

Rossvack Productions & Abstract Productions

Present

HYSTERICAL GIRL

A film by Kate Novack

13 minutes

Official Selection

2020 SXSW Film Festival - World Premiere (slated)

PRESS NOTES

SYNOPSIS

Sigmund Freud produced only one major case history of a female patient. "Hysterical Girl" uses a feminist lens to imagine Dora, the name Freud used at the turn of the 20th century to protect his subject's identity, as a girl today. In the film, she tells her version of events, alongside Freud's own words. What emerges is a portrait of the corrosive grip that a seemingly archaic theory from the Victorian era still has over thinking and policy around women, sex and consent, even in the era of #MeToo.

"Dora" – whose real name was Ida Bauer – was 17 when her parents brought her to therapy after she accused a family friend of sexual assault. "Please," Dora's father asked Freud, "bring her to reason." During the 11-week treatment, Freud chipped away at the case like a detective of the unconscious: why would you keep seeing the man you say assaulted you? Are you out for revenge? Did you send out signals? Did you secretly want it?

A century later, the questions that women face haven't changed much. "Hysterical Girl" intercuts several decades of archival material – from the cinema of John Hughes and Roman Polanski to the Congressional testimonies of Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford – to tease out the ways in which Freud's theory of hysteria persists into the present day.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Kate Novack (Director, Producer, Screenplay)

Kate Novack is an Emmy-nominated producer and director of documentary films. Her short film **Hysterical Girl**, about the legacy of Sigmund Freud and the corrosive persistence of his theory of hysteria in the era of #MeToo, was an official selection of SXSW and distributed, in 2020, by The New York Times Op-Docs and Grasshopper Film. Describing the 13-minute short, critic Christopher Campbell wrote: “Dora has been viewed from a feminine perspective for decades, but perhaps never so visually dynamic and concisely poignant as in the short documentary *Hysterical Girl*.”

Kate’s solo directorial debut, **The Gospel According to Andre (2018)**, traced the life of the legendary fashion editor Andre Leon Talley. After premiering at the Toronto International Film Festival and with worldwide distribution by Magnolia Pictures, the movie was named one of the top ten Queer films of the year by Indiewire. **Gospel** also was nominated for best LGBTQ documentary of the year by the Society of LGBTQ Entertainment Critics and won the Best Documentary award at the Melbourne Queer Film Festival. Variety described the film as a “beautiful testament to the former Vogue editor who rose from humble beginnings in North Carolina to become arguably the high fashion world’s first major African-American tastemaker.”

Kate was a producer and writer on **Page One: Inside the New York Times (2011)**, which went inside that paper’s newsroom for one year to explore the upheavals in print journalism. The movie premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, where it was acquired by Magnolia Pictures and Participant Media, and went on to be nominated for two News & Documentary Emmy Awards and a Critics Choice Award. CNN called **Page One** “a film anyone who cares about the future should see.”

She has worked as a story consultant on several films, including CNN's **Ivory Tower (2014, co-producer)**, about the escalating cost of higher education, which premiered at Sundance and was named one of Indiewire's best documentaries of the year, and **The First Monday in May (2016)**, about the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Kate was a reporter at Time Magazine, where she covered arts and media.

Andrew Rossi (Producer)

Andrew Rossi is the Emmy-nominated director and producer of documentary films, including **Page One: Inside The New York Times (2011)**, following the inner working of the New York Times media desk; **Ivory Tower (2014)**, about the challenges facing higher education; **A Table In Heaven (2008)**, following the Italian family behind Le Cirque restaurant; **Bronx Gothic (2017)** about performance artist Okwui Okpokwasili; and **The First Monday In May (2016)** about the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute.

Andrew has been nominated for three Emmy awards, including two for **Page One**, which was one of the highest grossing theatrical documentaries of 2011. **Ivory Tower** was nominated for an Emmy for Best Business and Financial reporting following its broadcast on CNN. Co-distributed by Participant Media, **Ivory Tower** was ranked as one of the best documentaries of 2014 by Indiewire and premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. A look behind the scenes of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute, **The First Monday in May** debuted as the Opening Night film at the Tribeca Film Festival, in 2016, and went on to a theatrical release throughout the United States, Europe, Japan and Australia. **Bronx Gothic** premiered at the Full Frame Film Festival and was released by Grasshopper Film, at New York's Film Forum in the summer of 2017. The film delivers a vérité portrait of performer Okwui Okpokwasili and was described by RogerEbert.com as "A stirring ode to the liberating catharsis of artistic expression."

Through his New York based production company Abstract, Andrew produces content for film and television. Most recently he produced multiple true crime documentaries directed by Erin Lee Carr for HBO, including **Thought Crimes (2015)**, about law enforcement's attempt to police online activity, which the New York Times described as "a primer for the century ahead," **Mommy Dead and Dearest (2017)**, about the shocking murder of Dee Dee Blanchard, which CNN.com described as "a twisted and twisty documentary that's...true crime at it's best," and **I Love You Now Die (2019)**, about the Michelle Carter case in Massachusetts. He also produced Kate Novack's feature documentary, **The Gospel According to Andre** about former Vogue creative director Andre Leon Talley, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2017 and won the Best Documentary award at the Melbourne Queer Film Festival.

CREDITS

Directed and Produced by
Kate Novack

Producer
Andrew Rossi

"Dora"
Tommy Vines

Sigmund Freud Narration
Brian Kelly

Editor
Steven Ross

Co-Editor
Joanne Nerenberg

Screenplay
Kate Novack

Cinematographers
Andrew Rossi
Bryan Sarkinen

Motion Graphics
Big Star

Executive Creative Director
Josh Norton

Executive Producer
Carson Hood

Producer
Kristen Weber

Senior Designer / Animator
Jane Wu

Designer / Illustrator
Carol Cai

Animator
Brian Landsman

Music
Olivier Manchon
Clare Manchon

Distribution Advisor
Submarine Entertainment
Josh Braun

Production Counsel
Frankfurt Kurnit Klein & Selz PC
Melissa Georges

Associate Producers
Archer Grano
Liam Epstein

Digital Intermediate Colorist
Will Cox

Digital Intermediate Online Editor
Steve Quinlan

Digital Intermediate Producer
Caitlin Tartaro

Digital Intermediate Manager
Drew Kilgore

Digital Intermediate Executive Producer
Will Cox

Re-Recording Mixer
Annie Medlin

Sound Effects
Steven Ross

ADR Engineer
Alex Loew

Post-Production Services
Final Frame

Makeup
Theo Kogan
Aviva Leah

Transcription
David Jenkins

Original Still Photography
Madde Pontin

Additional Support
Abstract LLC

Thank You
Lindsey Acree
Sophie Anderson
Erin Lee Carr
Jonas Cohler
Eda Dalaman
Deborah Gordon

Leonard Groopman
Amanda Lebow
Kristen Lynch
Kenneth Novack
Alan Oxman
Roy Perlis
Stacey Reiss
Eli Rossi
Stella Rossi
Lauren Sandler
Madelon Sprengnether
Mary Tanski

Senior Series Producer
Lindsay Crouse

Supervising Editors
Regina Sobel
Andrew Blackwell

Associate Producer
Yvonne Ashley Kouadjo

Executive Producer
Adam Ellick