

# Cause of Death / through the eyes of...

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**Cause of Death** seen through the eyes of Sarah Schlüssel, member of the preselection team of Berlinale Shorts:

How do we look at the female body? And how do we treat it? Jyoti Mistry examines the (male) gaze on women, skillfully assembling a collage of historic archival footage from the EYE Film Museum. In some way or another, we all know these images; but Mistry arranges them in a way that adds a new layer to what has been seen before, contrasting these depictions of women from different cultures and backgrounds. It hits you right in the face. Western women, either sex symbols or mothers; and non-Western women, bare-chested curiosities, dancing for the colonialists' amusement.

The bell tolls – a warning? Accompanied by South African writer and poet Napo Masheane's haunting words, we get to know Anonymous: the nameless, unknown girl and woman. Anonymous, a being which exists only to entertain men. An object, a toy, a threat.

Systemic violence against women has existed for as long as we can think, with femicide being its most extreme and violent form. Anonymous is beaten, drowned, hanged, stoned to death. In animated scenes contrasting the historic images, Mistry gets very graphic, working directly on and with the material. A healthy body is superimposed with images of broken bones, injuries are named and shown next to the wounds. How many times can a woman die?

For a woman, a relationship with a man can be hazardous, at least if she does not behave in the way she is expected. Anonymous carries deep scars on her body, says Masheane; love is a mortal danger. It might be a "love that bites," as Masheane says. A witch is burned at the stake. The autopsy report states it clearly: "cause of death is: woman."



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Sarah Schlüssel is a culture manager with a focus on film and festivals. She is a member of the Berlinale Shorts selection committee, coordinates the [Short Form Station](#) of Berlinale Talents, and co-founded [shorts/salon](#).