

[www.womenvideoletters.com](http://www.womenvideoletters.com)

## **Call for contributions: women videoletters second edition**

### **women videoletters - a second text on war & globalization**

We'd like to **invite you** to participate in the second edition of 'women videoletters'. The idea of the project is to make a compilation of short videofilms by women, which will bring together different local perspectives concerning social hierarchies, militarization and war. We want to make visible the effects that war produces. And our interest is to give a view on the global connections between sustained poverty, gender hierarchies and normative heterosexuality by collecting differing regional perspectives.

What point of views do women, straight, lesbian and transgender women, have on the daily life of war or on the 'normality' of war? How do we define what war is?

### **The Project**

The project started during the war in Afghanistan.

The idea for this project came up at a meeting around video activism in Berlin in October 2001, where there were about ten women from different video initiatives from India, Germany, Mexico and Switzerland who felt the need to react to the follow ups of September 11th: this was first of all the war in Afghanistan but also measures like for example the installation of the racist security laws in Germany. A great need was felt for the exchange of critical feminist perspectives from women of different descents and contexts.

In 2002 the first edition of videoletters by women was produced by women activists and filmmakers from India, Chiapas/Mexico, Berlin/Germany, USA and France. This first compilation was shown at demonstrations, political events, university seminars and filmfestivals.

### **Videos with a feminist perspective on war**

“this is not war” – film work on the issue of war & the ‘normality’ of war

We have discussed films like “Who hangs the laundry, washing, war and electricity in Beirut” (by Tina Naccache and Hrafnhildur Gunnarsdottir), "Asurot“ (“detained” by Anat Aven and Ada Ushpiz), “News Time” (by Azza El Hassan) or “Queer Documentary in Wartime: A New View of the Israeli Palestinian Crisis” (by Ellen Flanders) as rare examples which show the everyday life or the ‘normality’ of war from a personal point of view of women.

In “Who hangs the laundry, washing, war and electricity in Beirut” Tina Naccache is tells us about war while she is washing her clothes – a series of actions which is influenced by the shortage of water and electricity as an effect of the war in Beirut:

“People who haven't gone through a war think that war is when shells are falling on people's heads and people are being killed. This is not war, this is just the beginning of war. War is when the canons have stopped, where there is no more violence against individuals, when there are no more buildings being destroyed, where there is no more fear and one looks around and sees what's left over from the war. This is war, the leftover of what we think is war.”

In “Asurot” three Palestinian women live in a house in Hebron: the front part of the house belongs to Israel, the back part to the Palestinian autonomous territory. The Israeli soldiers force their way into the house whenever they like to and the women have to deal with the permanent presence of the soldiers. In “News Time” Azza El Hassan talks about Ramallah being a point of media interest. She shows the presence of lots of different tv-teams and -cameras. Her film describes how this affects her work as a filmmaker, the conflict itself and the construction of masculinity of the young Palestinian participants of the fights against Israel. In “Queer Documentary in Wartime: A New View of the Israeli Palestinian Crisis” (a documentary-in-progress) we hear how the ways queer Palestinians and Israelis live their lesbian and gay identities collide with the situation of occupation. Through these conflicts is thematized, what ‘war’ means. And Ellen Flanders connects the reflection of her own family story with her critique on the current situation in Israel and Palestine.

Videoletters can provide a means to document projects or political actions, to make statements or to analyse daily life.

### **Questions we’re asking ourselves**

In consideration of the urgency of war, what happens to the feminist and lesbian structures, projects and networks we rely on? What happens to the desires to create different practices and ways of living?

"In a moment of global crisis people don't know why they should care about queer politics, about transgenderism and so on and it makes our concerns seem as if they are petty. They are not and they need to be folded into these anti-war-agendas. But we have to make explicit the ways in which queer politics and anti-war politics and anti-capitalist politics work together. And i think in many ways that's sort of a big task."

Judith Halberstam, San Diego, USA, videoletter-videoclip

The videoletters could connect the ,normality’ of war and globalization with the agendas of feminist or queer politics. They offer an opportunity to develop a network where we can exchange our differing standpoints. In the places where the videos are shown they could also function as a feminist statement against war.

### **Various Aspects**

In our group we have different ideas of “feminism”, “women’s perspectives”, “queer or lesbian/gay/transgender issues”. Some of us understand videoletters as a project, where women from different parts of the world exchange their differing experiences, analysis or ideas of resistance. Others understand a feminist analysis as one, which makes visible experiences or standpoints systematically concealed in the media and political representation. Or there is an interest in the question how war and globalization produce and construct special kinds of gender- or sexual positions and relations. Some want to find out, how a genderspecific division of labour and sexualised violence are related to war, the military and nationalism. Anne from Berlin is especially interested to hear from Tejal and Natasha from Bombay about their experiences with these issues, related to the religious-fundamentalistic motivated genocid in Gujarat. And Nadja would like to hear from Ana and the women from Mexico how this may be related to Chiapas with its ongoing low intensity war. When we speak about “queer” perspectives we want to address a common critique of sexism,

heterosexism, homophobia, transphobia and racism, which for some of us is covered by this term.

We would like to begin an exchange of interests and questions between the participants of the videoletters project.

## **How can you participate?**

The videoletters should be between 1 and 15 minutes in length. The character of a video as a “letter” may be a starting point to think about the format of your videos which could be addressed to women in all regions of the world or addressed to women in a specific region.

We think it would be also a nice idea if we all showed ourselves in our videoletters – as it is interesting for all of us to get to know the makers, the “senders” of the videoletters.

We copy all the videoletters, put them together in one compilation and then send them back to the original senders (which means that you get all videoletters made). Each author of a videoletter decides in what context she wants to show the videoletters (at political events, festivals, exhibitions, feminist meetings, cinemas...).

All videoletters belong to all the women who contribute their work!

## **Screenings**

The first screening date is the World Social Forum in Bombay/Mumbai, India on January 16 – 21, 2004. We could either meet there or/and organize local screenings during the time of the forum.

Women who are part in the organization of the upcoming world social forum want to discuss more feminist issues than it has been the case in the last forums in Porto Alegre. Therefore we think it would be a good idea to support this wish to change the focus of this critique on globalization in a way which includes gender- and sexual politics. In advance of the forum some women in Mumbai will organize a 2-3 days long international queer & feminist meeting and during the forum they will provide a queer space and a film festival on gender and sexual plurality.

## **A non-funded project**

The project ‘women videoletters’ hasn’t received any funding yet. Some of us think that it is better to work on this project without official money and be independent in a political and artistic sense. After consideration however, we are in the process of trying to get at least some money for those who can’t do a videoletter without financial support and for costs of material. But since it is difficult here to get money for a feminist film-project and for a project quite open in form and content, we can’t promise that we will succeed in this. If some of you have access to funding please get in touch with us.

If you want to participate in the project, here’s some further information:

Write a note to [videoletters@mail2world.com](mailto:videoletters@mail2world.com) telling you want to participate. And send your comments and ideas concerning the project and the issues mentioned.

Please send your tapes (preferably: miniDV, DV-Cam, Beta SP, otherwise VHS) before November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003 so we can manage to send the sample of videoletters back to you by the end of December 2003. Please send one original version plus the transcript and the written English translation – and, if possible, also a version with English subtitles.

If you cannot produce a videoletter this time but you are interested in the project, please write us a note anyway!

## **Send your videoletters to the following address:**

(please mark the package: no commercial value!)

Videoletters c/o Frisius, Lausitzer Str. 9, 10999 Berlin, Germany

This invitation comes together with a videoclip (if you haven't got it yet, please send us a mail and we will send you the clip as CD or VHS-copy).

You can also find the clip and the invitation text in small in the net:

[www.umbruch-bildarchiv.de/video/women/videoletters.html](http://www.umbruch-bildarchiv.de/video/women/videoletters.html)

All our best, from Berlin,

Renate Lorenz, Malou Bülow, Nadja Damm, Karin Kasböck,

Christine Lamberty, Tania Eichler, Karin Michalski and Anne Frisius

The project is open to all interested women/groups.

But we will start by sending this letter to:

Black Laundry/LGBT-group against occupation/Claudia Levin, video activist/filmmaker, Israel

Tina Naccache, urban planer, video activist / ngo which supports migrant women, Beirut

Hrafnhildur Gunnarsdottir, Filmmaker, Island

Gayten-LGBT, Center for Promotion of LGBT Human Rights, Belgrad

Simin Farkhondeh, filmmaker, video activist, New York

Azza El Hassan, filmmaker, Ramallah/Palastine

Gülsün Karamustafa, visual artist, Istanbul

Alejandra Riera, visual artist, filmmaker, Paris

Carole Roussopoulos, feminist activist, filmmaker, Switzerland

Judith Halberstam, queer/transgender theorist, San Diego/USA

Sabiha Sumar, filmmaker, Pakistan/India

Osnat Bar-Or, video activist, filmmaker, works with a media group in Palastine, Israel

Anja, women in black, Belgrad

Sunccica Vaccai, filmmaker, Belgrad

Deepa Dhanraj, filmmaker, video activist, India

Hanna Smitmans, video activist, Amsterdam

Ana Hernández, videoactivist and filmmaker, Chiapas, Mexico

Women video collective of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico

Tejal Shah, Natasha Mendonca, political activists, visual artists, Bombay, India

Madhusree Dutta, political activst, filmmaker, Bombay, India

Liz Miller, filmmaker, USA

Ellen Flanders, filmmaker, Canada

Mai Masri, filmmaker, Lebanon

Shahla Asad, RAWA-activist, Pakistan

Lorie and Les Penéelopes, Paris, France

