

FEMINIST REVIEW

FEMINIST REVIEW BLOG BELIEVES THAT ALL OPINIONS - POSITIVE AND CRITICAL - ARE VALUABLE AND SEEKS TO GIVE VOICE TO COMMUNITIES THAT REMAIN ON THE MARGINS. OUR MISSION IS TO WRITE REVIEWS FROM FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES TO EXPLORE THE WORLD THROUGH AN ANTI-OPPRESSION LENS. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE MANY FEMINISMS AND PROVIDE A SPACE WHERE THOSE DIFFERENCES CAN BE REPRESENTED AND EXPLORED.

MONDAY, APRIL 23, 2007

The Films of Su Friedrich, Vol. 3: Sink or Swim

By Su Friedrich
Microcinema /
Outcast Films



Su Friedrich's *Sink or Swim* is a beautifully complex film that quietly sneaks up on the viewer, draws her in and, ultimately, leads her

to a place of intimate introspection and intense analysis. The film follows Friedrich's development from "The Girl" to "The Woman" through a series of anecdotes involving her father. The viewer follows Friedrich's maturation as she celebrates birthdays, mourns her parent's divorce and struggles to reconnect with her father after he remarries.

Many of the film's anecdotes center on water, a force of nature which is at once a source of great pleasure and pain for Friedrich. It is from one such memory that the film gets its title: when Friedrich tells her father she would like to learn to swim, he takes her to the water, explains the methods of swimming and then throws her into the deep end to *Sink or Swim*. The film is comprised of a series of equally powerful and arresting interactions between father and daughter, each of them important to Friedrich's development in its own way.

The power of the film lies not in the recollection of the memories, however, but in the way that Friedrich uses them to move beyond the personal to the universal. Friedrich weaves narrative upon narrative, using her past as a lens through which she may gaze critically at everything from the construction of the Self, to social definitions of femininity and womanhood, and the ideals of the American family. Friedrich considers these issues with a tenderness and subtlety which is at once astounding and breathtaking. *Sink or Swim* is simply brilliant.

Review by Joanna Chlebus

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AT 6:52 PM

KEY TERMS: CHILDHOOD, DEVELOPMENT, FATHER, FEMINIST, FILM, GIRLHOOD