



Ann Fessler – Class of 1967

Ann Fessler is professor of photography at Rhode Island School of Design and a specialist in video-installation art. She is especially known for her work dealing with adoption. In 2006, Ann published the book, *The Girls Who Went Away* that tells the stories of unmarried women in the '50s and '60s who surrendered their children for adoption because of pressure from families and society. An adoptee herself, Ann begins and ends the book with the story of her own successful quest to find her birth mother.

Ann has appeared on television and radio programs including: *Good Morning America* and National Public Radio's *Fresh Air with Terry Gross*. Her book was chosen by the National Book Critics Circle as one of the top five non-fiction books of 2006 and awarded the Ballard Book Prize, given annually to a female author who advances the dialogue about women's rights. In 2011, *The Girls Who Went Away* was chosen by readers of Ms. magazine as one of the top 100 feminist books of all time.

Ann has also produced three films, the latest in 2012 titled, *A Girl Like Her*. This film combines footage from films of the '50s and '60s dealing with topics of dating, sex, illegitimate pregnancy, and adoption. Ann's films have been screened at festivals and museums internationally and her work is in the collections of the MoMA, the Whitney Museum, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

In 2014, Ann received the Adoptee Trailblazer Award that annually honors an adoptee whose work inspires others. She is the recipient of grants from: National Endowment for the Arts; LEF Foundation; Rhode Island Foundation; Rhode Island Council for the Humanities; Art Matters; and the Maryland State Arts Council.

Ann and her husband Peter Andersen live on an old farm in rural Rhode Island where Ann pursues her love of gardening.