

## "I've Heard the Mermaids Singing"

Directed by Patricia Rozema

by Dot

"Isn't life the strangest little thing you've ever seen?" It is when you see it through the eyes of Polly. Polly is doing her own personal documentary, telling her story to a camera she "borrowed" from work, which is what she is so intent on telling us about; work that is.

Polly is an artist of sorts, but she doesn't know that. She only knows that she doesn't deal with ordinary reality very well. The way one of her ex-bosses put it, Polly is "organizationally impaired." Her job record had been disastrous before she met "The Curator" who for her own reasons, needed someone like Polly around.

Played by Sheila McCarthy, Polly is wonderfully fresh and naive. She has the unbridled enthusiasm and creativity of a child. She tells us in this "documentary" she is making that this deep and impressive woman she now works for, The Curator, says wonderful things like "acute aware-

ness", which Polly misunderstands as "a cute awareness, you know, like a cat face." Paule Baillargeon plays The Curator, Gabrielle, a jaded sophisticated, somewhat spoiled art dealer. Polly, infatuated with Gabrielle, is blind to Gabrielle's sadness and emptiness.

Enter Mary. A captivating, powerful lesbian image portrayed by Anne-Marie MacDonald, Mary shows up at the gallery one day to claim her old romance with Gabrielle. Polly who is jealous, spies on the romantic scene through the gallery security camera, the same one she will eventually commandeer to record her story.

The theme of artful innocence versus jaded sophistication is played out with the use of some very nice devices. Pure art, depicted as a solid luminescent rectangle, is juxtaposed with Polly's world: an apartment with walls covered by black and white photos of "everything she likes," which are indescribably free and fun.

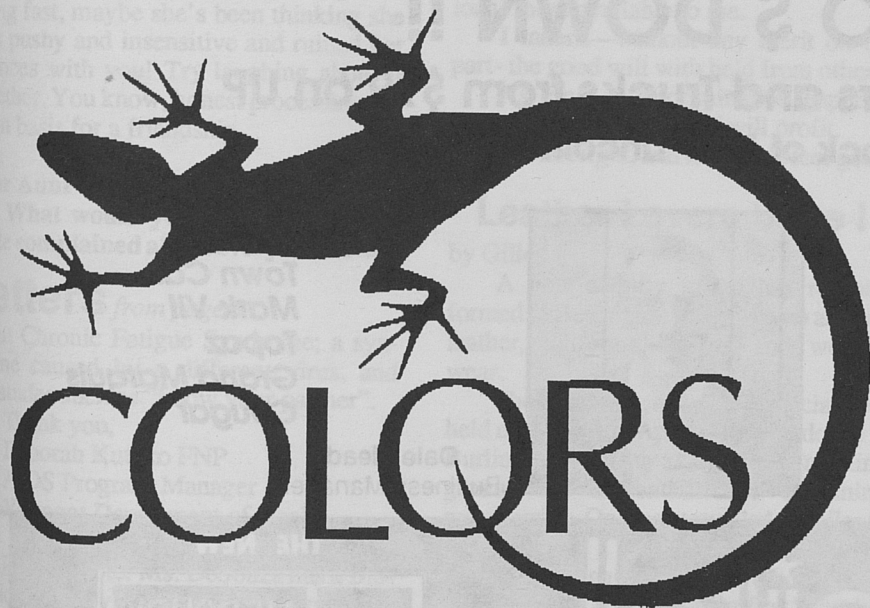
It is a treat to be invited into Polly's delightful world of fantasy and to hear the

voices of the mermaids singing.

The contrast of Gabrielle's ludicrous argument with a fellow art critic over the socio-political messages conveyed by the "egg, or is it the fork?," in one of her gallery paintings leaves no question as to the film's message.

Filmmaker Patricia Rozema does all this with a stark simplicity that gives the film an almost 1960's look. There is none of the over-technologized slickness of the popular American film. This simplicity is part of the charm and reinforces Polly's down-to-earth straightforward character.

The lesbian theme consists of a few suggestive embraces. We never really even see them kiss, although when Polly asks Mary, "do you love her like a mother or a sister?," Mary answers, "No. Like a lover." Nice to hear on the big screen. "I've Heard the Mermaids Singing" is pure fun. If you missed it at the theater, keep your eye out for the video which is available at many local video stores.



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