

# the work

10 newly digitised Cinenova videos  
10 response commissions  
10 venues

a national  
public programme  
from the Cinenova collection

# we share

# introduction

Cinenova presents *The Work We Share*: a national public programme of newly digitised films from the Cinenova collection addressing representations of gender, race, sexuality, health and community. The films are captioned by Collective Text, and supported by response commissions from contemporary artists and writers.

*The Work We Share* gathers a number of films which previously existed in precarious conditions; in some cases, with negatives being lost or distribution film prints being the only copy. This programme intends to acknowledge our interdependency: from organisation, to filmmakers, cultural workers, communities, and individuals. How can we acknowledge our interdependent relationships? How can we recognise our place in a network of communications, relationships and resources, particularly as an un-funded volunteer organisation? What different strains of labour does our work rely on? How do we sustain this work mutually?

The digitised films include *Back Inside Herself* by S. Pearl Sharp, *A Place of Rage* by Pratibha Parmar, *Now Pretend* by L. Franklin Gilliam, *A Song of Ceylon* by Laleen Jayamanne, *Loss of Heat* by Noski Deville, *A Prayer Before Birth* by Jacqui Duckworth, *A Question of Choice* by Sheffield Film Co-op, *Sweet Sugar Rage* by Sistren Theatre Collective, *Scuola Senza Fine* by Adriana Monti, and *Women of the Rhondda* by Esther Ronay, Mary Kelly, Mary Capps, Humphrey Trevelyan, Margaret Dickinson, Brigid Seagrave and Susan Shapiro.

With the ambition of encouraging a dialogue between a range of works across time and space, we invited artists and writers to respond to each film through a variety of mediums. The programme includes response commissions from Sarah Lasoye, Taylor Le Melle, Onyeka Igwe, Natasha Ruwona, Nicola Singh, Nat Raha, Annie Goh, Carolina Ongaro, Umulkhayr Mohamed, and others.

The programme will tour the UK in 2021-2022 at partner organisations including Kettles Yard, Pavilion, Spike Island, Brighton CCA, Modern Art Oxford, Site Gallery, Grand Union, Open School East, and Rule of Threes. A weekend of film screenings will also take place in London at the ICA in collaboration with The Essay Film Festival.

A number of community workshops will support the screening programme, to continue a commitment of feminist filmmaking as a tool and framework for community cohesion, conscious-raising and anti-racist education.

S. Pearl Sharp's *Back Inside Herself* has already screened at Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival 2021, alongside Sarah Lasoye's response commission *On the Inside*. In addition, L. Franklin Gilliam's *Now Pretend* has screened at Pavilion in February 2022, alongside a response commission by Onyeka Igwe in the form of a short essay and a soundscape. These response commissions will be made

available in an online platform in Spring 2022.

## films

### **Back Inside Herself, S. Pearl Sharp (USA, 1984, 4 mins)**

S. Pearl's first film, it is a lyrical visual poem that urges Black women to reject images placed on them by others, and to discover and invent their own identities. Features Barbara-O.

### **A Place of Rage, Pratibha Parmar (USA/UK, 1991, 54 mins)**

Pratibha Parmar weaves the story of the 1960s civil rights movement and 1980s LGBT rights movement together in a reminder that the struggle continues because of such leaders. June Jordan's 'Poem about Police Violence' is just one of many moments that still hit home.

### **Now Pretend, L.Franklin Gilliam (USA, 1991, 10 mins)**

Now Pretend is an experimental investigation into the use of race as an arbitrary signifier. Drawing upon language, personal memories and the 1959 text, *Black Like Me*, it deals with Lacan's "mirror stage" theory of self perception and the movement from object to subject.

### **A Song of Ceylon, Laleen Jayamanne (AU, 1985, 51 mins)**

This stylized non-narrative film presents an audio/visual montage of 'possessed bodies' by staging and interpreting a Sri Lankan ritual of spirit possession and cure.

### **Loss of Heat, Noski Deville (UK, 1994, 20 mins)**

The film is an evocative portrayal of queer love that challenges preconceived notions on the 'reality' of living with the invisible disability of epilepsy. It is a poetic, immersive interpretation exploring the interplay of the emotional and the physical, across boundaries of sexuality, dependence and desire.

### **A Prayer Before Birth, Jacqui Duckworth (UK, 1991, 20 mins)**

The film confronts debilitating illness with creative vitality, simultaneously desperate and defiant.

### **A Question of Choice, Sheffield Film Co-op (UK, 1982, 18 mins)**

A documentary portrait of two cleaners, a dinner lady and a lollipop lady drawn in terms of the limited choices available to women with family commitments.

**Sweet Sugar Rage, Sistren Theatre Collective (JM, 1985, 42 mins)**

The film shows the work of, and explores the methods used by the theatre collective Sistren to highlight the harsh conditions facing female workers on a Jamaican sugar estate.

**Scuola Senza Fine, Adriana Monti (IT, 1983, 40 mins)**

*Scuola Senza Fine* shows how the experiment extended into the lives of women taking the course, most of whom were housewives. The film was produced in collaboration with these students as part of their studies for the class, turning the curriculum's question about the representation of women into the questions about the representation of themselves.

**Women of the Rhondda, Esther Ronay, Mary Kelly, Mary Capps, Humphrey Trevelyan, Margaret Dickinson, Brigid Seagrave and Susan Shapiro (UK, 1973, 20 mins)**

*Women of the Rhondda* turns much needed attention to the role played by women in the gruelling Welsh Miners' Strikes of the 1920s and 1930s.

## commissions

**Sarah Lasoye**

'On the Inside' by Sarah Lasoye, is a piece of prose writing engaging with the question of what happens when the protagonist of S. Pearl Sharp's film returns. It explores internal conversations, cycles of retreat, rest and self-preservation.

**Taylor Le Melle**

Taylor Le Melle is developing a video piece featuring an interview with Pratibha Parmar on her films *Wavelengths* and *A Place of Rage*.

**Onyeka Igwe**

In response to L.Franklin Gilliam's *Now Pretend*, Onyeka Igwe will explore the themes of self portraiture and presence through a short essay and a soundscape. These works will reflect on the changing meanings of blackness in a single lifetime and throughout history examining the question of what it means to be more myself in a layered configuration of societies that both foreclose and expand those possibilities.

## **Natasha Ruwona**

*The body is an echo* is Natasha Ruwona's response to *A Song of Ceylon* by Laleen Jayamanne. It borrows from the interconnectedness between ritual, body and hysteria present in the film. The work responds to the desires for healing and the creation of healing practices by answering to the call for a self exorcism.

## **Nicola Singh**

Nicola Singh's response to Noski Deville's film *Loss of Heat* (1994) organically developed into a collaborative project with Deville. The pair will produce an audio work that uses Deville's prose as a loose score for improvisation, and the feel of the film's soundtrack as inspiration. They will play with moods and rhythms, across fragments of sound, song and speech.

## **Nat Raha**

On 'A Prayer Before Birth', is an essay by Nat Raha that takes the form of interwoven dialogues on Duckworth's short, final film, 'A Prayer Before Birth' (1991). The film is a harrowing, surreal visioning in which a Black queer woman charts the onset of a physically debilitating health condition – refracting the director's own experiences. Reading the film as presenting ableism as a horror story, the author speaks with four artists, curators, activists and scholars. They discuss anti-Black racism in Britain; representations, politics and aesthetics of disability and ableism; interracial queer desires; care and self-care; and the work of attending to this film now, thirty years after it's production, and after the passing of the director. The dialogues themselves emerge out of long-term friendships, in the knowledge that intimacy can create a space for deep conversation, which in turn work to hold the film itself.

## **Annie Goh**

In response to *A Question of Choice* (1982) by the Sheffield Film Co-op, Annie Goh is undertaking an explorative research-based project and hoping to engage current day cleaners at a site related to the commission. Annie begins her research with the question "Who Cleans the World?" citing Françoise Vergès's *A Decolonial Feminism*. The aim is to address some of the themes raised in the film for the present day around the role of cleaning and maintenance as paid and unpaid work, the personal cost and choices of those who do that work, as well as wider issues of care, community, health and aspiration.

## **Carolina Ongaro**

Activating conversations and archival material, Carolina Ongaro revisits *Scuola Senza Fine* (1983) by Adriana Monti, looking back at the ‘150 Ore’—a pedagogical experiment implemented in Italy in 1974, that saw women organising into independent learning and working groups, testing ways to challenge dominant powers through self-education and self-narration. New dialogue considers the alternative economies that have historically emerged through feminist movements and experiments, reflecting on the unending value of constituting informal spaces for learning where coexistence, solidarity and cooperation become the basis for new systems to thrive.

## **Umulkhayr Mohamed**

‘OF THE \_\_\_\_\_ BY ASSOCIATION’ by Umulkhayr Mohamed, is an artistic response to *Women of the Rhondda* (1973) in the form of an artist moving image piece that meditates on the contemporary legacies of the themes that these women of the Rhondda. This piece incorporates elements of experimental sound and video collage situated both in nostalgia and the present day, and is punctuated by calls to contemplate how our struggles are as interdependent as we are.

# biographies

## **S. Pearl Sharp**

S. Pearl Sharp’s work focuses on cultural arts, health and Black Diaspora history including the poetry short *Back Inside Herself* (1984 and 2009 Re-mix), the semi-animated *Picking Tribes* (1988), the celebrated *The Healing Passage/Voices From The Water* (2004) and directing numerous documentaries for the City of Los Angeles’ CH 35. Her films have screened in Norway, China, Britain, the Caribbean and at FESPACO. Instigating through art and activism she authored the non-fiction books *Black Women For Beginners* and *The Evening News*, four volumes of poetry, and in 2021 she released the short poetry video “Blood Bank.”

## **Pratibha Parmar**

Pratibha Parmar is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, video artist and professor. Awarded The Visionary Award from the One in Ten Film Festival and the Frameline Film Festival Life Time Achievement Award, Pratibha is Writer/Director/Producer of over 16 documentaries She is the author and editor of several ground breaking books notably, “The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 1970s Britain,” and editor and publisher

at Sheba Feminist Press (1980's), the first UK publishers of Audre Lorde. Pratibha was Visiting Artist at Stanford University, Theatre & Performance Studies Department (2013) and is currently an Associate Professor in the film department at California College of the Arts, San Francisco.

### **L.Franklin Gilliam**

L.Franklin Gilliam (they/them) believes that, in a broken world, the vision and creativity of artists are critical to transformative systems change.

Gilliam's creative practice is research-based and multidisciplinary. It has taken the form of film/video art, installation, games, and illustrated lectures. Gilliam's projects explore the interplay between obsolete technology formats and the faulty transmission of historical knowledge and difference. Their projects have been screened and presented at the 1997 Whitney Biennial, the New Museum, Oberhausen Short Film Festival, and featured in Anais Duplan's *BLACKSPACE: On the Poetics of an Afrofuture* (2020). Gilliam's role-playing game, *Lesberation*, premiered at New York University Game Center's No Quarter exhibition in 2015.

### **Laleen Jayamanne**

Laleen Jayamanne taught Cinema Studies at the University of Sydney. Her undergraduate education was in Sri Lanka and she has a Masters in Drama from New York University and a Ph.D. in film from the University of New South Wales, on "The Positions of Women in the Sri Lankan Cinema; 1947-1979"

She is the author "The Epic Cinema of Kumar Shahani" (Indiana University Press, 2015) and "The Poetic Cinema and the Spirit of the Gift in the Films of Pabst, Paradjanov, Kubrick and Ruiz" (Amsterdam University Press, 2021).

### **Noski Deville**

Noski Deville is a cinematographer and film artist, working across film, music and sound. As Workshop Co-ordinator at the London Filmmakers Co-Op in the 1980s she developed her skills on the JK Optical Printer. Deville has over 25 years experience as a cinematographer, which is well known from her award winning work with internationally acclaimed artists including; Isaac Julien, Steve McQueen, Alia Syed, Daria Martin and Jananne Al-Ani. In 2015 she won the Jules Wright Prize for her cinematography in the field of visual arts. An industry recognised Director of Photography and member of the Guild of British Camera Technicians, Deville is also a committed film educator having headed up the Cinematography Department at UCA, Farnham Film School.

## **Jacqui Duckworth**

Jacqui Duckworth was an independent filmmaker, born in Warrington in 1948. All of Jacqui's film and photography work arose from an instinctive and original cleverness rather than a traditional academic approach and she made several searching films before the MS diagnosis in her early 30s prevented her carrying on with her plans for further film projects. These included: *An Invitation to Marilyn C*, *Home Made Melodrama* and *A Prayer before Birth*, the latter shown on Channel 4 as part of a series exploring the relationship between mind and body.

## **Sheffield Film Co-op**

In the early 1970s the second women's liberation movement was engaging in raising consciousness about issues women faced in their domestic and work lives. It was soon clear that there was a need to disseminate feminist ideas about the issues to a wider audience than those women already attending meetings. A small group of women with young children in Sheffield realised that film could be a powerful means of giving women the voice that they did not have in the mainstream media. *A Question of Choice* was Sheffield Film Co-op's fourth film, made in 1982 on 16mm with a crew of two and shown on projectors in community and adult education centres. With funding from Channel 4's Independent Film and Video Department, SFC later went on to make films for broadcast and to help train new women filmmakers.

## **Sistren Theatre Collective**

Sistren Theatre Collective, which means 'sisterhood,' was founded in 1977 in Kingston, Jamaica by working class women in the social, cultural and political context of Jamaica's socialist experiment of the 1970s following the first decade of independence. Since 1977, Sistren has used art as a tool for social change for the discussion and analysis of gender-based violence and to provide solutions through organisational networks. The founding members included Vivette Lewis, Cerene Stephenson, Lana Finikin, Afolashade (then Pauline Crawford), Beverley Hanson, Jasmine Smith, Lorna Burrell Haslam, Beverley Elliot, Jerline Todd, Lillian Foster, May Thompson, Rebecca Knowles and Barbara Gayle. Assisted by the actor and director Honor Ford-Smith, the Collective was forged through a government initiative to improve employment in Jamaica's poorest communities. Plays like *Downpression Get A Blow* (1977), *Bellywoman Bangarang* (1978), *Nana Yah* (1980), *QPH* (1981) and *Domestik* (1982) along with community drama workshops, presaged the documentary *Sweet Sugar Rage* in 1985.



### **Adriana Monti**

Adriana Monti is an Italian-Canadian independent producer, feminist filmmaker, and author. She started her career in Italy in the late 1970s by developing a collaborative and experimental style that allowed the women who were the subjects of her research to take an active and creative role in her films. Monti is the founder of the experimental film school Laboratorio di Cinematografia – Albedo, where she taught and managed while she was finishing *Scuola senza fine* in 1983. She also taught film history and film production at the Women’s Free University and at the Film and Television School in Milan. Monti moved to Canada in 1996, where she worked for fifteen years as reporter and story producer at OMNI Television Rogers Media, and started her own company A&Z Media Ltd.

### **Esther Ronay, Mary Kelly, Mary Capps, Humphrey Trevelyan, Margaret Dickinson, Brigid Seagrave and Susan Shapiro**

Esther Ronay, Mary Kelly, Mary Capps, Humphrey Trevelyan, Margaret Dickinson, Brigid Seagrave and Susan Shapiro came together to make *Women of the Rhondda* in 1972. What started as research for an oral history book about the General Strike of 1926, turned into a film that captures the experience of four women from the Rhondda Valley mining community in South Wales.

### **Sarah Lasoye**

Sarah Lasoye is a poet and writer from London. She is an alumna of the Barbican Young Poets and a current member of Octavia – Poetry Collective for Women of Colour. Her debut chapbook, *Fovea / Ages Ago*, was published by Hajar Press in April 2021.

### **Taylor Le Melle**

Taylor Le Melle writes, organises and produces objects using their training in art history, architectural theory and developmental psychology. In 2018 they became one of the founding directors of not/nowhere, an artists’ workers cooperative which is dedicated to supporting moving image practises and analogue technology. Through their publishing collective, PSS, they have edited and produced several collections of science fantasy and one poetry collection.

### **Onyeka Igwe**

Onyeka Igwe is an artist and researcher working between cinema and installation, born and based in London, UK. Through her work, Onyeka is animated by the question — how do we live together? — with particular

interest in the ways the sensorial, spatial and non-canonical ways of knowing can provide answers to this question. She uses embodiment, archives, narration and text to create structural ‘figure-of-eights’, a form that exposes a multiplicity of narratives. Onyeka is part of B.O.S.S., a sound system collective that brings together a community of queer, trans and non binary people of colour involved in art, sound and radical activism. Her works have been shown in the UK and internationally. She was awarded the New Cinema Award at Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival 2019 and the 2020 Arts Foundation Fellowship Award for Experimental Film.

### **Natasha Thembiso Ruwona**

Natasha Thembiso Ruwona is a Scottish-Zimbabwean artist, researcher and programmer. They are interested in Afrofuturist storytelling through the poetics of the landscape, working across various media including; digital performance, film, DJing and writing. Their current project Black Geographies, Ecologies and Spatial Practice is an exploration of space, place and the climate as related to Black identities and histories. Natasha completed a curatorship for Africa in Motion Film Festival 2019 and is a Project Coordinator for UncoverED, Assistant Producer for Claricia Parinussa, a Committee Member for Rhubaba, Board Member of the CCA, and Assistant Curator for Fringe of Colour.

### **Dr Nat Raha**

Dr Nat Raha is a poet and activist-scholar, based in Edinburgh, Scotland. She is the author of three collections of poetry, *of sirens, body & faultlines* (Boiler House Press, 2018), *countersonnets* (Contraband Books, 2013) and *Octet* (Veer Books, 2010). Her creative and critical writing has appeared in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *MAP Magazine*, *The New Feminist Literary Studies* (Cambridge UP, 2020), and *Transgender Marxism* (Pluto Press, 2021). Her poetry has also been anthologised in *We Want It All: An Anthology of Radical Trans Poetics* (Nightboat Books, 2020), *ON CARE* (MA Biblioteque, 2020), *What the Fire Sees* (Divided Publishing, 2020) and *Makar/Unmakar: Twelve Contemporary Poets in Scotland* (Tapsalteerie, 2019). Nat has performed her work internationally, and her writing has been translated into French, Galician, German, Greek, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Slovenian and Welsh. She co-edited ‘Imagining Queer Europe Then and Now’, a special issue of *Third Text* journal (January 2021), and co-curated the ‘Life Support: Forms of Care in Art and Activism’ Exhibition at Glasgow Women’s Library (2021). Nat holds a PhD in queer Marxism from the University of Sussex, and co-edits *Radical Transfeminism Zine*.

## **Nicola Singh**

Nicola Singh is an artist currently based between West Yorkshire and Newcastle upon Tyne. She teaches art in university and community settings. Her practice encompasses solo and collaborative performance, film, photography, drawing and painting, and sculptural installation. She is currently focused on improvisation in spoken word, for sound and song, and in movement and writing — exploring ideas and states of self-representation and identity. Forthcoming projects include the Leach 100 residency at Porthmeor Studios, Cornwall (2021), a performance at Quench Gallery, Margate (2021), a residency at La Bonne Women and Girls Centre, Barcelona (2022) and a presentation of new work at XARKIS Festival, Cyprus (2022) — both part of a programme with D6: Culture In Transit (Newcastle, UK).

## **Annie Goh**

Annie Goh is an artist and researcher working primarily with sound, space, electronic media and generative processes within their social and cultural contexts. She completed her CHASE/AHRC-funded PhD at Goldsmiths, University of London in 2019 on archaeoacoustics and sonic knowledge production, where she was also a Stuart Hall Foundation PhD Fellow. She co-curated the discourse program of CTM Festival Berlin 2013-2016 and is co-founder of the Sonic Cyberfeminisms project since 2015 with Dr Marie Thompson. She is currently a Lecturer in XD Pathway in BA Fine Art at CSM and an Associate Lecturer in Sound Arts at LCC.

## **Carolina Ongaro**

Carolina Ongaro is curator, writer and researcher based in London. Since 2014 she has been running Jupiter Woods, an arts organisation focused on research and collaborative practice based in South East London, where she has been initiating multiple projects, individually and collectively. She currently works at Forma Arts & Media, where she assists with productions, R&Ds, and long-term projects. Through her work she explores formats and methodologies of making, organising and learning—in the cultural sector and beyond—that prioritise forms of cooperation, solidarity and active engagement, looking at possibilities for alternative systems of economy and relations to grow. The formation and generative potential of feminist spaces, in particular, has been a central part of this inquiry — accompanying various projects and collaborations. As part of an ongoing project called Thinking With (2019-present) she has been engaging in learning through conversations with artists and peers, and has started exploring the uses and principles of Permaculture in relation to creative and organisational practises.

## Umulkhayr Mohamed

Umulkhayr Mohamed is a Welsh Somali writer and artist, who also produces work under the alias, Aisha Ajnabi, their art other. Her artistic practice involves primarily poetry, artist moving image, and performance work that explores the tension present between enjoying the act of wandering between emancipatory temporalities and a functional need to position oneself in the now. Their art is the place where they are able to forgo pretences and hierarchies, replacing them with solidarity and liberation, a way for them to contribute to doing the work of eroding the borders between beings to reveal the wholeness that lies beneath. Her art and writing have been featured in The National Museum of Wales, Festival of Voice, MOSTYN, Seren Cardiff Poetry Festival, Where I'm Coming From's Anthology, and COMMUNION: a happening at SHIFT Cardiff.

## about Cinenova

Cinenova is a volunteer-run charity preserving and distributing the work of feminist film and video makers. Cinenova launched in 1991 following the merger of two feminist film and video distributors, Circles and Cinema of Women, each formed in 1979. Cinenova currently distributes over 300 titles that include artists' moving image, experimental film, narrative feature films, documentary and educational videos made from the 1910's to the early 2000's. The thematic in these titles include oppositional histories, post and de-colonial struggles, representation of gender, race, sexuality, and other questions of difference and importantly the relations and alliances between these different struggles. Current Working Group: Tracey Francis, Emma Hedditch, Charlotte Procter, Irene Revell, Moira Salt, Louise Shelley, Marina Vishmidt.

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