

Filmmakers inspired by Nora

ROBERT GLUCK

FOR filmmaker Meera Menon, no honour could have been more fitting than winning the inaugural award named after famed Jewish screenwriter and novelist Nora Ephron – the woman whose work inspired her.

At the recent 2013 Tribeca Film Festival, Menon was named the first recipient of the \$25,000 Nora Ephron Prize, given to a writer or director whose work embodies that of the late Ephron, who wrote the scripts for a number of hit films, including *When Harry Met Sally*, *Heartburn* and *Sleepless In Seattle*.

Menon, 28, says that Ephron's work inspired her because it epitomises how to take pain and suffering and turn them into laughter and joy.

"Those qualities inspired me and my co-filmmakers," says the writer, director and producer, who specialises in documentary films.

On June 26 it will be one year since Ephron's death from complications from acute myeloid leukaemia. Her work will now live on through the annual prize given at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Menon received the prize for her film *Farah Goes Bang*, which follows a woman in her 20s who tries to lose her virginity while campaigning across America for presidential candidate John Kerry in 2004. It looks at the issues that matter most to her: race, politics, sex and youth.

Menon explained that Ephron, through her scripts, "recounts a particular female experience that is sometimes painful or shameful, but



Prize-winning filmmaker Meera Menon.

Photo: Jim Dobson

she finds the humour, the heart and the levity in those subject matters".

"In her iconic film *When Harry Met Sally* and in *You've Got Mail*, Meg Ryan's characters, and her interpretation of Nora's words, presented a new modern woman that we hadn't seen before, one that was smart, funny and complicated, and she did all of the things that women aren't allowed to do on screen."

"I hope this award will inspire a new generation of women filmmakers and writers."

Jane Rosenthal
Founder, Tribeca Film Festival

Menon – much like her film's protagonist, Farah – says she has learnt much along her road of self-discovery.

"I grew up in a household that was the constant host of actors, directors, artists, musicians, comedians, and dancers. Through this, I learnt the most sacred lesson that I carry with me today: communities need their films, objects of their collective storytelling, to keep themselves together."

Jane Rosenthal, co-founder of the Tribeca Film Festival with Robert DeNiro and Craig Hatkoff, says Menon's film captures the spirit and themes of Ephron's work.

"I'm proud to continue Nora's legacy through this award and

encourage women filmmakers to create the work that inspires them."

The Tribeca Film Festival emerged in 2001 following the attacks on the World Trade Centre, with the goal of spurring the economic and cultural revitalisation of lower Manhattan through an annual celebration of film, music and culture. The first festival was held in 2002.

Rosenthal says Ephron was a great friend of the festival.

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Before she became one of the most influential women in the film industry, Ephron worked briefly as a White House intern for President John F Kennedy and as a reporter for the *New York Post*.

In 1976, Ephron married journalist Carl Bernstein, who along with Bob Woodward broke the story of the Watergate scandal. Three years later, after she had Jacob and was pregnant with her second son Max, she discovered her husband was having an affair with a mutual friend, married British politician Margaret Jay.

Coping with this situation, Ephron wrote the novel *Heartburn*, which was made into the 1986 film by Mike Nichols starring Jack Nicholson and Meryl Streep.

Jacob Bernstein, a reporter for *The New York Times*, is working on a new movie about Ephron's life called *Everything is Copy*.

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Screenwriter-novelist Nora Ephron.

ARTS BEAT

DANNY GOCS



Singer Dahlia Dior in concert.

Paying tribute to Piaf's passionate life

SINGER Dahlia Dior celebrates the life of French music icon Edith Piaf, the waiflike singer with the indomitable spirit and powerful voice, in a show titled *Piaf: A Passionate Life* at the popular cabaret venue, the Blue Beat at Double Bay, on July 14.

In the show, Dior acknowledges the wonderful contribution to the world of music and song by Piaf (known as the Little Sparrow of Paris), who died 50 years ago.

"In *Piaf: A Passionate Life*, I demonstrate how her songs relate to both joy and human suffering, and can cover the gauntlet from pathos to the frivolous," explains Dior.

"It includes the challenging pulsating musical adventures of *La Foule* and *L'homme a la Motte*, the unbearable sadness of *Mon Dieu* and *Lovers for One Day*, the gay abundance of *Padam, Padam*, as well as the sexiness of *Jezebel* and *Le Gitan* and of course her signature number *Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien*.

Jerusalem-born Dior started her musical career in the famous Israeli Nahal entertainment troupe in 1963, then toured Israel with the Shemer Sisters before travelling overseas.

Dior lives in Sydney and performs at concerts, community events, festivals and functions in styles ranging from jazz to world music in different languages.

Piaf: A Passionate Life is at the Blue Beat, Double Bay on July 14.
Bookings: www.moshtix.com.au.

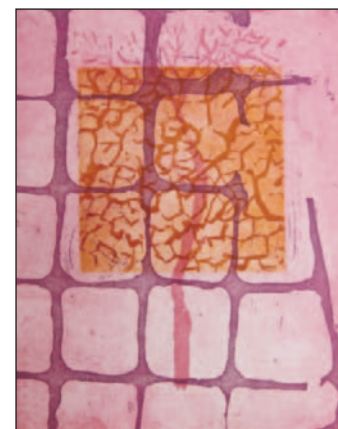
Thea Weiss exhibitions

PAINTER and printmaker Thea Weiss has her work currently on display in two exhibitions in Sydney – *Patterns & Structures*, a joint exhibition with Angela Hayson at St Vincent's Hospital Xavier Art Space, and *Mapping Memory*, a group exhibition of nine artists at Incinerator Art Space in Willoughby.

For *Patterns & Structures*, Weiss says there are patterns everywhere in nature and numbers, waiting to be recognised and deciphered.

She says an important influence on her artwork for this exhibition is the Jewish tradition of gematria, which is built upon the belief that numbers are a path to understanding.

In *Mapping Memory*, the inspiration for Thea's work is her American mother's memories as well as her own childhood memories.



Thea Weiss' *Chai XIII*

Patterns & Structures is at St Vincent's Hospital Xavier Art Space, 390 Victoria Street, Darlinghurst until July 11.
Mapping Memory is at Incinerator Art Space, 2 Small Street, Willoughby until July 7.

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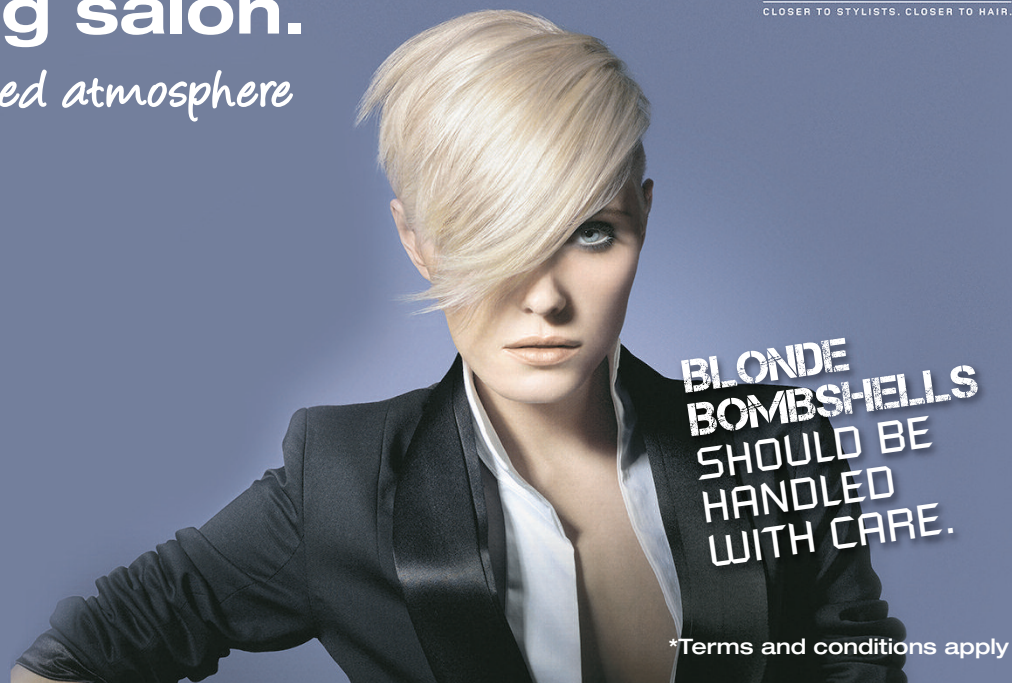
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