

Raven Row  
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*Visions, Divisions and Revisions*  
*Political Film and Film Theory in the 1970s and 80s*

'Visions, Divisions and Revisions' revisits the idea of 'film as a political practice', as it was practiced and theorised in the 1970s and 80s in the UK. Over the course of six events we will look at some of the key debates that enlivened these years: issues around authorship; the role of the audience; the relation of theory to practice; the use of psychoanalysis in film; and different ideas of collectivity.

The first event in the programme will be a screening of the seminal political film, *Night Cleaners* (1975) by the Berwick Street Film collective, followed by a Q&A with former member of the collective, Humphry Trevelyan. When *Night Cleaners* was released in 1975 it polarised opinion, sparking heated debate about the role of political film. The film broke with many of the accepted conventions of political filmmaking, abandoning documentary realism in favour of a more searching, poetic mode. As Clare Johnston put it at the time, writing in *Spare Rib*, '*Night Cleaners* could provide the basis for a new direction in British political filmmaking'. Although the film was influential it never quite functioned in this way, as a pathfinder. Humphry Trevelyan will trace the film's influence and look back at its lengthy production and post-production phases.

*Night Cleaners* was screened at the Edinburgh International Film Festival in 1975, and was discussed then in the context of the festival's 'Brecht and Cinema/Film and Politics' programme of screenings and events. Our second event brings together some of the people who took part in the festival during the 70s and others who were active at this time and whose work shaped film culture in the UK. A panel discussion on the EIFF in the 1970s will reconstruct some of the arguments that energised the festival, before going on to reflect on how the idea of a 'political cinema' was advanced then, and what it might mean now.

The third event, a screening of *Deux Fois* (1969) by Jackie Raynal will provide another point of access to some of the debates that were circulating during the 70s. Although it was made in 1969, and in France, *Deux Fois* was screened at the EIFF in 1975. The film constitutes a markedly different approach to film and politics than that practiced by both the Nouvelle Vague and the 'left bank' filmmakers (Chris Marker, Agnès Varda, and Alain Resnais). It is also distinct from Godard's political films of the late 60s. Instead the film looks forward to performance art recorded on film and video, and to political films made by women in the 70s. Raynal described *Deux Fois* as a film "against editing", a job which at that time was one of the few open to women in the film industry. The screening will be followed by a discussion on women and labour, and the fate of the women's movement, with Nina Power and Marina Vishmidt.

A screening of *Women of the Rhondda* (1973) by Mary Capps, Margaret Dickinson, Mary Kelly, Esther Ronay, Brigid Segrave, and Humphry Trevelyan, and *The Amazing Equal Pay Show* (1974) by the London Women's Film Group, will pick up on these ideas. A discussion between Dan Kidner and Julia Knight, will consider the short-lived but influential London Women's Film Group with a focus on how their films were distributed and presented. The fifth event will focus on the work of Cinema Action. Two films will be screened, *So That You Can Live* (1982) by Cinema Action and *Year of the Beaver* (1985) by Steve Sprung. After the screening Steve Sprung will be in conversation with Alex Sainsbury. In the final event, Paul Willeman who edited the film journal *Framework* in the 1980s and was on the board of *Screen* throughout the 1970s, and Peter Osborne, Professor of Modern European Philosophy, Middlesex University, will critically examine the discourses that proliferated within the British film culture of the 1970s, and which informed the film theory that was developed then.

Programme organised by Petra Bauer and Dan Kidner

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Monday 8 March, 7pm  
**Night Cleaners (1975) by Berwick Street Film Collective**  
Screening and discussion with Humphry Trevelyan.

Tuesday 9 March, 7pm  
**Edinburgh International Film Festival in the 1970s: A Panel Discussion**  
With Esther Leslie (chair), Paul Willemen, Colin MacCabe, Margaret Dickinson, Noreen MacDowell and Felicity Sparrow.

Wednesday 17 March, 7pm  
**Deux Fois (1969) by Jackie Raynal**  
Screening and discussion with Marina Vishmidt and Nina Power.

Wednesday 21 April, 7pm  
**London Women's Film Group**  
Screening of *Women of the Rhondda* (1973, 20 minutes) by Mary Capps, Margaret Dickinson, Mary Kelly, Esther Ronay, Brigid Segrave and Humphry Trevelyan, and *The Amazing Equal Pay Show* (1974, 48 minutes) by London Women's Film Group. Discussion with Julia Knight.

Saturday 24 April, 3pm  
**Cinema Action**  
Screenings and discussion with Steve Sprung and Alex Sainsbury.  
3pm *So That You Can Live* (1982, 83 minutes) by Cinema Action.  
4.30pm *Year of the Beaver* (1985, 77 minutes) by Steve Sprung/Poster Collective.  
6pm Steve Sprung and Alex Sainsbury in conversation.

Wednesday 28 April, 7pm  
**Peter Osborne and Paul Willemen in conversation**  
Paul Willemen who edited the film journal *Framework* in the 1980s and was on the board of *Screen* throughout the 1970s, and Peter Osborne, Professor of Modern European Philosophy, Middlesex University, will critically examine the discourses that proliferated within the British film culture of the 1970s.

All events are free but booking is essential as space is limited. Please email [info@ravenrow.org](mailto:info@ravenrow.org) to reserve a place.

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