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**Sarah Pucill:** The coherence for me was the level of political critique that engaged in a relationship between film language and a politics of subjectivity that in turn broadened out the singularity of white masculine heterosexuality. Feminist and postcolonial debate and queer theory were intersecting, upsetting the 'purity' of a former modernist context. The radical approach to the language of structural film was sustained in much post-structural film work and brought with it the different subjectivities of the film-makers. They adopted a wider approach to film-making and started to experiment with aspects of image and narrative, as opposed to their radical exclusion in favour of process only. The artists I'm thinking of include all those around the table now, as well as Sarah Turner, Tanya Syed, Sandra Lahire, Jayne Parker, Lis Rhodes. I was also looking at artists from USA: Sue Friedrich, Abigail Child, Ulrika Ottinger, as well as Sally Potter and Laura Mulvey in the UK who provided a context between avant-garde and larger budget films.

I arrived on the scene at the end of the 1980s. There were a lot of important feminist artists teaching at the Slade at the time who had a lasting impact on me (Rhodes and Parker, being key examples). All through the 1990s there were conferences on feminist critiques of art history, film studies and psychoanalysis, all of which impacted on the work that was being made. There was a massive growth of feminist literature on art and film, which intersected with postcolonial and queer theory.

At the time, experimental film and video artists were in the minority within the wider spectrum of practicing artist and many of them were teaching on fine art B.A.s. The Film Co-op in the 1990s, Circles in the 1980s and Cinenova were part of this context. The critique of the semiotics of advertising and commercial cinematic language formed the basis of much radical feminist cinematic experiment. The politics of (film) language was being interrogated. Because the artists also had a 'hands-on' knowledge of practice, attention to camera, edit and sound was considered in terms of the language of film. That makes it sound all very dry but this was the background context. It provided a space to explore image and narrativity, and I ended up doing that.

Radical work from Europe and the USA and also from other time periods was being shown at the Filmmakers' Co-op cinema, which you wouldn't see anywhere else. I remember being a bit shocked and thinking that it gave the place a risky feel. The films shown had not gone through the censorship of museum or curating but came straight from the artists. It was an uncensored space set up and managed by the artists, which included screening programmes, distribution and workshops; it created that possibility for interaction, for radical dialogue between film-makers. I remember being slightly fearful of the Film Co-op, but it was a place that was challenging and for me it was formative for my film-making.

**Jean Matthee:** Up until the early 1990s, the Co-op was an important theatre of action (among others) in my life in London. I spent the late 1970s and the 1980s often working day and night for intense stretches in the workshop on my own films or collaborating with others on their work (for instance, I did the camera work for the film made by Mona Hatoum of her performance *Under Siege* (1982, during the time of the war in Beirut), as well as participating in the discursive life around the cinema (with, for instance, Sandra Lahire, Alan Stocker, Stuart Marshall and Malcolm Le Grice who were intense interlocutors and fellow travellers) or writing/theorizing on the practices of women (for instance, I wrote on Nina Danino's films for *Undercut*). I also co-curated an event with Cerith Wyn Evans on *Melancholia* for the cinema. The Co-op folded together many pathways arising from the production of alternative forms of Being, knowing and practice. We explored the processes of becoming woman, of becoming Other and becoming political subject. Our line of sight and polar

star in navigation were the complex emancipatory questions: of the body, of the image, of the cinematic apparatus, of forms of pleasure, of *jouissance* and of radical forms and multiplicities of desire (in thought, in discourse and in action) and of subjectivity (de-centred, unconscious, split and multiple) – performed at the heart of practice and life as political and ethical subjects. For us the practice of theory, the practice of art (which included the filmic/cinematic apparatus as material support) and the practice of feminism were forms of resistance against reduced lives – they were war machines and lines of flight out of the unendurable.

We took the Co-op to be a potential condition and chance for a recovery of the enormous social loss caused by long histories of patriarchy and epistemicide of the Being and knowledge of woman.

**MPC:** Nina, would you like to respond to that?

**Nina Danino:** As a recent graduate, I felt part of the incredible creative energy generated by the proliferation of films by women shown in the early 1980s, whether documentaries or poetic films by Margaret Tait who was regaining visibility. In the 1970s, German women film-makers such as Helma Sanders-Brahms or Claudia von Alemann, were getting funding to make ambitious feature-length films, as was Chantal Akerman. Whether you liked the films or not, or thought they were any good, it was very exciting. Films were shown together without curatorial themes other than it was all work by women. There was a great deal of critical thinking and writing going on about women and representation in film. Laura Mulvey's work on the gaze was being worked with in relation to 16mm film and narrative. I remember seeing Nina Menkes' *Magdalena Virago* (1986) at the Film Co-op, which was an experimental, feature-length film with a bizarre and unique vision. Many of these women's films incorporated the use of duration in narratives about women's lives. Chantal Akerman acknowledges being influenced by formal film. So there was a cross-over of structural film and the theme of self-inscription, the feminist idea of self-authorization within the narrative and the durational material of film. This became inscribed into the Film Co-op's empirical project and changed it, took it elsewhere. I was on the editorial collective of *Undercut* and we were committed to reflecting critically on the diverse voices and films by artists. So the Film Co-op intersected with other critical spaces, publications and conferences, and these created my working context.

**MPC:** Can I just ask about the women's group? Were you all part of it?

**ND:** Women from the Royal College, the Slade and St Martins started to meet: Jean (Matthee), Laura Ford, Mona Hatoum and others. We met for about two years. I can't stress enough how important it was to me; when you leave college, you are out on your own, and by getting together, we created a network of discussion that went beyond the institution. At the Film Co-op there was Anna Thew, Vicky Smith and Cordelia Swan who were present and important in the workshop, programming and distribution, and we saw each others' work in the cinema.

**MPC:** You have talked about the cinema and the films that you saw there, and how there was no censorship and you were able to discover radical voices. Was that also the way that you came to the Co-op, Alia?

**Alia Syed:** I went to the University of East London, which was then the North East London Polytechnic where we had a dark room, film processor and printer. All of my work was informed by these processes and inspired initially by the availability of free black and white film. When I joined the Film Co-op, I learned how to run the processor and printer and I made some money doing this, which enabled me to continue my practice. My film *Unfolding* (1988) had been accepted into distribution having previously been rejected by Circles on the grounds that it was too middle-class, so I naturally veered towards the London Filmmakers' Co-op. *Unfolding* was made over a long period of time – it was a very considered piece of work. I thought it was important to put myself in the frame, so I created a meta-narrative. I had been reading *Alice Doesn't*:

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