

LIP





A high-contrast, black and white graphic illustration of a woman's face. The image is dominated by stark black and white areas, with a few vibrant red accents. The woman's eyes are partially visible at the top, looking slightly to the left. Her lips are full and coated in a bright red lipstick. A large, detailed red rose with green leaves is positioned on the left side of her face, partially overlapping her cheek and hair. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century graphic design or pop art.

**Femininity doesn't mean lack of bite.**

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As its final parting shot at the dismissed Claudia Wright in a recent newspaper advertisement, 3AW said, "*Femininity does not mean lack of bite*". Apparently it is only *truly* feminine to bite in the right (sic) innocuous places and certainly not at such sacrosanct institutions as the Catholic Church. Censorship has been imposed not only on a fine journalist but effectively on Claudia's radio audience. The image of the rose has been previously used to advertise 'beautiful muzak'; this 3AW rose marks the end of controversial probing of issues, the return to bland, tranquilized idle talk.

Jennifer MacKenzie





DORA SOMMERS

# Editorial

**LIP** continues to function as a feminist collective whose fundamental concern is with the cultural conditions and lives of Australian women. The second issue extends our areas of interest, for while we retain the emphasis on the visual arts, we recognise the necessity to examine the broad social context which informs and conditions women's work.

*The Work of Non-Anglo Saxon Australian Women:* The report on The Migrant Women's Handicraft Programme deals more with the issue of why many migrant women in Australia do not practice traditional hand crafts rather than with the objects themselves.

*Women's Traditional Art and Activity:* Craft activity has always been ignored and denigrated by mainstream culture. It is important that a feminist critique of hand crafts acknowledge the contradiction that our only continual cultural heritage has depended on the oppression of women. The article "The Fancywork of The Great Goddess" raises these problems within an analysis of needlework symbols.

*Feminist Art and Politics:* A concern with the everyday lives of Australian women requires alternative historical analysis of our national identity. Beverley Kingston's article on "Rediscovering Old Women's Magazines", provides a valuable source and method for such reconstruction.

An ongoing critique of existing art institutions is essential to feminist politics, in order to oppose the prevailing bias of patriarchal art. Central to Barbara Hall's article on The 1976 Sydney Biennale is an attack on art institutional discrimination against women.

*Supplement on Australian Women Filmmakers:* Six interviews with women working in film are valuable as documents of personal struggle and in the introduction they are placed in the context of the position of women in film in Australia.

The structure of **LIP** has changed to facilitate production. We have appointed a Co-ordinator for six months. The Collective remains open and we encourage women to participate in the journal — both in content and production. Each issue will reflect and explore the interests of the women involved.

Collective for this issue: Suzanne Spinner (Co-ordinator), Janine Burke, Suzanne Davies, Kim Donaldson, Jeanette Fenelon, Christine Johnston, Sue Johnston, Pat Longmore, Jennifer Mackenzie, Meredith Rogers, Ann Stephen.

The Lip Collective is grateful to the many people without whose generous financial assistance this issue would not have appeared and particular thanks to Greenhouse Publishers.

The frontispiece was adapted from the cover of *Woman*, Melbourne, 1907, a publication of the National Woman's League.



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Design and Layout: Janine Burke, Suzanne Davies, and Ann Stephen. (Art) Christine Johnston, Jenny Mackenzie, Meredith Rogers, Suzanne Spinner and Lyn Wilkinson. (Theatre and Film).



avel, Joan Long, Corinne Cantrill, Martha  
ne Oehr all have children. Elsa and Corinne  
ely with their husbands on joint film projects,  
nd Martha did in the beginning of their careers  
ent films have been solo efforts. From the  
survey the report concludes that —

the few successful women in the industry have  
cel in the few non-operational/technical jobs  
nera work (acting, presenting, or interviewing)  
r — before they are given a chance to produce  
This all adds up to mean that women must  
t tenacity and sense of purpose to make their  
industry and to get in front of male competitors  
ion of oversupply.”<sup>11</sup>

w up to this supplement, in the next issue No.  
to publish a comprehensive Filmography of  
omen Filmmakers, which Sue Johnston of the  
Media Centre at Royal Melbourne Institute is  
ompleting. She would like to receive full film credit  
ose Australian women filmmakers who have not  
ated with her. Please include the following:

full; complete film titles to your credit; 8mm;  
m; B/W or colour; year film was made; crew;  
l; brief film plot resume.

ould be sent to: Sue Johnston, 175 Kooyong Road,  
ria, to reach her by July 1, 1977.

#### S FOR THIS ARTICLE:

n *Women in the Media*. p.1

n *Women in the Media*. p.4/5 and p.21

20's *Film Australia* did not exist, although since

been a Cinema Branch which had come under

ments and was finally established under the

Information during the Second World War. In

rtment of Information was disbanded and the

ame under the News and Information Bureau of

at of the Interior. The Division made film for

epartments. In 1956 it came to be called the

h Film Unit and in 1974 was renamed Film

n it came under the Department of the Media.

ministered by the Australian Film Commission

59 people. In 1973-74 it produced 68 films.

s, *Report on Women in the Media*.

Ross. *The Australian Film Industry 1896-1930'*

honours thesis Monash University. cited p.13

men in the Media

an. 'Not for the Faint-hearted: an Historical

men in the Australian Film Industry.' *Cinema*

July 1976. cited p.50 *Report on Women in the*

n *Women in the Media*. p.21/22

n *Women in the Media* p.30

n *Women in the Media* p.33

n *Women in the Media* p.48

n *Women in the Media* p.44

n *Women in the Media* p.64/65

seen circumstances the interview with Mrs Elsa  
ow appear in the next issue



Upper: Title Credit, "The Far Paradise".  
Middle: Paulette McDonagh directing a scene from "The Cheaters"  
Lower: Paulette McDonagh directing a scene from "The Far Paradise".



## Interview: Phyllis McDonagh

Phyllis McDonagh interviewed by Suzanne Spinner and Sue Johnston in Sydney in May, 1976.

*Did you get good distribution for your films?*

Of course we did. Distributors couldn't turn our films down because they got such fantastic publicity. The idea of three young girls — *we were seventeen, eighteen and nineteen*, making films appealed to the public. *It seems more remarkable now, looking back, at the time we took it in our stride.* It was doing our own thing — we just had to do it. My father had implicit faith in us, he put 1000 pounds behind us and we could never have got started otherwise.

*A thousand pounds was a lot of money then.*

It was then, yes. But even then it wouldn't have got us off the ground except for one more thing — we had a beautiful old home, twenty-two rooms, a forty foot hall, thirty foot rooms, hand painted ceilings, and added to that my father was a collector of beautiful things all his life and it was fabulously furnished. We could never have rented anything like it.

*That was a brilliant idea to use an actual environment rather than trying to build a set or hire it. It gives the interiors of your films a naturalism and remarkably convincing sumptuousness. Were you in charge of the sets yourself?*

Yes — I was also in charge of choosing locales . . . All sorts of requirements came my way . . . for one sequence in "*The Far Paradise*" we needed a train — and I was simply told: "Go out and find a train". . . . I followed a practise then — and it still holds good today — only speak to someone at the top. So, when the matter of the train came up, I settled for the Commissioner of Railways himself . . . He was fascinated at the story behind all this — and agreed to do his best for us . . . That best consisted of securing the Premier's train and running it into a siding at the Railway station for a single day's shooting. The Premier was due to leave on a trip that same day at 5 o'clock . . . Well, as you will appreciate, nothing goes exactly as you plan in filmmaking. And at 5 pm, when the Premier and his party arrived on the station, we still had a half-hour's shooting to complete the scene . . . I was asked to go over, explain the delay and make our apologies. The Premier waves this aside: "Don't even worry — go ahead with your scene. This is the first time I have seen a picture being made — and we'll enjoy watching." . . . so the episode (a love scene between the hero and heroine) was completed. And we ended up with the whole company waving the Premier and his party off the train.

*Which film was that?*

*'Those who Love'.*

*What was it about, was it a love story too?*

Yes. *They were all love stories*, very important. There are certain types of pictures that you can make without love interest, but we were definitely attached to a love theme. It had general appeal.

*Were you also interested in family relationships as another theme?*

We never considered it.

*That's why we were wondering what the story of 'Those who Love' was.*

It was just an idea that we thought up and I don't think we were trying to make any point about family relationships.

*It's just that in both films there was a daughter.*

We never planned that; it just happened. Our first feature film was "*Those Who Love*". With such public interest surrounding it, there was intense interest and curiosity among local film exhibitors as to what the effort would bring forth. Many refused



Miss Phyllis McDonagh, Art and Publicity Director.

to take our filmmaking seriously. However, we saw the rushes each night and we felt we had a good film . . . It was put to the test at a private screening we arranged at the Prince Edward Theatre, with some 200 of the film industry accepting invitations to be present . . . An invitation had also gone to the Governor of NSW, Sir Dudley de Chair, to be present at the screening — and to our great pleasure he accepted . . . my sister and I often look back on that morning . . . the famous Eddie Horton was at the Grand Organ choosing the popular "Always" as his theme song . . . as the picture got under way, a hush fell on the audience — the kind of quiet you recognise when attention is being held. About half-way through, I happened to glance at the Governor and saw him lift a handkerchief to his eyes; then looking around, I saw several other male members of the audience also reaching for their handkerchiefs . . . perhaps we did not realise till that moment that we had achieved a picture that made a direct appeal to the emotions . . . this response from the Governor and the audience was the finest accolade that could have been given the film. That evening the Sun came out with the headline "Governor Cries at Film — Best Australian picture ever made". On taking leave of us after the screening, Sir Dudley told us he was going to make sure that his wife and daughter Elaine, saw the picture on its first release. And, in one of our later films, it was arranged that Elaine de Chair appear in a ballroom scene.

*So you had no trouble at all with distribution?*

"*Those Who Love*" had long runs wherever it was shown in Australia and earned more than the Charlie Chaplin picture of the year.



*Why did the story make such an impact on people?*

Well, it was a love story. The son of a wealthy family who fell in love with a young widow singing in a city cabaret to support her small son — the human appeal was there.

*That is a common theme then in three of your films. Not only is there a social class division but the girl always comes from the lower class.*

Well I think that it created more sympathy for the woman in the picture.

*You made the woman seem the one with the strongest moral character.*

Yes, I agree, looking back, but I don't think anything was intentional.

*Were you interested in any particular theme or did you just choose one at random?*

I don't think we were concerned with any special theme — our whole aim was in producing an appealing and entertaining story.

*You certainly could not have made films if you had not been the particular individuals you are.*

The whole thing was a team effort — we did everything together. We did not rush into this enterprise blindly. Paulette had studied camera angles and film-form at a local drama school, and Isobel (a noted beauty and natural actress) gained experience by appearing in a couple of locally-made films. I stepped automatically into the role of Art Director and Press Officer.

*Did all three of you get together in the writing of your stories?*

Initially, yes, we combined on the story development. But Paulette (the director) had also studied script-writing, and she put the stories into scenario form.

*She must have been an enthusiast?*

She was dedicated. She spent every free hour at picture shows; morning session, a break for lunch, then back for an afternoon session — all the time studying and absorbing cinema form . . . It filled her life. And when we finally started out ourselves as filmmakers, she quite simply stepped into the role of director. We had every single detail of the story mapped out beforehand — and our first film "Those Who Love" was actually completed in four weeks.

*That was pretty good going — did you have a big crew?*

A small one, really — about four technicians and our camera — the best that could be procured. For our big crowd scenes we hired the only available studio offering then at Bondi Junction. Two other ballroom scenes were shot at The Ambassadors and Romanos, generously lent to us by the owners for a Sunday's shooting. It ensured authentic backgrounds for both sequences.

*What other experience did you have in finding locales?*

One of our sequences in "The Cheaters" required a prison background. My man at the top in this instance was the Commissioner of Police, and I had a personal interview with him at Philip Street Headquarters. I asked for the correct layout for a police identity card — and also for correct details in building a prison cell set, together with a prisoner's uniform.

He was greatly intrigued by this somewhat unusual request — and insisted on hearing all our story. Again it worked the oracle . . . not only did the Police Commissioner suggest bringing in our actors to Police headquarters to have their photographs taken for inclusion on the required police identity card — but he arranged for us to go out to Long Bay and to photograph our scene in an authentic prison cell. Our chief character in this scene was also fitted out with an authentic prisoner's

uniform. We were more than grateful to the Commission for this unexpected help — and it lent complete realism to the scene.

On another occasion, I was asked to go out and find the best office in town. I remember looking up at a tall new bank building in Martin Place and reflecting that the director of such a bank must surely have the plushiest office in town. When I told the secretary that I wanted to see the director on important business, I think he must have thought I was about to deposit a million dollars. For, almost at once, I was ushered into the director's office. It was, as I imagined, an office de luxe; deep pile underfoot, handsome furnishings, and a magnificent polished desk that looked half-a-mile across. Here again, I was to find, the story of our enterprise immediately caught the director's interest. He finally agreed to loan his office to us for one Saturday afternoon's shooting. There was an amusing sequel to this. When we arrived on the arranged date, with cameraman, technicians and the company of actors, we were met at the entrance by an officer in uniform who kept us under surveillance with a revolver for the entire shooting of the scene. It was all worth it, for the scene on film has the marks of a millionaire's pen.

*Why did you stop making films?*

It was the arrival of the talkies . . . there was no proper sound equipment here at the time, though we did actually go ahead and make the first talkie here "Two Minutes Silence". To carry this through, we had to build a large asbestos box to enclose the cameraman, with a narrow aperture provided for the camera lens. By some miracle it worked — and it proved to be the best picture we had made. It was too difficult, though, to carry on picture-making under such conditions, so, regretfully, our little sister-team was obliged to break up. As far as we know, we still remain the only sister-producing film team in the world. At one time, Fox Films wanted to send us as a sister-producing team (director, art director and star) to Hollywood, but our parents had died within a couple of years of each other, and we could not desert the younger members of our family of seven, two of whom were still at school.

*Do you think that the fact that you are a woman assisted you in obtaining all these favours and assistance from important people?*

I cannot agree, it was the enterprise that counted. Actually, the theatre was the earliest and deepest influence in our lives. Our father was surgeon to J.C. Williamson for a number of years — and he loved the theatre. He used to give Sunday at-home receptions for visiting artists — and, as a great treat, my sisters and I, as children, were allowed to go in and sit quietly on the sidelines. But we absorbed it all. Years later, when pictures had become the popular entertainment, we were fascinated by its possibilities . . . I think it was then, in our last year at school, there grew the determination to become film-producers ourselves. We spent all our weekends at the pictures, and even then, were critical of the practically all-external, Dad and Dave type of picture being produced here. We felt that success was to be gained by following the pattern of American films with indoor backgrounds.

*Did Paulette want to make films later on?*

Oh yes, we all missed it terribly and Paulette more so, she was so heavily involved.

*Can you tell us about when Paulette was studying film making with Ramster?*

She thought he was a fake. He used to advertise in the papers and she came back and said 'He's got nothing to tell me. I know it already from watching the movies'.





Isabel McDonagh and Bill Carter in "Those Who Love".

*We understand that two of your films "Those Who Love" and "The Far Paradise" together with the four documentaries you made on Don Bradman, Phar Lap, Olympic Swimming Champions and the Koala Bear are lost. How did that happen?*

Inexperience. If we had been more mature and business-like at the time we would have looked ahead. As it was, we assumed the distributors were holding the films. But in reality, after a period of time, the negative is destroyed. The National Library at Canberra is still searching in England and in New Zealand (where "Those Who Love" was also released) in the hope of finding a copy. It is a tragedy to us that all the work that went into the making of all these films has been lost.

*Are the two remaining films you have, remembered today?*

It is extraordinary, but these appear just as alive today. Held in trust by the National Library of Canberra, over the past three years they have been in demand for showing at film Festivals both here and in New Zealand, and are constantly sought for loan by Universities throughout Australia to demonstrate picture-making to their Drama and Film classes.

*When you three girls were working out the scripts for your films was there anything you particularly wanted to tell the public?*

No, no message at all, nothing. We wrote the stories that we felt were entertainment and that's all. We never planned anything along the lines you mean. We chose situations that would interest people. We felt pictures were entertainment. We followed the story as it developed and discussed what would be the most appealing situations.

*Did you use experience from your own lives in your films?*

Nothing, just ideas. We were story makers. We all wrote, our entire family — Paulette too. You know getting all these messages across, I don't think it always works out. You may interest one section of the audience with a message but not everybody. Entertainment appeals to everyone.

#### Filmography: The McDonagh Sisters.

Compiled by Ross Cooper, acknowledgements — Eric Reade. First published *Cinema Papers*. July 1974.

#### 1926 *Those Who Love*

d: Paulette McDonagh & P.J. Ramster. p.c.: na MCD production. sc: Paulette McDonagh. ph: Jack Fletcher. a.d.: Phyllis McDonagh. l.p.: Isabel McDonagh — under stage name of Marie Lorraine (Lola Quayle), William G. Carter (Barry Manton), Robert Purdie (Sir James Manton), Mrs Kate Trefle (Lady Manton), Charles Beetham (Austin Mann), Geoge Dean (Parker), Reginald Reeves (Sir Furneaux Reeves), Jackie Williamson (Peter), Howard Harris (Doctor), Sylvia Newland (Bebe Doree), Bill Wilson (Ace Skinner), Nellie Ferguson (Nurse), Herbert Walton. 600 ft. dist: J.C. Williamson Films Ltd. screened: Syd. Haymarket 11/12/26.

#### 1928 *The Far Paradise*

d. Paulette McDonagh & P.J. Ramster (?) p.c.: M.C.D. Productions. sc: & continuity: Paulette McDonagh, ph: Jack Fletcher. a.d.: Phyllis McDonagh. l.p.: Isabel McDonagh — Marie Lorraine (Cherry Carson), Paul Longuet (Peter Lawton), John Faulkner (Howard Lawton), John Faulkner (Howard Lawton), Gaston Mervale (James Carson), Arthur McLaglen (Karl Rossi), Arthur Clarke (Lee Farrar), Harry Halley (Brack), Lawton (Attorney General). 7000 ft. dist: British Dominion Films also A/Asian Films Ltd. (?) screened: Syd. Regent 14/7/28.

#### 1930 *The Cheaters*

d: Paulette McDonagh. pc: MCD Productions sc: Paulette McDonagh (from a story by Phyllis McDonagh). ph: Jack Fletcher ad: Phyllis McDonagh ed: Paulette McDonagh and Jack Fletcher. Sound: Vocalion Studios, Melbourne. Laboratory work: Jack Fletcher. l.p.: Arthur Greenway, Marie Lorraine (Isabel McDonagh), John Barnbach, Leil Douglas, Arthur Quigley. Shot at Australian Film Studios, Bondi, Sydney. Released at Ben Fuller's Roxy Cinema, Pitt Street, Sydney.

#### 1932 *Two Minutes Silence*

d: Paulette McDonagh. p.c.: M.C.D. Productions. sc: Paulette McDonagh from a play by Leslie Haylen. ph: (?) l.p.: Isabel McDonagh — Marie Lorraine, Campbell Copelin. Leonard Stephens, Ethel Gabriel, Leo Franklyn Frank Leighton. Frank Bradley, Hope Suttor, Peggy Pryde, Arthur Greenaway. sc: Syd. Prince Edward 16/1/32.