

October 12, 2018

**Lewis Center for the Arts’ Program in Visual Arts presents**

**Screening of *The Washing Society, a film by Lynne Sachs***

***First in a Fall Film Series celebrating the reopening of the***

***James Stewart Film Theater***



Photo caption: A still from *The Washing Society*

Photo credit: Courtesy of Lynne Sachs

What/Who: Screening of *The Washing Society* followed by a discussion with filmmaker Lynne Sachs, collaborator Lizzie Olesker, and Professor in the Department of African American Studies Tera Hunter, whose book inspired the film, presented as part of a Fall Film Series celebrating the renovation and reopening of the James Stewart Film Theater

When: Tuesday, October 23 at 3:00 p.m.

Where: James Stewart Film Theater at 185 Nassau Street on the Princeton University campus

Free and open to the public

(Princeton, NJ) On Tuesday, October 23, the Lewis Center for the Arts’ Program in Visual Arts at Princeton University will celebrate the reopening of the James Stewart Film Theater with the first in a series of four film screenings featuring award-winning guest filmmakers, all free and open to the public. Visual Arts faculty member Lynne Sachs will screen her film *The Washing Society,* a documentary exploring the importance of unrecognized working lives,at 3:00 p.m. in the Film Theater at 185 Nassau Street. The film will be followed by a discussion with Sachs, collaborator Lizzie Olesker, and Professor in the Department of African American Studies Tera Hunter, whose book provided the inspiration for the film.

*The Washing Society* brings the audience into New York City laundromats and the experiences of the people who work there. Collaborating together for the first time, filmmaker Sachs and playwright Olesker observe the disappearing public space of the neighborhood laundromat and the continual, intimate labor that happens there. Inspired by Hunter’s *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War* — a depiction of the 1881 organization of African-American laundresses in Atlanta — Sachs and Olesker’s film investigates the intersection of history, underpaid work, immigration, and the sheer math of doing laundry. In the film, dirt, skin, lint, stains, money, and time are thematically interwoven into the fabric of *The Washing Society* through interviews and observational moments. With original music by sound artist Stephen Vitiello, the film explores the slippery relationship between the real and the re-enacted with layers of dramatic dialogue and gestural choreography.

J.P. Devine of the *Kennebec Journal* notes of the film, “This is a slice of life, a celebration of humanity from the historic Atlanta washerwomen to the New York City workers of today in swirling brilliant color — color that comes from the flesh, hair and eyes of the workers, and the mountains of laundry they deal with every day, underwear, socks, sheets, shirts. One has to see it to believe it.”Victor Esquirol of the Punto de Vista International Film Festival in Pamplona, Spain, describes the film as, “An exercise in high-concept cinema to which Olesker and Sachs devote three quarters of an hour of film stock and many more quarters in tips, revealing the stains (of racism and classicism) on an American Dream that seems to want to scrub away every last trace of its own identity.”

*The Washing Society* launches a four-film series that celebrates the reopening of the James Stewart Film Theater following a five-month renovation. The changes include upgraded film projection capabilities with state-of-the-art digital projectors while preserving capability for 32 mm and 16 mm film, as well as a new screen, HVAC and electrical systems, new seating and interior finishes.

Sachs’ work includes films, installations, performances and web projects that explore the intricate relationship between personal observations and broader historical experiences. She has made over 25 films, supported by fellowships from the Rockefeller and Jerome Foundations and the New York State Council on the Arts. Her films have screened at the New York Film Festival, the Sundance Film Festival, and Toronto’s Images Festival. Her work has also been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney, Walker Art Center, Wexner Center for the Arts and other venues nationally and internationally. Both the Buenos Aires International Film Festival and the China Women’s Film Festival presented retrospectives of Sachs’ films. She was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2014. Since 2006, Sachs has collaborated with her partner, filmmaker Mark Street, in a series of playful, mixed-media performances called “The XY Chromosome Project.” Sachs’ publications include a co-edited *Millennium Film Journal* issue on “Experiments in Documentary.” Recently, she produced *Your Day is My Night* (2013) and *Every Fold Matters (2016)* as live film performances in alternative theaters around New York City. Sachs has been teaching at Princeton since 2016.

Olesker is a writer, director, and performer whose plays and performances explore the poetry of the everyday. Olesker presented her solo piece *Tiny Lights:* *Infinite Miniature* at the New Ohio Theater and Invisible Dog in Brooklyn. She was a 2013-14 Audrey Fellow with New Georges, with her new play *Embroidered Past* about family hoarding and loss of nature. Other plays have been developed and presented at Dixon Place, Brave New World Repertory, Clubbed Thumb, the Cherry Lane Theater, and The Public Theater. Published in the *Brooklyn Rail* and Heinemann Press, she’s received support from the Brooklyn Arts Council, New York Foundation for the Arts and the Dramatists Guild.

Hunter is Professor of History and African-American Studies at Princeton. She is a scholar of labor, gender, race, and Southern history. In addition to *To ’Joy My Freedom*, Hunter is the author of *Bound in Wedlock: Slave and Free Black Marriage in the Nineteenth Century*, and co-editor of *Dialogues of Dispersal: Gender, Sexuality and African Diasporas* and *African American Urban Studies: Perspectives from the Colonial Period to the Present*.

All four films in the series are open to the public and will take place in the James Stewart Film Theater. The other screenings in the series are:

* *Fail State* with filmmaker Alex Shebanow followed by a panel discussion on Wednesday, November 7
* *Leave No Trace* with writer-director Debra Granik followed by a Q&A on Wednesday, November 14
* *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* with writer-director Desiree Akhavan followed by a Q&A on Wednesday, November 28

The film screening series is supported through the John Sacret Young ’69 Lecture Series fund. Sacret Young is a 1969 graduate of Princeton and an author, producer, director, and screenwriter. He has been nominated for seven Emmy Awards and seven Writers Guild of America (WGA) Awards, winning two WGA Awards.  He is perhaps best known for co-creating, along with William F. Broyles Jr., *China Beach*, the critically acclaimed ABC-TV drama series about medics and nurses during the Vietnam War, and for his work on the television drama *The West Wing*. Young has also received a Golden Globe and a Peabody Award, and his original mini-series about the Gulf War, *Thanks of a Grateful Nation*, was honored with his fifth Humanitas Prize nomination.

For more information on the Program in Visual Arts and the more than 100 performances, exhibitions, readings, screenings, concerts and lectures presented each year by the Lewis Center for the Arts, most of them free, visit [arts.princeton.edu](http://arts.princeton.edu).

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