

## Margaret Tait: Film Maker



Dr. Sarah Neely

The Maltings  
3rd August, 2019,  
4 pm to 6.30 pm  
£8

*I don't have to know what it's all about.  
That's not what I'm trying to know.  
It's the looking that matters,  
The being prepared to see what there is to see.*

- From 'Seeing's Believing and Believing's Seeing'

This programme will provide an introduction to Margaret Tait's life, work and legacy. [Dr. Sarah Neely](#) will present a selection of Tait's films alongside readings of Tait's poetry and writing, including rare recordings of Tait reading her own poetry.

Margaret Tait (1918-1999), the pioneering Orcadian filmmaker, painter and poet, was one of the most visionary and independent filmmakers to have emerged from Scotland, yet her work has until recently remained relatively unknown and its significance undervalued. She is the inspiration for the prestigious Margaret Tait Award, awarded annually by LUX Scotland, Glasgow Film and Screen Scotland to support innovative artists working with the moving image. [You can read Ali Smith's tribute to her here.](#)

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Structured chronologically, the programme will explore the way in which Tait's work developed over time and in relation to the places she lived and worked (Italy, Edinburgh and Orkney).

Although Tait's creativity found expression through a wide range of forms across art, film and poetry, she is best known as a filmmaker. She positioned herself resolutely outside of the commercial industry, instead developing a highly independent and unique approach that bears much more in common with the artistry of a poet than that of a commercial film director. Working primarily on 16mm film, she often described her philosophy and method by borrowing a phrase – 'stalking the image' – from the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca. This approach of locating the true nature of things through concentrated observation is closely tied to a technique that she described as 'breathing with the camera'.

Born in 1918 in Kirkwall on Orkney, Margaret Tait qualified in medicine at Edinburgh University. From 1950 to 1952 she studied film at the Centro Sperimentale di Photographia in Rome. Returning to Scotland she established Ancona Films in Edinburgh's Rose Street and was associated with the Rose Street Poets. In the 1960's Tait moved back to Orkney where over the following decades she made a series of films inspired by the Orcadian landscape and culture.

Come along and enjoy the calm and shrewd observation of someone *prepared to see what there is to see*. There is a twenty-minute interval and refreshments will be served.

This event is a collaboration between Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival, Margaret Tait 100 and Berwick Educational Association.

**MARGARET  
TAIT 100**

**BEA**  
Berwick  
Educational  
Association

 **BERWICK FILM & MEDIA  
ARTS FESTIVAL**

The cost of the lecture is £8, including refreshments. All are welcome and no previous knowledge is assumed.

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(Margaret Tait)

