

art 14b

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Francesca's Triumph

"The Woodmans" is a 2010 film biography about a contemporary American family of artists. Much of the story revolves around the youngest (and best known), Francesca, who in 1981 at the tender age of 22, decided to greet the street from the top of a building in New York City. In their youth Francesca and her brother Charlie are told in no uncertain terms, by word and example, that they *have* to make art.



The mother Betty says of her earlier days, "I couldn't imagine living with someone who didn't make art. I would *hate* them." No pressure Mom! Francesca accepts the parental mandate with fervor (at her death she had amassed over 10,000 negatives and made a number of moving pictures as well). Amongst the photos we do get to see in the film, many are of Francesca herself...sometimes just a blur, usually her face turned away from the camera, often nude. There is a disturbing undercurrent of competition in this family. Ambition is nicely controlled beneath the calm, cool surface, yet periodically slices of discontent shine through. During interviews each parent whines at least once, "What about me? I'm an artist too!" It seems that celebrating someone else's success doesn't quite come naturally to any of them. The parents enjoy a comfortable late life with exhibits of their own and Francesca's estate to manage, which keeps their hands full. Posthumously Francesca has received the appreciation from the art world at large that she desperately wanted and needed, yet was not able to find in her short life. A tragic price for fame.

"The Woodmans", written and directed by Scott Willis, can be seen on Netflix.com.

—Tanya Roland