"Lasting Evidence" was the title of the Seventh Annual Women in the Director's Chair film and video festival held in Chicago, Ill., from March 9-12, a designation that drew attention to the organizers' continued purpose of recognizing women's use of film and video to preserve and support their own and others' experiences and perspectives. This year's festival also gave evidence of its own expansion: 51 films and 46 videocassettes directed by women, up from about 65 total in previous years, ran in 28 two-hour thematic programs over six days (expanded from the usual four) at Facets Multimedia, which cosponsored the event with the Center for New Television. While the festival retained its traditional emphasis on documentary work on a range of social and political issues (this year highlighting a Third World Women's film and video program chosen by Indian-born, London-based film curator Preminda Vie), the number of experimental, narrative, and animation films and tapes increased to about a third of the works shown. Attendance by Chicago women and filmmakers as well as by the general public remained high, and the number of directors, producers, distributors, and programmers from New York, Seattle, Toronto, St. Louis, and points in between further attested to the national recognition of the event as a meeting and marketplace for women working in video.

The opening-night reception, which drew about 150 participants, included three short- er narrative films in place of the usual single feature. Like much of the festival this program had a thematic emphasis: the experiences of Jewish women. Rose and KatZ (1986), produced, directed, and co-written by Ruth Arison, is an engaging comedy about a young boy who, while preparing for his Bar Mitzvah, believes he has been saved by Jesus. His divorced mother must negotiate between him and her orthodox father to maintain family harmony. Despite its traditional premises of woman as buffer zone between men, the 25-minute film succeeds in using humor to register some complexities of motherhood: after initially dismissing the child's religious doubts, the woman concedes, "I'm too much of a Jewish mother to reject you for believing in Jesus!" Separate Skin (1987), written and directed by Dexterity Fishel, is a short experimental narrative that explores the deep anxieties and difficulties with intimacy that a daughter of concentration camp survivors experiences. Many viewers found the film stylistically uneven but liked its portrayal of the character's lesbian relationship as a facet of her complex subjectivity.

The third film on the opening-night program, Louise, the Rebel (1983), a 98-minute feature directed in France by Charlotte Silvera, elicits empathy for Louise, a Tunisian Jewish adolescent growing up in the early 1960s in France. At home, Louise is subject to her mother's arbitrary discipline and erratic behavior, her father's patriarchal privileges, and existing religious and economic strictures of which her French classmates seem enviably ignorant. Secretly viewed late-night television introduces Louise both to the West and the Arab struggle against the French and exacerbates her sense of being an outsider in every context. Louise rebels against the ambivalence and powerlessness of her position in an ongoing battle with her mother, which culminates in a political charade in which eating contests Chay (1987)

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result is a thought-provoking cinematic essay on how women are affected by men's definition and control of public space. Still Life with Barbie, a 1986 film by San Francisco filmmaker Barbara Kudlins, is a playful satire that intercuts shots of a 10-year-old girl enacting absurd scenarios with Barbie and Ken dolls and their friends, with similar scenes enacted by live adult stand-ins (except for Barbie, who is always represented by her customary plasticine face). The 24-minute film is edited as a discourse, with intertitles and a woman's voiceover posing questions and making comments that expose the contradictions between prescribed and actual fantasies and life stages.

June Bridg's (1987) is a high-energy, fast-paced 10-minute film made in 1987 by Milwaukee, WI artists Cathy Cook and Claudia Loosse, reminiscent of the absurdity and disturbing than, Cecelia's Condit's Possibly In Michigan (1983) videotape. (Condit, now teaching at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, is credited as a consultant.) The filmmakers themselves don the requisite white bridal gowns to mow the lawn, shop in a supermarket, and to marry each other, as the cardboard grooms collapse and most of the guests strip off their drag costumes. Our Marilyn (1987), directed by Toronto filmmaker Brenda Longfellow, juxtaposes optically printed images of Marilyn Monroe with those of Canadian heroine Marilyn Bell, who in September 1954 at age 17 was the first person to swim across Lake Ontario. Titles, progress reports on the swim, and voice-over recollections by a speaker who says she was named for "our," i.e., the Canadian Marilyn, augment an aural discourse on the differing fates of Monroe and Bell. Longfellow's film manages to reflect on United States cultural imperialism, nostalgia, the star phenomenon, and the representation of women; at the same time it emphasizes arbitrariness of the sign, in this case "Marilyn."

The festival also featured a number of experimental videos, notably an active group of Chicago-based video artists. Cyndi Moran's Home Movies 1936-1976 (1987) is a three-minute tape that explores the archaology of family mementos without sentimentality, as an owner of a resale shop discusses how she feels about selling old pictures of strangers; in a voice-over-counterpoint to re-edited, found home-movie footage of a family that has died out. Kapra Fleming's First Kiss (1986) also plays with disembodied voice-over, as diverse women's and men's confessions of their first sexual memory or experience fail gradually out of sync with the silhouetted backs of heads to which they initially seemed oriented. Annette Barber's 1987 tape Table of Silence draws on an installation piece of the same title shown in the 1985 Whitney Biennial in 1986 at the Noyes Art Center in Evanston, IL, in which four monitors faced each other across a table, each showing one of the artist's older films. The edited tape casts the viewer even more emphatically as a voyeur of the familial intimacy of food and gathering. Barber introduces each of the four family members with handwritten titles as they munch loudly without speaking in successive close-up. In subsequent segments, seated by tiers and accompanied variously by phone messages about meals and synthesized music, Barber traces the faces as they show the images gradually, graphically eaten away by an ins...