

"Not in this lifetime. Why? Because I'm the only one she hasn't done it to."

— ACTRESS SHARON STONE TELLS *ESQUIRE* WHEN TOLD MADONNA WANTS TO KISS HER.

close-ups

## Branded for success

The psychological drama *Skin Deep* was the only Canadian film at last month's Rotterdam International Film Festival to be selected in official competition for the Tiger Awards. The festival is one of Europe's most prestigious venues for new and avant-garde cinema.

Directed by local lesbian filmmaker Midi Onodera, *Skin Deep* tells the story of a filmmaker who prepares to shoot a film about love,

obsession and the trendy tattoo scene, unaware that her research candidate is deeply disturbed and gender-disoriented.

Says Onodera: "In the current climate of soft, feel-good lesbian films, I offer an audience something to sink their teeth into. An abrupt break from dyke candy floss, *Skin Deep* is not for the puff and fluff crowd."

The film will have its UK debut at London's Ninth Lesbian and Gay Film Festival on Wed, Mar 29. Then it's off to the Turin International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, to be held Apr 3-9.



BEAUTY IS ONLY SKIN DEEP.

Photo by Gabor Jurina.

## ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH: PROGRAMME 3 DEFYING CATEGORIES: SPOTLIGHT ON MIDI ONODERA

"As an exemplar of 'emerging' Canadian cinema Midi Onodera helps define its characteristics. Eschewing conventional notions of Canadian identity construction — 'tired' filmic frameworks that support historical nostalgia, landscape imagery, 'loser boy' or victim scenarios — Onodera's films represent radical shifts in perspective and execution. As an oeuvre, the films of Midi Onodera are propelled by formal innovation that plays against realist practices that traditionally designate 'race' as a problem. Blowing away the utility of earlier paradigms that have provided the bedrock of thinking about cinema, Onodera's films are decidedly cross-over and atypical: thematically and cinematically they explore and reconfigure the mantra of genre, sexuality and race. Without orthodoxy. Irony invariably attends her hybrid identity-probes.

"Onodera's self-styled multifaceted nature aids in checking the downside of identity politics: singularity. Such 'irregularity' is aggressively matched in the works, offering her own brand of 'noise.' Onodera's playing field is the margins, but she doesn't mine them in the usual voyeuristic fashion. An uncanny effect results from combining the familiar and the freaky, accommodating wild swings from the mannered to the sincere, albeit always studied. The result: an unabashed affirma-

tion of the centrality of the margins. From early Onodera shorts where fresh girl-punk sensibility rubs against the constrictions of experimental form, to the self-effacement of her Japanese heritage in *DISPLACED VIEW*, to tearing down the prison-house of gender in *SKIN DEEP*, Onodera tenaciously represents difference that is both shared and uniquely her own. The first Asian-Canadian 'girl' filmmaker on the Toronto block, Onodera is a tough act to follow; her films exude a gutsiness that serves to defy categorization. As a woman who has paid her dues, Onodera will reap the accolades she deserves." — **Kass Banning**

Kass Banning is a Toronto critic, writer, programmer and lecturer. She currently teaches Cultural Studies and Cinema Studies at Trent and York Universities.

### THE BIRD THAT CHIRPED ON BATHURST

Canada 1981 4 minutes

### VILLE? QUELLE VILLE?

Canada 1984 4 minutes super 8 transferred to video

### THE DEAD ZONE

Canada 1985 3 minutes super 8 transferred to video

### MADE IN JAPAN

Canada 1985 3 minutes super 8 transferred to video

### DISPLACED VIEW

Canada 1988 52 minutes

*SKIN DEEP* Canada 1995 85 minutes (10 minute excerpt will be shown)

**Tuesday, May 9 6:30 p.m.**