

the New York Lesbian & Gay Film Festival

Skin Deep

(Midi Onodera, Canada, 1994, 16mm, 85 min., US Premiere) Onodera's debut feature is a compelling, disturbing drama about obsession and disguise. Charismatic filmmaker Alex Koyama is preparing to shoot a film about tattoos, pleasure, and pain. Young and transgendered, Chris Black answers her ad for an assistant and is initiated into the big city art and club scenes, and becomes increasingly obsessed with Alex. Self-absorbed and intrigued by the convergence of real life and fiction that she sees in Chris, Alex ignores her lover's warning and Chris's increasingly threatening behavior. *Skin Deep* poses troubling questions about illusion and reality, identity, and desire.

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Film director Alex has the money and momentum to make her next feature about love, tattoos and obsession, and a competent, sexy lover, Montana, who doubles as her assistant. When young transgendered Chris responds to Alex's ad in a tattoo magazine, Alex sees the potential for research, and enters into a disturbing power-game with Chris, which questions her integrity and tries Montana's patience. As Chris' fascination with Alex becomes more demanding, the consequences are tragically drawn out, as the drama of Alex's own life supersedes her created fiction. This powerful first feature exposes gender prejudice - is Chris a baby-butch or a 'real' man, and is Penelope the drag queen she appears to be? - and reveals the queer layers of identity that lie beneath sartorial disguises. (Dir: Midi Onodera/Canada 1994/85 mins) Plus **RISING** (Dir: Daven Gee/USA 1994/16 mins).