

# ‘Brainwashed’ Trailer: Nina Menkes Clouds the Male Gaze with Feminist Film Theory Doc

Julie Dash, Rosanna Arquette, Penelope Spheeris, Charlyne Yi, Joey Soloway, Catherine Hardwicke, and Eliza Hittman appear in the documentary.



Samantha Bergeson  
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## “Eyes Wide Shut”

Warner Bros/courtesy Everett Collection / Everett Collection

Documentarian [Nina Menkes](#) is turning her camera on cinema history itself.

Menkes’ “[Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power](#)” centers on the cultural normalization of the exploitative male gaze found in cinema. Using clips from more than 175 films ranging from “Sleeping Beauty” to “Eyes Wide Shut” and “Spring Breakers,” Menkes deconstructs how the visual language of cinema is connected to “employment discrimination against women and an environment of pervasive sexual harassment, abuse, and assault.”

The film premieres October 21 via Kino Lorber at the new DCTV Firehouse Cinema in New York City and the Laemmle in Los Angeles, with a national rollout to follow.

Based on Menkes’ acclaimed talk “Sex & Power: The Visual Language of Cinema,” the film made its world premiere at 2022 Sundance. Award-winning documentarian Menkes argues that shot design is gendered, with “Brainwashed” seeking to illuminate the patriarchal narrative codes that hide within supposedly “classic” set-ups and camera angles, and demonstrates how women are frequently displayed as objects for the use, support, and pleasure of male subjects, per an official synopsis.

“If the camera is predatory, then the culture is predatory as well,” reads filmmaker Iyabo Kwayana in the trailer.

“Brainwashed” features interviews with an all-star cast of women and non-binary industry professionals including Julie Dash, Penelope Spheeris, Charlyne Yi, Joey Soloway, Catherine Hardwicke, Eliza Hittman, and Rosanna Arquette. From showing fragmented body parts of female cis bodies to dissecting the rise of the [#MeToo](#) movement in the film industry, “Brainwashed” weaves essential feminist theory essays from Laura Mulvey and more

writers to shine a lot on the embedded messages in cinema when reading films. But, how will Hollywood change, if at all?

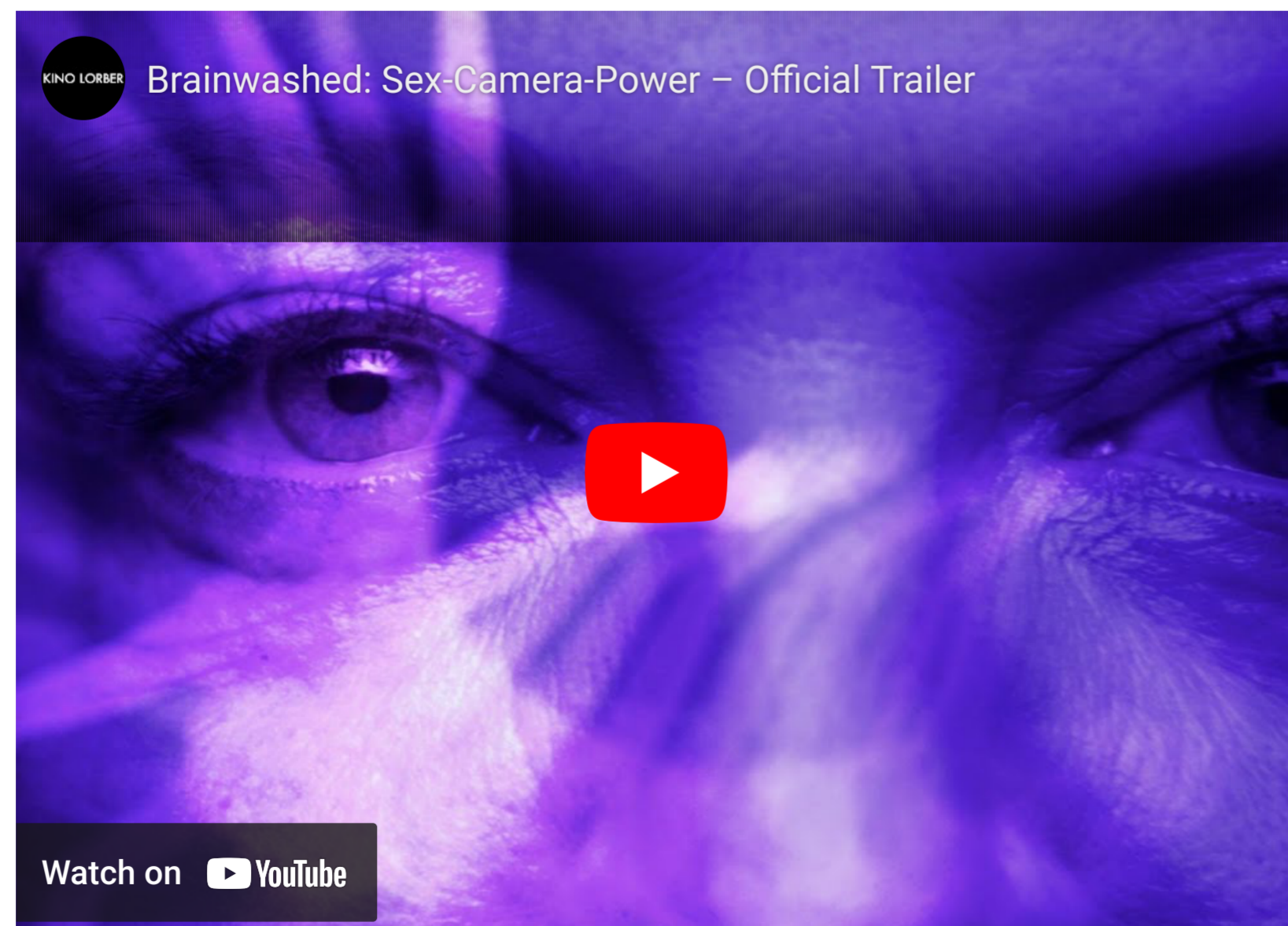
As director Dash states in the trailer, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”

IndieWire’s Kate Erbland wrote in her [review](#) of the film that “Brainwashed” will “inevitably spark discussion in its audience (it even includes a handful of scenes in which actual discussion groups chat about Menkes’ lecture, and good luck not feeling a bit jealous of those participants) and likely a desire to know more about the many topics it covers in under just two hours.”

Erbland continued, “Mostly, though, the film encourages not just a new way of looking but a new way of *seeing* — and that includes realizing that not everything worth watching has to be perfect for an audience to take something way from it.”

“Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power” premieres October 21.

Check out the trailer below.



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