

# COUNTERTRANSFERENCE

**Official Selection**

**SXSW**  
Austin, TX

**Official Selection**

**METHODFEST**  
California

**Official Selection**

**INSIDE OUT**  
Toronto

**Official Selection**

**CINEVEGAS**  
Las Vegas

**Official Selection**

**FRAMELINE**  
San Francisco

**Official Selection**

**SARASOTA**  
Florida



a comedy about therapy and its discontents

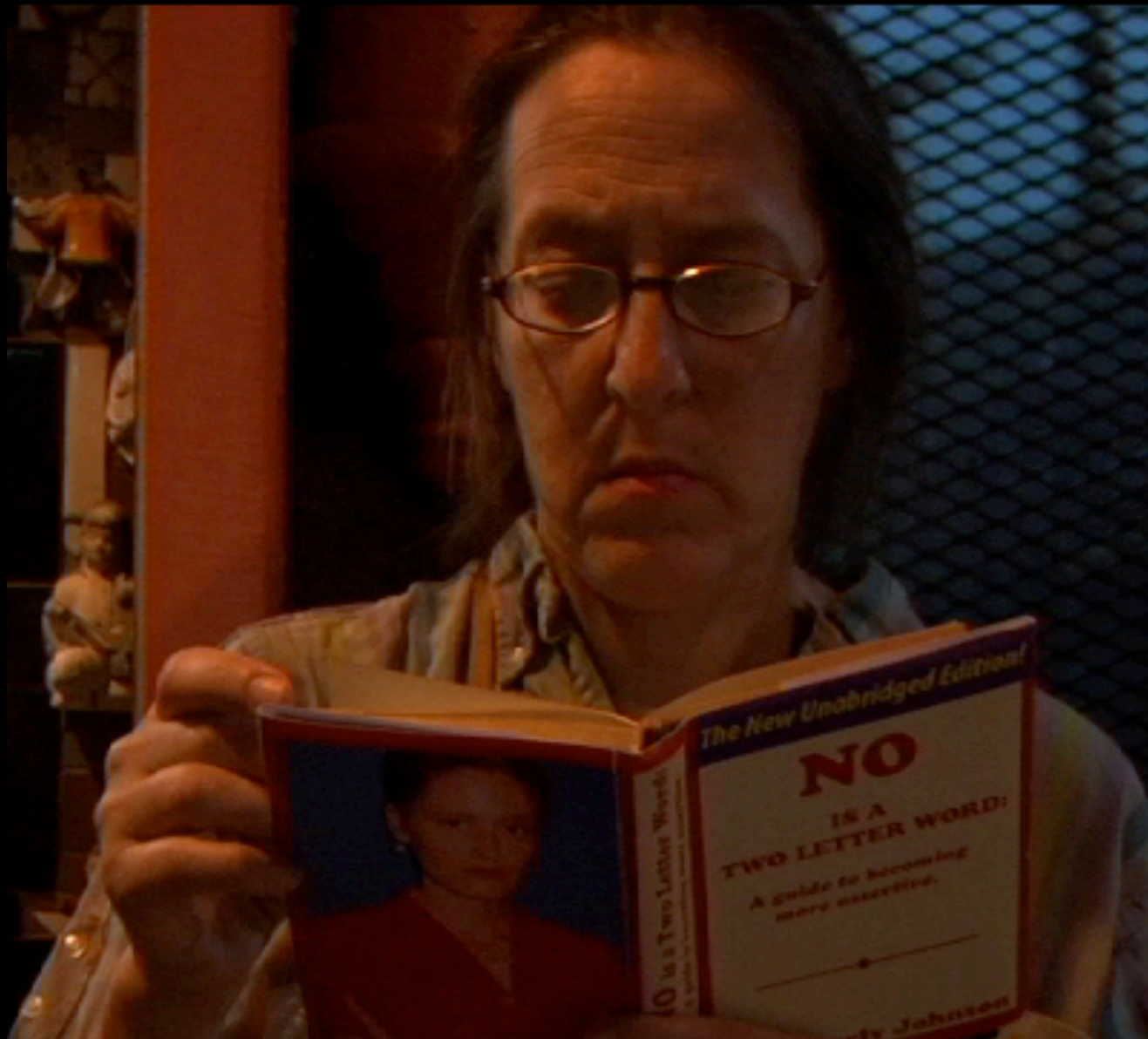


A SHORT FILM BY MADELEINE OLNEK

**AT SUNDANCE, "COUNTERTRANSFERENCE" WAS FEATURED ON I-TUNES AND ALSO WON A \$5000 PRODUCTION GRANT FROM "WOMEN IN FILM" (A Sundance Partner/Sponsor Organization)!**

The Sundance Film Festival Programmers curated a select special 10 of its shorts from the 96 programmed in the 2009 festival to show online during Sundance, and "Countertransference" was honored to be one of the ten.

"Countertransference" also won the "Women In Film" Production Grant, awarded at the "Women in Film" event at Sundance, and selected from all the Women Filmmaker's shorts at Sundance in 2009.





**Iris Prize**  
**OFFICIAL**  
**NOMINATION**  
Wales, UK

**Winner**  
**FAVORITE FILM**  
**IN PROGRAM**  
IFP AUDIENCE CHOICE AWARD  
Columbia MFA Film Fest  
New York

**Winner**  
**BEST DIRECTING**  
**OF ACTORS**  
STUDENT CHOICE AWARD  
Columbia MFA Film Fest  
New York

**COUNTERTRANSFERENCE**

with  
Deb Margolin  
Susan Ziegler  
Rae C Wright

U.S. Short Film – 2008  
15 minutes – mini dv 24 pa – stereo mix

Press Photos download on:  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/countertransferencethemovie/>

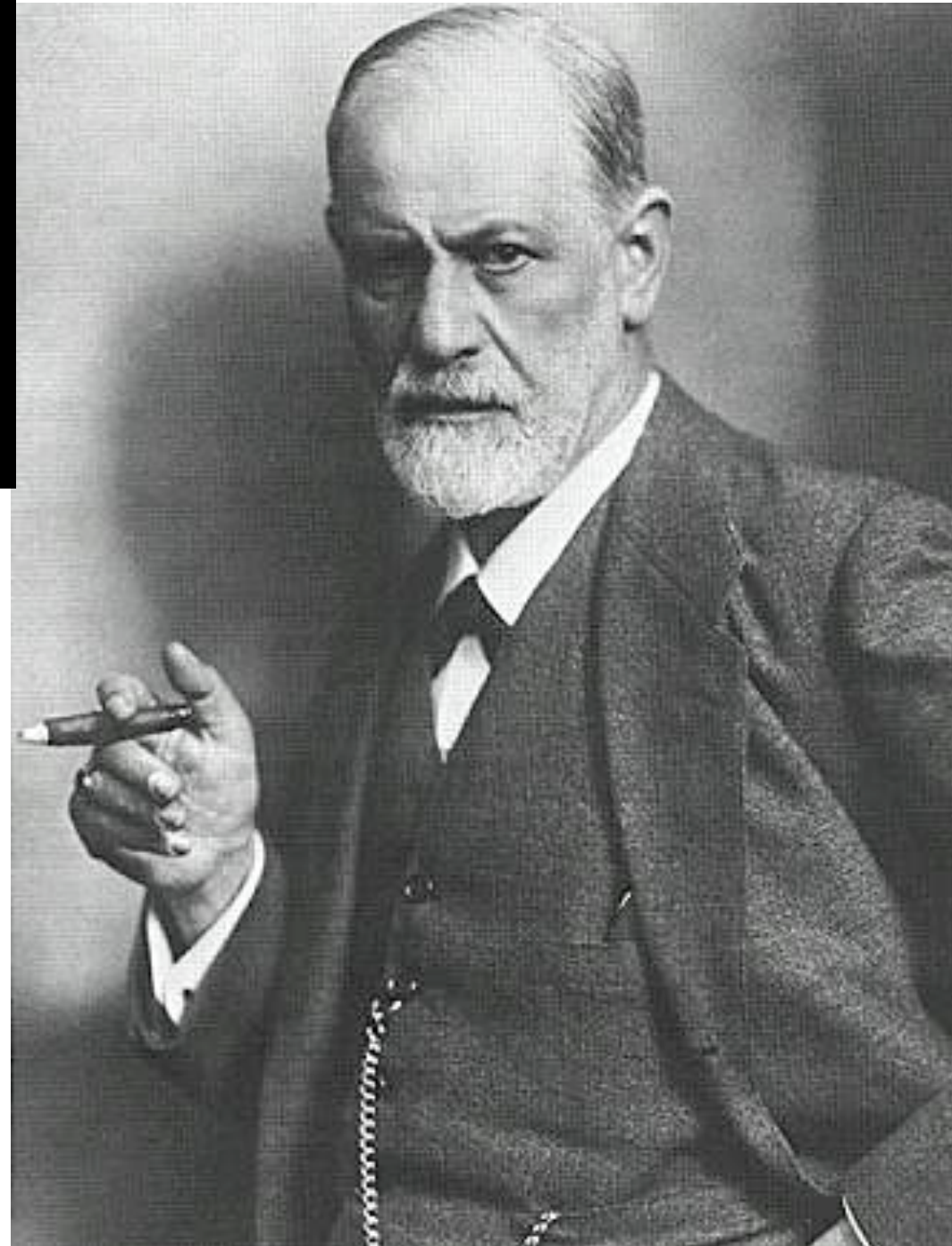
Director Madeleine Olnek's Official Website: [www.madeleineolnek.com](http://www.madeleineolnek.com)  
Contact: [madshorts@gmail.com](mailto:madshorts@gmail.com) phone: 917-587-7064

# SYNOPSIS/PROGNOSIS

“Countertransference” is a comedy about a lonely, socially awkward woman with assertiveness issues who finds her problems multiplied in therapy.

*Winner of the 2008 OUTFEST Grand Jury Prize for Outstanding Dramatic Short*

“...the wryly humorous comedy *Countertransference*, a 15-minute film from American filmmaker Madeleine Olnek that looks at the frustration and discontent that can arise during therapy-- especially with an unbalanced borderline psychotic therapist at the helm. Carla Carthrop is a shy, socially awkward woman with massive self-esteem issues. She works in an antique store and her professional claim to fame is being selected to manage the basement, which you can only access through a bulky trapdoor-- but that's only if 'it all works out, in two years.' She's in therapy to work on building her self-confidence, but her therapist begins to toy with her and ply her psyche with sexual suggestive comments and behavior. When Carla calls her on it, the therapist turns it around on her. The core of the film revolves around Carla's attempt to walk away from her dysfunctional therapist. It's a funny, psychologically loaded film that's well crafted and skillfully acted.” *The Bottom Line Magazine, Palm Springs, CA*



# DIRECTOR



**Madeleine Olnek** is a filmmaker, director and playwright. Her first short comedy "Hold Up," was an official selection of Sundance 2006 and the Los Angeles Film Festival, among many others. Her plays have been described by playwright Paula Vogel as "incredible contemporary masterpieces" in American Theater Magazine. Olnek is also one of the authors of "A Practical Handbook for the Actor" (foreword by David Mamet). "Countertransference" won the Adrienne Shelley Award for Best Female Director (Columbia MFA FF) and the Grand Jury award for Outstanding Dramatic Short at Outfest 2008.



## FILMOGRAPHY

**Countertransference** (2008)

**Make Room for Phyllis** (2007)

**Hold Up** (2006)

Official Selection- Sundance 2006

WINNER- NEWFEST Audience Award, NY 2005

WINNER- Fresno Reel Pride Audience Award, California 2006

WINNER- Closet Cinema Audience Award, New Mexico 2006

## PLAYOGRAPHY

Three Stories High

Lenore, The Human Roach Motel

You Call For The Fireman and The Arsonist Comes

Gay, Gay, Gay!

Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same

The Jewish Nun

Oona and Lurleen

Fan Mail

Help! Police!

23 Weston Road

A Bird in The Hand

It's Not The Shoes (based on "The Twelve Dancing Princesses")

From Eternity to Here

Room and Board

The Bad Neighbors Soap Opera, Episode 2

Wild Nights With Emily

How to Write While You Sleep

Spookyworld

Double Awareness Double Awareness

Dick Clark's Happy Rockin' New Year's Eve at the Millennium

Case Studies (segments)

The Destiny of Mimi

The I'm-Not-Welcome-Anywhere Christmas Special

Disaster Area Nurse

# Interview with the Director

**Tell us about your film. What was the impetus for making COUNTERTRANSFERENCE? Was there any single inspiration?**

I wanted to tell a story about a therapist who loses her mind and causes the lives of her patients to unravel. I have always been fascinated by the process of therapy: here are two people sitting in a room, attempting to talk about the subtext of a life. But meanwhile the subtext has a subtext, and people's alleged motives (to help and to get help) are really not as clear-cut as they present themselves to be. It seemed like a great subject matter to mine for comedy.

I also read with some amusement about a therapists' conference which held a workshop called "Erotic Countertransference." Transference is the process by which the therapist remains a blank slate and learns from what the patient projects on to them; countertransference is when a therapist projects onto the patient and is something that is NOT supposed to happen in therapy. The organizers of the "Erotic Countertransference" workshop worried that no therapists would attend since the subject matter was so taboo, but apparently it was the most popular workshop at the conference. The therapists read their erotic fantasies about their patients out loud-- which ranged from the prosaic to more hard-core scenarios-- and it was supposedly very cathartic with a lot of crying and relief; I found the whole description horrifying and hilarious.

**What is your approach to improvisation? I was stunned to learn the entire movie had been improvised on camera.**

I value improv because people can truly be in the moment and respond honestly – but the approach has to be tightly structured and objective driven; some of the actors in *Countertransference* are playwrights, and they all have an intuitive understanding of how to create improvised dialogue that is objective-driven and structured. I learned a lot about acting when I studied with David

Mamet; and his entire approach has to do with remaining incredibly focused on what you want in each scene—which is also a great approach for improv. I wrote an outline for the story, and directed the actors to keep singularly focused on what their characters wanted. Some of these actors have followed me into and out of innumerable demented comedies that I wrote and directed in downtown New York City theater venues; I've worked with them for many years. Our history together in the production of our sold-out theater comedies has created a level of trust, enabling us to create a wildly experimental environment where people are truly impulsive and in the moment. This is the perfect emotional landscape to examine the intimate process of therapy, which is at the core of this film.

**Was there anywhere that your actors were afraid to go with the story? Did you ask them to do anything that was very difficult for them?**

I refused to give actors character names because I didn't want them to have a pre-determined concept of who these people were. I wanted to push them to a place that was really uncomfortable and have them live there and see what they found.

**How kind of you. And are you in therapy now?**

Yes, I think therapy is great and really helpful and it always stuns me when I find out people aren't in therapy because they are really missing out on examining the unconscious forces that are driving them.

**I noticed that your film was also selected by Sundance to be one of ten (out of 96 films) to be showcased on the internet. What do you think of the internet as a platform for films?**

I think the internet is a great platform for films. I'm thrilled to have been selected and think that comedy in general works great in that format. I hope a lot of people will take advantage of seeing Sundance shorts for free.

(Interview conducted by Helen Eisenbach)

## **WHAT CRITICS HAVE SAID ABOUT COUNTERTRANSFERENCE:**

**"A really unusual little gem of a film. It was brilliant ...nicely shot and nicely written--very, very nicely written. I thoroughly enjoyed "Countertransference." Iris TV review, Wales, UK**

**"unforgettable...a comedic goldmine." Filmmaker Magazine**

**"The funniest short film made in the year 2008." Jenni Olson, Planet Out**

**"Madeleine Olnek's latest short made me laugh by the fifteen second mark and kept getting funnier from there." Michael Tully, Hammer to Nail.**

**..."twisted laughs..." Eric Melin, BlogLive - Sundance Film Festival.**

**"[Countertransference] is a funny, psychologically loaded film that's well crafted and skillfully acted" The Bottom Line Magazine, Palm Springs, CA**

**"I've yet to see Madeleine Olnek's first Sundance kissed short Hold Up, but if it's even a shadow of the comedy Countertransference is, then no explanations are necessary as to why Olnek is racking up festival awards and screening selections like they're going out of style." Short of the Week.com**

## **& ABOUT OLNEK'S OTHER WORK:**

**"If Madeleine Olnek's 'Hold up' were an SNL skit, it would be buzzed about at water coolers and on blogs across the country the next Monday... If only more movie comedies were this wry and skilled." Baltimore City Paper**

**"Uproariously Neurotic Comedy." New York Newsday  
"Hilarious... Olnek directs at a breathless pace." The Village Voice**

**"A delightful playground of bizarre moments." Time Out NY**

**"Funny, darkly obsessive, often fascinating... The work is disturbing, sexy and pithy, all at once." Greenwich Village Press**

# CAST



**Deb Margolin** is an actor, playwright, and performance artist. Called “a sparkling downtown wit” by The New York Times, she is a founding member of Split Britches Theater Company. Deb's solo shows have toured the United States, and she has been featured in productions at The Public Theater, Soho Rep. and international venues. She was awarded an OBIE award for Sustained Excellence of Performance. Deb is also an associate professor of writing and performance at Yale University.

**Susan Ziegler** is an actor with extensive Off and Off- Off Broadway credits; she starred in Madeleine Olnek's “Co-Dependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same,” as well as “Oona and Lurleen” at Joe's Pub at the Public Theater. LA theatre includes the critically acclaimed “Cheyenne” by Sex & The City writer Liz Tuccillo and the world premiere of “Sister Cities” (Edinburgh Theatre Festival). Film and TV credits include “The West Wing” and “Days Of Our Lives.” A graduate of NYU's Experimental Theatre Wing, and assorted experimental theatre ventures in Iceland.



**Rae C Wright** is an OBIE-Award winning actor/writer who has been featured in numberless obscure indies, including “Borders” with Steve Buscemi as her jilted lover, & the cockroach comedy “Joe's Apartment”. She created the role of Miss Thorne in “Ruthless”; is the author/performer of several solo works including “She's Just Away!” a comedy about grieving, and “Animal Instincts! Tales of Flesh & Tales of Blood”; and together with Ms. Margolin penned & performed the poignant comedy “The Breaks”, and has received numerous awards, grants & fellowships.





# CREW

**COSTUMES** LINDA GUI

**PRODUCTION DESIGN** BEVERLY BRONSON

**PROJECT COLLABORATORS**

CYNTHIA KAPLAN, DENNIS DAVIS, KEVIN SEAL, MOLLY KIRSCHNER, LAURA TERRUSO

**EDITED BY** SCOTT A. BURGESS

**DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY** ALISON KELLY

**GAFFER** ALEXA HARRIS

**SCRIPT SUPERVISOR** MELISSA FINELL

**SOUND** ROBERT GREGSON, ERIN GREENWELL, MARIE GAERLAN, ANDREW VENTIMIGLIA

**SOUND MIX** TIM KORN

**LINE PRODUCERS** ROBERT CHANG, LAURA TERRUSO, ALANA DA SILVA

**PRODUCED BY** STEPHANIE T. PERDOMO

**DIRECTED BY** MADELEINE OLNEK

## CREW BIOS

### **Alison Kelly**, Cinematography

Alison has been the Cinematographer on award-winning films, such as “Hummer,” “Fourteen” and “Make A Wish,” all of which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. She is the cinematographer on a soon-to-be-released feature-length documentary about the aftermath of the tsunami in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. She received her MFA in Cinematography from the American Film Institute.

### **Scott Burgess**, Editor

Scott edited the documentary feature, “Throw Down Your Heart,” which won Best Music Documentary at SilverDocs and audience awards at both the SXSW and Vancouver film festivals. His other work has included music performance videos for Chris Thile, Edgar Meyer, and Youssou N'Dour, as well as Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi's documentary "Youssou N'Dour: I Bring What I Love." He is currently editing Joshua Herrig's feature documentary "The Hidden Land."

### **Linda Gui**, Costume Designer

Major credits include the costume design for Yvonne Rainer's feature film, “MURDER and Murder,” which was funded with the help of a MacArthur genius award, and won a Teddy award at the Berlin Film Festival. Linda has also worked extensively in downtown NYC theater for over a decade, and she has enjoyed designing costumes for playwrights such as Madeleine Olnek and Deb Margolin.

### **Stephanie Perdomo**, Producer

A graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, Stephanie was a producer of the 16 mm short film, "Family Reunion", which was an official selection of Sundance 2007, was nominated for the Icelandic Academy Awards, and was selected for "The Best of Sundance" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

### **Laura Terruso**, Line Producer/ Project Collaborator

Laura is a filmmaker, writer and performer based in New York City. She wrote and produced the short film "His Name is Cosmo" which won numerous audience awards. Her short documentary “The Last Butcher in Little Italy” was screened at a number of film festivals including The Cork Film Festival in Ireland, and Rooftop Films Summer Series in New York. Other short films include: "Lesbians: the music video" and "Castrato Di Matteo's Audition Tape."

### **Robert Chang**, Line Producer

Robert is the director of “Nothing to Lose” a short documentary about Fat Activists, who seek to end discrimination based on size. He is currently a PhD candidate in Anthropology at NYU.



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