



Today we'd like to introduce you to Cheryl Bookout.

Hi Cheryl, can you start by introducing yourself? We'd love to learn more about how you got to where you are today.

My origin story begins when my mother was discharged from the WAVES (Navy), my father was stationed at the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, and they were renting a home in Laguna Beach. A home that is no longer there – the house was right about where the basketball court is on Pacific Coast Highway. You know the one. When my father finished his military service, he went to work for Flying Tigers at the Burbank Airport and my parents bought a home in Canoga Park – officially making me a Valley Girl for all of my school years.

Fast forward and you find me living in the high desert community of Joshua Tree, working as a filmmaker and in my studio wrangling numerous art projects.

Can you talk to us a bit about the challenges and lessons you've learned along the way. Looking back would you say it's been easy or smooth in retrospect?

It has not been a very smooth ride. Like many (most) artists I found making a living wage while working in the arts was not an easy path. In the past, I did everything from work for a catering company in Newport Beach, design and manufacture women's sportswear, sell real estate and even used cars in order to finance my art career. This is ancient history and fortunately my art career is standing on it's own legs now! Main lesson learned along my way: Don't take no for an answer.

Appreciate you sharing that. What else should we know about what you do?

I love being a filmmaker! I love every aspect of it – the storytelling, the technical challenges and having my boots on the ground putting all the pieces together. I even love the always-necessary fundraising part of it all. Along the way, I have become a pretty decent grant writer, but please don't tell anyone!

In 2020 I directed, with my filmmaking partner, Cheri Gaulke, a short documentary film, *Inside the Beauty Bubble*. The film follows self-proclaimed hairstorian, famed stylist and collector of hair artifacts, Jeff Hafler, as he struggles to keep his roadside attraction the Beauty Bubble Salon and Museum afloat during a year that changes his life and the lives of his husband and son. The film is just entering its journey in the film festival circuit and follows on the heels of two award-winning short films I produced, *Gloria's Call* (2019) and *PURE* (2019). I'm currently producing my first feature-length documentary *Acting Like Women* directed by Cheri Gaulke and preparing to shoot a proof of concept for a sci-fi episodic project I have been working for the past few years.

One of the accomplishments I am most proud of is being co-founder, alongside filmmakers Shana Betz and America Young, of The Chimaera Project. Our organization is a nonprofit that champions women and non-binary filmmakers. For nine years, we have been following our vision to advocate for women creatives by providing mentorship and finishing fund programs. In addition to The Chimaera Project, my nonprofit work includes sitting on the Board of Directors for FurstWurld located in Joshua Tree (art, music, film and more), the Joshua Tree Retreat Center and Mil-Tree Veterans Project.

As an individual artist, I am honored to be included in the California Women Artist Project archived at the University of Southern California and Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries, a project organized by Gloria Orenstein, Professor of Women in Literature and Art at USC.

What makes you happy?

My family makes me happy. I have a partner who believes in me, two adult children and a granddaughter who work in the nonprofit sector, and a granddaughter who is going to CSULB and studying to be a filmmaker. We have tons in common and no end of notes to compare when we get together! Making films makes me happy. Making any kind of art makes me happy. Helping filmmakers and artists get their projects across the finishing line makes me happy. Listening to music makes me happy. Dancing makes me happy. It's difficult to say exactly why these things make me happy, but they all make me feel like I can just be me and I am very grateful.

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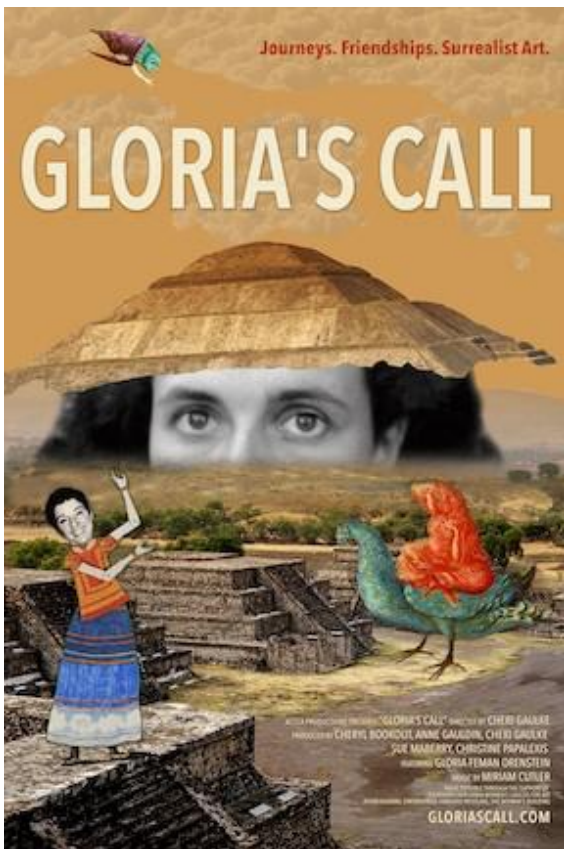




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