

Towards Other Cinemas

A critical re-assessment of 1970s independent film and video

Sunday 17 September 2017

Whitechapel Gallery cinema

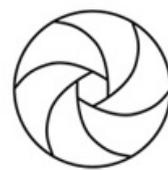
11.30 – 18.00



Above: Still from Lis Rhodes, *Light Reading* (1978). Courtesy of the artist.

Towards Other Cinemas explores renewed interest in diverse experimental film and video works made in 1970s Britain. The programmes coincide with the publication of *Other Cinemas: Politics, Culture and Experimental Film in the 1970s* (IB Tauris, 2017), edited by theorist Laura Mulvey and writer and director Sue Clayton.

Curated by **Sue Clayton** (Goldsmiths University London),
Claire M. Holdsworth (Kingston School of Art) and
Laura Mulvey (Birkbeck, University of London)
in partnership with LUX, London and Whitechapel Gallery.
Thanks to Gareth Evans and Close-Up.



LUX

Whitechapel
Gallery

11.30 – 13.00

Activated Spaces

Representing 1970s radical politics – and the new politics of representation

This programme brings together a number of politically-engaged films made throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s. Often counter-documenting these times – and in response to centralisation of the ‘free press’ and government legislation on cinema and broadcasting – activists, artists and groups of film and video makers addressed the complex social and cultural illusions and dominant voices of these times, documenting protests and political struggle at marches, demos, meetings, and opening new spaces for dialogue about class, gender and worker organisation in Britain. With Sue Clayton and Steve Presence (Radical Film Network), discussion explores the legacy and influence of these works and their continued relevance today.

Amber Films, *Last Shift*, 1976

(16mm, colour 17 min) Screened from SD Digital File. Courtesy of Amber Films.

Remarkable not only as a documentary record of a factory closing – a small handmade brickworks in Swalwell on the south bank of the Tyne – but also for the close and intimate process of collaboration between locally-based Amber Film Collective and the workers faced with this sudden crisis.

Ian Breakwell, *The News*, 1980

(video, b/w and colour, 12 min)

Screened from SD Digital File. Courtesy of LUX, London.

Video artist Breakwell’s film parodies and questions conventional news presentation – a straight-faced newsreader recounts the minutiae of small-town life, contrasted with disturbing elements of anarchic behaviour amongst the town’s population.

Cinema Action, *Arise ye workers (the dockers’ fight)*, 1974/5

(16mm, colour, 25 min) Screened from SD Digital File. Courtesy of Platform Films.

In 1972 five trade unionists were jailed for organising unofficial picket lines. One of the UK’s largest-ever industrial actions followed as dockers, builders, engineers and the newsprint workers of Fleet Street went on strike to show their support. Cinema Action’s agit-prop stylistic devices add to the film’s interest.

Esther Ronay, Mary Kelly, Mary Capps, Humphrey Trevelyan, Margaret Dickinson, Brigid Seagrave, Susan Shapiro, *Women of the Rhondda*, 1972

(16mm, 20 min) Screened from SD Digital File. Courtesy of Cinenova.

Highlighting the role played by women in the Welsh coal-miners’ strikes of the 1920s and 1930s, the film features interviews with four Rhondda Valley women who lived through those struggles. It reveals their massive contribution to the miners’ struggle, drawing out stories previously hidden from conventional labour histories, and giving space to the unmediated female voice.

Sue Clayton is a UK feature and documentary film writer and director. Her films include *The Song of the Shirt* (1979), *The Disappearance of Finbar* (1996), *Hamedullah: The Road Home* (2012) and *Calais Children: A Case to Answer* (2017). She has made award-winning documentaries for Channel 4 and ITV including *How to Survive Lifestyle*, *Japan Dreaming*, and *Turning Japanese*. She is a Professor and founding Director of Screen School at Goldsmiths and co-author with Laura Mulvey of *Other Cinemas* (IB Tauris, 2017).

Dr Steve Presence is a Research Fellow in Film and Television Studies at the University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol. He is a founder member of the Bristol Radical Film Festival, and founding member and convenor of the Radical Film Network (RFN) - an international network of organisations involved in politically-engaged and aesthetically innovative film culture, which has claimed the IFVA Independent Film and Video Makers’ Association, formed in the 1970s) as one of its formative influences. Steve is also Principal Investigator on the AHRC-funded research project, ‘Sustaining Alternative Film Cultures’.

14.00 – 15.30

Listening In

Radical sound and language, thinking through feminism in 1970s Britain

Using sound and the uttered voice, each work in this programme blurs the boundaries between writing and film/video making to weave complex audio-visual dialogues that alter the 'gaze'. Through differing approaches, each work complicates subjective sexual politics, calling attention to the mediumship of text as well as recording technologies. With guest speaker Lucy Reynolds (Westminster University) and chaired by Claire M. Holdsworth (Kingston School of Art), discussion will explore how radical sounds had implications during the 1970s, when feminist scholarship, filmmaking and video art were alert to the potentials for re-evaluating history and how this affects re-visitation of this complex context today, when rearticulated in recent studies.

Note: This programme includes graphic sexual content

Lis Rhodes, *Light Reading*, 1978

(16mm, b/w, 20 min)

Screened from HD Digital File. Courtesy the artist and LUX, London.

Beginning in darkness, a woman is heard speaking of her search for a voice over the blank screen. As the film progresses, images appear, gradually layered, torn and punctuated by silence and speaking, sources merged by the grammar of the film and its making.

Anthony McCall, Claire Pajaczkowska, Andrew Tyndall, Jane Weinstock, *Sigmund Freud's Dora: A Case of Mistaken Identity*, 1979

(16mm, colour, 40 min)

Screened from SD Digital File. Courtesy of LUX, London.

Dora interrogates formalism, feminism and psychoanalysis, through multiple storytelling devices. By interspersing talking heads style accounts relating to Freud's failed treatment of a patient known as 'Dora' with adverts and pornographic TV clips, it evolves structuralist filmmaking strategies, questioning representation whilst enacting a critical dialogue with other filmmakers at the time and contemporary theorists (Screen magazine).

Stuart Marshall, *Go through the Motions*, 1975

(video, b/w, 8 min)

Screened from SD Digital File. Courtesy of LUX, London.

Alongside Arcanum and Mouth Room (1976), this video forms part of Marshall's 'Mouth Works' series, in which each depict an extreme close-up of a moving mouth. In this case, it utters the words 'go through the motions of saying one thing and meaning another' over and again, as the lips freeze, sync and dissociate with what we hear.

Dr Claire M. Holdsworth is an archivist and writer. A Research Fellow at Kingston School of Art (Kingston University London) specialising in British artists' moving image (1970s/1980s), her research explores sound, the voice, authorship and oral histories in relation to archives and historiography. Holdsworth assisted with research and editing of the anthology *Other Cinemas* (IB Tauris, 2017), to which she also contributed as an author.

Dr Lucy Reynolds is Senior Lecturer and researcher at Westminster University. She has published extensively and curated exhibitions and programmes for a range of institutions, most particularly focused on questions of the moving image, feminism, political space and collective practice, and is currently editing an anthology on Women Artists, Feminism and the Moving Image (IB Tauris, 2018). As an artist Reynolds' films and installations, which include the ongoing sound work *A Feminist Chorus*, have been presented in galleries and cinemas nationally and internationally.

16.00 – 18.00

Time and Place

This session contrasts the materiality of the film process, as seen in three films from the London Film-Makers' Co-op, with the materiality of political commentary in a later documentary by the collective Sankofa Film/Video, directed by Isaac Julien. Juxtaposing cinematic responses to given situations, these films reflect on moments and sites of time and space. With Laura Mulvey and guest speaker Kodwo Eshun, the screening is followed by a discussion on the *Other Cinemas* project.

David Crosswaite, *Man with a Movie Camera*, 1973

(16mm, b/w, silent, 10 minutes)

Courtesy of LUX, London.

Filming the camera: adjustments of focus, aperture and composition are reflected in a mirror positioned in front of the camera lens.

William Raban, *Angles of Incidence*, 1973

(16mm, colour, silent, 12 min)

Courtesy the artist and LUX, London.

Filming through a window: the window-frame provides a constant spatial reference point while the camera modifies the view beyond by a series of major and minor variations.

Chris Welsby, *Anemometer*, 1974

(16mm, colour, silent, 10 min)

Courtesy the artist and LUX, London.

Filming with an anemometer: the camera position stays static while the filming speed varies according to the wind speed.

Isaac Julien / Sankofa Film/Video, *Who Killed Colin Roach?*, 1983

(16mm, colour, 45 min)

Courtesy of Isaac Julien Studio.

A landmark film of its time. Filming the environment and impact of racism: responses to the death of a young man in police custody.

Laura Mulvey is Professor of Film and Media Studies at Birkbeck, University of London. She is the author of *Visual and Other Pleasures* (1989, new edition 2009) *Fetishism and Curiosity* (1996, second edition 2013) and *Death Twenty-four Times a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (2006). She made six films in collaboration with Peter Wollen, including *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977) and *Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti* (1984), as well as *Disgraced Monuments* (1996) with artist/filmmaker Mark Lewis.

Kodwo Eshun is Lecturer in Contemporary Art Theory at Goldsmiths University London, Visiting Professor, Haut Ecole d'Art et Design, Genève and co-founder of the Otolith Group. He is the author of *More Brilliant than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction* (1998) and co-editor of *Post Punk Then and Now* (2016), *Harun Farocki Against What? Against Whom?* (2010) and *The Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective 1982–1998* (2007).