

VOGUE

TV & MOVIES

Miranda July Talks #MeToo, Tech, and *Joanie 4 Jackie*

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As soon as you hear about *Joanie 4 Jackie*, filmmaker, author, and actor Miranda July's archival chain letter video compilation project, you'll understand why people are still talking about it more than 20 years after she first started the effort. Originally called the *Big Miss Moviola Chainletter Tape*, July's call-to-arms was a DIY women's filmmaking project by the then college dropout, inspired by punk, music zines, and the Riot Grrrlscene, in which July invited female artists to send in their shorts, which she would compile into a single tape, complete with a quirky intro from July herself, and mail back to participants. Its principle was radical acceptance: No film was denied entry, and every tape came with a set of letters from each filmmaker addressed to her *Miss Moviola* compatriots. Analog in a way that feels so lamentably distant now (July did almost all of the work herself, on a VHS machine and photocopiers), *Joanie 4 Jackie* helped connect dozens of young, green filmmakers around the country who might otherwise have wondered if anyone would ever get to see what they made.

Joanie 4 Jackie grew and changed with July—there were a few iterations of chain letters, the later ones curated by other feminist filmmakers, as well as events around the country with contributors, and even an internship program. Eventually, before the release of her first feature film, *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, July entrusted the *Joanie 4 Jackie* archives to students at Bard College in 2003, who preserved hundreds of tapes, pamphlets, posters, and other materials. In 2010, more Bard students helped digitize them as well as gather testimonials from past participants, which were posted on Joanie4Jackie.com. And finally, in 2017, July donated the entire archive to the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles.

As “space” for women politically and professionally has been the primary topic of discussion in the last year post-#MeToo, *Joanie 4 Jackie* is almost prophetic in its creation of a physical, unmediated resource for solidarity and connection among women who felt unseen and unheard. And its importance as an archive that other women can peruse today, digitally and in person, made July an ideal person to speak at this year's FotoFocus Biennial, the theme of which was “Open Archive.” July spoke with *Vogue* on the phone after the event,

which occurred at the tail end of one of the most politically fractious weeks of Donald Trump’s presidency (which is, obviously, saying something)—she talked *Joanie 4 Jackie*, how social media has changed and not changed filmmaking, and how her work interrogates whose experiences are considered “real.” She also touched on her new installation at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, in which a set of curtains open and close according to the phone activities of July’s friend and former Uber driver, Oumarou Idrissa.