

Press Notes for *The Flamingo*

Title: The Flamingo

Director: Adam Sekuler

Running Time: 78 minutes

Genre: Documentary

Language: English

Year: 2024

Logline:

The Flamingo is a portrait of Mary Phillips, a 60-something divorcee who seeks intimacy, pleasure and freedom after 13 years of celibacy. Through self-embodiment, Mary reclaims her power, challenging societal conceptions of aging and female sexuality.

Synopsis:

The Flamingo is a feature-length documentary that intimately follows Mary Phillips, a 63-year-old divorcee who reinvents herself after 13 years of celibacy and isolation. Set against the backdrop of dungeon parties, road trips, and moments of deep reflection, the film traces Mary's journey as she claims her power through sexual play and healing touch within the BDSM community. It is a coming-out tale—both sexually and emotionally—as Mary navigates the complexities of desire, aging, and connection.

The film offers an unflinching look at how Mary redefines herself, whether by providing advice over pink lemonade to a neighbor curious about the swingers community, leading platonic cuddling sessions, or recounting her experiences with young women around a bonfire. Mary's role as a healer—both physical and emotional—comes through as she mothers those around her, even as she grapples with the challenges of her own life, including a strained relationship with her daughter.

Through its observational and poetic style, *The Flamingo* explores the interplay between Mary's joie de vivre and her existential questions about what life holds as she enters her final years.

Ultimately, *The Flamingo* offers a fresh perspective on aging and female sexuality, challenging viewers to see aging not as a process of decline but as a time to reclaim pleasure, self-expression, and autonomy.

Director's Statement:

With *The Flamingo*, I wanted to capture the nuanced and deeply personal journey of a woman like Mary Phillips, someone who refused to be boxed in by societal expectations about aging or female sexuality. This film was a meditation on how we could reclaim agency—over our bodies, our desires, and our lives—at any stage of life. It wasn't just about BDSM; it was about what it meant to live authentically, embrace one's desires, and navigate the vulnerability that came with such boldness.

The film's observational style allowed Mary's reinvention to unfold naturally, offering a candid and unfiltered glimpse into her world. As a filmmaker, I also sought to explore the ethics of portraying such intimate, transgressive experiences on screen. Through negotiation, consent, and trust, I worked to create a space where Mary's story could be told in all its complexity and sensitivity.

Production Notes:

- *The Flamingo* was filmed over six years, giving the documentary an immersive, longitudinal perspective on Mary's personal growth and transformation.
 - The film's observational approach minimized the intrusion of the camera, allowing Mary's life to unfold organically on screen, highlighting moments of joy, vulnerability, and introspection.
 - The BDSM community was portrayed with care, offering a respectful and insightful look at its practices, while challenging broader societal taboos around sexuality, aging, and power.
 - Key scenes, such as Mary's candid discussions about her strained relationship with her daughter and the complexities of her illicit affair, were interspersed with moments of healing and mentorship, creating a rich tapestry of her life.
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Themes:

- **Pleasure and Power:** Mary's journey through the BDSM community illustrates how sexual play becomes a vehicle for reclaiming personal power and agency, particularly for older women.
 - **Aging and Identity:** At its core, *The Flamingo* challenges society's expectations of aging, showing how women like Mary can redefine their sense of self and embrace new, non-traditional ways of living and loving.
 - **Healing and Connection:** Through her role as a healer, both in BDSM practices and in platonic interactions, Mary offers a unique perspective on how touch and intimacy create bonds that transcend conventional relationships.
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Key Scenes:

- **Dungeon Parties and Intimacy:** The film shows Mary navigating BDSM dungeon parties and engaging with strangers in a series of consensual, intimate encounters. These moments are portrayed with sensitivity, highlighting both the empowerment and vulnerability of such experiences.
- **Mentorship and Healing:** In one scene, Mary offers advice to a neighbor who is curious about joining the swingers community. In another, she sits around a bonfire with young women, discussing the healing touch of a platonic cuddling session. These moments emphasize Mary's nurturing side and her newfound purpose in helping others explore their desires.
- **The Affair:** In one of the most emotionally charged scenes, Mary opens up about her ongoing affair with Don, a married man. This relationship, filled with tension and fragility, serves as a poignant reflection on the complexities of love and intimacy in Mary's life.

Key Cast & Crew:

- Mary Phillips (Main Subject)
- Adam Sekuler (Director, Cinematographer)
- Weenta Girmay (Producer)
- Donal Mosher (Supervising Editor)
- Wendy Durrwachter (Original Music)
- Mell Detmer (Sound Mixing)
- Shanna Maurizi (Color)

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