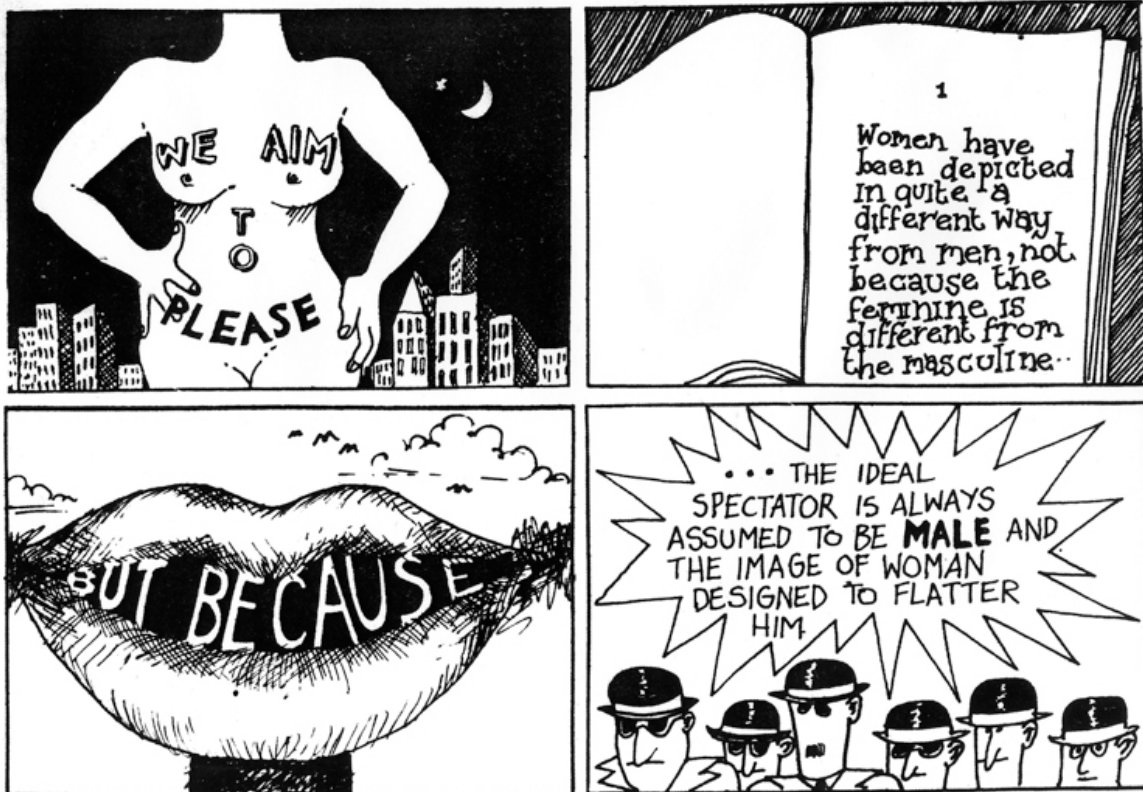


# WE AIM TO PLEASE

A film by Robin Laurie & Margot Nash

In 2017, this feminist classic was restored from the original 16mm film materials.



Graphic: Carol Porter

## Information Kit

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asif@netspace.net.au

16mm 13 minutes 1976 Australia.

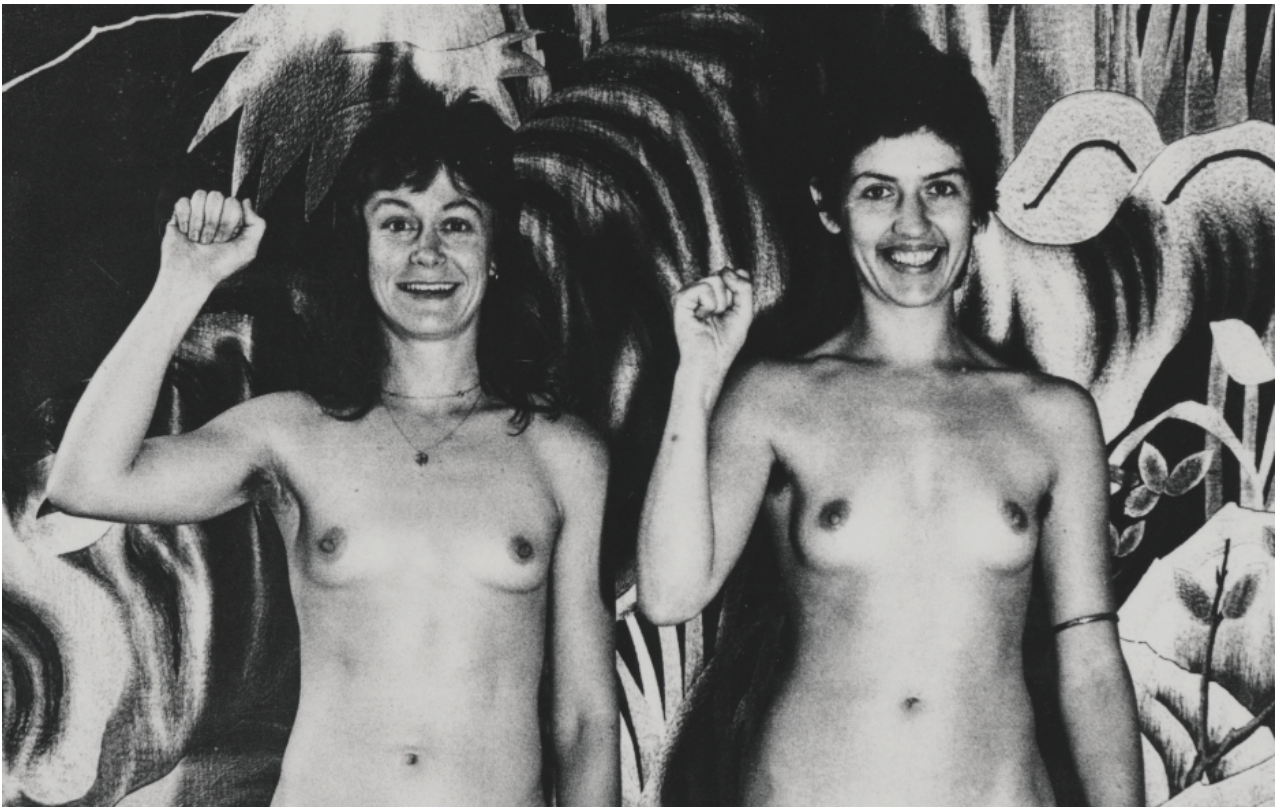
*We Aim To Please* was produced with the assistance of the Experimental Film Fund of the Australia Council.

## Synopsis

A film about female sexuality that not only touches the areas of paranoia, fear and doubt, which we as women experience in relation to our bodies and physical self image, but which is also joyful, erotic and funny.

The film is in three sections:

- Setting up the elements: us, the women filmmakers, sexxx the city.
- How it feels: female vulnerability in a violent society that expects women to be the flatterers.
- Breaking the silence: direct action and an attempt at a cinematic definition of female sexuality that is not idealised.



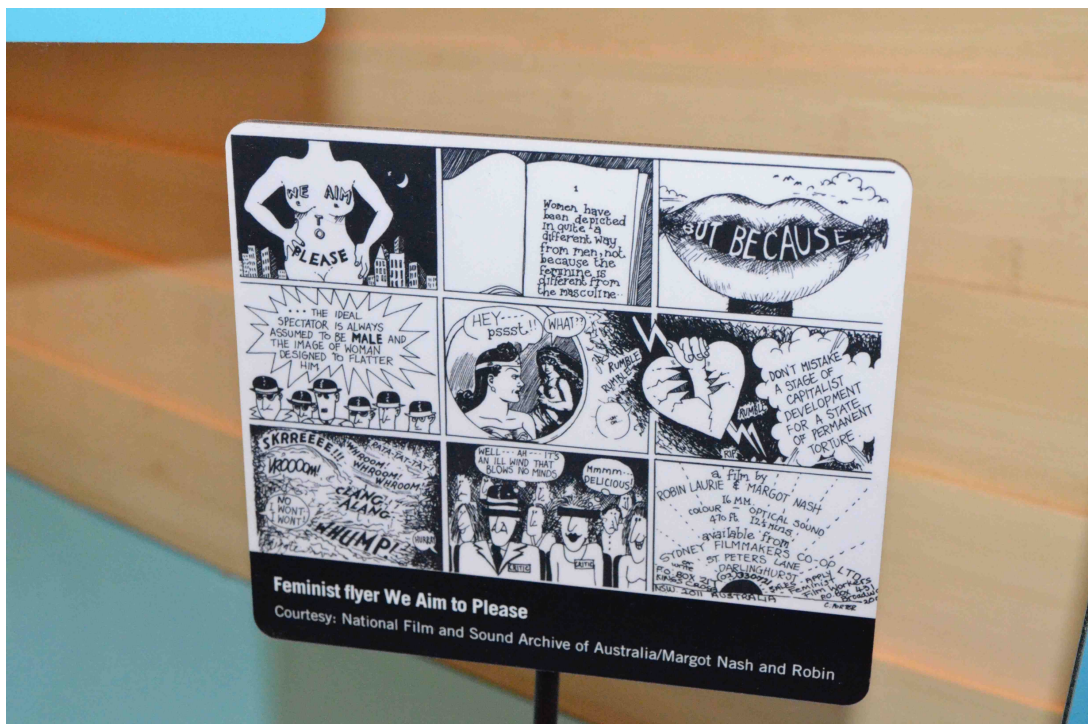
Robin Laurie & Margot Nash, 1976

Year Completed	1976
Genre	Experimental
Gauge and Stock	16mm Eastman colour
Running Time	13 minutes
Speed	24fps
Aspect Ratio	1.33:1
Sound	Optical

In 2017 the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) restored *We Aim To Please* to High Definition (HD) from original film materials.

Clips with curator Susan Lambert's notes can be viewed on the Australian Screen website (NB the clips are Standard Definition). <https://aso.gov.au/titles/shorts/we-aim-to-please/notes/>

Distribution and HD DVD sales: Margot Nash [asif@netspace.net.au](mailto:asif@netspace.net.au)  
<https://www.margotnash.com/we-aim-to-please>



Represented in 'Screen Worlds' Australian Centre for the Moving Image ACMI/NFSA Gallery and Mediatech permanent exhibition, where it can be viewed on request. ACMI Federation Square, Melbourne, Australia.

## Filmmaker's Statement

In 1976 we were both involved in live theatre and in film. We were close friends and both members of the Australian Performing Group, a theatre collective of about 55 people based at the Pram Factory Theatre in Melbourne, Australia. *We Aim To Please* was an experiment we fitted in between other commitments over the space of a year. Robin was working full time as a juggler, acrobat and funny person extraordinaire, and luckily Margot had started working as a camera operator and camera assistant.

We discovered feminism together around 1972 and fired up with revolutionary fervour created ASIF, the Anarcho Surrealist Insurrectionary Feminists. We wrote a manifesto demanding the end of the sexist, racist capitalist society and put out a screen-printed poster and two issues of a magazine that we printed on a hand cranked gestetner printer in our lounge-room. ASIF started as a joke to stir people up, but the manifesto and the magazines carried ideas and graphics we had collected over the years because they seemed important to us. We were influenced by the surrealists and their exploration of the unconscious, the French Situationists who wrote slogans like 'Imagination Seizes Power' and 'Be Realistic Demand the Impossible' during the May 68 uprising in Paris, and feminism which offered us an analysis of male power and female subjectivity. These ideas collectively captured our imaginations and inspired us. People from all over the country responded to the magazines so ASIF became serious play! A few years later we decided to make a third issue of ASIF as a film.

We pulled out our shoeboxes of favourite images and quotes and began to cook up ideas. We had written an ambitious script (now lost) and received \$1,300 from the Experimental Film Fund, but the small budget barely covered film costs, so we borrowed equipment, shot on a very tight ratio and improvised on the run. We filmed in our bedrooms and backyards when Margot was working and could bring the camera equipment home overnight or on a weekend. Margot edited it on a hand-winder in her bedroom, occasionally renting a flatbed editing machine for a day to mark up the cuts at speed. We recorded the spoken sound live while watching the rushes in a borrowed studio. The experience led to Margot giving up performing to work in film. Robin worked on a couple more films with friends then focussed on performing in contemporary circus and directing community events and performances. Forty-five years later we are thrilled that *We Aim To Please* still brings pleasure and challenges to audiences of all genders.

Margot Nash and Robin Laurie 1976/2021



*WE AIM TO PLEASE is angry, mordantly witty, funny, abrasive, hits you with lyrical paradoxes... it rings bells in the subconscious as well as the front of the mind.*  
Virginia Fraser, Filmnews

*WE AIM TO PLEASE is about women's perspectives on desire that bucks the male gaze and the beauty myth. Satirical and irreverent.*  
Lauren Carroll Harris – *From Archive into the Future, Realtime*

*WE AIM TO PLEASE ...a humorous and erotically charged pastiche of personal fragments of conversation, political statements, powerful images and improvised performance, all edited together to confront conventional ideas about women and their sexuality.*  
Susan Lambert - *Curators notes: Australian Screen Online*

*WE AIM TO PLEASE makes us very aware that we are watching a film but also uncomfortable for it alerts us to the cinematic conventions which place us as women in a male defined position, to see (ourselves) from a male perspective.*  
Lesley Stern - *Independent Feminist Filmmaking in Australia*

See also: Mary Tomsic's 'We Aim To Please: cinematic activism, sex and violence' 2016  
<http://www.auswhn.org.au/blog/we-aim-to-please/> Australian Women's History Network

## AWARDS

**1978**

Jury Prize: L'Homme Regarde L'Homme Ethnographic Film Festival Paris.

## FESTIVALS and SCREENINGS

**2023**

- Toronto International Film Festival, Cinémathèque, No Master Territories Shorts Program 2 International Women's Day

**2022**

- Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, ACMI
- No Master Territories HKW (Haus der Kulturen der Welt), Berlin June 19-August 28

**2021**

- War'Rak/Banksia (After the Fire) Festival, La Mama Melbourne
- Cinema 3 season, Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), Melbourne
- The Capitol Theatre Melbourne, screening with Brazen Hussies

**2017**

- Sydney Film Festival - Feminism and Film - Personal and Political

**2016**

- FFFlicks Women's Art Register, Long Play Bar & Cinema, Melbourne

**2015**

- Women's Gaze and the Feminist Film Archive, Syd College of the Arts exhibition.

**2014**

- The Form That Accommodates The Mess. IMA (Institute of Modern Art) Brisbane

**2009**

- Screen Worlds ACMI (Australian Centre for the Moving Image)/NFSA – Gallery and Mediatech permanent exhibition

**2008**

- Australian Perspectives: New and Archival queer shorts ACMI

**2004**

- Resistance: a screen history of Australian counter cultural movements ACMI

**1999**

- The Wild and Wonderful 70's Chauvel SYDNEY

**1996**

- Valladolid International Film Festival, Australian Cinema 1975-1995, SPAIN,
- Filmotheca, MADRID

**1994**

- BARCELONA
- Women and Film: The Hidden (A) Gender ADELAIDE;

**1990**

- INSIGHT Women's Film Festival-Canada

**1989**

- OTHER PLEASURES Modern Image Makers Melbourne

**1987**

- SPOLETO FRINGE, Women's Film Making – Practices and Perspectives, Melbourne

**1982**

- Gay Film Festival LONDON

**1981**

- 1st International Feminist Film and Video Conference AMSTERDAM

**1979**

- Bergama Festival of Third Theatre APG presentation, ITALY
- Christchurch Women's Arts Festival, NEW ZEALAND

**1978**

- L'Homme Regarde L'Homme Ethnographic Film festival, PARIS
- La Rochelle Avant Garde Film Festival PARIS
- World Congress of Sociology FINLAND
- Bleaker Street Cinema, New York
- Travelled to Cannes with a package of Australian films and was screened unofficially.

Picked up for distribution by French distribution company Impact.

**1977**

- WOMEN WAVES: image/space/creativity, cinematic perspectives by women, Sydney Filmmakers Cooperative national tour of short films

**1976**

- PRAM FACTORY, APG Carlton, Melbourne – Launch screening



## ROBIN LAURIE – SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Robin has been Making Things Up and engaging in Serious Play with groups of people for a Very Long Time. She has been a performer, filmmaker, director, researcher, dramaturg, writer & Feldenkrais (movement education) teacher. She was an original member of the Pram Factory, a co-founder of Circus OZ and the first Women's Circus and a participant in the first Nanjing acrobatic project in 1983.

She has researched, devised and directed large-scale multi-lingual community performances with the East Timorese, Italian, Middle Eastern, Warlpiri and refugee communities. She worked with the Filipino Mindanao Community Theatre Network in Australia and the Philippines and was Director In Residence at ASTI Bandung Indonesia for 3 months. In 2000 she spent 6 weeks in East Timor facilitating recordings of songs and dances for the CD Tebes. Most recently she made a spectacle of herself for a 4 weeks residency at FCAC gallery in Embolden, an Ageing and Creativity project and was performer/co-devisor in *Missa Pro Venerabilibus: A Secular Mass for the Venerable and the Vulnerable*, with disco dancing, writer Peta Murray.

Robin is part bionic and thinks it's probably true that life is a Circus! She is a gardener, a Grande Tata, has an MA in Asian studies, loves vernacular languages and cooks a very good Christmas cake from a Nut Trek kit.



## MARGOT NASH – SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Margot Nash is a New Zealand born Australian based filmmaker and academic. Her major film credits include the award winning feature dramas *Vacant Possession* (Nash 1994) about land and belonging; *Call Me Mum* (Nash 2005) about mothering and race relations in Australia; the feminist experimental short *Shadow Panic* (Nash 1989) about internal and external states of emergency; and the personal essay feature documentary *The Silences* (Nash 2015) about family secrets. Her first film *We Aim To Please* (Laurie/Nash 1976) about female sexuality was made collaboratively with co filmmaker and sister in crime Robin Laurie. She was co filmmaker and editor on *For Love Or Money* (McMurchy, Nash, Oliver, Thornely 1983), a feminist history of women's work in Australia.

Margot has worked as a consultant and mentor for Australian Indigenous filmmakers as well as working in the Pacific running documentary workshops for Pacific Island women television producers. Her most recent work *TAKE* (2019) a short film about traumatic events and colonial violence was made collaboratively with Maori performance artist and choreographer Victoria Hunt. In 2016 Margot won an Australian Writers' Guild AWGIE Award for the screenplay of *The Silences*. She is currently a Visiting Fellow in Communications at the University of Technology Sydney. <https://www.margotnash.com>



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