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# Kathryn Bigelow

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Genre, Gender  
and Relationships Between Men

# Education: From Painting/Conceptual Art

- Born 1951 in California
- Studied painting at [San Francisco Art Institute](#) (BFA 1972)
- Earned scholarship to Independent Study Program at [Whitney Museum of Art](#) in 1972
- Collaborated with conceptual artists [Vito Acconci](#) and [Lawrence Weiner](#)
- Joined collective conceptual art group [Art & Language](#)
- Visiting faculty member at [California Institute of the Arts School of Art](#)



Kathryn Bigelow as member of Art & Language.

Image source: [Signal](#)

# ... To Film

- Earned MFA from Columbia University School of the Arts Film Program in 1981
- Student film, *The Set Up* (1978), engaging in visceral depiction and deconstruction of violence



Image source: Film Reference

# Early Films

1  
9  
8  
2



*The Loveless*

1  
9  
8  
7



*Near Dark*

1  
9  
9  
0



*Blue Steel*

1  
9  
9  
1



*Point Break*

# Later Films

1  
9  
9  
5



*Strange Days*

2  
0  
0  
0



*The Weight of Water*

2  
0  
0  
2



*K-11: The Widowmaker*

2  
0  
0  
8



*The Hurt Locker*

# Genres: War Film

## Classical War

- Unit that is a democratic ethnic and religious mixture
- Hero part of the group, but must separate himself in order to be a good leader
- Specific objective and enemy
- Recognized military equipment and costume
- Idealization of home/values associated with home
- Soldier made noble by patriotic action of war even as he engages in violence

## Anti-War

- Home as social and political world from which war has emerged
- Field of combat as space where soldier can feel “at home”
- Graphic, realistic depiction of environmental destruction and bodily damage inflicted by war
- Emphasis on subjective, psychological reality of war
- Altered psychological state that alienates hero from world of home; home world that cannot understand the soldier’s experience
- Re-examination of values associated with home

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# Genre: Action

- Presence of conflict: “Alone or as part of a group, the heroes face some figure, force, or element that challenges them physically and mentally”
  - Overcoming of challenge: “the action or adventure hero is called upon to demonstrate courage, initiative and physical endurance, ultimately triumphing over what are typically cast as impossible odds”
  - Presence of spectacular action sequences, which can involve pursuit or violence
    - Post 1968—increasingly bloody and graphic depictions of violence
  - Connection to cultural concerns *and* spectacle of violence
    - “Because action focuses on conflict, it is centrally concerned with defining heroism and presenting violence as just in some instances, unjust in others. As such, action and adventure narratives enact scenarios of social power at a variety of registers, whether as a response to oppression, a celebration of empire and conquest, or more generalized images of physical freedom from the restraints of culture. . . . Yet violence and movement more generally are also presented as sources of formal pleasure within action cinema.”
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# Action: From Sequence to Genre

- 1980s shift in action
    - Action as genre rather than sequence
    - Combination of comedy with action
    - Turn away from critical action of previous two decades (conspiracy, surveillance and pursuit)
    - Genre characterized by “ideological simplicity and spectacular violence”
    - Excess, both in muscularity of male heroes bodies, pace and detail of action
  - Action as genre that articulates (reflects and constitutes) masculinity/new formations of masculinity
    - Jeffords (paraphrased in Barscay): hard body of hero standing in for the nation
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