

FLORENCE HOWE

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Photo by Paul S. Busk

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My Blog

[Two Women Artists: Audre Lorde and Dagmar Schultz](#)

April 3, 2012

Tags: [Audre Lorde](#), [Dagmar Schultz](#)

This past Monday night I saw my friend Dagmar's first film, a labor of love she had begun two years ago. She called the film "Audre Lorde: The Berlin Years." I knew Audre as poet, novelist, activist, professor, friend. I knew Dagmar as sociologist, professor, and friend. And then I remembered the photographs Dagmar sent me for my office walls, brilliant snapshots of wild horses on a western beach off the coast of Washington, magnificent blooming trees in Berlin. She had an eye.

More than her eye, for the film she had a vision and she had a story. She would present her view of Audre's eight years in Berlin. There were many themes—friendship, activism, teaching, and of course Audre's illness.

She wanted to portray the energized Audre, the activist poet, now reading for a German public eager to hear her, now sitting in a small group with Afro-German women, talking about what it felt like to grow up Black in a white German world. Around her, several groups began to organize, hold their own meetings, and come back to talk with her. The Audre we see in Dagmar's film is in motion, buying flowers, walking through beautiful parks or crowded city streets, alone or with friends, smiling, smiling, and sometimes laughing as well. And if she is indoors, she is sometimes dancing, other times deep in conversation.

Several times we see the poet reading and hear her clear voice. Sometimes we hear the voice and see Audre's mobile face in many different kinds of close-ups, seemingly full of spirit. Only towards the very end of the film do we meet the young naturopath who has been treating Audre, and only then do we become aware that her life is ebbing. Even then, she greets her friends are there with energy and a resilient spirit.

The film includes a strong handful of Afro-German women who speak about Audre's influence on them—as organizers of their own movement, and as poets and writers. On screen they are beautiful to see and to listen to, some of them in German, with English translations. But it is Audre's mobile facial features that the camera makes love to in close-ups that I never tired of, and that I am eager to see again.

At two moments in the film I remembered the Dagmar I first knew 40 years ago: the sequence of ocean waves introducing Audre's love for swimming; and the sequence of the flying gulls, the presaging of Audre's death. These were rhythmically correct at the moment they occurred, and they suggested to me that behind the camera putting the film together was the mind of an artist as well as a friend.

Plans are to screen the film on August 10, 2012 at the Second Annual Black German Convention at Barnard College (contact: Prof. Tina Campt, director of Africana Studies) and mid-October in a cooperative effort of Hunter College and John Jay College. If you want to see this film (the trailer and information on future screenings), go to the website www.audrelorde-theberlinyears.com.

Or you can watch the video here:

Select Works

[A Life in Motion](#)

"Everyone concerned about global feminism, women's contributions, and humanity's future will be enhanced and enchanted by *A Life in Motion*."—Blanche Wiesen Cook, author of *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume I and Volume II*

["The Women's Room: An Iconic Novel by a Visionary Novelist"](#)

Lecture delivered by Florence Howe on January 8, 2011, at the Modern Language Association Annual Convention

[Myths of Coeducation](#)

"It is impossible to imagine women's studies without Florence Howe. *Myths of Coeducation* shows her vision and courage, insight and dauntlessness."—Catharine R. Stimpson, Rutgers University

[No More Masks!](#)

A revised and expanded edition of the classic groundbreaking anthology of 20th-century American women's poetry, representing more than 100 poets from Amy Lowell to Anne Sexton to Rita Dove.

Quick Links

[The Feminist Press at CUNY](#)

The Feminist Press is an independent nonprofit literary publisher that promotes freedom of expression and social justice.

[Modern Language Association](#)

The Modern Language Association of America provides opportunities for its members to share their scholarly findings and teaching experiences with colleagues and to discuss trends in the academy.

[Authors Guild Directory](#)

A compendium of member websites