

Vibeke Løkkeberg presents a powerful journey into a pivotal era where ambition, creativity and the fight for representation redefined the future

The Long Road to the Director's Chair

Vibeke Løkkeberg



Written & Directed by Vibeke Løkkeberg

Produced by Anders Tangen Edited by Mina Nybakke

Sound Design Bror Kristiansen Colorist Bianca Rudolph Camera Georg Helgevold Sagen Post Producer Espen Skjetne

Supported by Anna J. Ljungmark, Film Commissioner Documentary NEI & Fritt Ord Foundation, Knut Olav Åmås and Bente Røalsvig

In collaboration with Arsenal - Institut für Film und Videokunst e.V. A very special thanks to Claudia von Alemann & The National Library in Norway

FOREWORD BY VIBEKE LØKKEBERG

In 1973, the world was turned upside down following the upheavals of the 1960s, which culminated in the militant uprisings of 1968. These events also influenced the world of cinema, dominated by the Nouvelle Vague (New Wave) from France. Feminism was born, and the introduction of the birth control pill offered women a new sense of freedom.

The era was politically transformative influenced, as it is today, by ongoing wars in the Middle East/Vietnam/Cambodia. French filmmaker and journalist Jean-Luc Godard emerged as a leading figure opposing the American industrial film dramaturgy. I participated in several films as a writer, actress and director that were inspired by the Nouvelle Vague.

In *The Long Road to the Director's Chair*, the direction intentionally preserves an archival quality. This approach allows the viewer to feel the essence of the time, both behind and in front of the camera.

For artists, the time has come to de-glamorise their cinematic expressions and to prioritise closeness to content over a polished form that risks creating distance or obscuring the message.

Every major turning point in the world creates a new canvas for artists. I would argue that our turbulent world today is experiencing just such a turning point.

Vibeke Løkkeberg



SYNOPSIS

The Long Road to the Director's Chair is an evocative documentary by Norwegian director and former actress Vibeke Løkkeberg that masterfully intertwines unique and captivating archival footage from the 1970s feminist movement.

Created from remarkable footage captured in November 1973 during the first International Women's Film Seminar at Arsenal Cinema in Berlin, this film delivers an inspiring narrative of ambition, bravery, and the relentless pursuit of equality through in-depth interviews with pioneering female filmmakers from around the globe.

The Long Road to the Director's Chair is a timeless and universal story that seamlessly bridges the pressing issues of the past with discussions in today's society about representation and gender equality. With its fusion of raw authenticity and artistic brilliance, this is a must-see document that not only moves and challenges but profoundly inspires.

The film is a journey through time; a celebration of female courage and creativity and a reminder that the fight for equality in the arts must never be forgotten.

Invited to open the Forum programme at the Berlinale 2025, The Long Road to the Director's Chair marks a milestone in Norwegian film history. It not only highlights an important and often overlooked part of film perspective but also gives voice to the female pioneers who helped shape the feminist film culture of the future.

THE STORY BEHIND THE DOCUMENTARY

In 1973, at the age of 28, Vibeke Løkkeberg attended the First International Women's Film Seminar at Arsenal Cinema in Berlin. Accompanied by a camera crew, she meticulously documented this historic event, which united female filmmakers from across the globe at a time when the feminist film movement was in its infancy. Through interviews with young women entering the film and TV industry, Løkkeberg uncovered their ambitions, challenges and dreams, while also highlighting the structural barriers they faced in a male-dominated field.

Despite the valuable material collected, the project was shelved when state-owned broadcaster NRK declined to broadcast it. NRK leadership positions were predominantly held by (male) Labour Party members and ridicule was a well-known tool of control, as Løkkeberg recalls. She was met with contempt and prejudice. And the material she made in Berlin faded into oblivion.

As a result, the footage remained untouched for nearly 50 years. However, in 2019, the historic film reels were serendipitously rediscovered in the archives of the National Library of Norway. This unexpected find reignited Løkkeberg's artistic vision, proving that the material was more than a collection of interviews - it was a treasure trove of authentic stories, forming the foundation for a powerful narrative film about women's rights, equality and creativity.

The Long Road to the Director's Chair transforms this archival footage into a poetic feature film that amplifies the voices of female filmmakers from diverse nations. Through artistic techniques and close collaboration with editor Mina Nybakke, the film authentically recreates a journey back to the 1970s. The women in the interviews evolve into people we come to know intimately: their vulnerability, pride and ambitions are interwoven into a larger narrative of hope, perseverance and the struggle for equality in the world of cinema.

Simultaneously, the film draws poignant historical parallels to the present, demonstrating how the themes of the 1970s continue to echo in today's conversations about representation and gender equality. This dual perspective enables unique relevance for both historically-minded and contemporary audiences, positioning The Long Road to the Director's Chair as a bridge between generations and cultures.

VIBEKE LØKKEBERG

Born 1945 in Bergen (Norway), Vibeke Løkkeberg is one of Norway's most prolific filmmakers, authors and cultural icons.

Married to producer Terje Kristiansen and mother to Tonje (born 1975) and Marie (born 1982), Løkkeberg created a unique concept of blending her personal life with her filmmaking, often working with her family.

Known for groundbreaking and often controversial films such as *Løperjenten* (The Story of Camilla) and *Hud* (Skin), the director brings her uncompromising vision and storytelling prowess to this project.

Løkkeberg is also a prolific novelist, with works including *Leoparden* (1989); *Jordens skygge* (1994); *Purpur* (2002); *Brev til himmelen* (2004); *Allierte* (2008); and *Frokost på stupet* (2018).

In 2005, she was appointed Cavaliere by the Italian President and in 2015, Løkkeberg was the recipient of the Honorary Amanda Award for her contribution to Norwegian cinema.





VIBEKE LØKKEBERG'S CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

VIBEKE LØKKEBERG'S CAREER SPANS DECADES, AND SHE IS WIDELY REGARDED AS ONE OF NORWAY'S MOST INFLUENTIAL ARTISTS

1966

Co-wrote and played the lead in *Liv*, selected for the Berlinale and which introduced a new film style to Norway

1971-1975

Directed and wrote several controversial short films addressing women's rights (*Abortion*), minority issues (*Tater*) and children's rights (*The Child Should Have a Father*). Directed her first feature, *Revelation*, exploring the lives of women over 50.

1981

Directed *Løperjenten* (*The Story of Camilla*), selected for the Critics' Week in Cannes. It was Norway's first Academy Award submission as well as the debut Norwegian film to be distributed in the US.

1991

Directed *Maker* (*Seagulls*), a poignant exploration of family relationships.

2010

Directed *Tears of Gaza*, an emotionally charged documentary on the human cost of the Gaza conflict, which garnered global recognition.

1970

Co-wrote and played the lead in *Exit*, selected for the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes. Turned down a role in Federico Fellini's *Satyricon* to distance herself from the way male directors usually portrayed her: as a seductive sex object. "I wanted to create my own roles and write them myself," says Løkkeberg who, at around the same time, also started thinking of establishing herself as a director

1976

The film sparked national debate and was selected for the Berlin and London Film Festivals.

1985

Directed *Hud* (*Skin*), Norway's first film starring international actors like Terence Stamp. Selected for *Un Certain Regard* in Cannes, it caused a national scandal because it addressed sexual assault and the abuse of women. The director recalls that she was hated by the press. Norway's largest newspaper 'Aftenposten' even labelled her a "National Witch" When one of the female executives at NRK managed to have *Hud* aired as a miniseries, a significant internal conflict emerged at the state-owned broadcaster.

1992

Directed *Where Gods Are Dead*, shot during the Balkan War.

2025

The Long Road to the Director's Chair is invited to open the Forum at the Berlinale

THE YEAR 1973

1973 was a year of transformation: the world was reeling from the upheavals of the late 1960s, culminating in the explosive uprisings of 1968. These seismic shifts echoed throughout society - and the world of cinema.

The Nouvelle Vague (French New Wave) broke boundaries, redefining what film could be and inspiring a global revolution in storytelling.

Feminism was on the rise, and the introduction of the birth control pill offered women unprecedented freedom. It was a time of political and social awakening, shaped by global conflicts and the relentless fight for equality.

In November 1973, history was made at the first-ever International Women's Film Seminar at Arsenal Cinema in Berlin. Among the trailblazers was Norwegian filmmaker Vibeke Løkkeberg, who presented her groundbreaking film *Abortion* (1971) and documented the seminar on 16mm film.

For nearly 50 years, the raw footage from this historic event remained uncut and unseen until it was rediscovered in 2023 by the Norwegian National Library. Painstakingly restored, the 16mm reels and recorded audio are now brought to life for the first time.

The Long Road to the Director's Chair is not just a film; it's a powerful journey into a pivotal era, where ambition, creativity and the fight for representation redefined the future. Preserving the raw energy of the 1970s, this film bridges the past and the present, reminding us that great art emerges in times of great change.



THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FILM SEMINAR

The First International Women's Film Seminar was a pivotal event that laid the foundation for future generations of female filmmakers. It was spearheaded by two visionary filmmakers and activists; Helke Sander and Claudia von Alemann. Their tireless efforts brought together female filmmakers from around the globe, creating a platform for dialogue, collaboration and solidarity in a male-dominated industry.

Due to funding requirements, the event was called a seminar and not a festival. However, it was one of the first opportunities to gather, screen and discuss films by the women's movements in Europe and the US. Held over four days, from 15-18 November, 1973, at Berlin's Arsenal Cinema, it marked a significant milestone in the feminist film movement, highlighting the importance of unity and collective action in addressing the systemic challenges faced by women in the film industry. The legacy of this seminar continues to inspire and resonate in the ongoing fight for gender equality in cinema.

Sander and von Alemann were no strangers to activism. Both were members of various political groups, including the Socialist German Student's League (SDS) and its Action Council for the Liberation of Women. Their involvement in movements such as 'Kinderladen' and the 'Second Women's Council' (Weiberrat) provided them with the experience and networks necessary to embark on this ambitious project. Despite the lack of resources, distribution networks or even a comprehensive contact list for women filmmakers, they leveraged their international contacts and experiences to build the foundation for the seminar.

One of their significant supporters was Erika Gregor, who facilitated the co-operation with Arsenal Cinema, ensuring the event could take place in this iconic venue. The festival was further supported by organisations such as the Friends of the German Kinemathek, the Municipal Cinema Frankfurt and the Foundation of Protestant Journalism.

Budget constraints meant that only 15 filmmakers and writers from abroad could be invited. Among them were Vibeke Løkkeberg Danielle Jaeggi and Nurith Aviv from Paris; Claire Johnston, Francine Winham and Barbara Evans from the London Women's Film Group; Annabella Miscuglio from Collettivo Femminista di Cinema in Rome; and Ariel Dougherty, co-founder of Women Make Movies from the US. The event saw the attendance of over 200 women and a few men, with the organisers inviting "multiplicators", i.e. journalists, women working in media and education to promote and distribute the films afterward.

The seminar featured a diverse selection of films addressing critical women's issues without victimising the subjects. This genre, later known as "Zielgruppenfilm" (target-group films), carried a clear political agenda. The programme comprised 45 contemporary films from seven countries, divided into four main themes: women in the workplace; the representation of women in the media; abortion, sexuality and gender roles; and the women's movement in Europe and the US.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FILM SEMINAR

One of the highlights was Løkkeberg's *Abortion* (1971), a hybrid film combining documentary interviews with a fictional narrative about a young woman seeking to terminate her pregnancy under restrictive Norwegian laws. Other notable films included Madeline Anderson's *I Am Somebody* (1970), documenting the successful strike of black hospital workers in Charleston, South Carolina, and *La lotta non è finita* (*The Fight Is Not Over Yet*, 1973) by Collettivo Femminista di Cinema, which explored consciousness-raising in the Marxist women's movement in Italy.

The seminar further included films that critiqued societal norms and legislation. *Kinder für dieses System* (*Children for This System*, 1972) by Ingrid Oppermann and Gardi Deppe criticised the criminalisation of abortion and analysed anti-abortion laws as tools of capitalist reproduction. Many of the films were low budget and collectively produced, breaking conventional genre boundaries to convey their political messages.

Von Alemann and Sander also decided to display artwork from Evelyn Kuwertz, Antonia Wernery and Brigitte Mauch as part of the seminar. This occurred shortly after the then-Senator for Education, Gerd Löffler, gave his orders to cancel an exhibition of the artists' recent work, citing "moral concerns".

Despite a lack of immediate reaction and some negative press, the seminar had a lasting impact. The event's snowball-effect was felt for decades, with variations of the programme travelling across West Germany, from small villages to big cities, reaching local women's groups and community colleges. The seminar also led to the founding of the first feminist journalist association during the festival. A year later, Sander launched the magazine "Frauen und Film" and in 1978, the Association of Women Film Workers (Verband der Filmarbeiterinnen) was established.

The First International Women's Film Seminar at Arsenal Cinema was a pioneering event that laid the groundwork for future generations of female filmmakers. Its legacy continues to inspire and resonate, proving that the spirit of those pioneering women still echoes in today's fight for representation and equality in cinema.

Sources:

- "feminist elsewheres. A Making (-) Of Three Festivals in the Making" from Elena Laumeister, Fiona Berg, Charlotte S Ethelbah, Sophie Herzberger, Arisa Parping. Published in: 'Feminist Media Histories' (2024)
- "Deep Cuts: The First International Women's Film Seminar" from Erika Balsom. Published in *Cinema Scope Magazine*
- arsenal-berlin.de



Vibeke having discussions with other filmmakers, The first international women's film seminar, Arsenal Cinema, Berlin.

THE WOMEN FEATURED IN THE FILM

The Long Road to the Director's Chair features the following women:



Claudia von Alemann (1943) is a filmmaker, author, independent producer and co-founder of the First International Women's Film Seminar. Recognised internationally through award-winning works such as *Blind Spot* (1981) and *Die Frau mit der Kamera* (2015), her innovative blend of experimental forms and political storytelling has cemented her place in feminist cinema history.



Ariel Maria Dougherty (1947) is a filmmaker and was the co-founder of Women Make Movies (WMM) in 1969, a non-profit advancing feminist media. She led initiatives in film production, education and global distribution, shaping feminist filmmaking. Her work includes the documentary *Health caring* (1976), which is still celebrated today as part of WMM's collection.



Helke Sander (1937) is a German feminist filmmaker, novelist, activist and co-founder with Claudia von Alemann of the First International Women's Film Festival. She was the founder of the feminist film magazine 'Frauen und Film' (1974). Her work remains a powerful voice for equality and innovation in cinema. In 1987, she won the Golden Bear for her short *Nr. 5 - Aus Berichten der Wach- und Patrouillendienste*.



Alice Schwarzer (1942) is a German journalist, author and feminist. As the founder and publisher of the feminist journal 'EMMA', she has been a leading voice advocating for women's rights, equality and social reform, shaping debates on reproductive freedom, economic independence and societal norms.



Karin Howard (1944) is a German/American director and screenwriter, renowned for her work on *The NeverEnding Story II: The Next Chapter*, as well as the story creator for *The NeverEnding Story III: Escape from Fantasia*. A member of the German Film Academy, Howard has made significant contributions to cinema and media.



Nurith Aviv (1945) is a French filmmaker and the first woman recognised as a Director of Photography by France's Centre National du Cinéma (CNC). She is celebrated for making 14 acclaimed documentaries, such as *Words That Remain* (2022) and *Yiddish* (2020), exploring themes of language, identity and cultural connections.

THE WOMEN FEATURED IN THE FILM



Annabella Miscuglio (1939-2003) was an Italian filmmaker and writer who co- founded Filmstudio, a cultural hub for independent cinema in Rome. Known for works such as A.A.A. Offresi (1981) and Vigilando reprimere (1972), her contributions to feminist and Italian cinema remain influential.



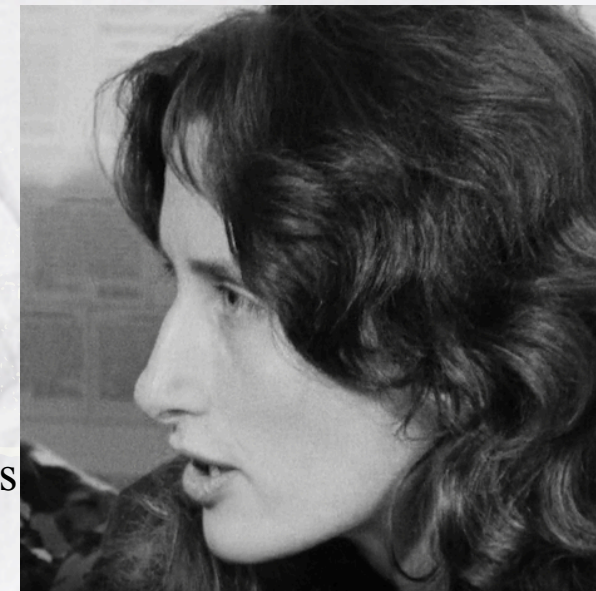
Angelika Wittlich is a Munich-based filmmaker, screenwriter and producer, known for works such as Alexander Granach - Da geht ein Mensch (2012), Alle Gefühle glauben an einen glücklichen Ausgang - Über Alexander Kluge (2002), and Die weiß- blaue Leichtigkeit des Seins (2003). She also contributed to numerous film and television productions since the 1970s and is married to Günter Rohrbach.



Christiane Schäfer (1949) is a renowned German producer and CEO of Winkelmann Projekt GmbH. With numerous acclaimed films such as Nordkurve and The Last Courier, she received prestigious awards including the Bundesfilmpreis in Gold (1992) and the Prix de la Critique International (1996).



Valeska von Roques (1939) is a journalist, author and recipient of the Theodor- Wolff-Preis. She worked for the German magazine Der Spiegel for 23 years, primarily as a correspondent in cities such as Rome, Paris, New York and Washington. She wrote several books exploring Vatican history and politics, including Mord im Vatikan and Verschwörung gegen den Papst.



Vibeke Løkkeberg (1945) Renowned filmmaker, actress, and author, celebrated internationally for acclaimed works like åpenbaringen, løperjenten (selected for the Critics' Week at the Cannes International Film Festival), and Hud (1986). She received Amandaprisens Honorary Award in 2015.

THE ARTWORK FEATURED IN THE FILM

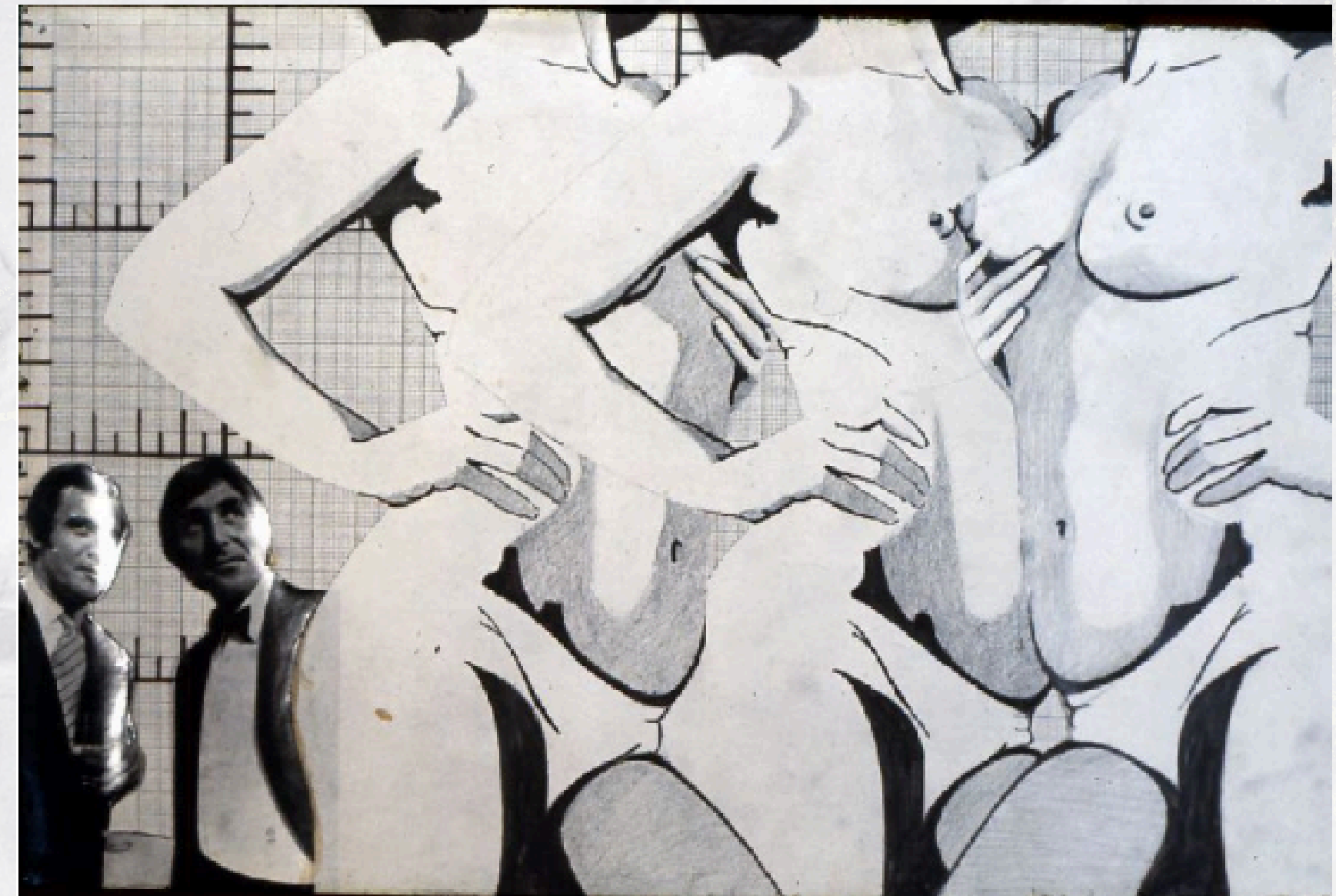
The artwork featured in *The Long Road to the Director's Chair* originates from a feminist installation titled *The Situation of Women in Family and Society*, developed between 1970 and 1973 by Evelyn Kuwertz, Brigitte Mauch and Antonia Wernery while studying painting at the Berlin University of the Arts. This collaborative project, showcased during the First International Women's Film Seminar at Arsenal Cinema in 1973, critically examines the roles imposed on women - mother, housewife and sexual object - through photography, collage, painting and other artistic techniques. A central piece is a painted Leporello (accordion-like artwork) titled *Konkurrenz*, which depicts the societal competition among women as sexualised and domestic figures.

The installation explored themes such as women's economic dependency, domestic violence and the influence of institutions like the church and state. It also analysed sexism in mass media, drawing from advertising images to create exaggerated representations of stereotypes meant to provoke and agitate against patriarchal norms.

Originally set to be exhibited at the Berlin State Media Center, the exhibition was canceled by a government official citing "moral concerns", specifically regarding a scene depicting domestic sexual violence. In response, von Alemann and Sander integrated the artwork into the seminar, where it became an integral part of the event and now a key historical element of the film.

The exhibition pieces and preparatory work are now in the possession of Kuwertz. Unfortunately, no further information is available about the other two artists, Mauch and Wernery.

Looking back, this installation is seen not only as a powerful feminist statement but also as an innovative piece of art that captured the struggles and realities of its time. Kuwertz has kindly given permission to share this story and has provided further context for its publication.



PRODUCER ANDERS TANGEN

Anders Tangen of Viafilm joined Vibeke Løkkeberg as producer of The Long Road to the Director's Chair.

Tangen is one of Scandinavia's most prolific producers, with a career spanning more than 30 years of national and international successes in both film and TV. He was a pioneer in producing content for the international streaming market and has shown time and time again that he possesses an infallible instinct for what audiences like.

Anders previously produced massive hits like Lillyhammer, Home for Christmas, Magnus, One Night, Norsemen, Easy Peasy and the third season of what probably has been Scandinavia's biggest hit series of the last few years - EXIT.

He recently created Viafilm Channels, a company where he experiments within YouTube channels and other content on new social media.



PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

The Long Road to the Director's Chair is a unique film project that combines authentic archival material from the 1970s with contemporary interviews to highlight the evolution of the fight for women's rights across generations. The film is significant not only as a cultural and historical document but also as a contribution to the ongoing debate about gender equality - a debate that remains highly relevant both in Norway and internationally.

I am especially thrilled that Arsenal Cinema in Berlin, where this journey first began, is showcasing the film more than 50 years after it was originally shot. It feels like a deeply meaningful and fitting place to launch its journey, providing an ideal starting point to share this important story with the world.

Personally, I have always been deeply committed to the fight for women's rights. As a high school student, I wrote a term paper on this topic and my interest in gender equality has stayed with me throughout my life. As a producer, I have witnessed how this struggle has played out within the film industry; a field that still faces challenges with diversity and representation. I also have a 21-year-old daughter, and it is crucial to me that her generation understands who paved the way for the opportunities and choices they now enjoy.

It is crucial to me that The Long Road to the Director's Chair is shown in cinemas across Norway, with the director actively participating in screenings during a national tour. I envision panel debates and discussions that engage both young and older audiences. This is a rare opportunity for a new generation to discuss equality with those who lived through a time when gender equality barely existed. Furthermore, we aim to bring the film to a global audience through a major streaming platform, television, cinema and other venues, enabling it to reach viewers worldwide. The film also has significant potential for screenings at festivals and internationally, contributing to the global conversation about equality and women's rights. We are thrilled to already have major interest from prominent documentary festivals, further underscoring the film's broad appeal and relevance.

This film is about creating a bridge between generations, encouraging audiences to reflect on the lives of the women Vibeke Løkkeberg interviewed in the 1970s. Did they achieve the goals they set for themselves? How do they perceive equality and women's rights today? I am proud to share that many of these women went on to become renowned filmmakers, making their voices and stories all the more impactful. At a time when gender equality continues to face challenges, this project is a timely and essential contribution to the ongoing global conversation. I have worked hard to ensure that this film reaches a wide audience.

THE LONG ROAD TO THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

A DOCUMENTARY DIRECTED BY VIBEKE LØKKEBERG

1973 CREW

Interviews: Vibeke Løkkeberg

Camera: Georg Helgevold Sagen

Sound editing: Ivar Rolland

Producer: Terje Kristiansen for Centralfilm

Executive producer: Knut-Jørgen Erichsen



2024/25 CREW

Writer/Director: Vibeke Løkkeberg

Producer: Anders Tangen for Viafilm

Production Adviser Documentary/NFI: Helen Prestgard

Editor: Mina Nybakke

Sound designer: Bror Kristiansen

Music supervision: Ohlogy by Jenny Aubert and Siri Lien

Technical supervisor: Ole-Andrè Oftedal

Colorist: Bianca Rudolph

Mastering: Åse Bjøntegård Oftedal

Studio executive: Ida Fiskerud

Post-production producer: Espen Skjetne

Post-production: Shortcut Oslo

Jesper Berglund: Presskit and Poster

Translations: Nick Norris (ENG), Susanne Hiller Giertsen, Bjorn Ole Giertsen (GER)

Special thanks to Arvid Skauge, Bent Bang Hansen, Ingrid Holtar, Arthur Tennøe, Idunn Myklebust, Per & Anita Fluge, Tone Hvaler, Advokat Tore Skar, Helga & Nils Urdal, Anita Engebretsen Fluge, Per Rolad Fluge, Tone Ruscelli, Ordfører Mona Vanger, Margrethe Stang Lund, FEMINIST ELSWHERE and all employees, past and present, of Arsenal – Institut für Film und Videokunst e.V.

Supported by: Anna J. Ljungmark, Film Commissioner Documentary Norwegian Film Institute & Fritt Ord Foundation, Knut Olav Åmås and Bente Roalsvig



With Claudia von Alemann, Nurith Aviv, Ariel Maria Dougherty, Karin Howard, Annabella Miscuglio, Helke Sander, Christiane Schäfer, Alice Schwarzer, Valeska von Roques, Angelika Wittlich

SPECIFICATIONS

Aspect ratio: 4:3 (hence DCP will be FLAT-133)

Frame rate: 25 fps

Sound mix: 5.1 surround

2025 | Norway | Documentary | B&W | 75 min

Language: **English**



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