

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**STRANGE CULTURE**

**A FILM BY LYNN HERSHMAN LEESON**

***-Starring Oscar Winning Actress Tilda Swinton-***



“Hershman Leeson is as interested in reinventing the doc form as she is in publicizing Kurtz’s case...The director not only breaks the fourth wall, she reduces it to plaster dust...Hershman Leeson gets it. And so will viewers of *Strange Culture*.”—*Variety*

**STRANGE CULTURE** is the unfathomable true story about post 9/11 government persecution and documents the ongoing and precedent-setting legal battle of Steve Kurtz, an Associate Professor of Art at SUNY Buffalo and a founding member of the internationally-acclaimed art and theater group, Critical Art Ensemble. While Kurtz was working on an exhibition for the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, his wife, Hope, tragically died in her sleep of heart failure on May 11, 2004. Kurtz called 911, but when police arrived, they became suspicious of his art supplies, various harmless bacteria cultures and an invitation to an art opening with Arabic writing on it and called the FBI. Within hours, federal agents in HAZMAT suits were sifting through his home and impounded his computers, books, cat, and even his wife’s body. He was detained as a suspected “bioterrorist” and is currently part of an on-going federal trial. Kurtz and his long-time collaborator Dr. Robert Ferrell, Professor of Genetics at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, each were charged with federal mail and wire fraud, potentially carrying a sentence of 20 years. For the most updated information on the case please visit [www.caedefensefund.org](http://www.caedefensefund.org).

When **STRANGE CULTURE** world premiered at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival, it was hailed with critical acclaim. The film went on to screen at a number of prestigious festivals including Berlinale 2007, the San Francisco International Film Festival and the Human Rights Watch 2007 International Film Festival. The documentary film stars Tilda Swinton (*Michael Clayton*), Peter Coyote (*Femme Fatale*), Thomas Jay Ryan (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*), Josh Kornbluth (*Teknolust*) and Steve Kurtz.

“When I learned about this case” Hershman Leeson says, “I dropped all other projects I was working on to see how I could help. I decided to make a film about this story to bring awareness of this situation to as many people as possible. It is a story about the curtailment of freedom of expression, and this issue is a cornerstone of a free society.”

As Kurtz cannot legally talk freely about the case, Leeson enlisted actors to interpret his story. Dramatic reenactments are woven together through animation, news footage, testimonials and interviews. The resulting complex documentary investigates the risk artists face when they question government policies in this post-9/11 climate. As the case has the potential to alter first amendment rights concerning freedom of speech for artists, scientists and researchers, Kurtz’s case has been extensively reported on by outlets such as *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times*.

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## Praise for STRANGE CULTURE:

“*Strange Culture* is an important heads-up to what is going on in our country right now in the name of national security, and a brilliant statement on artistic freedom and the dangers it faces. This film should be seen, should be discussed and is an important document on our times.”—***Film Threat***

“*Strange Culture* is a veteran artist’s thoughtful, indignant response to Patriot Act America.”—***indieWIRE***

“With disarming directness and intriguing indirectness, Hershman Leeson has made a document—though not quite a documentary—that speaks volumes about where free expression stands today in the U.S. in its ceaseless combat with the forces of repression.”  
—***Hollywood Reporter***

### About the Filmmaker



Lynn Hershman Leeson helped pioneer the use of interactive computer art and virtual sets in film with her 1997 feature *Conceiving Ada* (SFIFF 1997), which received the Outstanding Achievement in Drama Award from the Festival of Electronic Cinema. Acclaimed for her experimental shorts and the Tilda Swinton-starring feature *Teknolust* (SFIFF 2002), Hershman Leeson's other awards include the ZKM Media Arts Award, The Flintridge Foundation Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Visual Arts, the Golden Nica in interactive arts, and the Award for Positive Innovations in Media from the Digital Media and Arts Association. She is professor Emeritus at the University of California, Davis.

### About Docurama Films®

Docurama Films is dedicated to making critically acclaimed and cutting-edge documentaries available digitally and on DVD. The collection unites both classic and contemporary docs from award-winning filmmakers whose work continues to astound and enlighten. In 1999, parent company New Video launched Docurama Films, a line that has released over 200 award-winning and highly acclaimed titles including the Academy Award®-winning films *Murder on a Sunday Morning*, *Marjoe* and *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*. In addition, Docurama Films specializes in definitive films like D.A. Pennebaker’s seminal work *Bob Dylan: Dont Look Back* and *The Brandon Teena Story* (the true story behind the Oscar®-winning movie *Boys Don’t Cry*), as well as films of enormous sociocultural relevance including *Hacking Democracy* and the Academy Award® nominee *Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience*. Docurama Films has also released the critically-acclaimed *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill* and Andy Goldsworthy’s *Rivers and Tides*. In 2007, Docurama Films had its exciting first theatrical release with *Air Guitar Nation*. Upcoming 2008 highlights include *Gypsy Caravan* with Johnny Depp, *Autism: The Musical* and the enormously entertaining and factually eye-opening *King Corn*. To see a complete list of Docurama Film’s upcoming, current and extensive back catalog, please visit [www.docurama.com](http://www.docurama.com)

### STRANGE CULTURE

A film by Lynn Hershman Leeson

Produced by Lynn Hershman Leeson, Lise Swenson and Steven Beer

Film features an original score by The Residents

Pre-book date:	February 26, 2008	Format:	DVD
Street date:	March 25, 2008	Genre:	Documentary
Rating:	n/a	Catalog #:	NNVG108791
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