

Jean Mathee. *Life In Folds* (2015). Courtesy of the artist with portrait embedded in the work, courtesy of Len Thornton.

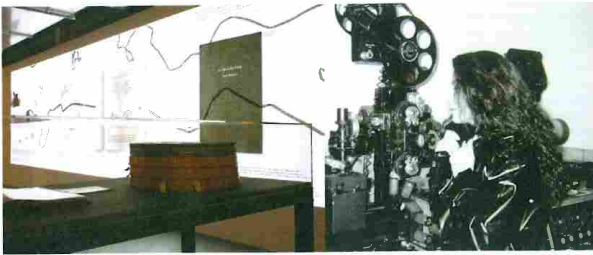
This feminine space was a privileging of a type of experience associated with a liminal and unstable position in an economy of the margins. The subjects who spoke were speaking from this position of not-the-centre. I didn't want my work to be about identity politics or cultural identity; it was about the subject. In the 1990s, *Now I am yours* and *Stabat Mater* were quite shocking to some because of the mix of Catholic imagery and emotion, the voice, experimental film, feminism and psychoanalysis, and in the context of the Film Co-op it was rupturing. There was still a taboo on the voice from the structural period and to use speaking and song as a means of expression was alien to the prevailing orthodoxies. I didn't want to argue a special case for the religious references or content as ironic or iconoclastic. I just researched what I wanted to without any prohibitions either from the structural tendency or from received ideas. One woman film-maker stormed out of the premiere of *Now I am yours*. This radical Other that to me was encompassed by the Kristevan psychoanalytic term *jouissance* was to be found in the complexity of Christian thought, specifically the Catholic imaginary that makes reference to the invisible realm. This was a fascinating paradigm for exploring a filmic feminine and experimental film as a revelatory exuberant style. To me, experimental film means the struggle of the film to reach a place of communication and yes, emotional expression.

We were working in an interim space between the structuralists and the yBas, a lacuna. This place is also very positive because the work has remained largely unco-opted. Why does the work we are talking about look and sit differently to the post-yBa work and moving image in the gallery today? Perhaps because it presents itself through a 'sincere' communication; in other words it is expressive of an 'inner life', which is deeply dissonant with the ironic and knowing subject of contemporary art. Many of these films were dealing with the subject in a kind of crisis of identity, in troubled and troubling spaces: the work seemed to be dealing with loss, suffering, desire, yearning, through the medium and material of film but it also had colour, sound, aesthetic pleasure as it evoked psychic spaces.

JM: The films that I made during these years at the LPMC were an attempt to de-territorialize the image of woman, an attempt to release forces and singularities from the materialized emptiness of the image: moving toward a polymorphous perverse body of infinite variation. This was an attempt to un-do through the operations of the film, the Duchampian *Bachelor Machine* (which Lacan analysed as the *symptom of all men*) that separates woman into virgin and whore. The virgin, with a body swept clean of all *jouissance*, on a pedestal as an object of love with unimpeachable moral purity, while the whore is a debased object of hate and sexual *jouissance*. I was trying to exit from this symptom/Bachelor Machine. My film *The Descent of the Seductress* (1983) is a feminist descent into the *Bachelor Machine* attempting to destitute the symptom.

The seven films I made at this time did close work (as feminist acts of resistance) on the embodiment and emplacement of the desiring feminine subject spectator. I was working with women's weepies and melodrama that (through globalization and nomadic film geographies) had impacted upon women in the Global South (including my mother and grandmother) to become a form of ancestral contamination and potential for daughters (me and my sisters) and for our processes of becoming woman. I worked closely with the archive of documentation of feminine hysterics in thinking my films as symptomatic bodies. These films were closely tied to symptomatology.

RN: What happened for me was that narratives started emerging: my subconscious started coming up through the image. A poetic exploration of something submerged that comes to light through the material. Alla and I have these submerged stories in our work. The notion of agency was also important. We felt that we could be innovators. Now, I'm more concerned with a subjectivity that takes on the wider world. My practice is like a prism. I'm taking in the world and putting it through the filter of my own heart and mind. Familiar or unfamiliar, appropriated footage is easy to cite in the



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