

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**VISIONARY FILMMAKER AND ARTIST LYNN HERSHMAN LEESON  
TO BE CELEBRATED AT THE 46<sup>TH</sup> MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL  
FESTIVAL DATES THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5 – SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2023**



Photo by Henny Garfunkel 2021

Mill Valley, CA, AUGUST 10, 2023 – The Mill Valley Film Festival proudly announces that visionary artist and filmmaker Lynn Hershman Leeson will receive the Mind the Gap Award for her groundbreaking work and versatile career. Hershman Leeson, whose association with MVFF dates back to her pioneering video art in the 1980s, will present her highly anticipated Cyborgian Rhapsody series in its entirety for the first time at the 2023 festival.

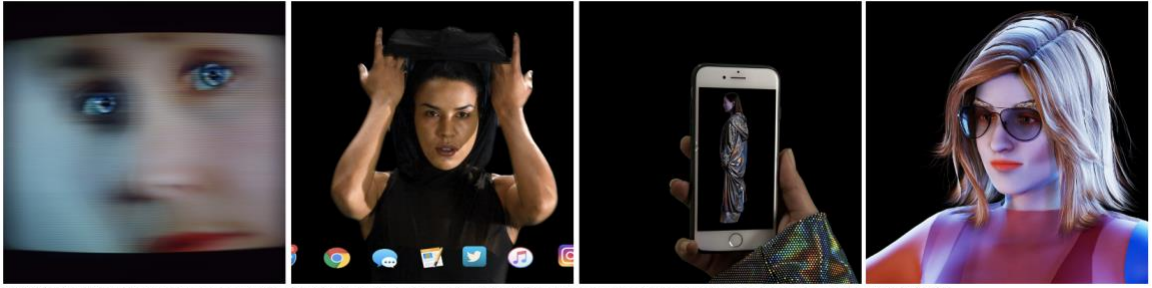
Zoë Elton, Mill Valley Film Festival and Mind the Gap Director of Programming, expressed excitement about featuring Hershman Leeson’s work at this pivotal point in her extraordinary journey. Elton emphasized the artist’s ongoing experimentation with new technologies, including AI, and her exploration of the intersection between art, technology, and identity. As the first film festival to include video in its programs with the Videofest, MVFF recognizes the significance of showcasing Hershman Lesson’s work now, just as it did in the ‘80s.

The program will feature a screening of the complete Cyborgian Rhapsody series, consisting of four captivating short films: **Seduction of a Cyborg** (1994), **Shadow Stalker** (2018), **Logic Paralyzes the Heart** (2022), and the premiere of the final installment, **CYBORGIAN RHAPSODY – IMMORTALITY** (2023), written and performed by a Cyborg – GPAT-3 Chatbot.

Additionally, there will be a special presentation of the Mind the Gap Award, followed by an engaging on-stage conversation that will delve into Hershman Leeson’s boundary-pushing innovations in film and art. Attendees will gain valuable insights into her exploration of issues that have become essential to our society, particularly the intriguing interplay between humans and technology.

**About the films:**

In 1960, two scientists from N.A.S.A., Manfred Clynes and Nathan S. Kline, coined the term “cyborg” to describe the technological apparatus a human would require to record information at supersonic speeds. Both the revolutionary potential of this technology and how it can be abused are examined in the series. **CYBORGIAN RHAPSODY**



Photos Courtesy Lynn Hershman Leeson (L-R) *Seduction of a Cyborg*, *Shadow Stalker*, *Logic Paralyzes the Heart*, *Cyborgian Rhapsody - Immortality*

- ***Seduction of a Cyborg*** (1994) is a poetic metaphor about the invasion of technology into an unsuspecting body, causing vision loss. (TRT 07:17)
- ***Shadow Stalker*** (2018) outlines the history of Predictive Policing, Digital Identity, and the dangers of identity theft which targets victims with a bias on race and economics and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's use of A.I.; the cyborg is becoming increasingly entangled with a desire to uphold the military state. (TRT 09:57)
- ***Logic Paralyzes the Heart*** (2022) presents the story of the first cyborg, portrayed by actress Joan Chen. Now 61 years old, the actress details the history of cyborgian technology, from its early intention as a tool for human liberation to the ways in which this technology has produced a break between ethical human advancement and exploitation. (TRT 13:53)
- ***Cyborgian Rhapsody – Immortality*** (2023), written and performed by a Cyborg – a GPT-3 Chatbot, considers how to transform human discrimination and technological weapons into tools of survival. (TRT 11:04)

The Mind the Gap Award honors creatives, leaders, and innovators whose work has helped close the gender gap in the film industry and our lives. Recognizing talents both above and below the line, the Award celebrates their groundbreaking achievements and acknowledges their importance as role models.

Past Mind the Gap Award recipients have included Sarah Polley & the ensemble cast for *Women Talking*, Chinonye Chukwu & Danielle Deadwyler, Pratibha Parmar, Jane Campion, Nina Yang Bongiovi, Viola Davis, Dawn Porter, Laura Dern, Anna Serner, Céline Sciamma, Betty Reid Soskin, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Carey Mulligan, Andrea Risborough, Dr. Stacy Smith, and Angela Robinson.

The California Film Institute continues to celebrate Lynn Hershman Leeson at the Smith Rafael Film Center the week of October 16<sup>th</sup>, showcasing three innovative feature-length films written and directed by Hershman Leeson and featuring Tilda Swinton, ***Conceiving Ada*** (1997), ***Teknolust*** (2002), and ***Strange Culture*** (2007).

Lynn Hershman Leeson is represented by Altman Siegel in San Francisco, California, and Bridget Donahue in New York.

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#### **About Mill Valley Film Festival**

Presented by the California Film Institute (CAFILM), the 46th Mill Valley Film Festival runs October 5-15, 2023. MVFF is a significant cultural cinema event in the San Francisco Bay Area. It has gained international recognition for its commitment to showcasing exceptional films, supporting emerging talent, and fostering creative dialogue. Over the years, it has hosted renowned filmmakers, actors, and industry professionals, establishing its reputation as the West Coast launch pad for many Academy Award®-winning films and a hub for cinematic excellence.

### **About Mind The Gap**

Films represent one of our most significant opportunities to impact society, break through language barriers, and highlight common values and shared experiences. Movies change the way we think and operate in society, which is why it's so important for films to reflect the totality of the world. Every race, every age, every religion, every sexual orientation. And every gender. **Mind the Gap** is the California Film Institute's platform for inclusion and equity, amplifies and champions filmmaking by women, non-binary people, and other marginalized groups. Alongside our celebration of filmmaking from diverse perspectives, the platform is committed to challenging prevailing industry narratives regarding women, BIPOCs, queer people, and people with disabilities.

The Mind the Gap Award is a custom-designed gold pendant with a moonstone and diamond accent, each individually cast and numbered.

We are grateful for the support of our Mind the Gap sponsors: Christine A. Schantz, Marin Community Foundation, Netflix, and LUNA.

### **About California Film Institute**

The California Film Institute (CAFILM) is a non-profit organization that celebrates and promotes film and media arts through its renowned programs, which include the Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival. CAFILM fosters the next generation of filmmakers and film lovers through CAFILM Education, offering a wide range of activities, including screenings, Q&A sessions, seminars, and a rich program of classes and hands-on workshops led by international & local filmmakers and industry professionals. The Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, one of the leading non-profit independent theaters in the country, serves as a year-round hub for cinema-centric programming. CAFILM utilizes the power of storytelling through film to entertain and address social, environmental, and cultural issues, reaching 275,000 guests annually. Additionally, CAFILM is the majority owner of the Sequoia Theater in downtown Mill Valley. The organization relies on the generosity of its community; the invaluable support from our sponsors, foundations, individual donors, and members ensures our ability to sustain these vital programs. For more information, visit [cafilm.org](http://cafilm.org).

### **Supporters**

The California Film Institute is once again proud to acknowledge the leadership support of the Christopher B. Smith Family, Jennifer Coslett MacCready, Nancy P. and Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation, and Vickie Soulier, and the continued major support of Marin Community Foundation, The Bernard Osher Foundation, and The Gruber Family Foundation. We are also fortunate to have the contributions of the following Signature and Major Sponsors of the Mill Valley Film Festival: Jackson Square Partners, Lucasfilm, Ltd., Wareham Development, and Bellam Self Storage and Boxes.