

Wildlight Productions, Inc. Presents

KINGS PARK

*Stories from an
American Mental Institution*

A film by Lucy Winer and Karen Eaton



Photo by Jason D. Brown

Running Time: 108 minutes

<http://www.kingsparkmovie.com>

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KINGS PARK PRESS KIT

KINGS PARK: STORIES FROM AN AMERICAN MENTAL INSTITUTION
a film by Lucy Winer and Karen Eaton

Short Synopsis

Thirty years later after her original commitment, director Lucy Winer returns to the now-abandoned state hospital that once held her captive.

Synopsis

On June 21, 1967, at the age of 17, Lucy Winer was committed to the female violent ward of Kings Park State Hospital following a series of failed suicide attempts. Over thirty years later, now an award-winning documentary filmmaker, Ms. Winer returns to Kings Park for the first time since her discharge. Her journey back sparks a decade-long effort to face her past and learn the story of the now abandoned institution that once held her captive. Meetings with other former patients, their families, and the hospital staff, reveal the painful legacy of our state hospital system and the crisis left by its demise.

Following a “sneak peek” at the Stony Brook International Film Festival, where it broke festival records with an audience turnout of over 1500, **Kings Park** premiered at the Woodstock International Film Festival where the screenings were sold-out and reviews were glowing. Showcased at major national conferences including the American Psychiatric Association, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), and the National Association of Social Workers to name a few, **Kings Park** is finding a vast audience in the mental health care community. Recently **Kings Park** was awarded the 2012 Education/Media Award from the New York Psychiatric Association of Rehabilitative Services (NYAPRS).

Background

They were very much alike - forbidding buildings and massive brick complexes - out of ear shot and hidden from view. These are the state hospitals where individuals deemed “mentally ill” were compelled to live out their lives. Established in 1885 and closed in 1996, Kings Park State Hospital on Long Island, New York, warehoused over 9,000 patients at its height in the 1950’s. Committed there in 1967 as a suicidal teenage girl, one such patient was Lucy Winer, the film’s director.

Kings Park offers an inside look at public mental health care in America by focusing on the story of this now abandoned institution. The journey back begins with Lucy’s sudden decision, on the cusp of her fiftieth birthday, to return to Kings

Park for the first time in over thirty years. Determined to face her past, Lucy's goals are purely personal when the film begins. She soon learns, however, that in order to fully understand her own story, she needs to somehow learn about the institutional world in which she was once locked away.

To this end, Lucy seeks out other former patients, their families, and hospital staff, who share intimate accounts of their lives at Kings Park. Shot on the overgrown and moldering grounds of the shuttered hospital, these firsthand accounts of a vanishing world bear witness to the many changes in treatment, policy and attitudes over the past century.

The film culminates with a vision of today. Stories are shared of the often brutally executed "emptying out" of the hospital, and we follow Lucy in her effort to see how mental health care has changed since the hospital's close. Scenes shot at small mental health care centers, committed to the recovery of their members despite limited resources, let us see the kind of progress that is being made. In contrast, footage shot at the local jail reveals a very different reality – where the penal system has replaced the state hospital as the default "provider" for people with serious mental illness.

A documentary with great relevance for today, **Kings Park** brings to light our nation's current crisis in mental health care and helps us to understand how we got here. Revealing the lessons of the past as a means of generating open discourse, **Kings Park** offers a creative platform from which we can face the challenges of the present and imagine the possibilities of the future.



"When the credits ended and the house lights came on, the audience sat in stunned silence. After a few seconds there was a scattered applause, which grew into a thunderous roar. **Kings Park** is an extraordinarily powerful film — or three films — superbly tiered with each poignant and insightful."

- *Stewart Nusbaumer, FilmMaker Magazine*

philly.com/Health

“... a deeply moving and disturbing new documentary ... If you’ve got plans cancel them. Go see this incredible account of the history of Long Island’s Kings Park State Hospital...this is a heartrending film.”

- Michael Yudell, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*



“**Kings Park** touches a nerve...a prizewinning film that shines a light into the dark corners of US psychiatric care.”

- Amy Maxmen, *Nature Magazine*

Quotes

“A *tour de force*. I have not seen anything as well made, as sensitive, nor as thoughtful. It is beautiful cinematically and in terms of its emotional tone...a real masterpiece of personal storytelling and documentary filmmaking.”

- Howard H. Goldman, MD PhD, Professor of Psychiatry,
University of Maryland School of Medicine

“A remarkable and groundbreaking film.”

- Robert Glover, Executive Director of the National Association of State
Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)

“**Kings Park** helps bring to life how we treat the most marginalized members of our society.”

- Robert Bernstein, PhD, President & CEO, *Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law*

“**Kings Park** is an honest, balanced and fascinating view of America’s mental health care system, past and present.”

- Doug Bradley, *NAMI Helpline Associate*

“Part personal memoir, part historical documentary, **Kings Park** is a brilliant exploration of the life and death of the state mental hospital. Lucy Winer treats a difficult subject with sensitivity, grace, and compassion.”

- Nancy Tomes, Professor, Department of History, Stony Brook University. Author *The Art of Asylum-keeping: Thomas Story Kirkbride and the Origins of American Psychiatry*

“Lucy Winer revisits the phantoms of her adolescence in an era when psychiatric patients were warehoused, neglected, and abused. As someone who lived a different version of that story, I can attest to the veracity, sensitivity and humanity of this profound, disturbing and deeply probing film.”

- Mindy Lewis, Author *Life Inside: A Memoir*

“In Lucy Winer’s moving and instructive film, her personal story ripples out across generations of patients and staff, connecting us to the indelible effects of a total 20th century institution. The contemporary mental health landscape supports communities of choice and recovery. We also rely on the criminal justice system to accommodate the social consequences of mental illness: poverty, homelessness, joblessness, social isolation. The viewer is compelled to reflect: where will we take this next?”

- Mary Jane Alexander
Director, Center to Study Recovery in Social Contexts

“Lucy Winer produced a film that required tremendous courage... It should be seen by all those who work with and care for the mentally ill and by all those who care about their future.”

- Benjamin Sadock, MD, Menas S. Gregory Professor of Psychiatry, NYU School of Medicine

“... an illuminating and wonderful story of an institution and a person. This is a documentary with a message that both the public and mental health professions can learn from and appreciate.”

- Gerald N. Grob, Henry E. Sigerist Professor of the History of Medicine Emeritus, Rutgers University
Author *The Mad Among Us: A History of the Care of America’s Mentally Ill*

“A critically important project, especially in a time of budget cuts, negative media coverage and public fear of people with mental illness.”

- Ellen Healion
Executive Director, Hands Across Long Island

Screening Highlights to Date

- Woodstock International Film Festival, Sold-Out Premiere
- Stony Brook International Film Festival, Record-Breaking Turn-Out of 1500 Plus
- New York Women in Film and Television
- FilmColumbia
- Light House International Film Festival
- Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
- Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- The American Psychiatric Association, 2012 Annual Conference
- National Alliance for Mental Illness, (N.A.M.I.) 2012 Annual Conference
- National Council for Community Behavioral Health Care, 2012 Annual Conference
- National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD), The Commissioners Meeting 2012
- National Association of Social Workers, 2012 Annual Conference
- New York State Psychological Association, 2012 Annual Conference

Director's Statement

Looking back, I see the making of **Kings Park** as an act of self-rescue. In order to leave the hospital I had to build a wall – a thick psychic barrier that stood between me and my time at Kings Park. For decades, that wall protected me from ever having to look back. But over time the wall became a trap – confining rather than protecting.

Making this film was my way of dismantling that wall and reconnecting with all that lay beyond it. For me, this entailed a series of very tangible steps. I had to go back to the hospital. I had to retrieve my records, and I somehow had to get permission to go back inside my old building and revisit the ward where I had been locked away as a terrified teenage girl. These three goals became my all-consuming passion and were the initial impetus for the film.

Kings Park is divided into three distinct acts. My initial journey back to the hospital is the primary focus of the First Act, entitled "*Part One: Going Back.*" A composite of live action documentary scenes, brief excerpts from many years of video-diaries, and a bringing together of family images and stories that speak to the inheritance of trauma and severe depression, Part One culminates with my return to the now abandoned state hospital and to the rooms of Ward 210, the

female violent ward of Building 21 (the Admissions Building in 1967), where I was originally committed.

The actual making of this film soon took me beyond the search into my own past, and in *“Part Two: The Story of the Hospital”* I set out to meet other former patients, family members, and hospital staff. With each encounter, I got to hear a dramatically different perspective on life at Kings Park. Some stories – especially those of other former patients – helped me to better understand my own experience. Other stories offended me deeply, challenging me to my core. Whether abhorrent or affirming, the act of going back with other people to the hospital grounds and hearing their accounts of the past, was for me a source of intense joy. Going back was a process of healing, and the elation I felt was rooted in the healing process. To make peace with my past, I needed to be able to hear perspectives alien and even threatening to my own.

In Part Two, as the focus shifts from my story, the hospital emerges as the central character of the film. Shot over the course of eight years on the vast 600-acre property that was once Kings Park, the scenes of Part Two have an evocative, dreamlike quality that captures the spirit of the moldering institution and gives it voice.

When I first returned to Kings Park and looked around at the huge, boarded up hospital, my first question was, “Where did everybody go?” When I was at Kings Park there were thousands of other patients there with me. Where were they? In *“Part Three: After the Hospital,”* we move from the past into the present. Scenes are more verite in style, though footage of the county jail hearkens back to images of the state hospital – forbidding brick buildings and locked interiors. The audience is left to question in what ways our society has progressed in its understanding of mental illness, and in what ways we have circled backwards — accepting homelessness and the imprisonment of people with mental illness as an acceptable norm – the very same conditions, ironically, that originally gave rise to the state hospital system in the mid-nineteenth century.

The goal of **Kings Park** is to educate, agitate and cause us to dig deep. More than a call to create increased services and better systems, **Kings Park** challenges us to face our fears and limiting beliefs about mental illness and mental health. Made by an “insider,” **Kings Park** invites viewers to open up and share their experiences. The power of this film lies in the connections it draws between the hopes & failures of the past and the challenges of the present, as well as the balance it creates between an intensely personal story and the pressing concerns of public mental health care in this country today.

The Filmmakers

LUCY WINER, Producer/Director, has been directing and producing award-winning documentaries for over 30 years. Committed throughout her career to issues of social concern, her directing credits include **Greetings from Washington D.C.**, an impressionistic look at the First National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights; **Rate It X**, a critically-acclaimed documentary feature about sexism in America; **Silent Pioneers**, the first of its kind documentary about lesbian and gay seniors; **Positive: Life with HIV**, a ground-breaking, four-part public television series; and **Golden Threads**, an ITVS-funded documentary about the unforgettable, ninety-three-year-old activist and organizer, Christine Burton. Winer's work has been distributed theatrically in this country and overseas, and broadcast nationally on PBS and cable. Her work has been called "intriguing, often hair-raising" by the New York Times; "warm, witty and genuinely touching" by the L.A. Times; "immensely affecting" by the Village Voice; "hilarious" by the Hollywood Reporter; and "produced with humor, insight and irony" by Variety. Her films have been featured at numerous festivals including Sundance, Berlin, Edinburgh, and Turin, and screened at the American Film Institute Theaters in L.A. and D.C., the Walker Art Institute, the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan and the New Museum. Her awards include "Outstanding Film of the Year" from the London Film Festival, a Golden Plaque from the Chicago International Film Festival, a CINE Golden Eagle and an Emmy nomination for "Outstanding Picture."

KAREN EATON, Producer, has collaborated with Winer on numerous productions. She was a Producer and Art Director on the multi-genre documentary, **Golden Threads** (POV). Her background as an artist and designer was critical to the successful interplay of animation and live action documentary footage in this film. Eaton also served as Associate Producer on **Rate It X** (POV) and **Tales of An Exhausted Woman**, as well as Art Director on **Silent Pioneers** (PBS). Founder and President of Canard Design, Inc., a multimedia design studio in Manhattan, her clients have included CBS, WNET, Lincoln Center, Random House, Scholastic, Macmillan and Prentice Hall, among others.

FRIEDRIKE MERCK, Executive Producer, is a visual artist working primarily as a sculptor and photographer. Given a Brownie camera at age seven, a few weeks after the sudden death of her older sister, a life of personal photojournalism ensued for over forty years. The website www.forthegreatergoodwomen.com culminated the artist's recent concentration with photography. Merck's sculpture of bas relief portraits and bronze medallions are found in private and public collections including Brookgreen Gardens, The N-Y Historical Society and the permanent collection of the National Portrait Gallery. Her involvement in moving film began in 2002, when she produced the Academy Award winning **Thoth**. In **Kings Park**, Merck has experienced the dual opportunity of engaging in a creative act while also playing an activist roll in helping impact the public's perception of mental illness. It is her hope that the

film will help relieve the stigma of mental illness, as well as lessen the suffering by those in need of understanding and help.

DEBORAH HOFFMANN, Consulting Producer, produced and directed the Academy Award nominated **Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter** as well as directed (with Frances Reid) **Long Night's Journey into Day**. Over the past 25 years she has edited numerous documentaries including the Academy Award winning **The Times of Harvey Milk**; Marlon Riggs' **Color Adjustment** and **Ethnic Notions**, and Jon Else's **Sing Faster** and **Wonders Are Many**. She was also an editor of Academy Award winner **Common Threads: Stories From the Quilt**. She has received two Emmy Awards, a Peabody, a Columbia DuPont, and two DGA nominations.

FRANCES REID, Consulting Producer, has been producing, directing, and shooting documentary films for over 30 years. With Deborah Hoffmann, she produced and co-directed **Long Night's Journey Into Day: South Africa's Search for Truth & Reconciliation**. It won the Grand Jury Award for Best Documentary at Sundance 2000, was nominated for an Academy Award and a DGA Award, and has been exhibited at festivals worldwide. Her numerous producing and directing credits include **Skin Deep**, the Academy Award nominated short, **Straight From The Heart**, and the ground-breaking documentary, **In the Best Interests of the Children**.

SPIRO C. LAMPROS, Editor, has cut numerous, award-winning documentaries including **Golden Threads** (PBS), **In Good Conscience: Sister Jeannine Gramick's Journey of Faith**, **West 47th Street** (PBS), **Boomtown** (PBS) and the Emmy nominated **Compassion in Exile: The Story of the 14th Dalai Lama**. He also edited **Halving the Bones** (screened in competition at the Sundance Film Festival), and several projects for the Academy Award nominated director/producer Christine Choy. Lampros won a 2009 EMMY for his editing on Season 5 of Project Runway (Bravo).

CLAUDIA RASCHKE-ROBINSON, Director of Photography, is an award winning cinematographer. She has photographed independent feature films and documentaries for over 15 years and is best known for her smooth hand-held camera work and natural lighting style. Her background training is in dance, martial arts and fine arts. Claudia lives with her husband, who is a personal trainer and football coach and her two children in New York City. Notable documentaries include Peabody Award winning **Black Magic** (2009 ESPN), **A Sea Change** (Discovery 2009), **What's Your Point, Honey?** (2008) **The Shoot Down** (2008), **The Music In Me** (HBO series 2008), **Mad Hot Ballroom** (Paramount 2005), Oscar-nominated **My Architect** (add'l DP), Oscar-nominated **Small Wonder** (add'l DP), Oscar nominated **Sister Rose's Passion** (add'l DP) as well as indie features like **Kiss Me Guido**, **Walking in the Sky**, **Frame of Mind**.

ELLIOT SOKOLOV, Composer, has composed scores for a wide variety of film and television productions as well as music for dance, theater, and concerts. His music can be heard in the documentaries **Golden Threads**, **The Restless Conscience** (Academy Award nominee), **The Burning Wall**, and **Hush**, as well as feature films **Broadway Damage** and **Comeback**. He has composed music for television shows including Nature, Nova, National Geographic Explorer, Monsters, Intimate Portrait, and Sesame Street. Elliot has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and Meet the Composer. He has a Masters degree in music composition from Columbia University.

RACHEL FARMER, Senior Associate Producer, has worked alongside Lucy Winer at Wildlight Productions for over a decade. She has helped produce videos for non-profit organizations including a capital campaign video for SAGE (Senior Action in a Gay Environment), an educational video “Mekong Tipping Point” for The Henry L. Stimson Center, and an Aid Darfur PSA campaign for the UN Refugee Agency which featured Tony Bennett, Meryl Streep and Khaled Hosseini (The Kite Runner) as spokespeople. In addition to her film work, she is an artist and a musician with an MFA in sculpture from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has a dual-career in art/museum education and is a School Programs Educator at the Museum of Modern Art. You can see a series of short videos she created about School Programs on MoMA’s website.

Abe Forman-Greenwald, Associate Producer, has been working as a director and editor in film and TV for the past 12 years. Some of his recent work includes directing episodes of the PBS series **In Their Boots**, producing a website of short documentary interviews called **The Man’s Guide To Love**, editing **The Simpsons Ride** for Universal Studios and the documentary/animation hybrid **Creature Comforts** for CBS. Abe also worked as an Assistant Editor in New York for several years on projects for Discovery Channel, History Channel and Harpo Productions. In 2005 he directed his first documentary feature, **Geeks On Board** and plans to do more in the future. This year he is launching a film, web and publishing company called Great Big International alongside his partners from The Man’s Guide To Love. You can follow the progress of his many projects via his Twitter account: @FilmingDocs.

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a film by Lucy Winer and Karen Eaton

Credit List

a film by
Lucy Winer & Karen Eaton

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