



Vulva 3.0

A film by Claudia Richarz and Ulrike Zimmermann
An Icarus Films Release

2014 / 52 minutes / Germany / An Icarus Films Release

**"Amusing and horrifying by turns, but consistently fascinating throughout."
—The Hollywood Reporter**

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SYNOPSIS I

We live in hyper-sexualized times. The press, advertisements and TV are constantly putting naked women and their genitalia on display. But many women are still deeply prudish when it comes to the relationship with their own body. In public we see airbrushed, de-individualized anatomies which conform to the standards of attractiveness used by the porn industry. The ideal image of the smooth, perfectly shaped vulva with symmetrical labia has little to do with the actual shape of most female genitalia. The resultant insecurity many women feel about their own bodies has proven to be a goldmine for cosmetic genital surgery which promises to manufacture the perfect vagina via the surgeon's scalpel.

With their comprehensive and unflustered research into the history of this particular aspect of the female anatomy in the 21st century, the directors shed light on every facet of the matter in hand, from sex education to censorship, from the airbrushing of 'misshapen' labia in pornographic images to the work of activists against female genital mutilation—and, in doing so, celebrate the diversity of the female body.

SYNOPSIS II

"Showing the vulva scares off bears and lions, makes wheat grow higher, calms storm tides and demons fear it. The devil runs away. Showing the vulva can save the world. The vulva is omnipotent."

This powerful image of the female genitals is unfortunately not anchored in our imagination. While nudity seems no longer taboo, the presentation of the female genitals continues to irritate and various bans have been imposed on it. Decades of retouching in the media, anti-pornography campaigns and aniconistic bans have led to a public image of the vulva that is far from reality. A "concept of ideal beauty that is invisibility" prevails.

The film begins in a dermatological surgery in Cologne. Bella Joy has her labia plumped up with hyaluronan and is very pleased with the result... Directors Ulrike Zimmermann and Claudia Richarz present their comprehensive and non-sensationalistic research into the history of the female anatomy from the 16th to the 21st century—from the risqué and at times the sad to the comical aspects—thereby celebrating the diversity of the female body.

A film about representation and modification of the female genital, about anatomical errors, censorship, mutilation through photoshop as well as laser scalpels and not least about the beauty and uniqueness of the female sensual pleasure organ.

SELECTED FILM FESTIVALS

Berlinale International Film Festival, 2014

Tel Aviv International LGBT Film Festival, 2014

Doxa Documentary Festival, 2014

Split Film Festival, 2014

Elles Tournent Women's Festival, Belgium, 2014

Dio de Janeiro International Film Festival, 2014

Luststreifen Film Festival—Queer Cinema Basel, 2014

MIX COPENHAGEN LGBT Film Festival, 2014

Ageless Sex Life Program, Astra Film Festival, Sibiu, 2014

Canberra International Film Festival, 2014

Pink Screens Film Festival, Brussels, 2014

ABOUT THE DIRECTORS

CLAUDIA RICHARZ studied visual communications at the University of Fine Arts of Hamburg. She has been making documentaries for many years, either as a director or a cinematographer. In the year 2000 the ten-part WDR/arte series ABNEHMEN IN ESSEN received the Grimme Award.

ULRIKE ZIMMERMANN received her degree in Film at the University of Fine Arts of Hamburg in 1988. She founded MMM film production in 1989 and has since worked as a production manager/line producer and independent producer.

IN THE PRESS

"An enthralling documentary." —*Lisa Paul Streitfeld, The Huffington Post*

"Warm and affectionate whilst incredibly informative." —*Matt Micucci, Cinecola*

"A wonderful start to a conversation about a socially taboo subject, deserving of more thorough exploration."—*Shelagh M. Rowan-Legg, Verite Film Magazine*

Excerpt from review of VULVA 3.0

By Leslie Felperin, February 13, 2014, *The Hollywood Reporter*

Amusing and horrifying by turns, but consistently fascinating throughout, documentary VULVA 3.0 surveys attitudes towards and depictions of women's genitals through history to the present. Although this voiceover-free survey never preaches, it's not hard to spot that German co-directors Claudia Richarz and Ulrike Zimmermann are old-school feminists who want to explore how attitudes towards women's nether regions have changed over centuries -- or, depressingly, in some cultures, changed all too little. Obviously, up close and personal images of lady bits in all their glory will severely confine the film's distribution prospects, which in itself speaks volumes about how phobic folk are about this vital part of the human anatomy.

As readers of women's magazines and lifestyle publications will be aware, genital cosmetic surgery is now available to help those who feel unhappy with the appearance of their vulvas, and procedures are increasingly in demand to make the stuff down there look smaller, tidier, more symmetrical, what have you. So, with clinical -- in every sense -- detachment, the opening scenes show female doctor Uta Schlossberger injecting a collagen-like substance into a patient's outer labia to make the vulva look more enclosed. ("Very American but it's beautiful," says Dr. Schlossberger, satisfied with her handiwork.)

The filmmakers never come right out and judge anyone for choosing such surgery. However, it's clear from the juxtaposition of footage showing photo editor Ulrich Grolla meticulously retouching explicit pictures that the idea that vulvas should look a certain way is something promulgated by the pornography industry. Elsewhere, medical historian Marion Hulverscheidt advances the fascinating thesis that medieval depictions of vulvas were much less prurient and sanitized than 20th-century ones, while author Mithu Melanie Sanyal recounts the tragic story of Sara Baartman, an African woman who was

put on public display in the early 19th century for her supposedly "freakish" outsized genitals, and whose biography inspired Abdellatif Kechiche's 2010 film BLACK VENUS. The intersection of race, culture and sexuality naturally extends into a discussion of female circumcision, explored via footage of campaigner Jawahir Cumar showing plainly horrified German health workers the different kinds of female genital mutilation they might encounter among clients.

In a more positive, celebratory mode, Richarz and Zimmermann intersperse images throughout taken from artist Morgan Hastings' THE BIG COLORING BOOK OF VAGINAS, which lovingly depicts a variety of vulva shapes and sizes with delicate pen drawings, supplemented by close-up medical photographs. Elsewhere, imagery is drawn from a number of works by pro-pudenda artists, such as Marina Abramovic's fanny-tastic BALKAN EROTIC EPIC (2006) and slick still photography from publisher Claudia Gehrke's yearbook series MY SECRET EYE.

FILM CREDITS

Film Title:	<i>Vulva 3.0</i>
Country of Production:	Germany
Year:	2014
Running time:	52 minutes
Director:	Claudia Richarz, Ulrike Zimmermann
Author:	Ulrike Zimmermann
Cinematographer:	Claudia Richarz
Editors:	Daniela Boch, Antje Lass
Music:	Roland Musloff
Sound Engineers:	Thomas Sorig, César Fernández, Shinya Kitamura, Gregor Steinweg, Raphael Rumpf, Timo Selengia
Postproduction:	Studio Musloff
Producer:	MMM Film Zimmermann & Co. GmbH

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