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PRESSEHEFT

BARBARA FOREVER

von Brydie O'Connor

Weltpremiere: Sundance Film Festival 2026, US Documentary Competition

Internationale Premiere: Berlinale Forum 2026



If we're experimenting with our lives and the way we're going to live, our film and our art should also be experimental. It breaks tradition, and makes you think in a broader way. It's the way I experience the world. – Barbara Hammer

Queer Cinema-Pionierin Barbara Hammer (1939–2019) fing mit 27 an, Filme zu machen und hatte mit Anfang 30 ihr lesbisches Coming-out: „My life has been lived in film.“ Die schiere Fülle an Filmmaterial ihres Lebens ist auch der Stoff von **BARBARA FOREVER**, Brydie O'Connors Langfilmdebüt, dem die Mammutaufgabe gelingt, der schillernd-charismatischen Persönlichkeit gerecht zu werden: Vorreiterin lesbisch-queerer Selbstrepräsentation „in a world where we are invisible“, verführerische Liebhaberin, experimentier- wie risikofreudige Filmemacherin. Über allem: der Lebenshunger. Entlang ihrer Filme, darunter DYKETACTICS (1974), AUDIENCE (1982) und NITRATE KISSES (1992), erstmalig zu sehendem Archivmaterial, Barbaras Erzählstimme und mit Lebenspartnerin Florrie Burke als weiterem Zentrum wird Lebenszeitlichkeit selbst gequeert: viel Sex und Intimität, die Theorie des cinema of touch, der Wunsch nach künstlerischer Anerkennung, die Beziehung zur Mutter in der Immigranten-Familie und die Mission, weiterzugeben und zu teilen, was Film vermag, nicht zuletzt angesichts ihrer Krankheit und ihres Sterbens. Fans, Neu- und Wiedereinsteiger*innen gleichermaßen: Lasst euch von der Dyke-Poesie berühren! (Berlinale Forum, Gaby Babić)

BARBARA FOREVER

USA 2026 / 102 Min. / Shooting Format: 16mm, 8mm, video, digital / 16:9 / 5.1 Mix / Vorführformat: DCP / Sprache: Englisch / Sprachfassung: OmdU

Regie Brydie O'Connor. **Montage** Matt Hixon. **Musik** Taul Katz. **Sound Design** Gisela Fullà Silvestre. **Produzent*innen** Elijah Stevens, Brydie O'Connor, Claire Edelman. **Executive Producer** Christine Vachon. **Produktionsfirma** Space Time Films (Brooklyn, USA). **Mit** Barbara Hammer.

Barbara Hammers Filmografie (Auswahl):

DYKETACTICS (1974)
MULTIPLE ORGASM (1976)
DOUBLE STRENGTH (1978)
NO NO NOOKY T.V. (1987)
NITRATE KISSES (1992, Sundance FF)
TENDER FICTIONS (1995, Sundance FF) HISTORY LESSONS (2000)
LOVER/OTHER (2006)
A HORSE IS NOT A METAPHOR (2008, Berlin FF Teddy Award)
GENERATIONS (2010, Berlin FF Teddy Award)
MAYA DEREN'S SINK (2011, Berlin FF Teddy Award)
WELCOME TO THIS HOUSE (2015)
EVIDENTIARY BODIES (2018)

Mehr über die Arbeit von Barbara: www.barbarahammer.com

Regiekommentar von Brydie O'Connor

Über das Leben und Vermächtnis von Barbara Hammer

Was es bedeutet, einen Film über diese einzigartige, zutiefst einflussreiche Person zu machen und von ihrem Leben zu lernen

Ich betrat die Welt von Barbara Hammer zum ersten Mal als Studentin, als ich meine Abschlussarbeit über Barbaras frühe Filmografie schrieb – ich war unglaublich inspiriert von der Idee einer lesbischen Künstlerin, die ein Leben auf die Leinwand brachte, das sie zuvor noch nie gesehen hatte. Durch diese Forschungsarbeit lernte ich Barbara kennen und nach Barbaras Tod im Jahr 2019 entwickelte sich eine enge Freundschaft zu ihrer Witwe Florrie Burke. Dies führte dazu, dass ich mich ein Jahrzehnt lang mit Barbara Hammer beschäftigte – ich drehte einen Kurzfilm und nun einen Dokumentarfilm über Barbaras Leben, Werk und Vermächtnis. Ich habe Barbara Hammer immer als eine Art Historikerin angesehen, als jemanden, deren Leben sich mit meinem eigenen verband.

Als ich Barbara durch ihr Archiv näher kennenlernte, begann ich sie nicht nur als bahnbrechende Künstlerin zu verstehen, sondern auch als Vorbild dafür, wie man gegen den Strom schwimmt. Barbara war eine rebellische Frau, die Dinge auf ihre eigene Art und Weise tat – nicht durch starre Gewissheit, sondern durch Ausprobieren und Scheitern, Neugier und Verspieltheit. Sie erlaubte sich, zu experimentieren, zu scheitern, neu anzufangen und dem zu folgen, was sich für sie richtig anfühlte, anstatt dem, was von ihr erwartet wurde. Dieser Geist zieht sich durch ihre Filme und ihr ganzes Leben. Barbaras Werk macht deutlich, dass man keine Erlaubnis braucht, um sich selbst zu erfinden, dass das Leben nach den eigenen Vorstellungen ein fortwährender, unvollkommener und sehr menschlicher Prozess ist. In dieser Hinsicht bietet ihr Leben etwas zutiefst Universelles – eine Einladung an alle, ob Künstler*in oder nicht, hinauszugehen und das zu tun, was ihnen wichtig ist, mutig und ohne sich dafür zu entschuldigen.

Als Filmemacherin denke ich heute viel über die spezifisch queere Tradition nach und über diejenigen, die vor mir da waren – all die Leben, die gelebt wurden, so wie meines. Ich bin fasziniert davon, Geschichten zu erzählen, die in der Gegenwart verwurzelt aber von der Vergangenheit inspiriert sind, und die über zukünftige Möglichkeiten von Queerness nachdenken. Meine Arbeit hinterfragt, wie persönliche Archivalsammlungen einen ungefilterten Einblick in ein breiteres Spektrum queerer Leben bieten kann, insbesondere angesichts der aktuellen politischen und kulturellen Einstellungen gegenüber unseren queeren und trans Geschwistern. Letztendlich verwebt mein Ansatz, LGBTQIA+-Geschichten zu erzählen, meine eigene Perspektive mit zugänglichen Werken, die als einzelne Fäden innerhalb einer gemeinsamen kollektiven Aufzeichnung auftauchen. Auf diese Weise hoffe ich, zur Erhaltung und Erweiterung der queeren Geschichte beizutragen – indem ich sowohl reale als auch imaginäre Leben dokumentiere. Und als Lesbe finde ich, dass das ein und dasselbe sein kann.

Ich glaube, dass Barbaras Filme ein tiefes Potenzial zur Selbstidentifikation und kollektiven Verbindung besitzen.

Heute ist Barbara Hammer eine einzigartige und zutiefst einflussreiche Figur innerhalb des queeren Kinos und der Avantgarde-Kunstszene weltweit, doch ihre Arbeit ist einem breiteren Publikum nach wie vor weitgehend unbekannt. Mit diesem Film möchte ich den Kontext und die Reichweite ihres Vermächtnisses erweitern, indem ich ihre Arbeit in einen Dialog mit zeitgenössischer Kunst, Film, Bildung und queerer Lebensweise bringe – damit ein breiteres

Publikum zum ersten Mal damit in Berührung kommen kann. Ich glaube, dass Barbaras Filme ein tiefes Potenzial für Selbstidentifikation und kollektive Verbindung besitzen und dass sich viel mehr Menschen in ihren Werken wiederfinden würden, wenn sie die Gelegenheit dazu hätten. Ich hoffe, dass dieser Film es mehr Menschen ermöglicht, eine Verbindung zu Barbara aufzubauen und ihren Einfluss weiterzutragen, indem sie sich selbst ausdrücken und ihre Spuren hinterlassen – auf ihre eigene Weise – als die nächste Generation von Visionären.

Mein beruflicher Hintergrund als Archivproduzentin prägt nicht nur meine generative künstlerische Praxis und meine Methoden der Herangehensweise an und Interpretation von Archivmaterialien, sondern bietet mir auch die Möglichkeit, mit anderen Dokumentarfilmregisseur*innen zusammenzuarbeiten. Ich hatte das Vergnügen, mit queeren Filmemacher*innen die ich zutiefst bewundere zusammenzuarbeiten und von ihnen zu lernen, darunter Kirsten Johnson, Kim Reed und Sian-Pierre Regis.

Die Zeit, die ich mit Barbara und ihrem Werk während der Arbeit an diesem Dokumentarfilm verbracht habe, hat mir die Sprache und den Rahmen gegeben, um mein eigenes Leben mit Neugier, Ehrgeiz und dem Wunsch zu leben, mich tief mit anderen zu verbinden – sowohl künstlerisch als auch persönlich. Ich bin sehr gespannt darauf zu erfahren, wie das Publikum von **BARBARA FOREVER** das Vermächtnis von Barbara Hammer im eigenen Leben und Träumen verinnerlicht und weitergibt.

Brydie O'Connor (sie/ihr) wurde in Kansas geboren, lebt in New York. Ihre Arbeit als Filmemacherin belebt Archive durch queere Erzählstrukturen im non-fiktionalen Bereich. Brydies Arbeit wurde von Frameline, Hot Docs, Cinéma du Réel, der New York Foundation for the Arts und der Stonewall Foundation unterstützt und unter anderem im Museum of Modern Art, BFI und bei DOC NYC sowie auf weiteren Festivals und in Galerien weltweit präsentiert. Brydie wurde als Preisträgerin des Creative Capital State of the Art Prize für New York und des Hulu/Kartemquin Accelerator Award (2023) ausgewählt.

Filme: 2019: Going Steady (Kurzfilm). 2021: Friends of Dorothy (Kurzfilm). 2022: Love, Barbara (Kurzfilm). 2024: Sasporumpet (Kurzfilm). 2025: The Fault Line (Kurzfilm), The Roaming Center for Magnetic Alternatives (Kurzfilm). 2026: Barbara Forever.

Interview mit der Regisseurin anlässlich des Berlinale Forum.
Das Gespräch wurde auf Englisch geführt.

Absence and Presence

Barbara Wurm: Brydie, wonderful to host the international premiere of BARBARA FOREVER (after its world premiere at Sundance) in Berlin and in the Forum, which was a 'home place' to Barbara Hammer over many years. It's your debut feature – and you picked a daring subject: the portrait of an incredibly great woman. What is your relationship to Barbara Hammer, when did you meet her, and when did you decide to make this film?

Brydie O'Connor: I researched Barbara's early filmography, her 70s films, in my undergraduate programme. I was writing my thesis on Barbara's work, specifically this idea of lesbian film made by a lesbian filmmaker. And at the time, I couldn't access Barbara's films online or in any museums or library system where I was living, in Washington, DC. So I reached out to Barbara directly to buy her DVDs. She sent me her DYKETACTICS compilation, all of her 70s films, and that's how we initially connected. She actually gave me a little bit of a hard time when I reached out. I reached out with my university e-mail address, and I said, 'I'm a student.' And she responded, 'I'd love to sell you my films, but I just want to double check that you actually are a student because if you were staff or faculty, it would be much, much more expensive.' So I said, 'Yes, I'm a student.' And she sent me her films, and I finished my paper. She had asked me to send it to her for her archive at Yale. I met her when I moved to New York when I graduated, and I would see her around at, like, Metrograph and say hello. And when I went to make my first film, I e-mailed her in early January 2019 saying, 'Hi, Barbara. I was wondering if I could take you for a coffee and you could give me advice. I'm making my first film.' And I didn't realise how sick she was at the time. And she responded and said, 'I'm at the very end of my life, but good luck with everything.' She passed in March 2019. After that, I reached out to Florrie Burke, her widow, to send my condolences and share how much Barbara meant to me, and the research I had been doing on her and her work. And Florrie and I made a short film together through the lens of their relationship. They were together for 31 years. And the short is Barbara's legacy, but narrated by Florrie. It's through her perspective. It's actually a really great footnote to **BARBARA FOREVER** because it's quite different. But through the process of making this short film with Florrie, in my research, there was so much material that I continued to find. And the core idea of **BARBARA FOREVER** was to make a longer film, to make a feature that Barbara would narrate herself. I found so many audio recordings. She spoke about everything at different moments in her life. Her voice sounds different throughout the film. She's very healthy and vibrant throughout, and at times she's very sick and her voice sounds weaker and older and faint. So it was really exciting to me, given who Barbara is as a person and as an artist, to make a film where she would not only be present through her visual perspective and her films, but also narrated through her voice.

Gaby Babić: It's a quite bold decision to debut via a person's life's work. That's really brave. I admire that self-confidence, but maybe you can elaborate on your fears, if you had any?

BO: I think part of the reason I love documentary filmmaking as an artistic practice is that there are so many unknowns, and there's such a learning curve at every stage. It was a big responsibility to take on telling the story of Barbara Hammer, who is my hero, first of all, but who is just such a force and such a figure in feminist filmmaking and queer cinema. I think that I certainly felt a big responsibility to do her and her work justice. And one of the biggest things that I felt throughout the process is I want to make Florrie Burke proud, and I want

her to feel like the film is true to Barbara's spirit and true to her intention as an artist and a filmmaker. So that was certainly one of my biggest fears throughout the process, making something that felt true to Barbara, but true to Florrie as well. Because Florrie has provided the access, and she's provided her trust in me and our filmmaking team. And her trust in a documentary about Barbara is what has made this possible. So I can't really highlight that enough. But as a first feature, I certainly had my fears of wanting to make sure I was doing her justice, but admittedly, I was very excited about those unknowns and being able to figure it out at each step of the way, and tried to call upon Barbara to be there in spirit, feel her presence as a person. I think I've always been very inspired by her attitude and fearlessness in terms of creative risk-taking. And Barbara wasn't afraid to fail, and I think that's really rare. And I can't say that I innately have that inside of me. So I really tried to tap into that quality of Barbara.

It was so important to her that her work and her path of making work live on in the future because she was so invigorated by risk-taking.

BW: Do you have the feeling that a big part of her work is this internalised thought of being there forever, going beyond the boundaries of a lifetime as well, so to speak?

BO: Yeah. I think I'm so glad, first of all, that that comes through in the film because I really wanted that to be the case. There's something really interesting about Barbara, where she has this huge personality and this big ego, but at the same time is really generous and really exists outside of herself and is making work, of course, because she wants to express who she is and how she feels and how she moves through the world. But it was so important to her that her work and her path of making work live on in the future because she was so invigorated by risk-taking, and creative risk-taking, and living very responsibly in one's surroundings, and making art that reflected one's own experience. And she loved consuming other art. She was very inspired by other people's art. I'm so glad that it comes through in the film that Barbara wanted her work to live on as a way to say, 'I did this thing. I made over 80 films in times that were difficult. And it was hard to be a feminist filmmaker. It was hard to be a queer filmmaker. And whatever challenges, come what may, I hope that you in the future will continue to make art that will serve as authentic records of history.' And Florrie says very clearly and directly, Barbara told her she wanted her work to live on. She wanted her efforts to pay off, and that queer people and film people and art people would continue valuing her films and her work.

BW: Would you say there is a specific moment in her biography that made her focus on the after-life?

BO: That is such a fascinating question, Barbara, because I don't think that it was her cancer diagnosis that sparked this idea to live on forever. And in the film, it was so important that it didn't feel that way, that just because she received a cancer diagnosis, she started to think about her afterlife. Because even when she was a young filmmaker, she has this writing. There's a scene in the film where Florrie reads a passage from her book, her autobiography, but it's a printed writing from 1980, when Barbara was just a young filmmaker. She'd been making films for a decade at that point. And she says she wants her films to be considered a 'visionary forever'. And I think that it's so indicative not only of her foresight, but that she wanted to be recognised as this artist. She always wanted to be recognised for her work. But separately, she felt like she had this confidence in herself that what she was doing would be important to future generations and to future artists. And I think that because it was so hard for Barbara, she always wanted more. She always felt like she didn't fit neatly into the queer

cinema space or the avant-garde space. I think she wanted it to feel easier for future artists. She did view herself to some degree, even early on, as a trailblazer. She just kept creating her space and demanding more for herself and her work. I really admire that.

GB: Could you describe how you found the form for the film because obviously you had to deal with over 80 films and a huge archive? How did you find the chapters and the chronology that you've chosen?

BO: Thank you. What we've been calling it for years is a 'queered chronology', which also could be one that is non-linear or non-traditional. But in this case, it feels so true to the form, a queered chronology. And on one hand, it's a film about Barbara Hammer. So I wanted the form to reflect that expansiveness that Barbara's work gives us on the one hand. But separately, I really asked myself what feels exciting to me about queer time. And it's the fact that I think queerness is so expansive in one's life. Barbara even says in the film, 'I was born when I became a lesbian.' I think so many queer people feel that way, that once you have this moment of self-discovery, that queerness is all about discovery and reinvention and expansiveness. I realised I was a lesbian when I was 18, and I just felt so myself from that point on. And I just wanted the form of the film to emulate her form or her experimental sensibility. So it's certainly the structure of the film. How it is structured now was one of the biggest creative challenges of the film, and it was so fun to slalom a lot, certain contemporary scenes and how those scenes would converse with each other throughout the film. It's one of the things I'm the most proud of in the film, I think, that we are able to move through time in a way that trusts the viewer, I hope, and that really just gives a glimpse into or like a nudge that we are living in Barbara's future. We filmed other contemporary scenes that didn't make it into the movie. And that was all part of the the editing, the trial and error. My editor, Matt Hixon, is brilliant, and we work together so closely. We've worked together on all but one of my films. So we have a really close working relationship, we trust each other so much, and we have this space in our working relationship for us both to try things and trust each other. Having this relationship with Matt helped me to feel less scared, per se, or less worried about something failing in the film or in the structure of the film, because if we tried something that didn't work, we moved forward or we sat with it, or we debated it or talked through it. So I think that our specific relationship, our collaboration really lent itself to finding the structure of the film because we were able to try all these things that didn't end up working or didn't end up in the film. And what we see in the film is what we landed on together.

It was very clear from early on that Barbara would narrate the film.

GB: Was it clear early on that Barbara would narrate the film and that Florrie would be, so to speak, the second voice?

BO: It was very clear from early on that Barbara would narrate the film. That was the genesis of the idea of the feature iteration in itself. But as we developed the film, I think that we were unsure how other voices would make their way in. Initially, we thought that there would be more voices as audio recordings or as audio paired with more observational, contemporary scenes. But as we thought about it more and as we edited, the idea that was most exciting to me about the contemporary scenes was this idea of absence and presence with Barbara. And I wanted to feel very strongly and very emotionally either her absence or her presence, or a blend of the two. And I think that with that guiding principle there, it became very clear in our editing process that it was most impactful to me to feel Barbara's absence in just experiencing life or experiencing being in Florrie's home with her, being in an installation with her, whatever it may be, that is what was most impactful to me, to experience Barbara's absence

with the love of her life instead of utilising Florrie's voice as a way to bring in information about Barbara, if that makes sense.

BW: I gather there are three main strands of material. One is the contemporary, the other is the footage from the films, and the other is the footage from the 'not films'. I don't know if that's how you call it, but how many hours in each strand did you have available for this final version?

BO: It's a great question about the film, the breakdown. I will say in total, with Barbara's archive, it was over 400 hours of footage. And then I will say that we filmed the contemporary scenes very sparingly. One, because of budget, this was such an independent production, if you will. So we really tried to be specific about what we filmed and not just continuing to film and seeing what worked. And I also ended up filming a couple of those scenes, and that was not something I had done before. So I, again, tried to feel the Barbara Hammer inspiration, go for it. At the end of the day, I think there's 12 minutes of original footage in the film out of 102 minutes. So that balance feels very true to what we intended. I think we always thought that the thread would be fractional to the archive, but certainly always intended for it to be there. But we were working with over 400 hours of Barbara's material. And there's so much in the 'not films' bucket. We were finishing the film and received a batch from the vendor that was digitised a week before we locked the film. It just feels like it's never ending because she filmed everything. She filmed so much of her life that didn't make it into films that she ultimately released.

BW: There doesn't seem to be any border between filming and living, really, in this life. I guess so many of these intimate scenes are being shown for the first time.

BO: Definitely. And many of them we digitised for the film. There's so much footage in the film that hasn't been screened. The woman in the hot tub and Barbara and Florrie in bed. There's a short shot of that in my short film, but in the way that it's screened in the feature is new. I really couldn't even point out all of the instances that are in the film that are new material because it's so much. And I also like that in my approach to making the film there's not really a differentiation in the language of **BARBARA FOREVER** of what is released material or a proper film, and what is footage that has never been seen before or archival footage. I really like that blend because, my hope would be that it invites the viewer to go explore Barbara's films and see what's all in there, what she made into work.

GB: We touched on the topic of problematic categories, like being a queer filmmaker and an avant-garde filmmaker, as Barbara talks about. Is this something you would like to comment on as a young queer filmmaker nowadays?

BO: Totally. I think that it is certainly easier for me to be a queer filmmaker and a lesbian filmmaker in particular than it was for Barbara. And that's in part thanks to the work that she had done in the space she carved out. But I do think that, while there is so much, it's so much more acceptable to be queer in today's world. I think that in making a queer film, it was really hard to get this film funded. It was really hard to convince people why they should care about a lesbian filmmaker who's no longer here. But hopefully, the film does a really good job of bringing those people in who weren't sure. It is very emotionally accessible. Barbara has so much charm and is so charismatic and is an amazing character. But I think that for this film in particular, it was hard. It was hard to be evangelical about why Barbara Hammer and her impact matters. Why she's someone that should be on our radars.

It's so fascinating to me that Barbara wanted to make art in a form that reflects her experiential lifestyle, that the form matches or reflects the experience, the lived experience

BW: So I want to maybe follow up on that, but swap over more from the focus on the queer or lesbian side to the experimental and avant-garde aspect of this filmmaking. Can you try to describe it? What are the most fascinating aspects of that experimentalism? Also, how is your position connected to the queer pioneer?

BO: Yeah, I think the way that I view Barbara's films is that they're everything, they're playful and gorgeous, and experimental, and risky. It's so fascinating to me that Barbara wanted to make art in a form that reflects her experimental lifestyle, that the form matches or reflects the experience, the lived experience. That is so cool to me. And that is so inherently queer. Doing something in an expansive way is just queer to me. And I think that it's cool that Barbara's form, though it was always avant-garde and experimental, changed. She continued to evolve and experiment in different ways throughout her life, whether in content or approach or form, true form. She started making long form films 20 plus years into her career. And I have to say that I would not view myself inherently as an experimental filmmaker. I made this film on Barbara Hammer that I think has an expansive form, particularly for a biographical documentary. But I did make what I would consider a very intentional experimental film two years ago with my own archival footage. It was about my relationship with my mother. And I've framed it as a hybrid documentary, but it was experimental. And making that film as both a process and just an exercise in making something expansive in form that utilised my own archive, I think was so necessary for my process in making an expansive documentary using someone else's, Barbara Hammer's. So I think in the past couple of years, I can see myself more confidently as a filmmaker who can experiment within the form that I work in, even though I would not necessarily call myself an experimental filmmaker.

GB: During Berlinale, people who know Barbara's work will watch your film and people will be introduced to her work through the film, which is really exciting. Have you had any preconception or fantasies about these different audiences and generations?

BO: Oh, my gosh, of course. I want this film to reach people who will be learning about Barbara Hammer for the first time. I've made it for both audiences, of course. I just think it's so important that, frankly, Barbara's work up until this point can still be hard to access. I think that the way you can see Barbara's films is in museums or galleries or festivals or special screenings. And I'm just very excited for people who haven't had the chance to experience Barbara's work to be introduced to it through this film. And I think that Barbara as a person is so electric, and her work and her ideas are so electric to me, that it's a really warm welcome to her, the Hammer world. And I hope that any viewer, whether they're meeting Barbara or not, or know about her, will leave the theatre and go spend more time with her work, or follow where her screenings are happening, or just seek out her films. We're working with the estate right now to open up the possibility of more accessibility, like a streaming option or things like that. One thing that I think is so interesting, actually, that I found in her archive, though, were ideas for films that she never even was able to start. She had a whole folder that I found at one point, like ideas for future films, and it was so interesting. She just was so excited about possibility. That was fascinating to me, those ideas of things that she just couldn't make in her lifetime.

BW: I think that's a wonderful maybe ending to a forever project, the excitement about the possibilities. I think it's a perfect wrap up.