

For immediate release: Thu 5 June

barbican

[Hidden Figures: Stephanie Rothman](#)

Tue 29 July – Thu 14 Aug

“It’s only recently that Stephanie Rothman’s work has been unequivocally acknowledged for what it is: incisive, funny, and bursting with ideas, and a crucial counter to the male vision of the American 70s.”

- The Metrograph



The Student Nurses, US 1970, Dir Stephanie Rothman

Barbican Cinema’s **Hidden Figures** programme returns in July with a celebration of the rarely seen work of the renowned independent filmmaker **Stephanie Rothman**. Known for her ‘exploitation’ films and bad-ass female protagonists, she made some of the most socially and politically astute films about women’s lives in 1960s and 1970s America.

Curated by **Selina Robertson** (Club des Femmes and Birkbeck) and **Isabel Moir** (London Film Festival), the Barbican is delighted to showcase her work as a season to UK audiences, for the first time, with five features, two of which, ***Terminal Island*** (US 1973) and ***Group Marriage*** (US 1972), are screening as UK restoration premieres.

Rothman’s career began in the early 1960s when she was hired by the cult director **Roger Corman**, going on to make seven feature films between 1966 and 1974. At the time her work was celebrated in women’s film festivals and praised by feminist critics, but in recent years it has been re-discovered by a new generation of fans.

The season kicks off with ***Terminal Island*** (US 1973), a cult favourite for exploitation cinema fans, in which Rothman brings sex and bloodshed to the screen with a provocative thriller that is also a biting commentary on the US Justice system. After the screening, Barbican Cinema fans will have the rare opportunity to hear from **Stephanie Rothman** herself during a ScreenTalk (via Zoom), who will talk further about the film and her career.

This is followed by ***The Student Nurses*** (US 1970), a box office hit which took the popular 'nurse' sub-genre of exploitation films and imbued it with a feminist edge. In this film, four nursing students navigate the political and social turmoil of a turbulent 1970s LA, and is notable for its sophisticated discourse on the era's gender politics.

Group Marriage (US 1972) was Rothman's first fully fledged comedy and tells the story of a young LA couple who decide to open their relationship, but when their twosome becomes a sixsome, their 'group marriage' attracts unwanted media attention. The film explores gay life, polyamory, and alternative, collective utopian living well ahead of its time.

In ***The Velvet Vampire*** (US 1971), Rothman subverts conventions of exploitation cinema and creates the first truly feminist vampire movie with her signature style and wit. She foregrounds sexual agency and pleasure, exploring the shifting values of the early 1970s as erotic tensions arise in the heat of the Californian desert.

The season concludes with ***The Working Girls*** (US 1974), Rothman's final film as a director, in which female friendship and utopian socialism are explored as three young single women look for their place in the world. This is a socially and politically engaged film, full of hope and leaves us to imagine what she could have been, had her career not been curtailed by a lack of opportunities. Barbican Cinema is pleased Stephanie Rothman will take part in a ScreenTalk (via Zoom), to reflect upon this and discuss the film in further detail.

Selina Robertson and **Isabel Moir**, joint curators, comment:

"We are excited to collaborate with the Barbican to bring new restorations of Stephanie Rothman's films to UK audiences. Though labelled a second-wave exploitation filmmaker associated with Roger Corman, Rothman wrote and directed some of the most socio-politically astute films about women's lives in 1970s America."

An essential counter-narrative to the masculinist film history and misogyny of 1970s New Hollywood, Rothman's cinema is ripe for discovery and appraisal, with continuing relevance for audiences today. A warning sign about how little things have changed, and because Rothman's vibrant, funny, countercultural films express the possibilities for a better American society: one which is collective, caring and utopian socialist."

Hidden Figures is a regular Barbican Cinema strand, which celebrates filmmakers who, despite directing ground-breaking films, have been neglected in the canon of world cinema. Directors previously featured include **Lina Wertmüller**, **Euzhan Palcy**, **Ha Gil-jong**, **Jacqueline Audry** and **Idrissa Ouédraogo**.

Cinema Rediscovered, Bristol's annual festival dedicated to the rediscovery and revival of great films, is also showcasing two of Stephanie Rothman film's ***The Working Girls*** and ***The Velvet Vampire***, in July. Further info [here](#)

Screenings

Terminal Island (18*) + ScreenTalk with **Stephanie Rothman** (via Zoom)

US 1973, Dir Stephanie Rothman, 88min

Tue 29 Jul, 6pm

Cinema 3

With the abolishment of the death penalty, inmates are exiled to Terminal Island where they must fight to survive or die trying. Carmen (Ena Hartman) is a new arrival, one of the few women sent to this lawless land that's controlled by the tyrannical Bobby (Sean Kenney), where female prisoners are subjected to his sadistic pleasures. Carmen rebels by leading an underground resistance group who strive to overthrow this dictatorship and the men in power.

Rothman continues to explore gender politics and sexual violence by foregrounding the experiences of her female characters. It's an ambitious, edgy film that feels even more relevant today.

***The Student Nurses* (18*)**

US 1970, Dir Stephanie Rothman, 89min

Tue 5 Aug, 6.30pm

Cinema 3

The first in a popular 'Nurses' cycle of exploitation films that other directors went on to (mis)direct. Despite working within the confines of second-wave exploitation, Rothman introduced women's liberation ideas and subjects into her work whilst delivering box office gold for producer Roger Corman. Four nursing students finishing their education are faced with professional and personal challenges as they wade through the tumultuous and ever-changing political and social landscape of 1970s LA.

An exploitation, softcore film that delivers on plenty of sex and fleshy nudity, but more than that, as Anahit Behrooz writes, the film is, 'leftist cinema at its most subversive and agitprop'. A radical cinema for the masses by one of New Hollywood's most intriguing yet forgotten directorial voices.

Group Marriage

US 1972, Dir Stephanie Rothman, 82min

Thu 7 Aug, 6.30pm

Cinema 3

It's 1972. Imagine going to a drive-in to catch the latest exploitation movie with promises of sex and nudity (the clue is in the title), but instead you discover a goofy comedy with very little sex. Rothman's magic trick is to offer a breezy farce about what women and men want from their lovers, work and lives. Young LA couple Chris (Aimée Eccles) and Sander (Solomon Sturges) want an open relationship but when their twosome becomes a sixsome, and the group decide to legalise their relationship in a 'group marriage', they attract media attention which brings trouble, prejudice and a run up against the law.

Rothman's first film (post Corman) unfolds like a proto queer text, as polyamory, gay life and alternative, collective utopian living are delightfully explored in her first fully-fledged comedy.

***The Velvet Vampire* (18*)**

US 1971, Dir Stephanie Rothman, 80min

Tue 12 Aug, 6.30pm

Cinema 3

Young couple Lee (Michael Blodgett) and Susan (Sherry Miles) meet the mysterious Diane (Celeste Yarnall), who invites them to her secluded desert home. Little do they know that this temptress is a centuries-old vampire, becoming objects of her own desires. With psychedelic visuals and surreal dream sequences, Rothman foregrounds sexual agency and pleasure, exploring the shifting values of the early 70s as erotic tensions arise in the Californian desert.

Rothman plays with the conventions of the genre, prioritising a feminist perspective and playful exploration of gender roles by subverting the common trope of the male vampire, thereby allowing Diane to project her dark feminine desires.

The Working Girls (15) + ScreenTalk with Stephanie Rothman (via Zoom)

US 1974, Dir Stephanie Rothman, 80min

Thu 14 Aug, 6.15pm

Cinema 3

Stephanie Rothman's filmmaking career in Hollywood was bookended by two brilliant films about gender, labour, sex, money and class.

The first, was her breakout film *The Student Nurses*, yet it is her last film, *The Working Girls* that captures Rothman's heart and politics. Three young single women in Los Angeles look for their place in the world. Each character reflects the challenges and misogyny Rothman faced as a female filmmaker in 1970s Hollywood.

Although set during a chronic recession, seen today, the film oozes a distinctly dreamy Californian carefreeness and lightness, punctuated throughout with Rothman's razor-sharp humour. A socially and politically trenchant film, full of melancholia, regret and hope. Rothman's final film leaves us imagining what could have been had she continued her film career.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

For further information contact:

Ian Cuthbert, Communications Manager, Cinema

ian.cuthbert@barbican.org.uk

020 3834 1121

Andrea Laing, Communications Assistant: Theatre & Dance, Cinema and Creative Collaboration

andrea.laing@barbican.org.uk

Box office: www.barbican.org.uk

Standard: £13

Members: £10.40

Concessions: £11

Young Barbican: £6

Barbican press room

All Barbican Centre press releases, news announcements and the Communications team's contact details are listed on our website at www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/press-room

About the Barbican

The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity, sparking possibilities for artists, audiences, and communities. We showcase the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional artistic boundaries to entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

We are an international arts and events centre rooted firmly in our own neighbourhood, collaborating with local communities and putting the City of London on the map as a destination for everybody. Central to our purpose is supporting emerging talent and shaping opportunities that will accelerate the next generation of creatives. As a not-for-profit, we rely on the generosity of individuals and organisations, including our principal funder the City of London Corporation. Every ticket purchased, donation made, and pound earned supports our arts and learning programme and enables the widest possible range of people to experience the joy of the arts.

Opened in 1982, the Barbican is a unique and audacious building, recognised globally as an architectural icon. As well as our theatres, galleries, concert halls and cinemas, we have a large conservatory with over 1,500 species of plants and trees, a library, conference facilities, public and community spaces, restaurants, bars, and a picturesque lakeside oasis.

We're proud to be the home of the [London Symphony Orchestra](#), and a London base of the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#). We regularly co-commission, produce and showcase the work of our other associates and partners including the [Academy of Ancient Music](#), [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#), [Boy Blue](#), [Darbar](#), [Doc'n Roll Film Festival](#), [Drum Works](#), [EFG London Jazz Festival](#), [London Palestine Film Festival](#), [Serious](#), and [Trafalgar Theatre Productions](#).

For more information, visit our [website](#) or connect with us on [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Spotify](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

About Barbican Cinema

We connect audiences with a curated programme of international cinema; from celebrated filmmakers to ground-breaking and under-heard voices from past and present. Our programmes are presented in Cinemas 1 in the main centre and Cinemas 2&3 on Beech Street. Our programme ranges from thematic seasons that respond to today's world, to new releases, ScreenTalks, cross-artform collaborations, family events, access screenings and event cinema that presents the performing arts on screen.

We showcase the work of emerging filmmakers, as well as less familiar work of exceptional filmmakers from the UK and around the world. We champion the work of Barbican Young Programmers and give stage to emerging musicians in our ongoing film & live music series which includes our flagship collaboration with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

As part of a cross-arts centre, our cinemas are a cultural space for people to share the viewing experience. We strive to be inclusive in everything we do; providing platforms for the widest possible range of filmmakers and ensuring we are an open, welcoming and accessible venue for all our audiences.

