

The Archive in My Closet: Oral History as Feminist Pedagogy

Kiki Loveday, Proposal, Teaching Women's Filmmaking Conference

This paper will present the *Women in the Director's Chair Oral History Project* founded by independent filmmaker Louise Tiranoff at Tisch School of the Arts, New York University in 1998. The project's archive includes seventy-six oral histories produced by undergraduate film students which document a diverse group of female filmmakers in the United States at the turn-of-the-twenty-first-century (1998 – 2002). The collection includes high profile directors such as Nora Ephron (*Julie & Julia*), Betty Thomas (*Doctor Dolittle*), and Mary Harron (*American Psycho*); but perhaps more importantly, it also includes filmmakers few may have heard of such as Emily Squires (*Sesame Street*), Andrea Jobe (a Christian filmmaker), and Demetria Royals (one of only four black women members of the Directors Guilds two thousand members in the year of the interview).

This capstone production project was a pedagogical intervention in the status quo. The strength of this oral history archive comes from the diversity of the students producing the projects, as well as their subjects—it was a collective effort to re-write the historical present. Placing voices from the archive, including Tiranoff's own, in conversation with recent work by Maya Smuckler and Erin Hill, among others, this paper will situate the pedagogical intervention of the oral history project in relation to the collective actions of the 1970s feminist film movement in the U.S. (especially the understudied lawsuit *NOW v. WABC-TV, FCC, and WRC-TV*) and the Riot Grrrl movement of the 1990s. This paper offers a case study in the use of student-centered collective action in the production classroom. As a student in the pilot course *Women in the Director's Chair* I produced one of the first interviews in this archive; I then worked as Tiranoff's teaching and research assistant before ultimately teaching the course myself and taking over the auspices of the oral history project.

Bibliography:

- Erin Hill, *Never Done: A History of Women's Work in Media Production* (Rutgers, 2016)
- Annette Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (NYU, 2002)
- Maya Montanez Smuckler, *Liberating Hollywood: Women Directors & the Feminist Reform of 1970s American Cinema* (Rutgers, 2019)
- Katrina Srigley, et al. (eds.), *Beyond Women's Words: Feminism and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-first Century* (Routledge, 2018)
- Brenda Trofanenko, ““We Tell Stories”: Oral History as a Pedagogical Encounter,” *Oral History and Education* (Palgrave, 2017)

Bio: Kiki Loveday is a PhD candidate at University of California Santa Cruz currently completing her dissertation, *Sapphic Cinematic! Female Authorship, Queer Desires and the Birth of Cinema (1896-1931)*. Her scholarly work has been published by *Framework* and *The Women Film Pioneers Project* and is forthcoming from *Feminist Media Histories* and *The Journal of Early Popular Visual Culture*. Her moving image work has been presented in galleries and festivals from *The Coney Island Film Festival* in NYC to *The Virginia Scott Galleries of American Art* at The Huntington in Los Angeles. She has served on the archive committee of *New York Women in Film and Television* and spent five years teaching in the undergraduate film program at Tisch School of the Arts New York University, where she co-founded *The Women in the Director's Chair Oral History Project*.