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MPC: Let's talk more specifically about the work that you made: what it looked like and in what ways it was different or not to what had been done before and in what ways you feel that you shared some gestures, language and aesthetics with some of the others around the table.

SP: I was interested in experimenting with forms of sequential non-narrative, non-verbal visual language and in the potential for the image to speak on its own terms allowing the power of the body or the unconscious to speak. Early surrealism in film and photography were an important context for my work despite the difficulty in terms of gender and sexuality, at least at the start of my practice. Psychoanalysis and feminist theoretical writing have also been important reference points.

Much of my work re-images the body as both subject and object, which I think has a particular resonance for women image-makers, especially those who image themselves. Maya Deren, Chantal Akerman, Jayne Parker, Sandra Lahire, Claude Cahun, Cindy Sherman, Francesca Woodman and too many others to mention have been influential for me in this respect. These explorations have extended into relationships between the staged and unstaged space, in front of and behind the camera, where props, set, costume, performer and camera operator inter-change.

The relationship between women has been a longstanding and ongoing subject matter in my work. Working with, or being inspired by other women artists was the focus of my recent film *Magic Mirror* (2013), which explores the archive of a dead artist, Claude Cahun, through her photographs and her writing. I wanted to explore the possibility of collaborating or being in dialogue with an inter-war artist who has left images and texts that can be animated together in film. I feel many of my concerns and interests are close to Cahun's (who collaborated with her own partner Marcel Moore) despite the time that has elapsed. In many ways it is only now that her work can be understood; her feminist and queer thinking was beyond her contemporaries. I am interested in this very fact of an audience of another time. *Magic Mirror* was shot on black and white celluloid and was my first feature-length film. It focuses on Cahun's written text *Aveux non avenue/Disavowals* (1930), which critiques autobiography. The film re-stages the still photograph in a moving stage, creating a synaesthesia of image, voice and sound to explore boundaries of medium and authorship.

JM: I came from South Africa, a profoundly unjust, fascist, racist, patriarchal and shamefully illegitimate police state, one that was isolated from the rest of the world. I had come from one of the last outposts of an abyssal history of imperial and colonial exploitation and oppression inflicted by the Global North on the Global South. I had made the leap from the southernmost tip of the continent of Africa to the Co-op in 1976 as a young woman. I had suffered sexual violence and trauma, and came to the Co-op suffering from aftershocks and dispossession. The question of sexual violence remains as important today for feminism as it was then. Sexual violence arises in the fault-line of patriarchy as a reaction to a feared loss of power. I remain as engaged with this question in my practice today as I was then.

I was accepted at the Slade as a painter soon after I arrived in London. But within three months of arriving, my younger sister died in violent circumstances in South Africa. This event had the effect of rupturing me along with my practice as a painter. During this time I made two films – *Next Door* (1980, 16mm, 80min.) and a two-screen film *Double Doors* (1981, super 8, 20 min.) – made in these early years at the Co-op and completed at the difficult turn of the decade. Later, I came to understand how the concept of the silence of African witness played a part in these films.

These films were a form of resistance, a work of mourning, a working-through of trauma, a vigil for and a monument to the cry of a suffering people while affirming the transformative power of the forces of life. This is what the Co-op and the practices connected with it had to contain for me. I did not have the words to say any of this at the time or the ethics or political understanding as a subject to support myself in my struggle. The Co-op and the practice it helped make possible came to hold all this for me.

From years of careful study in collective feminist research groups emerged my desire to purloin frames of film (frames that found me, like *punctums* piercing my soul and demanding I do what it takes to obtain them). Frames that were part of an *optical unconscious* embedded in mainstream narrative cinema, an against-the-grain latent counter-archive of hidden forces of resistance and life that I longed to liberate from the narrative, setting me free in the process as well as the feminine spectator. The process of these films constituted ethical acts for me as non-derisory crossings of limits (in the sense that the stake of crossing the limit was not the *jouissance* of transgression nor of defiance, nor of destruction), acts that put me to the test, in which I had to stake desire, changing the chain of what I was in the process.

Without funding and with the shutting down of anti-capitalist transitional spaces for non-financialized experimentation, my practice became more theoretical, experimental, critical, performative and trans-medial, as affirmative acts of resistance against neo-liberal modes of reason and governmentality. From the mid-nineties until now, my practice has developed multiple material supports and modalities. I designate as part of my practice asymmetrical topological configurations that find holes, folds and pathways to un-work geographies and ecologies structured in domination: for instance, my eight-month curatorial project for Tate Modern called 'Topology at Tate Modern' (October 2011–July 2012). This was a trans-generational, trans-national and trans-disciplinary project that explored these ideas in multiple modalities (performance, dance, sound, conversation, symposium and publication). My cartographic work *Life in the Folds* in the exhibition 'From Floor to Sky' (2010), also mapped topological operations of resistance in multiple material supports. My nine-month collaboration with the Otolith Group in *A Long Time Between Suns* (2009) was another manifestation of this trans-medial topological cartographic practice. Over the last two years I have collaborated with the curator Grant Watson and the experimental curatorial platform *If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part of Your Revolution* on his project 'How we Behave'. I contributed an interview, sat for photographic portraits that appeared in a publication, wrote a script that I performed in a film about my life as art, and interviewed Grant Watson in public about his project at events connected with exhibitions in which my contributions appeared – *If I Can't Dance, Performance Days* (Amsterdam) (November–December 2014), Nottingham Contemporary (2015), The Showroom (2015). I explored topologies of resistance and transformation with Grant Watson in my contribution to his project. The stakes of this trajectory fold back to the beginning of my work at LMFC.

MPC: Could somebody else follow up the question of the personal being political?

ND: In the 1980s, I was trying to speak from the woman's space as absence. So I searched for a language through elliptical narrative and through the presence of the voice, which added a sensual dimension. For some women, the films of Marguerite Duras were problematic because they presented a silence or a hesitant, passive woman who did not speak or is present only on the soundtrack as a voice. This lack positioned her outside of history and that was extremely interesting to me because it also freed her from the programmatic feminism of the time. *First Memory* (1981) opened up absence as a space of loss and the acoustic space as the voice of the film. This material, subjective voice was different from voice-over, which sits on top of the image, which was dominant even in experimental work made at the Film Co-op.

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