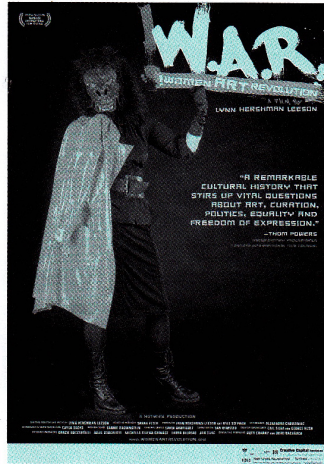


## !WOMEN ART REVOLUTION

Director: Lynn Hershman Leeson  
{HOTWIRE PRODUCTIONS}

It's not often you see a film that took more than 40 years to make. But when Lynn Hershman Leeson (*Conceiving Ada*) first picked up a camera as an art student at Berkeley in 1966, she knew the things she was viewing through its lens—the discussions of art and gender, the consciousness-raising groups and civil-rights protests that became the women's liberation movement—were part of a larger story. The result is *!Women Art Revolution*.



*Revolution*, which is both an astonishing chronicle of the dawn of the feminist art movement and a powerful, after-the-fact commentary on how obscured feminist art continues to be.

Beginning with a scene in which museumgoers in New York City and Los Angeles are asked to name three female artists—none of them gets much further than “Frida...Kaylo?” before shrugging sheepishly—the film explains, via Leeson’s own narration and myriad other voices, that though there has never been a shortage of women’s art, most of it has consciously and systematically been kept out of view. Interviews with and archival footage of artists (Judy Chicago, Hannah Wilke, Faith Ringgold), curators and museum founders (A.I.R. founder Howardena Pindell, New Museum founding director Marcia Tucker), and critics, historians, and activists (Lucy Lippard, Arlene Raven, the Guerilla Girls) offer a picture of full-scale rebellion against art-world masculinism, brimming over with equal portions of sober insight and electrifying anger at the very literal shutting-out of women’s voices from prevailing galleries, museums, and movements.

There’s a wealth of footage in this 83-minute film, and even more that we don’t see—Leeson estimates that she has accumulated more than 13,000 minutes

of interview footage since 1966. (Many of the uncut interviews are housed in Stanford University’s digital collection and can be viewed online.) And juxtaposing vintage interviews of artists like Judy Baca and Nancy Spero with more recent sit-downs underscores the determination of these artists to continue their work despite regular, cartoonishly horrifying sexism. (Spero’s story about being asked to spread her work on the floor of a gallery and crouch before it while the gallery director stood over her is particularly gross.) Even when the transitions from subject to subject come fast and thick—here’s an elegy for the artist Ana Mendieta! Here’s footage of Yoko Ono’s *Cut Piece*! Here are some congressmen struggling to say “vagina” during a House of Representatives debate on whether to ban Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party* from being exhibited!—*!WAR*’s trajectory remains remarkably straightforward, moving, and indelible.

—ANDI ZEISLER

**EXTRA CREDIT:** Leeson, with coproducer Alexandra Chowanec and underground comix legend Spain Rodriguez, created a graphic-novel companion to the film that includes a timeline of feminist art as well as a curriculum guide.

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