

Arts & culture

Ageing topics on stage, screen and digital media

By Linda Belardi

FILM TRIBUTE TO CENTENARIAN DANCER

The Arts Health Institute has produced a short video in conversation with centenarian and distinguished dancer Eileen Kramer.

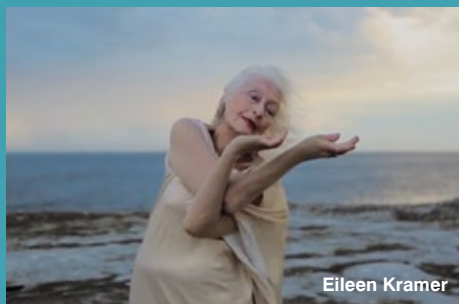
Kramer is the recipient of the AHI's 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award for her long and successful career as a performer, choreographer and artist.

The inspirational Australian was a founding member of Australia's first modern dance company Bodenwieser Ballet, and has since toured extensively overseas.

She was recognised at the 2nd National Play Up Convention in December for her passion and enduring contribution to the creative arts and her embodiment of positive ageing.

Kramer said reaching 100 was liberating and she was constantly exploring new endeavours. Her advice - be creative and always look forward. "Don't let yourself be swamped by reality. I'd rather live in a fantasy world and I can't see any reason why I shouldn't."

Watch the video: www.youtube.com/user/ArtsHealthInstitute



Artist Naomi Mikkelsen presents May Pearce, Nita Haynes and Clare Vidler (L-R) with their portraits.

PAINTING PERSONALITIES

Local artist Naomi Mikkelsen has painted the portraits of residents at the BaptistCare Mid Richmond Centre in rural NSW as part of an art project on older Australians.

Mikkelsen said it was overwhelming to hand over the portraits, which are now on display in the facility.

"One resident, Clare, was in tears when I gave her the artwork. She said she couldn't believe someone had taken the time to paint her. It was quite emotional for me also," said Mikkelsen.

She said the residents were excited to be involved and she was inspired to capture the residents' personalities through her paintings.

"Those who love deeply never grow old; they may die of old age, but they die young." – Benjamin Franklin.

FROM HER EYES

You're Looking at Me Like I Live Here and I Don't

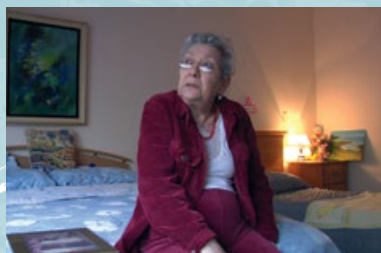
is an American documentary shot entirely from the perspective of a person living with Alzheimer's disease. Lee Gorewitz is a resident at a dementia care unit in Danville, California and the audience is invited to witness how she experiences the world.

Although Lee may not be able to name her disease or articulate her experience, filmmaker Scott Kirschenbaum gives us a glimpse of her living it – the disinhibited behaviours, the confusion and frustration, as well as moments of joy and interaction. Everything we learn about this physically vivacious woman is gleaned from Lee herself. Her family is completely absent from the film and the care staff, while in the background, are intentionally not interviewed by the filmmakers. Kirschenbaum said he sought to capture what he describes as the "Alzheimer's odyssey, a meandering string of transitory interactions and experiences."

It is film that arouses our empathy and captures on-screen a truly unforgettable woman.

Through this documentary, Kirschenbaum reminds us that although those with Alzheimer's might forget us, it is a disservice to forget about them. The film first aired in the US on PBS, and is now screening at dementia-related events around the world.

For more information visit: yourelookingatme.com



Lee Gorewitz is the subject of this Alzheimer's documentary.



MULTIMEDIA STUDY DOCUMENTS AGEING EXPERIENCE

Researchers from La Trobe University travelled throughout urban and regional Australia to capture the lived experience of ageing through film.

Participants discussed what was important to them as they age and what it felt like to be getting older - physically, mentally and in their social context.

The qualitative research project aimed to provide insight into the lived experience of ageing through interviews with 56 older Australians in their own homes.

In the short films, the participants reflect on their ageing bodies, staying healthy, the attitudes of others, and coping with death and dying.

La Trobe researcher Dr Kayli Wild said many of those who shared their stories spoke about gaining increased wisdom, confidence, tolerance and self-expression as they aged.

The themes of not wanting to be a burden on family or society and wanting to continue to contribute in late life also featured prominently in many of the interviews.

Watch the Experiences of Ageing study videos at: research.healthtalkonlineaustralia.org