

THE SHOW ROOM

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Reproductive Labour: An exhibition exploring the work of Cinenova

9 February – 26 March 2011

In the exhibition Reproductive Labour, Cinenova's films, videos and paper materials were worked on and displayed in a number of ways. Invited selectors nominated a work from the collection that was featured daily. Bringing these together with a series of screenings and events, this formed a rare opportunity to watch and research pivotal works from the history of feminist, black, queer and experimental film and video, and together consider how they activate the present.

WEEK ONE: FILMS

Each selected film was shown throughout the day. They were not looped, but were played when there were visitors in the space.

WEDNESDAY 9TH FEBRUARY

A Comedy in Six Unnatural Acts, Jan Oxenburg, USA 1975, 25mins
Selected by Oreet Ashery

My first choice is 'A Comedy in Six Unnatural Acts' by Jan Oxenburg. I was so pleased that this invitation gave me a chance to look at the collection and I really wanted to choose them all! What a collection of gems. I've decided upon this one because I haven't heard of the film before which is intriguing. I know it is not a good criteria but I wanted to choose a film over 20 minutes long, so that I could spend a long time in the Showroom watching it. The film seems funny and I am curious to see how it relates to the 6 different Hollywood genres.

THURSDAY 10TH FEBRUARY

Almost Out Jayne Parker, UK, 1984, 1hr 43mins
Screened at 12pm, 2pm, 4pm
Selected by Josephine Berry Slater

The quandary over representations of women's bodies within a feminist art framework is not any closer and, in the absence of convulsive social change, cannot get any closer to a solution today than it was during the fierce debates of the 70s and 80s. Question remain: Is it possible to include representations of the female body in a feminist aesthetic project or is the female body the ineluctable object of a male speculative economy of desire? Is it possible to disrupt representation's affirmation of coherent selfhood, one on which the self protecting phallocracy rests, through a refusal of realist techniques and 'activation' of the viewer? Is the viewer/viewed relationship inherently coextensive with a patriarchal structure which depends on the unitary and sublimated eye-of-reason disinterestedly contemplating an image which it stands outside of? Is this kind of looking necessarily patriarchal (and can the project of 'reason' be freed from this gendering)? Does making visible women's subjective experience of their own objectification, being a self for others, constitute a real disruption of this speculative economy, or is this project doomed to recuperation, producing just another way to consume the female image? And most of all, what does it feel like to think about these things naked with your mother? I hope this film helps to open up these questions again - and somehow free this discussion of its retro-styling.

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FRIDAY 11TH FEBRUARY

Arrows, Sandra Lahire, UK, 1984, 15mins

Screened at 12pm and then every half hour

Selected by Sarah Pucill

Sandra Lahire's first film 'Arrows' (1984) was made out of her own experience of anorexia that she returned to again in her last film 'Johnny Panic'. In 'Arrows', Lahire begins her journey of placing her body in front of the camera, a formal device that she repeats in all her following films either as herself or as a substitute. To quote Marina Grzanic, who describes Lahire's use of her body in her films: "The body, always that body that is coming near the image of a spectre, that is connected solely with 'air and bones', is also the primal element she uses to establish her relationship with her surroundings, particularly with a landscape destroyed by pollution or nuclear waste."

'Arrows' traces a journey through an experience of anorexia and includes letters from fellow sufferers, where the impossible relationship between body and mind is exorcised. Containing the seeds of the films that followed it, 'Arrows' also marks the beginning of Lahire's philosophical journey between aesthetics and politics, which simultaneously weave together richly textured compositions of sound and light, word and image, where the defining line between body and film, self and landscape become difficult to determine.

SATURDAY 12TH FEBRUARY

Peasant Women of Ryazan (Babi Riazanskic), Olga Prebrazhenskaya, USSR, 1927, 1hr 10mins

Screened at 12pm, 2pm, 4pm

Selected by Åsa Sonjasdotter

I'm happy to be able to suggest the Russian film 'Peasant Women of Ryazan (Babi Riazanskic)', directed by Olga Prebrazhenskaya in 1927. The film was made during a time when Russian film was paving the way for the medium's great potential. In Cinenova's catalogue it's described as the 'the greatest and most beautiful film that has ever been made' and there is no question that this is a unique film. The personal reason for selecting it from Cinenova's powerful archive is because of its portrayal of women's struggles and their solidarity. The drama takes place in a rural farming village, whose traditional knowledge-system is, to a large extent, dependent on collaboration and where work and private lives go together. The film can serve as a reference to the 70's feminist movement's emphasis on the relation between the Personal and the Political.

