

Lesbian Films Among Highlights at 'Outfest'

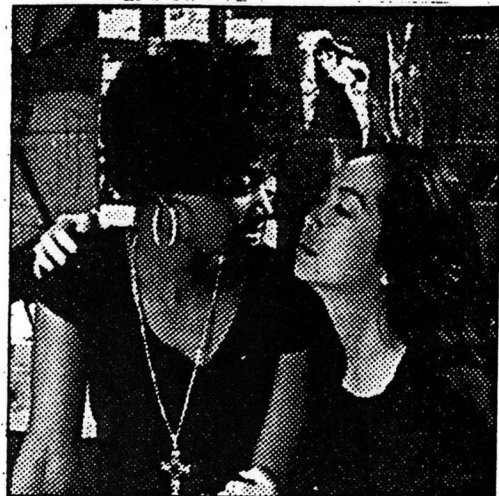
SCREENING ROOM

By KEVIN THOMAS
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Midi Onodera's stylish **"Skin Deep"** (Thursday at 9 p.m.) is a striking portrait of a confident, determined independent filmmaker (Natsuko Ohana). She's a sensual, elegant woman too self-absorbed for a romance with her assistant (Melanie Nichols-King) to pay enough attention to her intense new production assistant (Keram Malicki-Sanches), a mercurial figure so androgynous that it's impossible to say for sure whether the assistant is a man or a woman or a transsexual, either pre- or post-op. **"Skin Deep"** takes a shrewd assessment of both what it takes to be a filmmaker and of a chic, brittle world of sexual minorities and ambiguities.



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Daruma Pictures

Melaine Nicholls-King, left, and Natsuko Ohama are in **"Skin Deep"** (1994), which will be shown Saturday and June 6 as part of the annual New York Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, which opens Thursday at the Joseph Papp Public Theater.