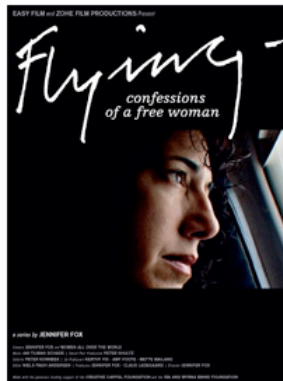


Flying – Confessions of a Free Woman: What does real freedom mean?

By **Jenny Lauck**, 10:25 am, Fri 29 Jun 2007



I've just finished watching the sixth and final hour of Jennifer Fox's film, *Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman*. I almost don't know where to start, how to explain what I've just experienced watching this film. I think the damp pile of tissues and empty wine glass next to my monitor pretty much says it all.

From the promotional information:

In six hour-long episodes, Jennifer Fox maps the world of female life and sexuality today – from the dramatic turns in her own life to the stories of women around the globe that shed light on the universal issues all women face. Filmed over five years, Jennifer traveled to over 17 countries in search of what it means to be a free woman. Employing a groundbreaking camera technique – called “passing the camera” – this powerful series creates a new type of documentary language and storytelling that mirrors the special way women communicate.

What this blurb doesn't really touch on is the fact that Fox is on a journey to uncover her own personal definition of freedom, a definition that evolves throughout the film. The first hours of the film, Fox surrounds herself with people who share her views on marriage, love, and children. She isn't seeking answers or real advice. She's seeking validation. She comes across as neurotic, needy and selfish...and yet, I didn't dislike her. Maybe it was because she reminded me of a few girlfriends, and even my own sister, whose relationship choices and thoughts on marriage and children don't match my own. I could have easily been inserted into many of the filmed conversations. This is a language that I understood, because I've experienced it first hand.

As the film progressed, and Fox began speaking with women around the world, I really began to be moved by the film. Fox's disdain for her mother and grandmother's roles, as well as her disdain for commitment, at first so jarring, is given a framework as the film progresses. A more complex portrait of Fox emerges, and she is still complicated, neurotic, needy and selfish. Although there were times when I was frustrated with Fox, I was also interested in her progress towards her own understanding.

The segments in filmed in India, Pakistan, Cambodia and with Somali women in England were very powerful. Arranged marriage for prepubescent girls, sexual abuse, female circumcision, young women shamed or forced into the sex trade, rape, the value of virginity, and even murder of daughters by parents was discussed matter-of-factly between Fox and

her subjects. Fox's own definition of freedom focused heavily on sexuality and lack of commitment, and her questions on these subjects were met with incredulity, confusion and even laughter. As she experienced these women's stories, and learned about their extended family dynamics and the cultures in which they were raised, she began to understand why her grandmother and mother attempted to restrict her freedom as a child, and gained a new perspective on her father's role in her adult views on relationships.

Much of the film focuses on Fox's relationships with two lovers – the married South African whom she loves, and the Swiss-German boyfriend whom she likes and respects, but doesn't feel a burning passion for. Her friends and new acquaintances listened politely to Fox's tales of woe, and then bluntly offered their advice on the relationships. As these relationships change over the course of the film, Fox's initial position of power changes, too. The transition from being an independent woman with two lovers, both of whom know about each other, to a woman who finds that the very qualities that once made her desirable can also be used against her is a painful one. Fox's desire to have a child complicates matters, and her ambivalence toward her own mother and grandmother and fear that her life will change forever (duh) provides plenty of interview fodder.

The final hour, Fox returns to her family, and begins the long process of putting aside her desire to flee from these women. I found myself smiling, with tears rolling down my cheeks as I watched these final scenes. Fox found that these women who had raised her had compelling stories and hidden parts that she never knew about – and realized that her own story has been deeply influenced by them.

Although I frequently wanted to shake her by her shoulders, smack her across the face or hand her a stiff drink and give her a chuck on the chin, I found myself intrigued by Jennifer Fox. I wanted her to make peace with her choices, and find balance. Candid, raw and unflinching, *Flying – Confessions of a Free Woman* ultimately reveals that real love sets you free, even as it binds you to others.

Flying – Confessions of a Free Woman opens in NYC July 4th – July 17th for an exclusive engagement. The full film will be presented in two parts – each running 2 hours and 55 minutes. Jennifer Fox will be on hand for questions after several of the showings. If you're in the NYC area, grab your girlfriends and go see it.

Jenny Lauck's butt is asleep, but my mind is flying.