

Monday, November 20th at 4:30pm  
Jerome Liebling Center, Rm. 120, Hampshire College

***“...Through Windows and Through Curtains Call on Us”***  
**The Documentary and Avant-garde Films of Barbara Meter**

Curated by Robin Roblee-Strauss

*“...Through Windows and Through Curtains Call on Us”* features two biographical documentaries and three short avant-garde films by filmmaker, Barbara Meter. As one of the first women to study at the Netherlands Film Academy in the 1960s and co-founder of Amsterdam's Electric Cinema, a bastion of avant-garde film and ideas in the 1970s, Barbara has been a pioneer in the production and promotion of experimental filmmaking in the Netherlands. In a 1971 interview, Barbara describes her work as “pure films”, conveying “thoughts and feelings by pure movement, a pure image that may flicker or be blurred, and by intervening in the process of developing and printing the film.” Through her innovative use of optical printing methods, she seamlessly massages, and reworks found sounds and images: combining them with her personal archive. She remolds these documents into distinct, deeply personal sense worlds.

This program showcases a range of works made throughout Barbara's artistic career which echo deep psychological themes tied to the destabilizing effects the Second World War wrought on her family life and personal sense of home. Her notion of “wanting to belong to something you can't reach” is explored prismatically in this film program by showing biographical documentary works which explore her family's history during WWII alongside experimental films that represent the universal feelings of yearning to belong, the pain of separation, the distance felt in estrangement, and the joy of homecomings.

Throughout Barbara's life she has continued to create work, program screenings, and teach and lecture on film. Her work has been shown at Rotterdam Film Festival, BFI London Film Festival, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Filmmuseum Amsterdam, Tate Gallery London, Cinematheque San Francisco, the Museum of the Moving Image in New York City among many other venues in Europe. *“...Through Windows and Through Curtains Call on Us”* is the first solo exhibition that combines her experimental work alongside her documentaries and the second solo exhibition of her films in North America.

Additional information about Barbara Meter can be found at her website (<https://www.barbarameter.com/>) and via Light Cone (<https://lightcone.org/en/filmmaker-470-barbara-meter>).

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<sup>1</sup> Line from poem *The Sun Rising* by John Donne, featured in Barbara Meter's 2022 film *Nightlight*. Joseph, Barbara's 'first love' used to read it to her when they were walking in the Woods.

## THE PROGRAM

*From The Exterior*, 1970, 16mm, color, silent, 9 min

A nocturnal view of existences left to themselves, seen from the other side. A handheld camera peers covertly through open-curtained windows, overlapping lives: faces, silhouetted figures, rouge lampshades, houseplants, blinking TV sets, cigarettes, poodles, and amber orbs – unobtrusive fragments of an evening spent at home.

*Up To The Sky, And Much Much More*, 2015, video, color, sound, 36 min

Barbara Meter tells the life story of her father Leo Meter, using slides, photographs, drawings, and the letters her father wrote to her after being arrested by the Gestapo and deported to the Eastern Front. Barbara Meter reflects, "There are not many testimonies from Germans who resisted fascism – my father was one of them, and I could tell it. So, I dug up what I found of him – photos, letters, drawings, stories – and recorded it. During the making of the film, I felt that step by step I came closer to who he had been, and also closer to the love and protection I experienced from him – even if I was too little to remember his presence clearly. In Poland, I was very close to where he had died. There were only empty fields of grain and old broken houses ... such an estranged feeling that there were no signs left of the cruel fighting that had happened there. For myself, this gap has been filled, and I hope for some others too."

*Convalescing*, 2000, 16mm (from super 8), color, silent, 3 mins

Confined to a room, one reads, looks, and listens. In these moments of distance from the world, Barbara Meter considers "the blue, the light of the television, the blue, the book, the patterns, the light, the blue. Time to appreciate how much that really is."

*Quay*, 2003 16mm, color, sound, 4 mins

A study of arrivals, maritime comings and goings: vessels dock, sailors throw ropes, drop anchor, and people poised on platforms await friends or families. Then the choreography of reunions begins. Barbara writes: "Arriving at an island is a joy forever. The magic of ships when they dock, the expectation on the quays, the exciting theatre of the people with and without their vehicles, the saying hello and goodbye are everyday experiences on the Greek islands."

*Nightlight*, 2022, video, color, sound, 38 min

Memories of a first love, set against the backdrop of the idyllic coasts and forests of southern England. They are inextricably linked to Bunce Court, a special children's home that provided shelter for hundreds of Jewish refugees during World War II. Barbara Meter's new film is an ode to the founder Anna Essinger and to the cook Gretel Heidt who invited Barbara and her mother to England after the war. It was here Meter found the comfort and security she had long lacked.

TRT 90 Min

Financial support for this screening has been provided by the Christopher L. Kaufman '67 Fund in Honor of Professor John Cameron at Amherst College.