

For bookings or press, contact Jenni Olson at (415) 239-1744 • butch@butch.org

“Powerful and evocative.”

—Daryl Chin, Documents on Art & Cinema



575 Castro St.

A FILM BY JENNI OLSON

.....
**Featuring the voice of
HARVEY MILK**
.....

**DIRECTOR: JENNI OLSON | CINEMATOGRAPHER: SOPHIE
CONSTANTINOU | EDITOR: MARC HENRICH | SOUND: JIM LIVELY |
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: JULIE DORF**

575castrostreet.com

**⊕ Official Selection: 2009 Sundance Film Festival ⊕
(2008) | HD | color | 7 minutes | USA | © 2008 FilmInFocus.com**

575 Castro St.

A film by Jenni Olson | (2008) | HD | color | 7 minutes | USA

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About the Film:

575 Castro St. reveals the play of light and shadow upon the walls of the Castro Camera Store set for Gus Van Sant's film *Milk*. These mundane shots are almost bereft of movement and sound. So quiet, so still. All the better to showcase the range of emotions evoked by Harvey Milk's words on the soundtrack. The audio track is an edited down version of the 13-minute audio-cassette that Harvey Milk recorded in his camera shop on the evening of Friday, November 18, 1977 (a few weeks after his election to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors which made him one of the first openly gay elected officials in the United States). Labeled simply: "In-Case" the tape was to be played, "in the event of my death by assassination." The sensibility of *575 Castro St.* hearkens back to the dozens of Super 8 gay short films of the '70s that passed through Harvey Milk's hands to be processed and developed. The film was commissioned by FilmInFocus.com to be showcased online in conjunction with the theatrical release of *Milk*.

About the Filmmaker:

Jenni Olson is director of e-commerce at WolfeVideo.com and is one of the world's leading experts on LGBT cinema history. Her debut feature film, *The Joy of Life* world premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival and went on to play a pivotal role in renewing debate about the need for a suicide barrier on the Golden Gate Bridge, as well as garnering praise from critics and audiences for its unique storytelling style.

In 1995 Jenni was one of the founders of PlanetOut.com where she established the massive queer film industry resource, PopcornQ and pioneered the first online showcase for LGBT short films (the PlanetOut Online Cinema), as well as founding the PlanetOut Short Movie Awards in 2000. She is very proud to be co-founder of the Queer Brunch at Sundance; the annual LGBT event she created in 1998 has grown to become the largest queer party at Sundance. As a film collector and archivist Jenni's historical movie trailer programs (including the ever-popular: *Homo Promo*, which is now available on DVD) have been shown at film festivals around the world, as have her many short films and videos. In addition to her vast curatorial experience (including stints at the Minneapolis/St. Paul and San Francisco LGBT Film Festivals) Jenni has written extensively about LGBT film since 1985 for publications too numerous to mention. Her wildly entertaining coffee table tome, *The Queer Movie Poster Book* was a 2005 Lambda Literary Award nominee.

In addition to working on her many other creative endeavors, Jenni loves serving on film festival juries, advising filmmakers on a variety of projects, and serving on the advisory board of Outfest's Legacy Project for LGBT film preservation. Jenni's new short film called *575 Castro St.* should be coming to a film festival near you in 2009. She is currently in development on an innovative new feature about the Spanish colonization of the State of California as described to you by an erudite butch dyke with the hots for a Hollywood actress which is either called, *Get Me Guinevere Turner* or *The Royal Road*.

Cast & Crew:

Voiceover Harvey Milk was the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in the United States. He was assassinated in 1978 and has since been described (by gay writer Andrew Epstein) as, "our Kennedy, our King, our Malcolm X. Our bullet." The audio recording featured in *575 Castro St.* is an edited down version of Milk's original 13-minute audio cassette recorded in his camera shop on the evening of Friday, November 18, 1977 (a few weeks after his election to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors). Labeled simply: "In-Case" the tape was to be played, "in the event of my death by assassination."

Cinematographer Sophie Constantinou's work has earned international acclaim for tackling difficult topics with artistry and sensitivity. She has produced, directed and photographed several award-winning documentaries, including *Divided Loyalties*, an intensely personal, feature-length exploration of the conflict in Cyprus (Golden Gate Award, 1999); *Between the Lines*, about women and self-injury (Golden Gate Award, 1998); and *Impact Zone* (Best Experimental Film, NY Underground Film Festival, 1997). Sophie has been shooting high-profile documentary films for over a decade. Sophie also shot Jenni Olson's previous film, *The Joy of Life*.

Editor Marc Henrich is a Bay Area-based filmmaker, film teacher, freelance editor and photographer. He has taught editing and film history at UC Berkeley Extension, the Academy of Art, and Film Arts Foundation. His films (*The Visit*, *In the Shadow of Fear*, and *Unsettled*) have been shown at festivals around the world. Marc also edited Jenni Olson's previous film, *The Joy of Life*.

Sound Jim Lively is a San Francisco-based audio engineer who has worked with dozens of filmmakers on sound design, recording, re-recording, dialogue editing and more. Jim is also an accomplished musician and composer (his favorite music credit claim to fame: the cult hit series, *Happy Tree Friends*).

Associate Producer Julie Dorf has been doing fundraising in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1989 when she founded the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. She has also worked as a fundraiser for the Vanguard Foundation, Horizons Foundation and as a consultant for the Open Society Institute. She is now Senior Advisor at the Council for Global Equality. In 1990 she co-directed the first documentary about gay life in the former Soviet Union, *Outcasts in Moscow and St. Petersburg*.

Director's Statement:

I have been programming, researching, collecting, and writing about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) film since 1985 when I founded the Minneapolis/St. Paul LGBT Film Festival. My efforts to promote LGBT film and to help other filmmakers get their work seen have ultimately fed my own desire to make movies. Three primary interests drive my creative work and career: LGBT issues, formal experimentation, and historical documentation. These interests come together in *575 Castro St.* which presents an intimate historical portrait of Harvey Milk in his own words, while at the same time capturing for posterity a tremendously significant artifact of LGBT film history: the Castro Camera Store set of Gus Van Sant's *Milk*.

The San Francisco Gay Film Festival came into existence in February 1977 when a self-described “ragtag bunch of hippie fag” filmmakers got together and projected their Super8 short films on a bed sheet at San Francisco’s old Gay Community Center. For its first few years the festival showcased the modest Super8 imaginings of such prolific but obscure gay filmmakers as Jim Baker, Bern Boyle, Stephen Iadereste, Ric Mears, Allen McClain, Billy Miggins, T.K. Perkins, Wayne Smolen, David Waggoner, Ken Ward and Christine Wynne as well as festival founders Marc Huestis and Dan Nicoletta and Names Project founder Cleve Jones. Many of these films explored gay themes, but a good percentage of the work (like many other experimental films of the era) focused on simple light and motion studies. The visuals of *575 Castro St.* (the play of light and shadow upon the walls of the Castro Camera set for Gus Van Sant’s *Milk*) hearken back to those gay short films of the ‘70s: The films that passed through Harvey Milk’s hands to be processed and developed. The films that inaugurated an event that would grow to become the largest LGBT film festival on the planet.

One of the first films I got to see when I attended my first Frameline festival in 1989 (looking for films to curate for my queer film series in Minneapolis) was Warren Sonbert’s *Friendly Witness*. That same year I also got to see my first queer experimental works by filmmakers like Su Friedrich, Abigail Child, Barbara Hammer and Ulrike Ottinger. These are the cinematic visions that have shaped and sparked my own vision — first as a curator, and then as a filmmaker myself. It is fitting that the style of *575 Castro St.* should match the style of the pioneering gay films that Harvey Milk helped to develop (in all the meanings of that word).

Perceptually and spiritually, my work challenges viewers to slow down and pay attention to the moment and to the world around them, drawing attention to the beauty of what might—at first glance—appear mundane, but is in fact a rich tapestry of architecture, light and shadow, and ephemeral history. For me, the joy of my films is found in the poetry of the static image — in the experience of time passing on film, undistracted by plot, actors, dialogue and other narrative conventions. An internal drama is evoked in the sensitivities of each viewer who is open to the subtleties of these mundane shots that are almost bereft of movement and sound. So quiet, so still. All the better to showcase the range of emotions evoked by Harvey Milk’s words.

A note about the sound quality:

In our final sound mix (on June 20th 2008, the day after Opening Night of the 2008 San Francisco LGBT Film Festival) my sound guru Jim Lively diligently removed as many of the clicks and squeaks as he could from Harvey’s tape. The man was an inspiring orator, but really didn’t seem to know the first thing about how to hold a microphone. Just as well — I think the noises provide a vivid sense of Harvey’s presence in that room. There is even one point during the desk shot where we hear the creaking of his chair (like he is pushing his chair back from the desk).

End Credits:

Thank You: Actual Films, Peter Bowen, Walter Caplan, Bruce Cohen, James Fererra, Shari Frilot, Dan Nicoletta. Audio of Harvey Milk (November 18, 1977)
Courtesy of Walter Caplan. Used by permission. © 2008 FilmInFocus.com.

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Praise & Acclaim for Jenni's previous film, *The Joy of Life*:

"Another perfect film with a masterful screenplay."
—indieWIRE.com

"Thrillingly minimalist. Gently hypnotic."
—*The Village Voice*

"Provocative and evocative, both political and erotic."
—MediaRights.org

"A cinematic love poem. . . .Beautiful."
—*San Francisco Bay Guardian*

"Simply stunning to behold."
—AfterEllen.com

"Absolutely brilliant. A poetic and heartfelt adventure."
—SFGate.com

"The festival's best film. . . vividly evocative."
—*The Boston Globe* (from review of *Boston L&G Film Fest*)

"The pick of the festival. . . one of the most sensuous documentaries you will ever see."
—*The East Bay Express* (from review of *SF LGBT Film Fest*)

"Lonely and beautiful, desolate and breathtaking, 'The Joy of Life' is unlike anything you've seen (or heard) before."
—*The Washington Blade*

***The Joy of Life* — Official Selection:**

Sundance Film Festival | San Francisco International Film Festival | London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival | Seattle International Film Festival | SILVERDOCS: AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Festival | Provincetown International Film Festival | New York Lesbian & Gay Film Festival (**Best US Screenplay Award**) | San Francisco International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival | Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Film Fest (**Outstanding Artistic Achievement Award**) | Vancouver International Film Festival | Viennale: Vienna International Film Festival | **Winner: Marlon Riggs Award, San Francisco Film Critics Circle**

About *The Joy of Life*:

The Joy of Life is an unconventional blending of documentary and experimental narrative, combining stunning 16mm landscape cinematography with a bold, lyrical voiceover (performed by LA-based artist/actor Harriet "Harry" Dodge) to share two San Francisco stories: the history of the Golden Gate Bridge as a suicide landmark, and the story of a butch dyke in San Francisco searching for love and self-discovery.

The Joy of Life is a film about landscapes, both physical and emotional.

More Than You Ever Wanted To Know About Jenni Olson

Filmography: Director, *575 Castro St.* (HD short, 2008).

Writer/Director, *The Joy of Life* (16mm experimental feature, 2005).

Consultant/Interviewee, *Fabulous!: The Story of Queer Cinema* (2005), Directed by Lesli Klainberg

Co-Producer, *This Way Out* (short documentary, 2004). Directed by Jill Burnett.

Consulting Producer, *By Hook or by Crook* (narrative feature, 2001). Harry Dodge/Silas Howard.

Co-Director, *Matzo Maidels* (short video, 2003). With Julie Dorf/Monica Nolan.

Producer, *Sing Along San Francisco* (35mm short, 2002). Directed by Georgina Corzine.

Writer-Director-Producer, *Meep Meep!* (short video, 2000).

Associate Producer, *The Offering* (35mm short, 1999). Directed by Paul Lee.

Co-Director, *Blow-Up* (short video, 1997). With Kadet Kuhne.

Associate Producer, *Jodie: Icon* (short documentary, 1996). Directed by Pratibha Parmar.

Writer-Director, *Sometimes* (short video, 1994).

Writer-Director, *Levi's 501s Commercial* (short video, 1991).

Curated historical movie trailer programs: Homo Promo (1991), Neo Homo Promo (1993), Jodie Promo (1995), Trailer Camp (1995), Afro Promo (1997), Trailers Schmailers (1997) and Bride of Trailer Camp (2001).

Other Programming & Curating: Sundance Queer Movie Poster Show at Queer Lounge, Park City (curator, 2008); The Queer Movie Poster Show, SF Main Library (curator, 2004); PlanetOut.com Short Movie Awards (founder/co-curator, 2000-2003); Queer Brunch at Sundance (co-founder/organizer, 1998-2003); San Francisco International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival (co-programmer, 1992-1994); Minneapolis/St. Paul LGBT Film Festival (founder/co-programmer/consultant, 1987-2006).

Film Writing: *Gay.com* & *PlanetOut.com* (film writer, 1995-present); *indieWIRE.com* (film contributor, 1996-present); *Bay Area Reporter* (film and gossip contributor, 1992-present); *The Advocate* (film contributor, 1991-2007); *Out & About Magazine* (travel writer, 2000-present); *Girlfriends Magazine* (film columnist, 1995-1996); *Twin Cities GAZE* (arts & entertainment columnist, 1987-1992); *Minnesota Daily* (arts & entertainment critic, 1989-1990); *Artpaper* (film critic, 1990-1992); writing has also appeared in: *Out Magazine*, *Filmmaker Magazine*, *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, *Curve*, and numerous other periodicals.

Publications: *Queer Encyclopedia of Visual Arts* (contributor, Cleis, 2006); *Queer Movie Poster Book* (author, Chronicle Books, 2004); *Mom Book* (contributor, Cleis, 1999); *Ultimate Guide to Lesbian & Gay Film and Video* (editor, Serpent's Tail, 1996); *Images in the Dark: Encyclopedia of Lesbian & Gay Film* (contributor, Plume, 1996); *Lesbian Words: State of the Art* (contributor, Richard Kasak Books, 1996); *Cookin' with Honey* (contributor, Cleis, 1996); *Dagger: On Butch Women* (contributor, Cleis, 1995).

Juries, Panels, Etc.: Barcelona LGBT Film Festival (consultant, 2002-present); Outfest: L.A. LGBT Film Fest (feature jury, 2007); San Francisco International Film Festival (shorts jury: 2004, 1998); Manila Eksperimento Film Festival (shorts jury: 2003); Sundance Film Festival (shorts jury: 2002 & Internet film exhibition panels: 2000, 2001); Frameline Completion Fund (jury: 2007, 2002, 1999); Turin Gay & Lesbian Film Festival (shorts jury: 1999); Mill Valley Film Festival (shorts jury: 1998).