Synopsis

In the late 1950s, a woman named Agnes approached the UCLA Medical Center seeking sex reassignment surgery. Her case study – long considered to be singular – would go on to define the medical understanding of transgender people well into the 1990s. Much like Freud’s classic studies of Dora and the Wolf Man, Agnes’ story endures in popular culture and continues to capture the imagination of scholars and activists alike.

In 2014, filmmaker Chase Joynt and sociologist Kristen Schilt began searching for Agnes in the archives. *Framing Agnes* captures their discovery of never-before-seen case studies of gender non-conforming people who had been Agnes’ contemporaries. These stories change the historical record, disrupting the notion that Agnes was exceptional at the time. The film puts the life stories of Georgia, Denny and Henry in conversation with Agnes to complicate the medical definition of sex and gender in the midcentury.

The cast of *Framing Agnes* are on the cutting edge of transgender artistic production. Zackary Drucker is a performance artist whose work has been exhibited at MoMA PS1 and the Whitney Biennial; Angelica Ross currently stars in Ryan Murphy’s series *Pose* on FX; Silas Howard is a film director of the Sundance premiering *A Kid Like Jake* (2018); and Max Wolf Valerio is a poet and author of *The Testosterone Files* (2004). With Agnes and her contemporaries as contextual foundation, *Framing Agnes* allows contemporary actors to reimagine their place in the making of trans history.

Full Production Credits

Directors: Chase Joynt, Kristen Schilt
Producers: Samantha Curley, Chase Joynt, Kristen Schilt
Executive Producer: Lauren Berlant
Co-Producer: Brooke Sebold
Associate Producer: Tey Meadow
Cast: Angelica Ross, Chase Joynt, Max Wolf Valerio, Zackary Drucker
Director of Photography: Aubree Bernier-Clarke
Editor: Brooke Sebold
Composer: Becky Gebhardt
Camera Operator: Ava Benjamin Shorr
Sound Recordist: Casy Minatrea
Hair & Makeup: Carmen Dianne
Director Biography

Collaborative Bio (Individual Bios below)
Filmmaker Chase Joynt and sociologist Kristen Schilt met in 2002 while studying at UCLA. *Framing Agnes* extends from their 2014 Mellon Foundation Fellowship at the University of Chicago’s Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry. Their book-in-progress, *Conceptualizing Agnes*, disrupts dominant legacies of medical expertise about transgender identities. Together, they have been invited to present their work at Columbia University, the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.

A note on collaboration:

We playfully summarize our ongoing collaboration as “chicken two ways” – we share innumerable curiosities and intellectual investments in gender and sexuality but gravitate toward different media to explore these investments. Chase draws on his background in theater and film to create documentary film and multi-media art installations. Kristen works within academic sociology - though we joke that our collaboration has ruined her for the traditional social sciences because she now is working on several creative projects beyond our film. For us, *Framing Agnes* - and the accompanying book that will follow - shows the possibilities of cross-disciplinary collaboration. We worked together to create a film and a book that neither of us could have authored on our own. It is when we are pushing at the boundaries of our disciplines that we are really creating new knowledge and finding new ways of world-making.

Chase Joynt
Chase Joynt is an internationally award-winning filmmaker and writer. His films have won the Jury Award for Best Documentary (Bangalore), Jury Award for Best Short (Ecuador), Jury Award for Most Promising Filmmaker (Regent Park), Audience Award for Best Documentary Short (Seattle), and the EP Canada/Canada Film Capital Award for Emerging Canadian Artist (Toronto). His most recent two film projects, *Between You and Me* and *Genderize*, are now streaming live online with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

As a recipient of a Mellon Fellowship in Arts Practice and Scholarship at the University of Chicago, Joynt’s speaking engagements include Harvard University, Princeton University, NYU, The New York Academy of Medicine, University of Manchester, UC
Berkeley, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. In 2013, Chase starred as Mars Brito, the lead character in John Greyson’s *Murder in Passing*, which is widely regarded as the most ambitious transmedia public narrative project available on public screens worldwide. *Murder in Passing* is currently being made into a feature film.

His first book *You Only Live Twice* (co-authored with Mike Hoolboom) was a 2017 Lambda Literary Award Finalist and was named one of the Best Books of 2016 by both *The Globe and Mail* and CBC. His second book, *Conceptualizing Agnes: Exemplary Cases and the Disciplines of Gender* (co-authored with Kristen Schilt), is under contract with Duke University Press. Joynt holds a PhD in Cinema and Media Studies from York University and is currently a Banting Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Chicago.

**Kristen Schilt**

Kristen Schilt is an associate professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, where she serves as the current faculty director for the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality. She is the author of *Just One of the Guys?: Transgender Men and the Persistence of Gender Inequality* (University of Chicago Press, 2010) and the co-editor of *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology* (University of California Press, 2018). Her work has appeared in venues such as *Gender & Society*, the *Annual Review of Sociology*, and the *Transgender Studies Quarterly*.

Schilt works through a series creative projects that seek to trouble the disciplinary conventions of sociology and to enable progressive cultural change through the arts. With filmmaker Chase Joynt, she has an ongoing collaborative project about the legacy of the social sciences in shaping public and medical understandings of transgender and gender non-conforming people. In 2013-2014, they held a Mellon Foundation Fellowship at the Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago. *Framing Agnes* (2018) is their first moving image collaboration. They are currently working on a book project, *Conceptualizing Agnes*, that draws on their original archival research into 1950s sociology research with gender non-conforming people.

In 2017, Schilt co-directed an alternate reality game, the ParaSite, with two University of Chicago faculty, Patrick Jagoda (English) and Heidi Coleman (Theater) that transformed the ways in which universities approach first year orientation. The largest such game to take place in an educational setting, the ParaSite was covered by Wired magazine and the Chronicle of Higher Education.