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BRATTLEBORO WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVAL ARRIVES
WITH 22 FILMS OVER THREE WEEKENDS

The 14th annual Brattleboro (Vermont) Women's Film Festival rolls into town Friday, March 4, 2005, for a three-weekend run of 22 films from eight countries. The festival is a yearly benefit for the Women's Crisis Center of Windham County, Vermont, and in past years has played to sold-out houses.

Almost all of the films have women directors, and all are about the lives of women, be they twentysomethings searching for meaning, an over-65 crowd talking about sex, Middle Eastern women documenting life in their politically charged countries, seasoned blues singers telling it like it is, lesbians dealing with life, stalwart women activists standing tall, or daughters connecting to family history and family lore.

Opening night of the festival coincides with Brattleboro's monthly Gallery Walk and will feature a silent auction art exhibition, "Visions and Voices," and a gala reception at the Hooker-Dunham Theater & Gallery at 139 Main Street. This will be followed by the festival's first film, "Ferry Tales," the ferry being New York City's famed Staten Island Ferry and the tales being those of women on their way to work dishing in the ferry's powder room on everything from sex scandals and stilettos to family problems and September 11th. The art opening and reception will take place from 5 to 7:45 p.m. and will be followed by the film at 8 p.m.

The Women's Crisis Center is a not-for-profit organization whose goal is to end physical, sexual and emotional violence against women and children. "While much of the work conducted by the Center must be kept confidential," Barbara Charkey, chair of the festival, says, "the Women's Film Festival allows us to really go out in the community to raise consciousness about women's struggles and accomplishments."

A festival schedule and film descriptions are available on the festival's Web site, www.womensfilmfestival.org. Other information about the festival can be had by calling 802-258-9100.

Single film tickets are \$8 at the door. A Festival Pass for five admissions is available for \$35, and a Student & Senior Pass for five admissions is \$30. A Benefactor Pass for all films can be purchased for \$100. Those holding Benefactor Passes are guaranteed seating up to 15 minutes before the show and those with Festival or Student & Senior Passes are given advanced seating up to 15 minutes before the show. Passes will be available at bookstores in Brattleboro, Putney, Bellows Falls, Keene, Greenfield and Northampton, and at the Twilight Tea Lounge in Brattleboro.

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Aside from “Ferry Tales,” which will open the festival, eight other films will be shown the first week. They are:

“Watertermarks.” Champion Jewish women swimmers who were forced to flee Austria in the 1930s (and are now in their eighties) return to Vienna to swim together one last time.

“Downside Up.” The director explores the coming of MassMoCA, the nation’s largest museum of contemporary art, to North Adams, Mass., on the site of Sprague Electric, where her parents and grandparents once worked.

“Sweet Soil” tells the story of four family farms, a natural foods store committed to supporting them and a community’s passion for fresh local food.

“Wild Women Don’t Have the Blues.” Women blues singers talk about their lives, their music, and their predecessors who first popularized the blues, such as Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith, against a backdrop of vintage clips and classic blues songs from the 1920s.

“Return to Kandahar.” A journalist searches for her childhood friend in the turmoil of post-Taliban Afghanistan.

“For a Place Under the Heavens.” The film, from the director’s personal point-of-view, explores the tension between progressive and fundamentalist forces shaping life in contemporary Pakistan.

“The Watermelon Woman” and “Chutney Popcorn” are films that deal with lesbian life in different cultures—the first, a mock documentary shot on the streets of Philadelphia about African American women, and the second, a romantic comedy in which Indian traditions come up against ’90s New York City values.

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