

skin•es•the•si•a

an experimental short by Vicky Funari
1994 / digibeta / 18 minutes

SYNOPSIS

How does a woman's body move? *skin•es•the•si•a* scrambles the cultural codes of female movement by juxtaposing images from the work of performance artist Hannah Sim with images of Sim working as a nude dancer in a peep show. It explores the rapport between one woman's body and two performance environments. How are women perceived and typed through our own physical movements? What might a response of power to these codes and norms look like? What do we discover by embracing our otherness, by transforming it into a means of confronting the world?



PRESS QUOTES

"Examines the construction of gender through body parts and movement... a rap piece that is dangerous, poetically enoightingening and ultimately enthralling." –Edward Rubin, *Greenwich Village Press*

"A striking and original feminist work... Funari makes her points about pornography, performance and sexuality in an admirably unpretentious style." –Paul Bollwinkel, *Bay Area Reporter*

AWARDS

- Honorable Mention, FICC Jury (International Federation of Cine-Clubs), Oberhausen International Short Film Festival, Apr 1996
- Jury Award, New York Expo of Short Film & Video, Nov 1995
- Director's Choice, 19th Atlanta Film & Video Festival, Apr 1995
- Honorable Mention, University of Oregon Queer Film Festival, Jan 1995

SELECTED SCREENINGS

- MIX-Mexico, Lesbian & Gay Experimental Film/Video Festival, Mexico City, 1997
- Images Film & Video Festival, Toronto, 1997
- Mediawave International Visual Art Festival, Győr, 1997
- Viper International Film, Video & Multimedia Festival, Lucerne, 1996
- Osnabrück European Media Art Festival, Osnabrück, 1996

- Chicago Underground Film Festival, Chicago, 1996
- Telemanitas Women's International Video Festival, Cineteca Nacional, Mexico City, 1996
- MIX, the New York Lesbian & Gay Experimental Film/Video Festival, New York City, 1995
- Berlin International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, Berlin, 1995
- Chicago International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, Chicago, 1995
- Charlotte Film & Video Festival, Charlotte, 1995
- "Reel Women" series, Clinton Street Theater, Portland, 1995
- In exhibit: "Re/Defining Lesbians: Power/Transition," Esperanza Peace & Justice Center, San Antonio, 1995
- Film Arts Festival, San Francisco, 1994
- Artists' Television Access/Other Cinema, San Francisco, 1994
- Broadcast on Free Speech TV

KEY CREDITS

Producer / Director / Camera / Editor: Vicky Funari
 Co-producer / Editing Consultant: Heidi Jane Rahlmann
 Performer: Hannah Sim
 Choreography: Osseus Labyrint & Hannah Sim
 Score: Pauline Oliveros / Deep Listening Band and Marilyn S. Zalkan

BIOS

Vicky Funari: Vicky Funari is a documentary filmmaker, editor, and teacher. She produced, directed, and edited *MAQUILÁPOLIS [city of factories]* (2006), a piercing look at globalization through the eyes of Mexican factory workers (co-directed by Sergio De La Torre). She produced, directed, and edited the non-fiction feature *Paulina* (1998), a story of human resilience, about a Mexican woman who redefines and reclaims herself after being trafficked as a child (co-produced with Jennifer Maytorena Taylor). She directed and edited *Live Nude Girls UNITE!* (2000), a fierce, funny account of the first strippers' union in the US (co-directed by Julia Query). These award-winning, critically acclaimed films have screened in preeminent film festivals, including Sundance, Locarno, Havana, Rotterdam, SXSW, Ambulante, and Tribeca, and have aired on PBS and the Sundance Channel. Funari's work encompasses a commitment to co-creative and community-oriented processes. She builds multiplatform project elements and collaborative engagement campaigns to keep the work connected, useful, and accessible to the people represented in the work and to maximize its real-world impact. With *MAQUILÁPOLIS* and its Binational Community Engagement Campaign she and her team modeled this approach, partnering with factory workers and grassroots organizations to promote public dialogue and social change. She is a Visiting Senior Lecturer in Visual Studies at Haverford College, where she teaches documentary filmmaking and designs interdisciplinary programming and curriculum.

Hannah Sim/Osseus Labyrint: Hannah Sim is a founding member of Osseus Labyrint, an experimental arts entity which has been working in multiple disciplines and forms of media since 1989. The group describes its work as "a manifestation of accumulated data from billions of years of evolving and recombining of matter and energy." Founded and directed by Hannah Sim and Mark Steger, Osseus Labyrint has inhabited extreme, remote, conventional, and self-made environments. The group's work has been presented live and broadcast throughout the USA, Canada, Mexico, England, Scotland, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand and over the World Wide Web. The pair has found much fame through their work with the band Tool; they have appeared in Tool's music video *Schism* and live on stage at many of Tool's concerts. Osseus Labyrint has also appeared as a pair in the film *Men in Black II* doing the same "interpretative dance" seen in the "Schism" music video.

EXTENDED SYNOPSIS

skin•es•the•si•a explores the cultural codification of female movement by juxtaposing images from the work of performance artist Hannah Sim with images of Sim working as a nude dancer in a peep show.

A woman performs naked, her shaven body clothed only in leopard-skin stockings, high heels, a tousled blond wig, black lace.

A woman performs naked, bald, her body shaven, a harshly lit figure cutting shapes into a black void.



In motion, this body becomes by turns vegetable, alien, animal, machine, meta-female. Her movement is named “performance art.”

In motion, she is pelvic-thrusting, ass-spanking, red-lipsticked pre-fab female. This movement is named “pornography.”

She is the same woman, the same body in motion, in two distinct contexts. *skin•es•the•si•a* weaves together four strands of imagery, two of them visual and two of them aural: 1) Sim performs her own work, her muscular body sidelit against blackness. 2) Sim dances in a peep show, framed through the windows of the customers’ booths, multiplied in mirrors, fragmented and abundant as porn bodies are. 3) A female voice names the parts of her body, using Western medical terminology as her text. 4) Another female voice names the movements of her body, taking as text fairy tales and commonly-voiced descriptions of women in motion. These four image-worlds have no immediately apparent connection to each other, but they gradually become intertwined. Like the facets of any woman’s life, they are fluid, slipping across boundaries, affecting each other, fusing into a unique and personal physical reality.

Hannah Sim’s performances transform her body, explode gender and offend common notions of artistic propriety. This same body performing “erotic” dancing engages in another behavior which is considered subversive, but which consists of performing a precisely coded femininity. Women have no choice but to consider our bodies territory; yet to do so is to break rules of propriety, femininity and sometimes of feminism itself. We are compelled by our position in this culture to explore, reject, embrace and re-map our bodies in reaction. *skin•es•the•si•a* is not: an anti-porn diatribe; a manifesto in support of the sex trades; or a “Two Lives of Mistress X” story. It explores the rapport between one woman’s body and two performance environments. It asks how women are perceived and typed through our own physical movements. It wonders what a response of power to these codes and norms might look like. What do we discover by embracing our otherness, by transforming it into a means of confronting the world?