

a Cinema Guild release



Opens January 15 in virtual cinemas nationwide

2020 / 74 min / Flat / 5.1 / Color / In English
8mm, 16mm, VHS, Hi8, MiniDV, Digital / HD

press

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booking

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Press Materials:

cinemaguild.com/theatrical/filmaboutafatherwho_press.htm

synopsis

Over a period of 35 years between 1984 and 2019, filmmaker Lynne Sachs shot 8 mm and 16mm film, videotape and digital images of her father, Ira Sachs Sr., a bon vivant and pioneering businessman from Park City, Utah. *Film About a Father Who* is her attempt to understand the web that connects a child to her parent and a sister to her siblings.

With a nod to the Cubist renderings of a face, Sachs' cinematic exploration of her father offers simultaneous, sometimes contradictory, views of one seemingly unknowable man who is publicly the uninhibited center of the frame yet privately ensconced in secrets. With this meditation on fatherhood and masculinity, Sachs allows herself and her audience to see beneath the surface of the skin, beyond the projected reality. As the startling facts mount, she discovers more about her father than she had ever hoped to reveal.

credits

a film by Lynne Sachs

Featuring:

Ira Sachs, Sr.

Lynne Sachs

Dana Sachs

Ira Sachs, Jr.

Beth Evans

Evan Sachs

Adam Sachs

Annabelle Sachs

Julia Sachs

Madison Geist

and

Diane Sachs

Diana Lee

Mallory Chaffin

and

Rose Sachs/Maw-maw

Photographed between 1965 – 2019 by:

Lynne Sachs

Ira Sachs, Jr.

Ira Sachs, Sr.

Editing:

Rebecca Shapass

Music:

Stephen Vitiello

Sound Collages and Mix:

Kevin. T. Allen

Additional Photography:

Todd Berliner

Seth Cohen

Susanne Fairfax

Ethan Mass

Rebecca Shapass

Mark Street

Additional Sound:

Mark Maloof

Mark Street

Soundtrack:

Stephen Vitiello

Additional musical performances:

Justin Alexander (percussion) and Sara

Bouchard (piano)

U.S. Distribution: Cinema Guild

directors's statement

Since I began making films in the mid-1980s, I've been collecting images, recording sounds and writing text for a film about my father. It took me three decades to complete the film, and so many things have happened in that period. Life goes on, and each day brings surprises, joys and disappointments. In 2020, I premiered *Film About a Father Who*, the third film in what ultimately became a trilogy (including *States of UnBelonging*, 2005, and *The Last Happy Day*, 2009) of essay films that explore the degree by which one human being can know another.

Film About a Father Who is my portrait of my father Ira Sachs, a bohemian entrepreneur living in the mountains of Utah. My father has always chosen the alternative path in life, a path that has brought unpredictable adventures, nine children with six different women, brushes with the police and a life-long interest in trying to do some good in the world. It is also a film about the complex dynamics that conspire to create a family. There is nothing really nuclear about all of us, we are a solar system comprised of nine planets revolving around a single sun, a sun that nourishes, a sun that burns, a sun that each of us knows is good and bad for us. Somehow, we accept and celebrate the consequences.

I've never quite known where the "inside" is with my father. Over the last three decades, I've organized many recorded interviews — a time, a place and a structure so that he would feel it was the right moment to tell me what he thinks about when he is alone — driving in his car, looking out from his living-room window at the Wasatch range, listening to the quiet of an evening snowstorm. My father speaks more intimately of the trees and the steep slopes that reach up around him than he does of his closest companions. He swears to me that he does not dream. A warm, dear person, he is still not at ease with the acknowledgment of what probably was a traumatic childhood. I believe that I know all of the facts—his mother, high school, jobs, children — but I don't have any idea what made these scattered events become my father. The mature, rational "me" whispers: "You don't have the right or the need to put all of the pieces together. Let him stand on the present. The details of his past are not critical to your life." Each and every time that I have gone from my home in Brooklyn, New York to his home in Park City, Utah, or that he has visited me, I have filmed. As a result, I have hours and hours of material on 8mm and 16mm film, video and digital. The technology has changed again and again, the subject has not. Over these many years, my camera has witnessed, my microphone has recorded. I pretend I am seeing all that is there, but ultimately I always know...nothing is really what it seems. *Film About a Father Who* is a filmic journey of me as a daughter. The film captures my naïveté transformed into awareness, my rage transformed into forgiveness.

And in addition to filming my father, I sought out each of my siblings (now ages 59 to 25) and three of six of their mothers (including my own), knowing that the only way I could construct a group portrait of our father would be to listen to my five sisters and three brothers. Inspired by German author Heinrich Boll's *Group Portrait with a Lady*, I knew that their deeply felt experiences and observations would help me to better understand our father. I also began the challenging and exhilarating process of transferring my own thoughts to recordings that I could use as a voice-over in the film. For the first time, rather than initially writing my thoughts down, I spoke them directly into a recording device during a solitary few weeks at an artist residency at Yaddo in January 2019. I worked extremely closely with my editor, Rebecca Shapass, who helped me to get a perspective on all the material. Toward the end of 2019, we took our fine cut to an audio mixer and a color grader. After three decades as a work-in-process, *Film About a Father Who* was done.

filmmaker's bio

Lynne Sachs is a filmmaker and a poet born in Memphis, Tennessee but living in Brooklyn, New York. Her work explores the intricate relationship between personal observations and broader historical experiences by weaving together text, collage, painting, politics and layered sound design. Strongly committed to a dialogue between cinematic theory and practice, she searches for a rigorous play between image and sound, pushing the visual and aural textures in her work with every new project. Her work ranges from the very personal, as in her early experiments that are reminiscent of Bruce Connor's found footage films and Chris Marker's essay films, to documentary, as in her film on the Catonsville Nine's antiwar-activism in *Investigation of a Flame*. Lynne discovered her love of filmmaking while living in San Francisco where she worked closely with film artists Craig Baldwin, Bruce Conner, Barbara Hammer, George Kuchar, and Trinh T. Min-ha. Between 1994 and 2006, she produced five essay films that took her to Vietnam, Bosnia, Israel, Italy and Germany — sites affected by international war — where she looked at the space between a community's collective memory and her own subjective perceptions.

Sachs has made 35 films, which have screened at the New York Film Festival, Sundance, Oberhausen, Viennale, BAMCinemaFest, Vancouver Film Festival, DocLisboa and many others nationally and internationally. They have also been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Walker Art Center, Wexner Center for the Arts and other venues. The Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Cinema, Festival International Nuevo Cine in Havana, China Women's Film Festival and Sheffield Documentary Festival have all presented retrospectives of Lynne's films. She received a 2014 Guggenheim Fellowship in the Arts. In 2019, Tender Buttons Press published Lynne's first collection of poetry, *Year by Year Poems*. Lynne lives in Brooklyn with filmmaker Mark Street. Together, they have two daughters, Maya and Noa Street-Sachs. www.lynnesachs.com.

Film About a Father Who Select Filmography

A Year of Single Frames (Museum of Modern Art, 2020)

The Washing Society (BAMCinemaFest, 2018)

Tip of My Tongue (MoMA, 2017)

Your Day is My Night (MoMA, 2013)

select festivals

Opening Night Film, Slamdance Film Festival 2020

Official Selection, MoMA's Doc Fortnight 2020

Official Selection, Sheffield Doc/Fest 2020

Opening Night Film, Indie Memphis

Official Selection, RIDM - Montreal International Documentary Festival

film subject's bio (Ira Sachs, Sr.)

Ira Sachs was born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1936. Never happy with an “occupation” that did not entertain him in some way, he hopped from one business venture to another, beginning with selling small family homes and advancing to developing hotel properties. While married with a family of three children in the 1960s, Ira quickly cultivated a parallel roustabout reputation based on his accumulation of one “new toy” after another. He was often seen steering a cruiser boat down the Mississippi, driving his amphibious duck around town or directing a helicopter to pick up his children on Saturday afternoons. By the 1970s, spending time thinking about real estate in the flat Delta of Memphis and being married simply presented too many limitations, so Ira moved westward and began a whole range of entrepreneurial adventures. Over the course of thirty years in Park City, Utah, Ira bottled spring water, carved out an alfresco wedding retreat with a waterfall and a dance floor, turned a yellow school into a hippie cabin, got arrested for smoking marijuana, mined translucent yellow stones he sold to Russians, and organized major coat drives and food deliveries for the homeless. A daily reader of the *New York Times*, Ira's hunger for left-leaning politics meant that he always followed his transcendental meditation with a thorough reading of the newspaper. In the later years of the Vietnam War, Ira declared that he would become a vegetarian until the war was over. He has never eaten meat again. He comfortably quotes Frederick Nietzsche, Voltaire, Thomas Paine and the Eagles.

Throughout his life, Ira always had either a wife or a girlfriend, six of whom gave birth to his nine children between the years of 1961 and 1995. At this time, Ira is single and happy with his bachelorhood. Ira Sachs's children include Lynne Sachs, Dana Sachs, Ira Sachs, Jr., Beth Evans, Evan Sachs, Adam Sachs, Annabelle Sachs, Julia Sachs, and Madison Geist.

Stephen Vitiello bio (music)

Electronic musician and sound artist Stephen Vitiello transforms incidental atmospheric noises into mesmerizing soundscapes that alter our perception of the surrounding environment. He has composed music for independent films, experimental video projects and art installations, collaborating with such artists as Nam June Paik, Tony Oursler and Dara Birnbaum. Solo and group exhibitions include MASS MoCA, The High Line, NYC, and the Museum of Modern Art.

Rebecca Shapass bio (editor)

Rebecca is a filmmaker, multidisciplinary artist, and community organizer based in her native NYC. She works at the intersection of moving-image, installation, and performance to deconstruct traditional narratives surrounding femininity and womanhood through the study of personal and collective memory.