 **Barbican Cinema
Her Lens, His Story:
Female Directors and Masculinities

Wed 26 Feb —Tue 10 Mar 2020**[**www.barbican.org.uk/her-lens-his-story-masculinities**](http://www.barbican.org.uk/her-lens-his-story-masculinities)


***The Ascent*,** 1977 Soviet Union, Dir Larisa Shepitko

This season explores complex, revealing and often provocative takes on men and masculinity, as seen through the lens of female filmmakers around the world.

As the Barbican Art Gallery explores how masculinity has been depicted by artists and photographers over the decades, the Barbican Cinemas present a series of feature films by female directors, including **Edith Carlmar**, **Kinuyo Tanaka**, **Larisa Shepitko** and **Shahrbanoo Sadat**, many of which are rarely screened in the UK, that offer interesting and insightful depictions of its male characters.

**Her Lens, His Story** shows how great female directors have reversed the traditional male gaze to give us exciting and challenging male characters across multiple genres, including film noirs, melodramas, comedies and war movies. This is part of **Inside Out**, a year-long Barbican cross arts season exploring the relationship between our inner lives and creativity, and all screenings will have introductions.

**Edith Carlmar**’s ***Death is a Caress*** (1949 Norway) isa noir-tinged melodrama about the male paranoia and hysteria that ensues when a love affair turns sour. This was the first Norwegian feature to be directed by a woman and Carlmar’s film delivers a frankness about toxic relationships and what happens when passions fade.

Fading passions are also central to the directorial debut from **Kinuyo Tanaka**, an actor best known for her roles in the films of **Kenji Mizoguchi**, including ***The Life of Oharu*** and ***Ugetsu Monogatari***.  ***Love Letter*** *(*1953 Japan*)* is a post-war male melodrama about a reserved man who is reunited with his former girlfriend, who had an affair with an American soldier during the Second World War.

Wartime masculinity is deftly explored in **Larisa Shepitko**’s ***The Ascent*** (1977, Soviet Union) which follows two very different soldiers during the Great Patriotic War. Here she examines men in times of crisis, as one soldier becomes increasingly martyr-like when faced with death, while the other scrambles for his life.

**Ana Kokkinos** tests masculinity to the limit in the explosive ***Head On*** (1998 Australia), which follows 24 hours in the life of a troubled gay Greek-Australian teenager, who struggles to reconcile his homosexuality with his Greek Orthodox heritage. A drug-fuelled weekend of sex, partying and wild abandon culminates in an unexpected opportunity for romance.

**Anahí Berneri**’s award-winning ***A Year Without Love*** (2005 Argentina) also portrays a nuanced take on masculinity in this sexually charged drama about Pablo, an HIV positive gay man living in Buenos Aires. Whilst looking for love and connection, he is drawn to the city’s underground S&M scene and finds himself in a world that plays with danger, sexual identity and clichés of machismo.

The season finishes with **Shahrbanoo Sadat**’s ***The Orphanage*** (2019 Denmark/ Germany/ France/ Afghanistan*),* a tender film about a young boy in 1980s Afghanistan who is sent to a Soviet orphanage and finds himself in a complex social hierarchy. Sadat expertly conveys the solidarity and camaraderie of the orphaned boys in this moving and coming of age tale.

**Alex Davidson**, Barbican Cinema Curator, comments:
“*Flipping the traditional gaze to put women in the director’s seat, the boys and men in these films, unencumbered by clichéd representations of heroism or toxic villainy, are flawed, often likeable and above all recognisably human. We are delighted to present these astute and revealing depictions of men and masculinity on the big screen, whose female directors deserve far greater recognition for their remarkable films.*”

**Screenings
 *Love Letter*** (12A\*) + **intro** - 35mm presentation1953 Japan Dir Kinuyo Tanaka 98 min
Wed 26 Feb 2020, 18:30, Barbican Cinema 1

Actor **Kinuyo Tanaka**, a regular star of the films of **Kenji Mizoguchi**, including *The Life of Oharu* and *Ugetsu Monogatari*, made a tremendous directorial debut with *Love Letter*, a moving and constantly surprising melodrama starring Kurosawa regular Masayuki Mori.Mori plays a reserved man who makes a living translating letters into English from desperate Japanese women who need to contact the American soldiers with whom they had affairs during WWII. One day, his beloved ex-girlfriend (**Yoshiko Kuga**) shows up, needing his services.

Unusually, Tanaka explores societal attitudes towards ‘fallen women’ through the eyes of the male protagonist, emphasising that it is he who needs to change rather than the vulnerable woman. This unique portrait of post-war Japanese masculinity is very rarely screened in the UK.
***Head On*** (18)+ **intro**
1998 Australia Dir Ana Kokkinos 104 min
Fri 28 Feb 2020, 18:20, Barbican Cinema 3

Based on the novel Loaded by **Christos Tsiolkas** (*The Slap*), ***Head On*** introduces us to Ari, a hot-blooded teenager who keeps his homosexuality secret from his Greek-Australian family, who are rooted in cultural customs and traditional views around masculinity. A drug-fuelled 24 hours of sex, drugs and partying culminates in an unexpected opportunity for romance.

Director **Ana Kokkinos** explores the protagonist’s complex attitudes towards masculinity with tact and precision, and **Alex Dimitriades** is a sensation as Ari. Excellent support is provided by **Paul Capsis** as his genderqueer friend who forces Ari to confront his own identity.

***Death Is a Caress*** (12A\*)+ **introduction by writer and curator Isabel Stevens**1949 Norway Dir Edith Carlmar 88 min - 35mm presentation
Sun 1 Mar 2020, 15:00, Barbican Cinema 1
The first Norwegian feature film to be directed by a woman is a splendid male melodrama about Erik, a mechanic (**Claus Wiese**) who spurns his loyal fiancée for the attractions of Sonja (**Bjørg Riiser-Larsen**), a glamorous married society woman. Lust turns to resentment, as Erik realises Sonja is a woman he cannot control, and their differences in class threaten to erupt into cruelty and violence.

**Edith Carlmar**’s debut delivers a frankness about toxic relationships and what happens after passions fade; the spiky exchanges between the leads are reminiscent of **Ingmar Bergman**. Her visual flourishes create a unique and provocative work, that critiques male paranoia while offering a complex and sometimes empathetic male lead who makes terrible decisions in his search for love.
***The Ascent*** (15\*)+ **introduction by writer Vlad Strukov**
1977 Soviet Union Dir Larisa Shepitko 111 min
Wed 4 Mar 2020, 18:20, Barbican Cinema 3

**Larisa Shepitko**’s film, an extraordinary depiction of the horrors of war set in German-occupied Belorussia, begins as a fight for survival, as two soldiers (**Boris Plotnikov** and **Vladimir Gostyukhin**)search for food and shelter while dodging enemy fire in the snowy forests. In the second half, Shepitko explores masculinity in times of crisis, as one soldier becomes increasingly martyr-like when faced with death while the other scrambles for his life.

The roles of men in wartime are examined in critiqued subtly throughout, with Shepitko refusing to judge either man as their behaviour towards the end becomes more extreme. She also elicits a chilling performance from Tarkovsky regular **Anatoly Solonitsyn** as a terrifying collaborationist interrogator. *The Ascent* won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival.

***A Year Without Love*** (18)+ **introduction by Ben Walters**2005 Argentina Dir Anahí Berneri 102 min - 35mm presentation
Thu 5 Mar 2020, 18:30, Barbican Cinema 3
**Anahi Berneri**’s sexually explicit drama, set in 1996, stars **Juan Minujín** (Zama) as Pablo, a lonely HIV positive poet living in Buenos Aires with his aunt, who has a difficult relationship with his father.

He becomes drawn to the city’s S&M scene and Pablo documents his experiences in a diary, hoping they will be published. An encounter with a charismatic bondage master blurs the lines between lust and love in Pablo’s mind.

Berneri refuses to sensationalise Pablo’s lifestyle, giving a sensitive portrait of a marginalised man who plunges himself in a world that plays with danger, sexual identity and cliches of machismo.

Minujín gives a strong central performance as a vulnerable man who battles with self-loathing and desperately seeks love and affection, and the film won the Teddy Award at the Berlin Film Festival.

***Gone Too Far!*** (12A)+ **intro**2013 UK/Nigeria, Dir Destiny Ekaragha, 88 min
Mon 9 Mar 2020, 18:30 ,Barbican Cinema 3
The attempts of Yemi (**Malachi Kirby**) to attract the attentions of Armani (**Shanika Warren-Markland**) and earn respect from his peers are thwarted by the arrival of his loud and proud long-lost Nigerian brother (**O.C. Ukeje**). When the two brothers are sent to buy some okra, their day rapidly spirals out of control when Armani’s ex (**Tosin Cole**) goes on the hunt for Yemi...

Ekaragha affectionately mocks the bravado of her male characters while offering welcome moments of tenderness, with Cole excelling as the self-important antagonist, who is not as tough as he pretends. Agbaje’s sparkling script also ridicules the prejudices of her characters, who look down on the cultural identities and backgrounds of others in the community.
***The Orphanage*** (12A\*)+ **intro**2019 Denmark/Germany/France/Luxembourg/Afghanistan,
Dir Shahrbanoo Sadat, 90 min
Tue 10 Mar 2020, 18:30, Barbican Cinema 3

A young boy in 1980s Afghanistan is sent to a Soviet orphanage and finds himself in a complex social hierarchy with the other boys in **Shahrbanoo Sadat**’s tender drama.

When young Qodrat is caught selling black market cinema tickets on the streets of Kabul, he is sent to a Soviet orphanage where he enters a male social hierarchy, with an as yet unchallenged bully at the top of the pack. As the politics of Afghanistan change immeasurably around them, we see how the last days of the conflict affect the lives of the boys and their home.

While there are tensions within the boys’ relationships, Sadat expertly portrays the solidarity and camaraderie of the orphaned kids. Film fanatic Qodrat’s frequent daydreams, where he imagines himself in a series of elaborate Bollywood numbers, are a highlight of a moving and inventive coming-of-age tale.
 **Notes to Editors
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 **Sarah Harvey, Barbican Cinema Press Consultant**sarah@sarahharveypublicity.co.uk/ 07958 597426 **Ticket prices:
Box office:** 020 7638 8891 **www.barbican.org.uk**
**Her Lens, His Story: Female Directors and Masculinities**:
Standard ticket price: £12/ Members: £9.60/ Concessions: £11/ Young Barbican: £5 \* Local Classification

**About Barbican Cinema**

A fully curated programme of international cinema including thematic seasons, new releases, and special events presented in Cinemas 1, 2 and 3.

Our offer includes partnerships with film festivals, art & culture organisations, plus regular family screenings for young audiences and parent & baby screenings.
The Event cinema programme presents the best of the performing arts on screen.

 **About the Barbican**

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](http://www.barbican.org.uk/) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does.

Over a million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 [staff](https://www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/our-people/careers) work onsite.

The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas 1, 2 and 3, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery The Curve, public spaces, a library, the Lakeside Terrace, [a glasshouse conservatory](https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2019/event/conservatory), conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, [London Symphony Orchestra](http://lso.co.uk/); Associate Orchestra, [BBC Symphony Orchestra](https://www.bbc.co.uk/symphonyorchestra); Associate Ensembles the [Academy of Ancient Music](http://www.aam.co.uk/) and [Britten Sinfonia](http://www.brittensinfonia.com/), Associate Producer [Serious](http://www.serious.org.uk/), and Artistic Partner [Create](http://createlondon.org/). Our Artistic Associates include [Boy Blue](http://www.boyblueent.com/site/), [Cheek by Jowl](http://www.cheekbyjowl.com/), Deborah Warner, [Drum Works](http://drumworks.co.uk/) and [Michael Clark Company](http://www.michaelclarkcompany.com/).

The [Los Angeles Philharmonic](https://www.laphil.com/) are the Barbican’s International Orchestral Partner, the [Australian Chamber Orchestra](https://www.aco.com.au/) are International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court, and [Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra](http://www.jazz.org/JLCO/) are International Associate Ensemble.

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 **About Inside Out

Inside Out** is a Barbican cross arts year-long season that explores the relationship between our inner lives and creativity.

Throughout 2020, Inside Out will showcase the work of artists who have found pioneering ways to articulate their innermost thoughts, feelings and desires, and how this can help us to better understand ourselves and empathise with each other’s experience of the world.

The programme will interrogate themes such as identity, self-expression and how we shape our private selves in a world in which we are more socially connected than ever.

It will highlight courageous artists and individuals who have challenged society’s definition of them, including those that have found ways to express themselves during times of censorship.