

Rachelle A. Dermer
Biography

Rachelle Dermer is an artist and a scholar working with and studying lens-based media. Dermer earned her B.F.A. in photography from Arizona State University, and her M.A. and Ph.D. in Art History, focusing on theory & criticism and the History of Photography, from Boston University in 2002. She has been making short films in conjunction with her photographic work for over a decade. She completed a number of short films, including *Myths of Freedom, a Road Trip Diary*, which screened at Clark University and Marran Theater at Lesley College and *I Fell*, which won an audience choice award at the Boston Bike Film Festival in 2005 and “Best Screenplay” at the 2006 NEMBA MTB Video Awards. She screened her short film, *Flipping Cancer the Bird*, at the Art Institute Boston in 2006. Her work has been exhibited in a range of venues from film festivals to exhibitions spaces. She completed her first documentary feature, *Commit to the Line* in January 2008. Initially it screened at the Coolidge Corner Theater with the support of The New England Institute of Art and featured a panel discussion with an oncologist, Dr. Ursula Matulonis, a psychiatrist specializing in trauma, Dr. Trude Kleinschmidt, a retired professional mountain cyclist, Daamiann Skelton, Dermer and the film’s editor, Christopher McKenzie. *Commit to the Line* was an Official Selection at the 2008 Rhode Island International Film Festival, where it received the First Place Providence Film Festival Award. The film was featured on the radio program, “Exceptional Women” (WMJX, Boston) with an interview of Dermer by Gay Vernon. The film continues to screen, most recently as an official selection at the Big Big Lake International Film Festival in California.

Dermer is currently in production on a feature non-fiction film titled BUILD!. This film is a collaboration with artist Thomas J. Gustainis and follows trailbuilders who modify the landscape and create built stunts for mountain biking. As the film takes the viewer on a journey of discovery of the ethics and intention of building up the existing landscape for the pleasure of the cyclist, the viewer comes to understand these builders individually in terms of what motivates their dedication and hard work, but also as artists, sculptors of the landscape, who are creating not only wonderful trails to ride, but monumental ‘earthworks’ style artistic interventions that re-shape the earth to perform and provide visual pleasure when viewed. Additionally, Dermer is in pre-production of a feature-length, non-fiction film with the working title, Waltham House. Waltham House is the first group home designed especially for GLBTQ youth in the DCF system and it is the fourth program of its kind in the U.S. Waltham House is a living space that houses up to twelve 14-18 year-olds who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The stories of the residents of Waltham House form a wide range of emotional and psychological engagement ranging from the moving and courageous to the extraordinarily sad and heartbreaking. The narrative arc of the film will be defined by the residents as they move through the State system. Production on Waltham House is scheduled to begin early in 2010.

Finally, Dermer has taught theory and production courses at Emerson College, Boston University, Massachusetts College of Art and is currently the Chair of Photography at The New England Institute of Art.