

FINDING CHRISTA

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- Vincent Canby, NEW YORK TIMES

"For Camille Billops, autobiography is a means to a new black documentary style."

- B. Ruby Rich, Sight and Sound Magazine

Directed by Camille Billops and James Hatch

1991, 55 min, United States, English, Closed Captions in English

Original Shooting Format: 16mm

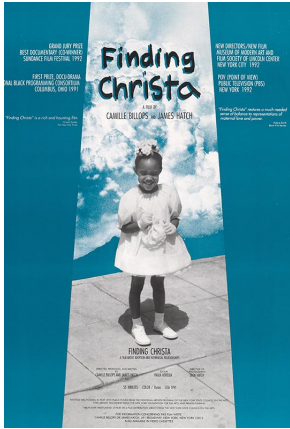
Screening Formats Available: DCP

Contact:

Third World Newsreel

545 8th Avenue, Suite 550, New York, NY 10018

(212) 947-9277 x 10, tw@tw.org



FINDING CHRISTA

SYNOPSIS

This documentary presents a moving yet unsentimental view of motherhood and adoption. It explores the feelings surrounding the reunion of a young woman with her natural mother 20 years after being given up for adoption. The reunion is between filmmaker Camille Billops and her and her own daughter. Facing the re-encounter with mixed emotions, Billops interrogates her family and friends as well as her own motivations behind the decision. The result is an original and personal film that challenges societal biases about adoption and offers new insight on mother-daughter relationships.

Part of A String of Pearls: The Films of Camille Billops & James Hatch

REVIEWS

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"Loaded with real-life family drama... a brave film [which] raises questions, opens closets, and takes the viewer through the filmmaker's unchangeable past."

- Donald Taylor, *East Bay Guardian*

"In 1981, visual artist Billops reconnected with Christa, the daughter she gave up for adoption 20 years before. A decade after reuniting, Billops composed this rueful, docu-fictional examination of the difficult choices that define a life."

- Matthew Eng, *Tribeca News*

"The films of Camille Billops are heartrending, fearlessly personal meditations on a range of emotionally charged subjects."

- BAMcinematek

"This unusual film combines the most personal subject matter with documentary conventions and docu-drama techniques. The openness of the personal revelation is inspiring, and despite the painful memories for all members of the family, that openness has produced a high-energy and high-spirited testimonial to the strength and joy that can come from taking such an enormous personal risk"

- International Women's Film and Video Festival

"Finding Christa documents an attempted reparation, through the cinematic medium, of a mother/daughter relationship interrupted by adoption."

- Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames*

SCREENINGS, FESTIVALS & AWARDS

- Grand Jury Prize, Sundance Film Festival
- P.O.V. Documentary Series, PBS
- Best Docudrama, Atlanta Film Festival, 1992
- Best Docudrama, National Black Programming Consortium Film Festival, Columbus, 1991
- One Way or Another: Black Women's Cinema, BAMcinematek, 2016
- We Wanted A Revolution, Brooklyn Museum, 2017
- African-American Women Behind the Camera series, Brooklyn Museum, 1993
- Cinema Rediscover, Bristol, 2022
- No Master Territories Exhibition, HWK, Berlin, 2022
- Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2003
- Kenkeleba Gallery, New York, 2010
- BAMCinematek. 2017
- Brooklyn Museum of Art, 2017
- BFI, London, 2017
- South Side Projections, Chicago, 2017
- Northwest Film Forum, Seattle, 2018
- Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, 2018
- Anthology Film Archives, New York, 2019
- Film Streams, Omaha, 2019
- Indigo Impact, San Francisco, 2020
- International Women's Film and Video Festival, 1992
- Whitney Biennial, 1993
- New Director/New Films, Museum of Modern Art and Lincoln Center, 1992
- Flaherty Seminar
- Toronto Film Festival
- Southern Circuit, South Carolina Arts Commission
- International Feature Project, 1991
- Black International Cinema, Indiana University
- Sandwiched In, Port Washington, NY
- Black Cinema Series, Zeeland Film Festival, Middelburg, The Netherlands, 1992
- Sydney Film Festival, 1992
- Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema, International House, 1992
- The Studio Museum of Harlem
- Non-Fiction Festival, Cornell Cinema, 1994
- Women in Film International Film Festival
- 25 Years of Women Callin the Shots Exhibition & Symposium, Lincoln Center, New York
- Black Women in Film and Television, Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame, Oakland, 1992
- Women in the Directors Chair, Chicago, 1992
- Cinema du Reel, Centre George Pompidou, Paris, 1992
- Pioneering Women in Cinema, Wellesley College & MIT, 1992
- Black Talkies, Four Star Theater, Los Angeles
- Festival International Films de Femmes de Créteil, France
- South Florida Black Film Festival, Miami, 1992

BIOGRAPHY OF DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER



Camille Billops (1933-2019) was a fearless filmmaker, artist, sculptor, historian, archivist, and staunch supporter of Black art and artists. Billops came into her own within the converging contexts of the 1960s civil and human rights struggles, New York's emerging Black artists movement, and her personal struggles for affirmation. Her work is autobiographical, interpretive, and challenging. Without apology, she successfully drew from her life's experiences, her education, and her observations of the world around her to carve out a space for her voice to be heard. She and her husband James made their loft in SoHo a hub for artistic collaborations, collecting thousands of books, documents, photographs, and ephemera related to Black culture. They held salons with Black artists, performers, and musicians, and recorded more than 1,200 oral histories, which were published in an annual journal called *Artist and Influence*.



James V. Hatch (1928-2020) was a historian of Black theater who taught English and theater at the City College of New York for three decades. He has written and co-written more than a dozen books, including "The Roots of African American Drama: An Anthology of Early Plays, 1858-1938" (1990), which he edited with Leo Hamalian, and "Sorrow Is the Only Faithful One: The Life of Owen Dodson" (1993), about the titular Black poet and playwright.

Camille Billops and James Hatch made six films together, starting with *Suzanne, Suzanne* (1982) and ending with *A String of Pearls* (2002). At the time of Billops' death the two were working on their final film, *Mama and Papa Lala* which is still left incomplete.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

A film by

CAMILLE BILLOPS and JAMES HATCH

This film is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Alma Billops (Dotson) and Lucious "Bill" Billops, my sister Josie Mae Dotson, our friend Melvyn Helstien and to all who search for children or parents

Directed, Produced, and Written by

CAMILLE BILLOPS and JAMES HATCH

Editor

PAULA HEREDIA

Director of Photography

DION HATCH

Cameraman

SHAUN WHEELER

Sound Editor

RAY McCUTCHEON

Sound

WALT MARTIN

TONY SMILES

JT TAKAGI

Assistant Editor

MAXIME BERKOWITZ

Assistant Cameraman

ARIEN HATCH

Production Assistant

DIANE HATCH-AVIS

Synchronization

LYNN IJIMA

"CAST"

CAMILLE BILLOPS • MARK BROWN • RHONDA BROWN MICHAEL BROWNING • PETER BROWNING • SUZANNE BROWNING MARJORIE DAY • JOSIE DOTSON • WALTER DOTSON • BERTHA GAGE • JUDY GLOVER • RUTH GLOVER • MARION "AUNT PHINE" HARVEY JAMES HATCH • MELVYN HELSTIEN • BEVERLY HILL • TINA HILL SHERMAN KENNEDY • MARGARET LIEBIG • LOUISE "PLUTZ" MCGREW MARION "BILLIE" MEY • CHERI MUTHLEB • KENNETH MUTHLEB • PAUL OPSTAD • ALMA PENN • CAROL PENN • JAN REED VERENA "AUNTIE" ROBERTSON • HENRY RUSS • VAUGHN RUSS • COREEN SIMPSON • CHRISTA VICTORIA • VANTILE WHITFIELD • GEORGE C. WOLFE

Archival Footage

ALMA AND WALTER DOTSON

Still Photos

Newark Airport

JEANIE BLACK ©1981

Camille Billops

MARY ELLEN ANDREWS ©1980

Children's Home Society

COURTESY OF THE CHILDREN'S HOME SOCIETY

MUSIC

"STORMY MONDAY BLUES"

Gregmark Music, BMI

written by Aaron "T" Bone Walker @ 1975

Sung by Margaret Liebig

accompanist Al Tanner

"BECAUSE"

written by Edward Teschemacher

Sung by Margaret Liebig

"CHRISTA'S THEME"

Played by Christa Victoria ©1991

"MOTHERS"

Christa Victoria ©1989

Sung by Christa Victoria

"DEAR FRIEND"

Christa Victoria ©1988

Sung by Christa Victoria

BACKGROUND MUSIC
Played by Christa Victoria

Oh My Tender Boy ©1990
Southern Sudan Folksong
Sung by Camille Billops

Special Thanks
CINEMA RESEARCH CORPORATION, HOLLYWOOD
CAROLYN CAMPBELL AND THE CHILDREN'S HOME SOCIETY
DU ART FILM LABORATORIES, INC.
GESI/DIAQUEST-BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
LAWRENCE & LAWRENCE ASSOCIATES
SHERMAN. L. KENNEDY, JR., BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
ROBERT ARMSTRONG • SHAFIK BENJAMIN
DR. GEORGE JACKSON • LOUISE McGrew
ROBIN SPECTOR • FREDIE STYLES

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FROM THE NEW YORK FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS AND PRIVATE FUNDING

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