



Grains *of* Sand

Community Building Workshop



Grains of Sand

COMMUNITY BUILDING WORKSHOP

Film screening. Discussion. Art work.

Imagine aging as a source of inspiration. Build a sense of connection through art. Join us for a community-building workshop around the power of friendship and creativity in aging.

DURATION

- Time Frame: 2.5 hours plus breaks (or in 2 parts)
- Film screening: 85 minutes
- Discussion: 20 minutes
- Collage workshop: 45 minutes

PARTICIPANTS

- 15-30 suggested (negotiable)

TARGET AUDIENCE

- Aging audiences and their caregivers
- Intergenerational groups (ie, workplace or church)
- High school / college students

PURPOSE OF EVENT

- Bridging generations – strengthening empathy through shared experience
- Countering gender ageism
- Engaging participants in artmaking

WORKSHOP LEADERS

- Sarah Gross, Filmmaker
- Suzanne Reich, Museum Educator

REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKSHOP

- Screening room (projector & speakers can be provided by workshop leaders)
- Collage materials (can be provided by workshop leaders)
- Tables for art work
- Optional - Board to display artworks

AFFINITY GROUPS

- [Ruth's Table](#)
- [Artists against Ageism](#)
- [mediabildung.de](#)

WORKSHOP FEE

- Available upon request

MORE INFORMATION

[Grains of Sand Trailer](#)

Website: www.buglefilms.com



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View the trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7S8h7r5qqA>



THE GRAINS OF SAND PROJECT

Grains of Sand is a positive “coming-of-age” story about two women in their 80s. Filmed over eight years, the documentary accompanies the filmmaker’s mother and mother-in-law, artists and close friends, as they enter their ninth decade. *Grains of Sand* is available as part of a workshop designed to engage with the themes of the film and use them to reflect on our own lives.



View the trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7S8h7r5qqA>



THE FILM

Margot & Barbara, close friends and artists, meet for a work retreat in a stone farmhouse in the German countryside. They are both about to turn 80. As they begin to work on the large stones they have brought to sculpt, they embark on a conversation about creativity and aging, exploring what it means for them to arrive at this stage of their lives. Their wrinkled hands become dusty as they scrape and chisel the stones.

The filmmaker's close, personal relationship with the protagonists provides a layer of intimacy and reflection. Her voiceovers - under grainy black and white images such as mist rising off the lake or sunlight pouring through flowers - reflect upon the main questions of the film and push the story further. These moments are interwoven into present day scenes and interviews in vibrant 4K cinematography.

Margot was born in England and now lives in San Francisco with her husband of over 60 years. In her studio she reflects on the struggle it took for her to maintain her painting practice as she navigated expectations as a wife and mother. She visits the gravesite she and her husband have chosen. On green sloping hills of the

burial grounds in Marin, Margot imagines how it will be to live alone if he dies first.

In her studio in Hamburg, Barbara explains how after her divorce she didn't have much money. She found a way to support herself with a part time job so that she would have time to paint every day. She hopes she can continue painting until her very last gasp. Barbara shares an apartment with her second husband, and observes how their relationship is changing now that they are approaching 80.

The farmhouse becomes a yearly ritual where the women share their pasts, discuss their artistic processes, and reflect on their similarities and differences as artists, women, and mothers. Here they continue work on their stones, reflect on changes of the past year, and gather strength for the months which will follow. They also laugh and simply enjoy their friendship and shared pleasures - a cold glass of wine in the evening, a beautiful wildflower by the side of the path. There is so much to discover and enjoy! Margot and Barbara aren't looking back on their lives. They are living them.





THE DISCUSSION

With humor and empathy, *Grains of Sand* demystifies the aging process and builds identification with the protagonists. The film collapses the experience of eight years into 85 minutes. This moving narrative arc invites people of all ages to engage with what it means to grow old and what matters most as we do so.

Voiceovers in the film from the filmmaker/daughter create a space for reflection in and after the screening – and encourage viewers to share their own points of view. Many younger viewers think about their grandparents or parents – some are inspired to imagine their own lives at 80. Older viewers often remark on the importance of friendship, or of having an ongoing creative passion as one ages.

Topics such as gender ageism, loneliness, a sense of connection through art, friendship, and imagining aging as a source of inspiration are unpacked through leading questions and an open discussion format. Participants have a chance to share their first impressions and ask questions. How does the film capture an experience which is true for you?





THE ART PROJECT

Art for Barbara and Margot is a way of living. Throughout the film, art transcends the sensual experience to become also a way of reflecting on life itself.

Because art is a prism through which the film looks at life, there is a logical connection for discussions after the film to lead us back to art.

In their collage artwork, Barbara and Margot fold in memories and references to lived events and use color and shapes to reflect abstractly about their lives. Building on the film, workshop participants will have a chance to continue the conversation in a tactile, visual exploration.

We conclude the workshop with a collage portrait of who we are today – personal elements which define us.

Communities who make art together can learn something new about themselves and about those with whom they interact. We aim to build bridges among the participants, giving them a chance to share with each other and to reflect also for themselves about what their sense of purpose in aging can be. How do they incorporate past moments into who they are now? And how do they share what is meaningful to them with others?



WHAT AUDIENCES ARE SAYING

Audiences of all ages are connecting to *Grains of Sand* on a deep level.

Their comments:

“It is beautiful and gives room to sadness.”

“It felt very intimate and real, and I think it’s important to tell this kind of story.”

“I learned about ageing from a totally new perspective.”

“I am 21 and friends with several older artists, so this film felt very familiar and personal to me. I think that anyone who is creative will be able to connect with this film.”

“Sarah Anne Gross’s cinema tells stories that are not captured on camera but are touched, felt, and lived together. *Grains of Sand* is one of the calmest but most profound steps of this journey for now.”

Evrin Kopenek, bianet.org, Turkey

“What a beautiful film! When I say beautiful I mean it in different ways. The film is beautiful to look at – both outside in nature, indoors or just on their faces. And the content about two elderly women, their friendship and work as artists is also beautiful in a deeper sense.”

Annika Gustafsson, film critic, Sweden



CHANGING THE SCRIPT ON AGING

What we see (or don't see) on screens has a profound effect on shaping the treatment of older people in real life.

AGEISM IS REAL AND PREVALENT

The WHO Global Report on Ageism from 2021 reports that 77% of older adults experience ageism.

Ageism is widespread in the media. Representations on television and social media and in print are crucial because they influence our everyday perceptions and interactions, including how we relate to older people, and they shape how we each see ourselves growing old.

GENDER AND AGEING

Research on the combined impact of sexism and ageism in older age has concluded that older women bear the brunt of multiple forms of discrimination. Women are often in a situation of double jeopardy in which patriarchal norms and a preoccupation with youth result in a faster deterioration of older women's status compared with that of men. "Producing data and disaggregating it by relevant levels such as by sex, age and other key characteristics, is essential to understanding the multiple social and economic roles of older women and their varied needs"

MEDIA IMPACT ON OUR PERCEPTIONS

Older people are vastly underrepresented in the media. The WHO Global Report on Ageism (2021) quotes studies which show that of the few older characters shown on television in the United States, most of them had minor roles and were often portrayed for comic effect, drawing on stereotypes of physical, cognitive and sexual ineffectiveness. A second study, an analysis of prime time television series in Germany, found that only 8.5% of main characters were older adults.

We need to change our media representation to combat social erasing and the silencing of older women.

— UN Advocacy Brief, April 2022

Older women are even less likely to be represented in the media than men are, as has been reported from around the world. An analysis of 2000 Hollywood films found that women are given less dialogue the older they get: 38% of dialogue was spoken by women aged 22–31 years and 20% by those aged 42–65 years. In contrast, male actors get more lines as they age, up until age 65.

The Geena Davis Institute Global Report on the representation of older women in media (2024) informs us that in their film survey, women over 50 represented 5% of all characters and 0% of leading characters. Older women characters were also four times as likely as their aging male counterparts to be shown as senile, frumpy or feeble and seven times as likely to be shown as homebound.

The Global Report on Ageism (March 2021) was developed for the campaign by WHO, the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, the United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Population Fund.

(Studies quoted from Zebrowitz LA, Montepare JM. "Too young, too old": stigmatizing adolescents and elders. In: Heatherton TF, Kleck RE, Hebl MR, Hull JG, editors. The social psychology of stigma. New York: Guilford Press; 2000:334–73; Kessler EM, Rakoczy K, Staudinger UM. The portrayal of older people in prime time television series: the match with gerontological evidence. Ageing Soc. 2004;24(4):531–52)

"Frail, Frumpy, and Forgotten" Geena Davis Institute Global Report on representation of women ages 50+ in the media, 2024. (A report analyzing over 1200 characters in top 10 grossing films from 2019 in Germany, France, UK and the USA)



SARAH GROSS

Director/Producer

Sarah Gross' works have been shown in festivals around the world and broadcast on PBS nationally and Deutsche Welle internationally. *Grains of Sand* is her fourth feature-length documentary.



SUZANNE REICH

Museum Educator

Trained as a teacher, Suzanne Reich is a museum and arts educator at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Ruth's Table. www.ruthstable.org



BUGLE FILMS

Bugle Films is a small production company in Berlin, Germany. With professional networks in Europe, USA and South Africa, and usually working with international co-production partners, past films include documentary features *Brown Bread* and *A Growing Thing* and the mini documentary series *Connection*.

www.buglefilms.com



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