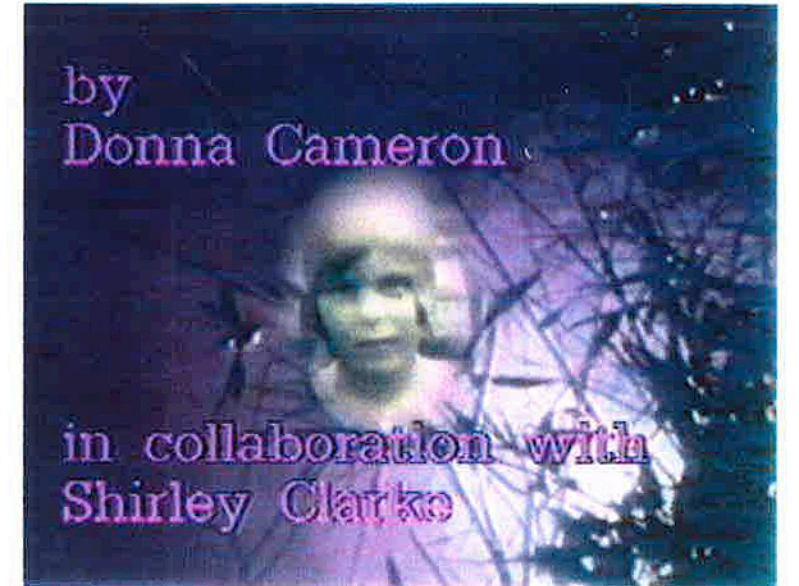




Shirley Clarke

In Our Time



by  
Donna Cameron

in collaboration with  
Shirley Clarke

SHIRLEY CLARKE IN OUR TIME

Jytte Jensen  
by Donna Cameron

Shirley Clarke in Our Time is as complex a work as its subject. It is also a fascinating attempt towards outlining a strategy for making an appropriate historical record of female artists in our century.

In this moving tribute to her friend and filmmaking colleague, Shirley Clarke, Donna Cameron brilliantly uses collage to fashion a focused but dizzying trip through "...Our Time" while creating a personal, affectionate portrait of Clarke, her sometime collaborator ("No soul could love your steps more", Cameron voice-over).

The very real history analyzed and represented in this film/video is the world of two women artists. Their efforts to express themselves may be thwarted in a patriarchal society, but is counterbalanced by the support and understanding they provide each other. Clearly Cameron sees Clarke as her mentor ("Your roots are in my soul", she says). Clarke's strong presence is implied rather than existing in real time -- originally, the two artists together envisioned a performance by Clarke to accompany screenings of the film/video.

The homemovies of Shirley Clarke's childhood are the idyllic center and organizing principle of the piece, whereas the world Cameron constructs from found footage and literally wraps around this material is a disruptive, frightening one.

With optical printing, Cameron collages images of Shirley and her sisters, small, delicate white-clad girls playing in a flower garden or gracefully dancing for the camera, onto a world of

monsters, men with dubious intentions, quarrels and arguments, domestic violence and the bizarre. This duality is the basis of the entire piece.

On the macro plane Cameron juxtaposes film/video, found footage/home movie, color/black & white, private/ public, individual/type, animation/live-action, negative/positive film stock, moving images/stills, images up-side down and regular, forward/backward motion, as well as disparate images fused by editing. On the micro plane -- within the frame -- the filmmaker deploys iris, windows, partial coloring, filters, vertical and horizontal split screens; only in the process of relating all of the fragmented pieces to each other by screening, viewing and discussing the film does it come alive. The textured layering of images of different origin provides a challenging and visually exciting means of interpretation.

Repetition is another strategy used by Cameron to create space and rhythm -- used in collage the same images viewed in different context is infused with different meaning. Repeating homemovie material centers the film and expands the interaction of the individual life to the whole ("...Our Time").

The intricate mix of mass-media modes (broadcast commercials, B-movies, Felix the Cat cartoons, etc.) create a specific, yet changing, view of the world surrounding, and acting upon, the homemovie material.

Images of 'scientists' re-creating pre-historic dinosaurs mirror the re-creation of the life of a woman artist in our time. What evolves is that it is the 'intrepid' Shirley of

the home movies who becomes the strong personality and presence of the mature Shirley Clarke -- represented by lovely repeated close-ups of her haunting soulful eyes.

