

BUZZ

Knock, Knock

My mother, a psychologist, encouraged me from early on to write down my dreams...and not to conform to society," explains independent filmmaker **Nina Menkes**. A USC artist in residence, Menkes obviously took her mother's words to heart. So far, in collaboration with her sister, actress Tinka Menkes, she's made a series of distinctive feature-length films in her own cinematic language, leading audiences on a hallucinatory journey through her psyche. This month the Nuart Theater hosts a Menkes retrospective that includes the debut of her third feature, *The Bloody Child*, in which, Menkes says, she "knocks on the doors of perception." —*Anél Young-Irving*

"My mother encouraged me from early on not to conform to society."



Filmmaker
Menkes:
Psyche as
subject

MOVIES

■ **THE BLOODY CHILD: AN INTERIOR OF VIOLENCE**

Bold, intense, and utterly original. Director Nina Menkes has turned the real-life story of a marine arrested for murdering his wife into a fascinating and poetic meditation on the nature of violence.

BUZZ BETS

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The Bloody Child

*** 1/2

Starring Tinka Menkes, Russ Little. Directed by Nina Menkes. Written by Nina Menkes and Tinka Menkes. Produced by Nina Menkes. Drama. Unrated. Running Time: 85 min.

A self-proclaimed witch, filmmaker Nina Menkes certainly has the power of a sorceress. With **THE BLOODY CHILD**, Menkes has crafted a disturbing portrait of violence, a film that rattles the core without resorting to typical Hollywood scare tactics. Told through a series of images in a non-linear fashion, the film is based on the true story of a marine who murders his wife. Found digging her grave in the desert by two on-duty marines, the murderer is captured.

Menkes takes a documentary-like approach while shooting the marines, crime scene and victim. The camera captures these scenes from a distance, static and objective with no apparent regard for the characters' feelings or fate. Yet Menkes intercuts these harshly real moments with surreal, haunting images that create another level of tension. In the woods, a naked woman (Tinka Menkes), with crusty white/gray skin, scrapes letters in her arm. She is the ghost of our collective unconscious, inflicting pain on ourselves and the world.

—*Lea Russo*