



Still from "Synthesized Memories" by Diva Martinez

Tuesday, November 17th 7:00-8:30 PM
Part 3: Public Screening and Conversation

Join us for Part 3 of "Collective Visions: The Past, Present, and Future of Feminist Media," for a public screening with two filmmakers from the original '94 gathering [Cheryl Dunye](#) and [Shu Lea Cheang](#), who will be joined by two contemporary CUNY film students and makers [Neha Gautam](#) (Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema) and [Diva Martinez](#) (Brooklyn College) who will screen their own short works. The screenings will be followed by a moderated discussion by [Devon Narine-Singh](#) (MA student in Screen Studies, Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema) and [Alex Juhasz](#) & [Angela Agauyo](#), co-editors of the *Feminist Media Histories* special issue, "[Informed Historical Reveries](#), [fmh.ucpress.edu]" Vol. 5 Issue 4, October 2019, 1-18.

Alexandra Juhasz : @diva: I love your “COVID video.” So closed down in space and yet opens out into time. And your joy and power in the images of yourself (about *Synthesized Memories*)

Darshana : I like the way memory is structured in the changing visual scapes produced through the mixing (about *Synthesized Memories*).

Alexandra Juhasz : Look how Cheryl is also mining her early photos (in *Janine*).
@darshana: me too. what do you think about how Cheryl is doing that? and this event?

Darshana : Cheryl’s recounting uses the episodic structure that calls attention to the constructed nature of memory.

Kelly Spivey : Blowing out the candles (in *Janine*) ... @Diva, what do you think so far? I’m curious. this reminds me of Howardina Pindell’s *Free, White and 21* in opening up a space for personal stories of racism.

Alexandra Juhasz : Or your work, Kelly!

Kelly Spivey : Ya, maybe!!

Diva Martinez : “Constructed nature of memory” is a great way of putting it since so many of our own memories are non-linear themselves, and somehow archiving and revisiting physical media that are artifacts of moments help us to make sense of the non-linear aspects of memory.

Lynne Sachs : I really love the way that Cheryl can connect so directly with her teenage self (in *Janine*), both her emotional side and her cerebral side. Her testimonial also reminds me of *Free White and 21*, very introspective while also performative.

Xavier : Cheryl's feelings of attraction to Janine while at the same time feeling insecure by Janine's class status, her blonde hair, and blue eyes is very reminiscent of the works of Toni Morrison. The devaluation of racism and classicism as intensely intimate.

Diva Martinez : @Kelly, personally I feel it’s an important voice and it reminds me of part of the conversation in the 1994 NYC meeting which was “video enabled a whole other kind of production” (see this conversation between Martha Gever, Abigail Child, Juanita Mohammed and Cheryl Dunye at [01:52:00 on the annotated video](#) of the 1994 research meeting.) Another comment made was how feminism was “perceived as middle class & white” ([02:51:12](#): Cheryl Dunye, Annie Sprinkle, Shari Frilot, Terry Lawler, Alisa Lebow) and I was wondering how people felt about that in 2020?

Alexandra Juhasz : In the documentation of the 1994 research meeting Cheryl talks about books by black women as being her inspiration as there wasn’t a lot of film yet ([02:19:50](#))!

Devon Narine-Singh : Unexpected association: I feel this calls to mind more the work of the 60s/70 (Carolee Schneeman/Joyce Wieland) and so does Diva’s film, maybe more than the 90s VHS aesthetics that may seem the more obvious association at first glance.

Diva Martinez : @Devon the visuals of the film really do speak to me.

Devon Narine-Singh : Also, the way you and Shu Lea use color as way of movement is really interesting (in *Janine* and *Sex Fish*).

Kelly Spivey : Thanks Diva, I love that insight about the “constructed nature of memory” and the relationship with media as artifacts.

Devon Narine-Singh : “I have a hard time thinking about the future these days, but the past is always there” (about Neha’s film, *Where the Light Enters*.)

Alexandra Juhasz : @neha: “the past is always there.” what do we do with it. how do we let it nourish, teach, and ground us?

Devon Narine-Singh : @Angela the past seems to drive your research in collaborating with Alex —how is that part of a feminist practice?

Diva Martinez : @Neha when you said “between worlds, neither here nor there” (in *Where the Light Enters*), I think you have encapsulated the experience that children of immigrants in America have. There is a distance between the home you are familiar with and your “perceived home” according to nation of birth or heritage. The further the distance, we tend to hold onto memories passed on from relatives or from images to give us those building blocks of our cultural heritage, who we are as people.

Diva Martinez : I was born in Cuba but was raised in Miami and my experience as a Cuban American raised in Miami, a place so close to Cuba, is vastly different than that of the experience of a Cuban American raised in Jersey. But when you look further into the histories attached to people who have been exiled across time, there are so many similarities in the effects of these displacements long term.

Angela Aguayo : I think the recovery of a forgotten past is an opportunity to reconsider the present. It can become a moment of political intervention by disrupting narratives of exclusion and addressing structural oppression where public memory has ossified.

Alexandra Juhasz : My father survived the Holocaust and came here as a teenager, to Queens, Jackson Heights. Now in his 80s, his trauma unrolls, and I am more and more aware of it in me ... war, colonialism, racism, carry forward. It helps to talk with him, but some of it is mine.

Saleem Gondal (he/him) : It’s so important to have the 1947 Partition told through a feminist lens. The shadow of that time still haunts the subcontinent today. This footage is precious.

Devon Narine-Singh : “If there is intergenerational there is intergenerational wisdom” (in *Where the Light Enters*).

Cristy (she/they) : "In this process, I have been coming home to myself" <3 (in *Where the Light Enters*).

Devon Narine-Singh : Neha thank you for showing us how to heal forward.

Alexandra Juhasz : I love this "COVID film," too! Our time inside has given us the need to search inside" (in *Where the Light Enters*).

Diva Martinez : @Neha This was very inspiring for me, especially when you mention what to talk about and you mention the chronic pain, as I have fibromyalgia myself. Intergenerational traumas and wisdoms are both things we carry with us but can learn from and the healing aspect of this film will help many.

Neha Gautam: @Diva, yes. I think partly I was lead on this path because I started listening to my body and what it was holding.

Elizabeth Mehling : Loving the usage of the witch symbol as a source of empowerment as a subversion of its historically negative connotation (in Shu Lea's, WONDERS WANDER - *Con Brujas, Avanzamos [With witches, we move]*)

Kelly Spivey : impervious bubbles have a poignant double meaning with COVID! (in *Wonders Wander*).

Alexandra Juhasz : I love how this immigration story presses so hard against the one @neha documented, and the one that @diva has told us here in the chat. The queer dance version! So much joy (like Neha's ending dance). (in *Wonders Wander*).

Devon Narine-Singh : Thinking back to the notion of aesthetics discussed in the editorial—we are seeing a future, without a Hollywood budget needed—a future that doesn't demand the money to show it, only the ideas.

Alexandra Juhasz : And how this presses against Cheryl's words in *Janine*. And her words about about the white gaze and her blackness...

Xavier : Its cool to see these films curated together. It's like a grand narrative weaved by smaller stories. In all the ways in which our contemporary time period is alienating, and as we are constantly under barrage by authoritarian forces and the degradation of our own memories, it is through the identities allowed under intersectional feminism that we moor ourselves to the context of our humanity and within our greater society.

Alexandra Juhasz : Not "curated," chosen by each maker on her own! We chose the makers though

Diva Martinez : It is interesting how the films do work together though.

Elizabeth Mehling : Thank you Xavier for expressing this, such an interesting perspective

Kelly Spivey : That in itself says a lot. A curatorial approach. The lens you set out for yourselves in selecting artists allows for a rich cross-referencing that helps us learn the larger conversations a work, from Cheryl's film to the present.

Darshana : @Neha, I liked the way you ended with Rumi! Intergenerational migration and identity building is always pitched as a journey that is never ending. The trauma of partition is still haunting the Indian sub-continent. The Rohingya crisis made it pretty evident that despite the trauma of partition, we haven't learned from these traumas.

Shahin Ismail-Beigi : I recommend Nalini Malani as an artist to look into re Partition, feminism, and more. She is multi-media artist who has done video installations and a range of works re partition in India and Pakistan, as well as other embedded histories and current traumas. Her work shows internationally, but also shows in NYC often.

Gallery site that should list current and upcoming shows, cv etc.

<https://www.galerieelong.com/artists/nalini-malani> artist site (not current but helpful)

<http://www.nalinimalani.com/>

Alexandra Juhasz : History that wasn't documented: see Cheryl's debut feature (and the first African American lesbian feature film), *The Watermelon Woman* (1996), which I produced and acted in!

Alexandra Juhasz : We faked an archive, The Fae Richards Archive because none was available to find: it was the very black lesbian archive Cheryl needed (shot by Zoe Leonard).

Shahin Ismail-Beigi: Malini also interweaves her work with The Cassandra story. Beckett, many cultural intertextualities. and I should clarify ... it is not exclusively about traumas of Partition and events since. it is multi layered. def seek her installations, youtubes, interviews.

Alexandra Juhasz : The body as archive, @neha

Alexandra Juhasz : In the previous session we showed a clip of Shari Frilot (now a curator at Sundance), 24 years ago, saying that women, and women of color need an invitation to begin to make their film: ([02:19:50](#))

Laura Wexler : I'm learning that "Covid film" is really a thing.

Alexandra Juhasz : Yes @Laura

Shahin Ismail-Beigi: A video documentation as part of Malini's "in search of vanished blood" ... an installation about partition, Indian farmers fighting for their lands, and a lot more. the work is super moving: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=6uK9iRoPds8>.

an artist who is sort of mapping lgbtq+ archives and lived experiences and histories... I recommend Carlos Motta. His installation “the crossing” is over a dozen interviews about lgbtq refugees in Amsterdam ... often shown on several screens ... really moving.

Kelly Spivey : What Neha said about creating a narrative from a trauma, this is a therapy that helps her and is also a real thing that trauma therapists have identified – a memory that seems hyperreal is one that hasn’t yet been integrated. Once it loses sharpness and becomes a narrative that’s healthy. So, I wonder if your film is part of this?

Shahin Ismail-Beigi: He too is repped in nyc at ppow gallery, so you can see his work in nyc often: <http://carlosmotta.com/project/the-crossing-2017-2/>

<https://www.ppowgallery.com/artist/carlos-motta/biography>

<https://instagram.com/carlosalejandromotta?igshid=18rv5d2y9vr5x>

Kelly Spivey : @Neha: It’s a story, it’s considered integrated, and “healed” to some respect for an individual. I am wondering if you see your film as potentially healing for others?

Alexandra Juhasz : In the first session, yesterday, “Intergenerational Screening and Conversation) Juanita Mohammed Szczepanski talked a lot about doing this work as a mother and grandmother (she was paired with her granddaughter Pharah Diaz for this event).

Maria Vinogradova : All of this makes me think about autobiography as an alternative to great man history. It’s more “micro” than social history, but the intergenerational approach creates a context to what otherwise could be a constellation of individual stories.

Diva Martinez : In the 1994 meeting one of the things that stood out to me that was said was “it’s hard when it’s a history people are still alive for.”

Shahin Ismail-Beigi: Carlos Motta’s *The Crossing* (link above) gives many really direct oral histories of lgbtq refugees and migrants currently in Amsterdam. discussing lived experience and trauma and joy in previous countries and in Amsterdam, where transphobic and homophobic/queer-phobic actions and trauma have followed them. highly recommend as it underlines the needed POLYPHONY of the archive where we do not just listen to 1 or 2 voices.

Devon Narine-Singh : From last year : https://garage.vice.com/en_us/article/wjvv8z/cecilia-condit-video-art-tiktok

Neha Gautam: @Kelly, I would definitely hope that the film helps to inspire people to make connections that connect current situations to intergenerational stories and to explore them.

Angela Aguayo : Check this out: <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/documentary-resistance-9780190676223?cc=us&lang=en&>. How documentary engages the process of social change

Christina Phoebe: Hi everyone! Thank you again for this welcoming series of gatherings. In the spirit of this “dangerous and safe space,” as was beautifully described in today's discussion, I share with you the film I recently finished, my first feature, titled *Amygdaliá*. *Amygdaliá* asks: can a film be like a nest? It is a film about belonging and borders, both around us and within us. I moved back to one of the two places I grew up in to make this film, Athens, Greece, a place where I mostly felt like an outsider during my childhood and teenage years.

Working on the film and listening to other people's voices recall their experiences of diaspora and foreignhood became a way of forming community and bonds of solidarity. bell hook's book, *Belonging: A culture of place*, was especially inspiring to me during the process of working on the film, alongside many more works of artists and thinkers engaging with feminist methods and activism.

I share with you the trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RHcADoz53s>
And link to the film (76 minutes): <https://vimeo.com/467611574> (password: Athens2020)

All thoughts/feedback are welcome. So far it has not screened in the US, so I am very curious about how it will read to your contexts there. And I would love to see your work as well!

Feel free to contact me at cpt012@gmail.com. I was very moved by some of the closing comments made about people's accessibility in connecting and sharing thoughts, works, practices...Thank you to everyone involved in making this event, for the openness and encouraging format of this gathering. Hope to meet with you all soon in some shape or form.

LINKS and References

Program, Collective Visions, Center for the Humanities, CUNY, Grad Center:
<https://www.centerforthehumanities.org/programming/collective-visions-the-past-present-and-future-of-feminist-media-day-2>

Annotated 1994 Research Meeting in NY: <https://womxn-of-vision.netlify.app/item/research-meeting-1994/>

Feminist Media Histories: Informed Historical Reveries, special issue on feminist media activism that pairs writers inter-generationally, edited by Angela Aguayo and Alexandra Juhasz:
<https://online.ucpress.edu/fmh/issue/5/4>

Gabriella Giannachi, *Archive Everything*: <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/archive-everything>