



SEE NL

**Polak's *Dirty God* opens
IFFR, competes at
Sundance**

**3 more Dutch filmmakers
in *Berlin Generation***

***Bloody Marie* bathes in
IFFR Limelight**

***Van Gool's Beast*
roars in Rotterdam**

**IFFR Bright Future for
*Nocturne***



Issue #34 January 2019 Sundance, IFFR,
Berlin and Clermont Ferrand issue

**NL FILM
FONDS**



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See NL is published four times per year by EYE International and The Netherlands Film Fund and is distributed to international film professionals.

Editors in chief: Marten Rabarbs, (EYE), Jonathan Mees (Netherlands Film Fund)
Executive editor: Nick Cunningham
Contributor: Geoffrey Macnab
Concept & Design: Lava.nl
Layout: def., Amsterdam
Printing: mediaLiaison Printed on FSC paper
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ISSN: 2589-3521

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The measure of Meter



"This was the form, the plastic art, in which I could express myself most freely"

Portraits (1972)
Barbara Meter



Acclaimed Dutch experimental filmmaker Barbara Meter will be honoured at the prestigious Ann Arbor Film Festival (Michigan) in March 2019 with a retrospective of her works. She talks to Nick Cunningham.

From the very beginning of her career, even when she was making narrative short films, the work of Barbara Meter was labelled hip and underground. She liked this compliment as she had, she says, "a rebellious streak". Her presence at the London Underground Festival in 1969 was therefore demanded, and for Meter the experience was earth-shattering.

"I was confronted with experimental film, and for me that was a complete revelation. It gave me all the freedom I was looking for. I knew a person could operate their own camera, but I didn't know that I could," she says. "I saw all these films for which one person did everything: camera, sound, editing, producing. I saw that there was no need of narrative, no need of linear progression. You didn't need producers as you could make it cheaply, so you didn't have to bend

to their demands. This was the form, more related to visual art than to theater or literature, not derived from those, but a direct expression of film itself, in which I could express myself most freely."

The Ann Arbor exhibition reprises curator Mónica Savirón's 'Found Sounds' retrospective of Meter's work (all of which has been digitised by EYE), organised in partnership with EYE and originally shown in 2017. It features works dated from 1970 through to 2012.

Among the many works, the 1970 3-minute *Song for Four Hands* offers a man and a woman the tantalising opportunity for conversation before shutting off their right to do so with a deafening musical chord. "The unsuccessful delivery of words leaves room for another kind of language," suggests curator Savirón. "The cinematic expression. Juxtapositions, light flares, rapid zooms, and overall movement transmit a series of feelings that would have been buried otherwise by words."

Core to Meter's experimental work, either side of a period in the mid 70s to early 80s when she made highly polemical feminist films, was her use of the optical printer, "which I really loved because you could manipulate the image like a painting." This can be seen to wonderful effect in *Ariadne* (2004), also part of the Ann Arbor programme. "A woman's hands lay on knitting wheels and vinyl records

that turn just as restlessly as the artist's film rewinders," describes Savirón. "Shot on Super-8, reworked and blown up to 16mm with the optical printer, and enlarged to 35mm, the blurred, soft grain purposefully becomes an homage to the quality of cinema as both weaving craft and relentless labour of love."

Meter describes the Bazinian analogue aesthetic of her early experimental tradecraft, noting how it contrasts with the less hands-on, more practical, digital. "The thing about analogue film and sound is that you can clearly see what is happening. You can see the film going through the sprockets, but with digital you can't. Therefore in analogue film you have more contact with the material itself, which is intrinsic with experimental film."

"The advantages of digital? Comfort, you can sit at home and edit. The digital camera doesn't make any sound and can do sound and image at the same time. It is much easier to operate and is cheaper. But the fact that traditional filmmaking was more expensive was an advantage in that you had to be a lot more critical at source with limited materials. Now you can shoot a lot more, but then there is so much more to edit. For every advantage there is a disadvantage."