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Art of the Real: Cecilia Dougherty, 'Grapefruit'

By Rachel Del Giudice on April 18, 2015 in Art of the Real

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Director Cecilia Dougherty reimagines famous pop-culture icons with lesbians at the center in her new film, *Grapefruit*. It screens on Sunday, April 26, the final day of the Film Society of Lincoln Center's [Art of the Real](http://www.filmlinc.com/films/series/art-of-the-real-2015) series.

**Grapefruit** (<http://www.filmlinc.com/films/on-sale/reimagined-icons-fresh-acconci-grapefruit>)  
Cecilia Dougherty, USA, 1989, 40m

Reimagining The Beatles as four women (including a young Susie Bright as John Lennon), *Grapefruit* restages events leading up to the band's breakup at the end of the 1960s, culled from Yoko Ono's memoirs. Shot on videotape, the episodes—a reenactment of Ono's seminal "Cut Piece," the "Bed-In" with Lennon, Harrison waxing over Buddhist philosophy while strumming an unplugged electric guitar—retain the feel of a home movie while simultaneously opening up a crucial space in history for lesbians where they're no longer on the margins. Per Dougherty: "It is not about lesbians, it is lesbian."

#### Responses from Cecilia Dougherty:

*On memory and pop culture:*

The subject is lesbian reception of popular culture, and it's also how pop culture kind of sits inside people's memories. I wanted to see how different individuals would choose to play out an iconic story. *Grapefruit* is not a documentary, but it is a document of sorts.

*On relearning how to play:*

Well, creating this piece involved a lot of play. We were play-acting. I gave people lots of room to reimagine the people they were supposedly representing, which in this case were The Beatles and Yoko Ono.

*On confusing fiction and documentary:*

How have they influenced my approach to filmmaking? I think I hadn't seen many very interesting or believable documentaries before making this. I often confused documentary with fiction, which in itself became my influence. When I was making this film, I didn't consider ideas about what is true and what are the basic elements of storytelling. Those things weren't relevant to this piece. What was relevant was finding a measure of reality in the re-creation of an old story. Not in the story, but in the re-creation of it.

*On what's next:*

I'd like to create a digital installation based on the book *Zipper Mouth* by Laurie Weeks.