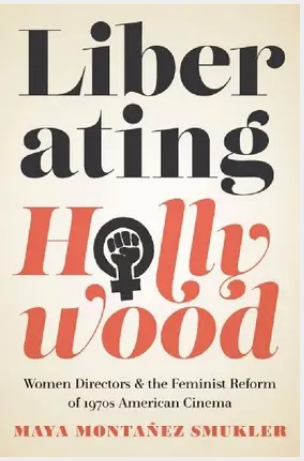
Rutgers University Press

Liberating Hollywood

Women Directors and the Feminist Reform of 1970s American Cinema



Liberating Hollywood examines the professional experiences and creative output of women filmmakers during a unique moment in history when the social justice movements that defined the 1960s and 1970s challenged the enduring culture of sexism and racism in the U.S. film industry. Throughout the 1970s feminist reform efforts resulted in a noticeable rise in the number of women directors, yet at the same time the institutionalized sexism of Hollywood continued to create obstacles to closing the gender gap. Maya Montañez Smukler reveals that during this era there were an estimated sixteen women making independent and studio films: Penny Allen, Karen Arthur, Anne Bancroft, Joan Darling, Lee Grant, Barbara Loden, Elaine May, Barbara Peeters, Joan Rivers, Stephanie Rothman, Beverly Sebastian, Joan Micklin Silver, Joan Tewkesbury, Jane Wagner, Nancy Walker, and Claudia Weill. Drawing on interviews conducted by the author, Liberating Hollywood is the first study of women directors within the intersection of second wave feminism, civil rights legislation, and Hollywood to investigate the remarkable careers of these filmmakers during one of the most mythologized periods in American film history.

Winner of the 2018 Richard Wall Memorial Award from the Theater Library Association

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