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CONSUMER: AUTOMATIC SYNC

NYPL

LIVE FROM THE NYPL: TILDA SWINTON WITH B. RUBY RICH: ORLANDO

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Tilda Swinton with B. Ruby Rich: Orlando-live from the NYPL.

>> Tilda Swinton: And he said it's about immortality and androgyny and he said we buy that. We'll -- we'd like to make that film. It sounds cool. We were the first ever international coproduction with a previous Soviet film studio.

>> B. Ruby Rich: I was in -- it was considered dodge gee and absurd

>> Tilda Swinton: They couldn't understand why we would want to make a costume film at that time you had certainly coming out of the UK, merchant ivory. That was sort of the limit of people's imagination. And certainly -- people could not grasp that and that's strange when you think now it's become rather, I wouldn't say fashionable, but it's not such a leap now to have that kind of blick as the Germans would say.

>> B. Ruby Rich: I was looking at the reception to Orlando when it came out and I have this delicious tiny -- it's based on a novel by Virginia Woolf the principle character spends a few centuries as a man and says same person just another sex. You travel between bodice but you travel across centuries.

>> Tilda Swinton: This is the reason I was able to commit myself to this project with Aperture because I think the sort of legend of Orlando the book and the film is it's only about the bending of genders and the more I have read the book, the more recent readings of the book have me realized that it's not about gender at all. It's not about gender. It's about limitlessness and it's about -- it's -- it's about revolution. And my sort of rather fanciful but quite serious proposal is if Virginia Woolf had written another thousand pages, who knows what this might have been a pig, a microphone or a really fancy skirt.

I don't think she's interested in the form. She's interested in the spirit. And that's something that I was aware of when we were shooting the film because I remember for example when we were sort of tussling with the very specific business of how are you going to play this boy and then this woman.

How is it practically going to work and we spent awhile, not very long talking about change. And then I realized quite fast, it's not about change, it's about consistency, it's about the fact that Orlando doesn't change at all. Orlando is a spirit. And is perpetual. And that's the thing that interests me, it's what interest me in general. It's certainly what interested me in Virginia Woolf's book but it's what made me want to make a new proposal in Aperture and so I was able to invite all these artists and writers to yourself included to address that. And to look at limitlessness and immortality in fact.

>> B. Ruby Rich: And you gave me this very difficult assignment about trying to right about the context of Orlando and no one was less androgynous than Derek. Derek was about the body and masculinity and sexuality and very much into time travel and with the super 8 films into this dystopia future in this epic time.

>>Tilda Swinton: And you would see how dedicated he was as a classicist. We were just likely to gossip around the kitchen table about William Blake. It was just all to do with a flame being passed. And that was an amazing experience as a young artist.

I met Derek when I was 25 and I had that, it was like my apprenticeship to grow up as a young artist. In the atmosphere of continuity and one generation handing down to another. That's limitlessness and that's what I'm really interested in and I think one of the reasons I'm interested in it is because having had the privilege of growing up as a young artist in that environment, I know that it's real, I know that it's practical and that Derek was open about that. That he had grown up as a young artist in the 60s and the 70s and that he had learned that the knee of everybody in Stan B. to everybody else. And so that feeling of, yeah, of community and of

connectivity. And to a certain extent collectivity. That's perpetual. Although I will take issue with you saying that the rib bald is only a male preserve.

>> B. Ruby Rich: I don't think it's only male just male in Derek's hand. Although I have to say I remember once seeing him at Sundance was the year that Edward II came out. It was '92 and I saw him and Keith skipping down the snow away from a party and I said oh, is the party over? And they said, oh, no, it's all boys up there and it's all these guys up there and we're lesbian boys and they skipped down the hill. So fair enough. Fair enough. Now, you begin after, while Derek is still alive and very much after his death you begin to make films with this extraordinary range of filmmakers and I know in the beginning these very amazing films like Female Perversions, where you going to travel through these very different worlds from these classic or imaginary ones through Derek. How do you end up working with these female directors like Lynn and Kelly and others.

>> Tilda Swinton: I haven't worked with Kelly. Who were you thinking of?

>> B. Ruby Rich: I just popped her in there.

>> Tilda Swinton: Lynn Ramsey?

>> B. Ruby Rich: I think you should.

>> Tilda Swinton: Okay.

>> B. Ruby Rich: We have to talk about Kevin is what I was thinking about.

>> Tilda Swinton: Well, how did that come about? It came about because I was -- when Derek died I was high and dry. Obviously, you know, we were all high and dry personally. High and dry in any sense, professionally, because my -- I've never worked as a professional and I'm not a professional and I had worked only with Derek and by that stage, Derek seven films, Sally, Orlando and Peter and I had been working for nine years so I was a very sort of -- had a very limited experience and when Derek died I truly believed that I couldn't make films anymore. Because I didn't know how to work professionally. I didn't know -- I was not interested in acting remotely. Never had been I doubt I will become interested in it. I am much more interested in filmmaking and working in this extraordinary way, very arcane way that Derek allowed me to develop which was something closer to performance art than -- or music really -- than any kind of interpretive acting. For a start, of those seven films I can't do the maths right up here, but the majority of those films were not scripted. The majority of them were silent. And shot on super 8 and were entirely improvised. It didn't feel at any point like I was acting. I did interpret queen Isabella and lady in Liechtenstein but in those kindergarten games it really felt like we were dealing with autobiography

>> B. Ruby Rich: You're talking about last of England, the garden -- that trilogy.

>> Tilda Swinton: They were improvised and they were silent and so they didn't feel like they equipped me to work with anybody else. You know. It was a very specific plant we'd grown. And so I didn't really do anything for awhile and then the wonderful thing about making films for nine years is if people had seen what they like they come to you. So people started sending me letters. Like Susan S. and Female Perversions was the first film I made after Orlando after Derek died and it went on from there.

People came to me and so I began to realize that the thing I was really interested in, which is the frame, there were enough filmmakers who are willing to take on somebody who is not interested in acting to kind of walk into their frame and so, I have been able to continue to be a proper film fan. So I can say I've walked into a Bela Tarr frame. I never thought I'd be able to say that and turning up in Bong Ho's frames. And Wes Anderson.

>> And are you about to work with Chakpong.

>> Tilda Swinton: Absolutely and we're going to Colombia in August.

>> B. Ruby Rich: I'm curious back to this Orlando moment. How this kind of pride opened. This range of characters you might consider and the kinds of filmmakers you want to work with. You worked with many people, over and over on films with them. Whether that's something like Lynn, the Coen Brothers that you get back together again and, have another bash at it.

>> Tilda Swinton: I suppose it's what I know. I know that familial thing. I know that collective thing. I don't know about, you know, learning my lines and preparing alone and then turning up in a trailer and going onto a set and shake everybody's hands and being a very good actor. I don't know how to do that and I know that that's what generally is what very good actors do but I don't really know that and I've done that. I'm not sure I've ever done that to be honest. No, I don't think I've ever done that.

>> B. Ruby Rich: I was noticing for anyone that's being paying attention of the screens in New York lately you have an appearance in the Souvenir as a backup act to your daughter. And you're leaving very quickly after this to go shoot Souvenir part two. I noticed when I look through your filmography you made a film called Caprice. Your very first film.

>> Tilda Swinton: Of all the long associations Joanna is the longest. I knew Joanna, we met when we were ten. And --

>> B. Ruby Rich: So if you want Tilda in your film you have to start thirty years ago.

>> Tilda Swinton: Very slow. Very slow. She's been my oldest friend and she's an extraordinary filmmaker. I don't know how many of you have seen the Souvenir, I urge you so see it. She's an extraordinary filmmaker and had an interesting ride as all artists do she didn't make films of her own for 20 years.

And then made her first film only, what, 10 years ago which is a wonderful film called Unrelated and you should go and look for it. This is her fourth film and she's already a master and this film's very special because it's proper autobiography even if you haven't seen the film you've read about it. It's about a period -- and we're back to the 80s. We talk about repetitions. It's about her as a young artist at film school having a relationship. And she asked me to play her mother who I know very well, I was brought up with. And then she was looking for somebody to play her. And she loves working with people who have never been in a film before. In fact, I think, in The Souvenir there's only two people who have been in the film before the wonderful actor Tom Burke who played the lover. And she was look for someone who had never been an actor and two weeks before we started shooting I had the nerve to say what about this person who just left school and is about to go off to Africa to the same organization that Chris and I were with to be a volunteer and she did it and she's wonderful.

>> B. Ruby Rich: This person being your daughter.

>> Tilda Swinton: Yes. Very, very, very strange and to walk onto a set that Joanna has had reconstructed. It's per Schenectady, New York. Wearing pieces of clothing that both our mothers wore. Seeing my daughter dressed in Joanna's clothes from the 80s. Hm, very weird.

>> B. Ruby Rich: But there is something about it. Those of you who have seen the film already know this. There's something about the film that captures the improvisational spirit of the 80s and figuring it out. Technologically it's the dark ages, technologically it's very primitive and yet people think it's fresh and new.

>> Tilda Swinton: The film has something, the way the texture is in the film does have something to do with the way the film works. There's that hesitancy in the

filmmaking but it so happens I think, if I read you correctly, there's something hesitant about that time. That we remember and those of you who have, most of you are too young to have remembered it. But there was something hesitant or inarticulate about that time. Which we are nostalgic for and as sort of, yeah, just a sort of rawness and there's something specific in that film about the generation gap between someone in their 20s and their parents who were war generation didn't have the kind of intimacy with their children that we have with our children clearly. That I think it really captures. Yes. It's very raw. And she does it beautifully.

>> B. Ruby Rich: And if you think about the 80s those are the war stories for the younger generations.

>> Tilda Swinton: It's very important that we do. It's like a trapdoor. I suppose it's the 80s. People don't talk about the 80s in a way that I truly believe we must because the kids -- she says -- you know, people don't know about the 80s and the 90s and it's -- I think more than at any other time it's really important that we talk about -- that -- what political activism was like then for a start. I don't know and I -- I don't want to bring any negative impetus here but I do think that we were activists, those of us who were, we had this sense of not only proper righteousness but a sense of power. We really believe that when we marched against clause 28 which was this extraordinary repressive series of laws that Margaret Thatcher's government were bringing into the UK to entirely repress gay culture we really knew it would make a difference and it did and we marched every Saturday and I think the miner strike was slightly different because we had our first taste of not feeling powerful then. We didn't win which was the thing. But I think that in terms of social politics if you can call, you know, gay rights then. It felt that we really did have a voice and that it was -- it's always going to be worth it. But it really felt like we made a difference. Now I don't know, I hope, and I do believe that it's true, a certain generation now, younger even, are beginning to feel their mojo and going for it. But it feels like there's a sort of gap in between people of, you know, Greta's age and our age. Where people haven't felt that actually speaking up and marching made any difference at all and that's been really dangerous.

>> Audience: (Applause).

>> B. Ruby Rich: Well done. I think it absolutely is and I think that there's this kind of back and forth through these periods that we're discussing. Even back to Virginia Woolf writing Orlando that seem to oscillate back and forth between pessimism and optimism. She writes Orlando in this moment. She kills herself in the middle of a blitz. We're in a blitz right now. This horrible fascist blitz without the bombs, yet.

>> Tilda Swinton: What Virginia gives us in this work which so sadly she couldn't give herself and her life is this feeling of survival, the capacity to survive and to transform, and to, yeah, to just know that change is all we've got. And that it's not something to be frightened of. It's something to be embraced. And that sense of the life force, her dedication as a writer, to capturing the present moment is the most extraordinary. Neurologically, it's good for us to read her. Whether it's in her essays or whether it's in Orlando or To the Lighthouse or anything that she by distilling an articulation of what it's like to be alive.

And feel the present moment. Is phenomenal contribution to human culture.

>> B. Ruby Rich: She bends the language to make it do that and also she's extraordinary to read out loud. Anyone who thinks Virginia's difficult you read her out loud. It's so beautiful. You just said something about change and I want to go back to this notion of you and the films you've done and, you as a kind of changeling

across these films because there is this kind of transformation and I was thinking deliciously you have a tendency to go into multiples.

It could be in Teknolust, the film in which you play a scientist called Rosetta Stone but also these three replicants. These three self-replicating automats.

>> Tilda Swinton: They are Marine and Ruby.

>> B. Ruby Rich: There's films where you're notoriously an aged man or secretly as in Suspiria, an aged gentleman. All of these kinds of transformations or through the wooden teeth. The person you pop up as in Snowpiercer.

Or as twins in Okja. Does this start with Orlando or somewhere else? This kind of transformational career you've created?

>> Tilda Swinton: Why would I need to explain it? It's such fun and I suppose, I don't even know where it started.

But I suppose it's all about identity and in all of the pieces of work in which I have a split my atoms it's always felt like it's one portrait but it's different aspects of that one portrait. I mean obviously I species it started with, yeah, this thing I described about deciding that Orlando would not change, except her clothes. You know, clothes do make the man and woman, let's not forget that. If you put on a farthing gale you probably at a certain point in history be female but, you know, who cares and whatever.

I think the -- I think -- one of the things that has felt so interesting about revisiting Orlando right now is I remember a couple years ago as I'm sure most of the people under this beautiful roof will have done going to the Whitney and having a delicious lunch and then going to the all gender bathroom for the first time and going, wow, yeah, time has actually moved on. I didn't, you know, didn't see that coming. I mean, we have all gender bathrooms in the highlands of Scotland all over the place because we all ever have one. All species bathrooms more like. But it felt, because when I remember as I describe trying to raise any interest in making a film about, you know, anybody turning into anything other than they were born, it felt absolutely impossible and so, yeah, we're in an interesting moment where maybe people are beginning to get the hang of the fact that change is not a threat to the intrinsic nature of a thing or a person or a spirit.

Or a movement or a people that change is just part of the deal. And I've always been sort of moved almost by the way in which society ascribes an identity to somebody. Either a gender identity or a class identity. And says, right, you are going to be a middle class woman and you are going to live here, and you are going to dress like this, and you're going to marry this person and you're going to do this with your children, forever, the end. That's always been very -- such a waste in my eyes and so I've always liked to sort of play around with -- if not splitting identity, then identify always been really interested in looking in a situation who reaches a precipice of transformation, so for example in a wonderful I made with David and Scott, The Deep End. I play --

>> B. Ruby Rich: Such a wonderful film.

>> Tilda Swinton: About a dutiful naval wife who is a very devoted mother -- and in the course of the film she turns into something else.

Or in a film I made called Julia where she's a dedicated alcoholic and sort of becomes, you know, a mother by the end. This possibility of change is a no-brainer for me.

>> B. Ruby Rich: What is this new film you're doing The French Dispatch with Wes Anderson

>> Tilda Swinton: It's Wes Anderson's French film and it's coming this year. I hope at the end of this year.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Can you tell us something about the other film you're off to Colombia to do?

>> Tilda Swinton: I've known Joey for about a decade and we've talked about making something for that long. The thing we started with is we wanted to make it in a place that neither of us knew and was very exotic and then we realized we've been such travelers that -- we couldn't find something that both -- a place that neither of us had been and a couple of years ago he called me up and said we're going to make it in Colombia. It's called Memoria. I think to think about what I can tell you about it.

It's about it's about history. And immortality -- no. It's about, no, here's a new one, it's about insomnia.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Well for those of us who have seen cemetery of splendor.

>> Tilda Swinton: We're both very interested in sleep.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Here's what I wonder, let me ask you this question about these new films in a different way. Who are you in these different films. In these new batch of films. Are you someone new, someone familiar, who are you inventing for these, with these directors and for these films?

>> Tilda Swinton: That's a really good question, Ruby, I start with the practicalities which are very banal but true for the last three years, my children are now 21 and they left school two years ago and I knew for awhile that I really wanted to be around for the last few years of their schooling. So for the last four years, I haven't really committed myself to any projects that have meant that I was away for four months or producing something. So I was tied up for over a year and I have been at home a lot. So I've been working with friends on little surgical strikes. And also developing longer projects for now onwards so the first thing is that I'm going to be doing what I really do love to do which is to be in the real -- what we call in Scotland the body of the crack. The meat and the potatoes of the film and to be in a film and every frame of a film. Orlando was the first film I made that way. It's a particular challenge to jump into a Wes Anderson film for a couple of scenes. It's precision work because you have to understand the entire tenor of the thing and try to get it right and land on a pin. But there's something very special about being in every frame of the film. And so I would say, first, boring practical thing is I'm going to be doing more of that. The next few films will be that. What will they be? They will be I suppose an update on where I'm at I suppose. Certainly the film, when I'm working with filmmakers, I'm so fortunate to work with people that I admire as much as I do and to work with the grain of a filmmakers pallet it's like you say, I am red paint, do with me what you want to do Rubins or Rembrandt. You adapt yourself with the pallet that you're working with and the pallet is very poetic. Very fine grained and, you know, not many prosthetic teeth. I would say that.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Not surprised.

>> Tilda Swinton: Hm.

>> B. Ruby Rich: And what about this Wes Anderson then? Just about yourself in it then if you can't give away the film per se.

>> Tilda Swinton: I'm trying to think what he's already said because if I say one more word I'm in trouble. I think it's out there that it's called the French dispatch. It's about an American literary magazine in France. Based in liberty, Kansas or rather funded from liberty, Kansas and based in a town called ONUI in France. And it's about the correspondence. Of this magazine.

It's a sort of, yeah, it's a series of stories about these correspondence and I am the arts correspondent.

>> B. Ruby Rich: I see, that's what I wondered. Hm.

>> Tilda Swinton: I don't think I can say anything else.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Well you're an arts correspondent so Aperture came at a good time. Can we talk for a minute about Paul Strand. There's a Paul Strand photograph in the issue that you had a really deep connection to and you've described yourself as Scottish.

You are Scottish but you've been describing yourself as Scottish from the highlands and I wonder about this Paul Strand photo and what you might like to tell people about it.

>> Tilda Swinton: I love that I am describing myself as Scottish as if I would describe myself as anything else. I was brought up in Scotland and I live in the highlands. It's a very small country but these things really matter. It's a matter of some couple of hundred miles but it means a lot. But the place I feel is my spirit's home is one particular island in the herring -- west coast. When I first saw Paul Strand's work a long time ago I was so grateful that an artist of his caliber had chosen as he did to come in 50s and make work there.

And when I started talking to Aperture about our issue and our exhibition, and this context of openness, of limitlessness and of sort of -- as they say at the end of studio films they say through the universe in perpetuity. This idea of perpetual freedom. There's a landscape in my mind when I say the words perpetual freedom and that landscape is that landscape and Paul Strand photographed it. And so it occurred to me that -- and I said to Michael and Chris when we were putting together the issue and they said does anybody else -- we were commissioning these extraordinary artists and they said is there anything from any archive that you would like and I said, well, of course. Paul Strand and of course Aperture has the archive of Paul Strand and if you can go to the exhibition you'll see that there's a beautiful sort of extra wall dedicated to Paul Strand not only for the landscapes that topographical landscapes but also for his portraits. His human portraits. I hope you see this when you see them. The faces in his photographs, his human portraits are landscapes. They are. And they are also absolutely timeless. I'm going to the Hebrides next week. I just booked the ferry on Friday and those faces are all there.

And the landscape is there. They can't ruin them because you can't build, you know, whatever, hotels there.

>> B. Ruby Rich: There's no Trump golf course.

>> Tilda Swinton: There are a couple not far away but that's another story but not there. And those people are limitless. I mean, the life there is a very -- is a -- well, I realize when I talk about limitlessness I forget to the virtue of limit. That's where limitlessness lies. You live on these lies and you don't have wi-fi and you live in a very sort of -- you stand on those rocks and you look at the sea and you realize that your ancestors from the 8th century saw exactly the same thing. Yeah. It's a wonderful thing and the faces are also blissfully gender-free somehow.

They just are. Those old men and those old women and those young men and those young women and those children and those cows and those sheep. They all look the same.

>> Audience: (Laughing).

>> Tilda Swinton: Yeah. So it's a real resource and a resource for my family. I will tell you a wonderful story that happened last year. This is actually pure Orlando so the island is owned by this family who my family have known for generations and old

lord staff who sadly died I think in '97 just earlier this year I was seeing him last year and I think he was -- as he was absolutely privileged to do. Slightly, you know, getting a little vague around details like the present moment. And I have known him all my life and I went to see him and his daughter said to me "he won't know who you are" and I went, okay, I want to see him. Selfishly. So I sat down in front of him and his wife said, it's Tilda. And he said what? And she said Swinton and he said, Swinton and I realized he wasn't looking at me he was looking at my father and my grandfather. Both of whom I look for alike except I don't have a moustache and we had a conversation about any grandfather's boat and it was so weird. It was pure Orlando. I was sitting there trying not to look 21st century, trying not to look particularly female or anything. Just trying to give him my DNA. It was the most amazing conversation. And then -- and he was so lit up and talking about this boat and afterwards his daughter said, I'm really envious. He doesn't have that attention for me and I said, you're too young. You're from now. He wasn't talking to me, he was talking to the line. That's pure Orlando.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Just pure lineage. Wow. Well, so time travel, we're back to time travel. I think we might be.

>> Tilda Swinton: I think it's just the deal, isn't it?

>> B. Ruby Rich: (Laughs). Okay. There's one or two other things I want to talk but I know there have been cards collect and we're going to go to those but before we do, I want to talk about a few other films and ask you about them and you know, since we're talking about gender and kinds of conformity and nonconformity and impersonation. The Avengers.

>> Tilda Swinton: That's the ultimate time travel. I don't want to spoil anything if you haven't seen Endgame. Nobody under this roof but everybody else in the planet so it's okay.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Well there was this dustup over Dr. Strange and not of your doing but a dustup nonetheless and what a question of what people will accept from an actor and what they want is where I was heading.

>> Tilda Swinton: Oh, yeah, you're talking about the fact that the character that I was asked to play was based on a Tibetan character.

>> B. Ruby Rich: But in your case was meant to be Celtic.

>> Tilda Swinton: And also by the way, male. That old thing. Well, I mean, dustups. I'm not against dustups. People need to, you know, speak up. These Marvel -- this universe, this belongs to people in a way that the -- those that make the films, they have to really attend to that. And I think that's something very interesting to deal with. That feeling of ownership and -- maybe a little change is not necessarily a bad thing but, yeah, it's an interesting thing.

>> B. Ruby Rich: So how do you, as we're winding down here, how do you choose your roles these days? Are you choosing them based entirely on the filmmakers that you want to work with or are you basing them on scripts or basing them on where they're being shot or -- what's influencing --

>> Tilda Swinton: It's always the filmmakers. It's never been anything else. Apart from anything else usually the deal is struck if you like. The conversation is started long before there's a script. And long before there's a character. So it's -- to go around looking for characters would be fruitless I think for me.

>> B. Ruby Rich: I think you go around carrying characters, don't you? You seem to carry them from place to place.

>> Tilda Swinton: To scourge them they seem to spill out. Last year I worked with a filmmaker I hadn't known personally. Who you may or may not know the creator of

Veep and all sorts of wonderful things and the Death of Stalin and he came to me out of the blue with the proposal that I be a part of his David Copperfield and the combination of the two was irresistible.

>> B. Ruby Rich: And have you done that yet?

>> Tilda Swinton: And we shot that. I'm Betsy T. Very, very happy to say that. I don't think I could play Joe G. but Betsy T is my favorite character in Dickens so that was a great honor.

Yes, I now Armando's work. I have known it for years and I have been a great admirer of his and that was easy. No, I tend to know people before we dream up the work.

>> B. Ruby Rich: M-hm and you've also been involved in these documentary projects like the piece that you did on John B. and going to see him and now you're up to another one now.

>> Tilda Swinton: I would describe them as essay films rather than documentaries. This started when we made Isaac Julian. Our mutual friend Isaac Julian and I made a film about Derek when he was very ill. So Derek, two years before he died he was very ill and then he rallied and in that two year moment we said we got to get you down.

And we made a film based on a massive interview that Colin did with him for hours. It was an opportunity for Derek. He knew he didn't have long to live and he gave this interview over days from this sort of cloud.

It really felt like that. He'd had this nasty, you know, moment, he was definitely on borrowed time and he gave this interview. And so using that as the bedrock of the film, because those of you who were not fortunate enough to meet Derek Jarman you can always see his work but he was a person to know.

And we really wanted, was he not? We wanted to give people the opportunity to meet him. You can see his films and I hope you don't you can -- I hope you do. We really made the film for that reason, for people to be able to meet him.

And we were very pleased that we did and my great friend John B. had just turned 90. And I said, let's do it with John.

I sort of thought John would be with us for another 40 years but as luck would have it he left us last year and we made the film about him so I'm very, very grateful we did that too. For the same reasons that I wanted people to meet him. They're not documentaries. They're -- I mean, those two films are love letters for sure. And I'm working on a film now. An essay film about learning. Which starts with a portrait of the school that I cofounded in the highlands. Which is a school that my children attended. And graduated from. Happily and unneurotically with no qualifications whatsoever and we start there and then we look at learning in Bangladesh with women in the tea garden there.

And yet I was at MIT talking to geniuses there about machine learning.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Excellent. Well we've been given these cards. Which have been sort of the jewels from you there in the audience. And I think we can kind of have a go at some of them. We'll see what you think. We were just staring at the pages of Virginia Woolf's diary that are over there and just amazing. No, I don't think that Virginia Woolf was given one of these cards although it'd be nice to have her question.

>> Tilda Swinton: What were you thinking?

>> B. Ruby Rich: Yeah, well. In the spirit of continuity, Tilda Swinton, what is today's analog to the spirit of 1980s London?

>> Tilda Swinton: Such a good question. I wish I had it yesterday.

>> B. Ruby Rich: And why yesterday?

>> Tilda Swinton: Because I might have dreamed the answer overnight. Or maybe at MIT I may have dreamed the answer. I do think, and I don't want to wipe the rest of us completely out of the question. But I do think that people of 16 and under are onto something that we would be -- really do well to pay attention to. Because they've had the privilege of getting the hang of all sorts of things that people that my age are still struggling with and people younger than me are maybe addicted to, and they're kind of over it. And they are -- they seem to be, in general, apprised of a kind of perspective. That I think it'd be important to pay real, real attention to because they aren't befuddled and they also don't want to be uncool and be addicted to Facebook. They're onto it. And -- I think the sort of, what I talked about earlier, that sense of righteous power, they -- feels like there's a movement there in a -- in that younger generation. So I would say that they hold the key.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Very good. I remember, this echoes something that Chris Marker once said. I remember meeting Chris Marker at the archive in Berkley and it was 1992 or 1993 and he would never appear in public so he refused to go on stage to answer questions after his screening but it was whispered he was in the side room and you could go in there and I said what's going to happen now? It's the end of the Soviet Union and about to be the end of the millennium. What's going to happen? How are we going to get our bearings? He said, it's so wonderful. He said it's too late for us of course but what a wonderful time to be 21. And then he said, or better yet, six. And that's the echo I'm hearing from you now.

>> Tilda Swinton: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And we can be inspired by them and we can change but I think they have a privilege. They have something on us which is, thank the Lord, by the way.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Let's hope.

>> Tilda Swinton: For all our sakes.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Okay. Here's another question, you experimented with gender fluidity throughout your career. What prompted this journey? Was there a particular inception point in your personal life?

>> Tilda Swinton: I've been asked a similar question for years and I've never come up with a good answer except to give you some sort of imperial facts. I'm the only sister with three brothers. And I look like I do. You know, I think -- probably that's it. I -- again, is it gender fluidity or just a kind of laziness about making decisions? I don't know. It's -- it's -- I don't know, I just have a sort of blind spot about these definitive signifiers. I don't know. I'm just -- I have a very low boredom threshold and --

>> B. Ruby Rich: That accounts for a lot actually.

>> Tilda Swinton: Yeah and I don't know. I -- I -- it can be both. Always it can be both. You know? I don't know. And having said it can be both and what you referred to in talking about Chris Marker, this whole binary world, talking about all of us old people. That's a thing. I'm not just talking about, yeah, I'm not just talking about gender but that is -- that's really old hat now. That's -- we don't have to bother with that anymore.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Okay. There's a question here then instead about immortality, okay, in a way I'm saying that. That's not a question. The question is, about Only Lovers Left Alive. It says did Only Lovers feel reminiscent to you of Orlando and this is from a person who loved Only Lovers Left Alive.

>> Tilda Swinton: That's a great question and the answer is yes. There's a sort of

funny little, only for me really, little drawstring that goes under my work that attaches to, you know, Orlando and then it sort of goes to only -- well, it goes to Only Lovers and then actually to the ancient one and keeps bumping forward and it's -- for those who haven't seen the dead don't die it makes a research -- research genes as well. Yes, there's an echo there.

And I love that film so much. Only Lovers Left Alive and I love that -- the person of Eve so much.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Well, I love that film too. And I'm dying to see the zombies. You're a zombie hunter, is that right?

>> Tilda Swinton: I'm a zombie killer. I can tell you this much, with a katana sword.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Very Kill Bill II.

>> Tilda Swinton: I wish.

>> B. Ruby Rich: You did start talking about performance art. This says you don't see much difference between performance art, films, photography, literature, do you feel your relationship to all these forms is somewhat indistinguishable.

>> Tilda Swinton: I would say yes. The sort of point about acting is, again, very practical. I never wanted to be an actor and I never trained to be an actor. I don't really know what acting is. Beyond the sort of children dressing up as a donkey and an old man at the end of your bed on a Sunday morning. That's truly that sort of play is what I'm interested in. And of course I'm being facetious but I'm also being really -- that's a very sophisticated point. Play is what I'm really interested in. Interpret -- I'm really not interested in mask in that sort of -- I'm not interested in that incredibly performed narcissism. I genuinely don't like to see it. I would much rather see documentary. I've always said and it is off quoted but it is still true that my favorite performance in any film of any time is the donkey in Au Hosar Balthazar because it's just the best performance of all time.

You know? Doesn't put a foot wrong. Not a foot wrong. And has the great luxury of only being in one film and then getting out. Which is the thing that I always wanted. And which I hope that my blessed daughter is going to achieve. Yeah.

>> B. Ruby Rich: You want her to be in the two films and out.

>> Tilda Swinton: She's going to university to read neurology. Psychology and neurology.

>> B. Ruby Rich: You're hoping that will lead her away from acting.

>> Tilda Swinton: I don't want to lead her away from anything but to her own life. It's an interesting thing. People like to quantify, don't they? I remember when we made our film festival, the first of our many ramshackle film festivals in Scotland.

>> B. Ruby Rich: The eight and a half film festival. Do you know about it?

>> Tilda Swinton: I'll tell you about it. We made this thing and it became a sensation and the first thing that all the press who came up to see it asked are you going to do it next year and are you going to do it next year and we said we haven't done it next year yet. She said it over there. Be in the present moment and the same -- nobody would wish their 21-year-old to be fixed down to some career when they got a perfectly good life to lead.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Of course that begs the question of what your parents thought.

>> Tilda Swinton: Dear Lord. I have no idea. They were very patient. And, yeah. No, they were -- I was going to say tolerant. They weren't tolerant but they were patient.

>> B. Ruby Rich: They hoped you would grow out of it.

>> Tilda Swinton: Yes, and I doubtless will.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Here's a question that about the images from the exhibition.

Someone wants to know how you approached your curatorial debut and could you touch on your process, your challenges, your joys, et cetera. And I should say was this your debut.

>> Tilda Swinton: It's my exhibition or is it? I might think of something else and then feel embarrassed. It feels like me -- no, there's a magazine in London called another magazine which my friend Jefferson Hack who -- we did a story about that. I was in the Cannes film festival and you fell in the boat and hurt your back. Sorry. I didn't mean -- anyway, I did -- I did edit his -- one of his a -- an issue a long time ago but I have curated film festivals for several years now to -- with -- to my great, great joy. And honestly, that's really what I'd like to do.

>> B. Ruby Rich: And for the ICA ones long ago too. I think we both did biennials for them.

>> Tilda Swinton: When Simon Field was running it and Simon Field is now the producer of the film.

>> B. Ruby Rich: We were talking about this about how wonderful it is to be living these lives where people come around and not completely lost.

>> Tilda Swinton: We're very lucky that way. Maybe, maybe, maybe other people have that but it feels -- there are some people who don't. I know people who make -- who are professionals who don't. It's the -- a joy of the amateur life.

>> B. Ruby Rich: Ah. Okay. Here's a question for the amateur life. When, Tilda, when did you learn the tools of empathy and perspective and was that heavily influenced by nature or nurture.

>> Tilda Swinton: These questions are amazing. Well obviously I don't know how to answer that question. But I will say that I -- I am a shy person. I've always been a shy person. This is why everyone has to stick with one's friends. I was bullied at school. Like a lot of shy people. That helps. And I have noticed that being with people that you feel really comfortable with and you feel you can be free with and take risks and make a fool of yourself with is a good thing. And to stick with it. So I suppose, yeah, to -- early disadvantages have led me to stick with my swirl.

>> B. Ruby Rich: And speaking of the swirl, here's a final question, since the term new queer cinema was coined in 1992. Guilty as charged.

>> Tilda Swinton: Yeah, by Ruby Rich.

>> B. Ruby Rich: How have your relationships with cinema evolved.

>> Tilda Swinton: When you talked about the beloved lesbian boys running down the hill at Sundance I was thinking when you were talking about Derek's maleness for example. That was a different time. It was a different time. And there was a moment when separatism felt like the most anchored position for so many of our friends to kind of, you know, root themselves in. And my sense is that that has evolved. And it was important. Incredibly important. That you coined, you pulled an umbrella over that movement. And also claimed that word. Because it's a word that I've always claimed for myself. This has absolutely nothing to do with who anybody sleeps with. Queer people are the people I live amongst and always have been and there's a million ways of being queer and there are only a few ways of being straight as you know. And --

>> Audience: (Applause).

>> Tilda Swinton: -- I think that has evolved. And I do feel really optimistic about that. I mean, I feel optimistic about pretty much everything but I feel properly optimistic about that. About that feeling of inclusivity and dialogue and awareness and people not battenning down the hatches and long live that inclusivity and relaxedness last because of course there are fresh challenges. Challenges that we

thought we were over have --

>> B. Ruby Rich: We were so stupid, we thought we won. We were so dumb.

>> Tilda Swinton: I was listening to the radio in Scotland not long ago and I was listening to a liberation counselor talking about his work going round to schools and he was saying, oh, just a couple years ago I was doing a series of talking around schools talking about homophobia and last year I did a lot of work on homophobia and this year he's talking about misogyny. We got to keep going. We got to keep going.

>> B. Ruby Rich: And I think that moment was vital for where we are getting now. If we're not in the same position.

>> Tilda Swinton: But then that's not reason why it's so important to talk about history. In the 80s, 90s. It's such a long time ago for so many people.

>> B. Ruby Rich: We are available for discussions of these myths and legends. And sadly we're out of time now. I have these numbers flashing at me finally and so I think that it's time to kind of wrap it up. I hate to say. But wonderful questions. We got to most of them. Not all of them. Wonderful audience out there. I am curious to see who you all are when these lights come up and Tilda, thank you so much.

>> Audience: (Applause).