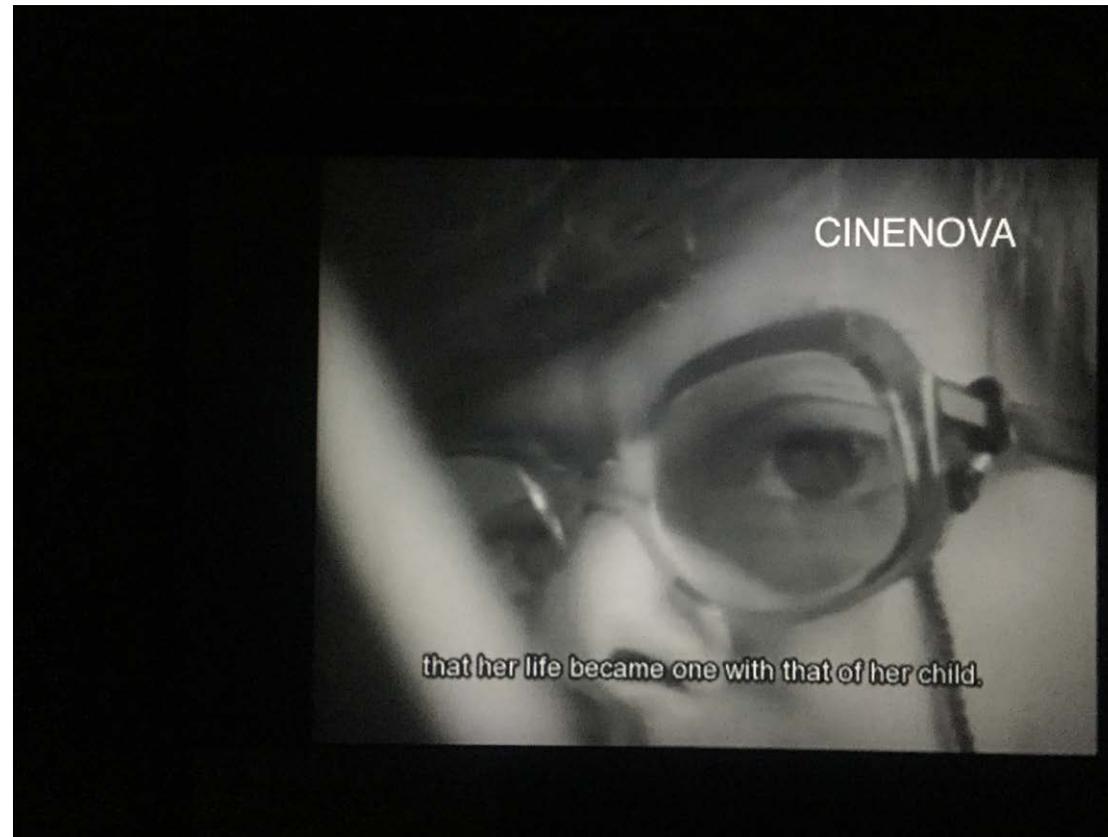


Reflections on ***Scuola Senza Fine*** by Adriana Monti, with Betsy Dadd and Polly Wright

I'm delighted to introduce artist Betsy Dadd and the following dialogue in response to *Scuola Senza Fine* by Adriana Monti, as part of Front Room Film Club online screening programme in partnership with Cinenova.

We sat down on Tuesday evening, Betsy in London, myself in Brighton, to watch the film together (but apart) and converse over live note taking. This was, in part, to reflect on Betsy's practice today through the lens of this 1983 film with resonant themes of education, collectivity and working with moving-image, as well as testing a way to connect and work together, yet remotely. The following is an edited compilation of our unfolding chat...



Front Room projection of *Scuola Senza Fine*, Adriana Monti

PW / I'm ready when you are.

BD / Ok let's hit play at the same time. Ready?

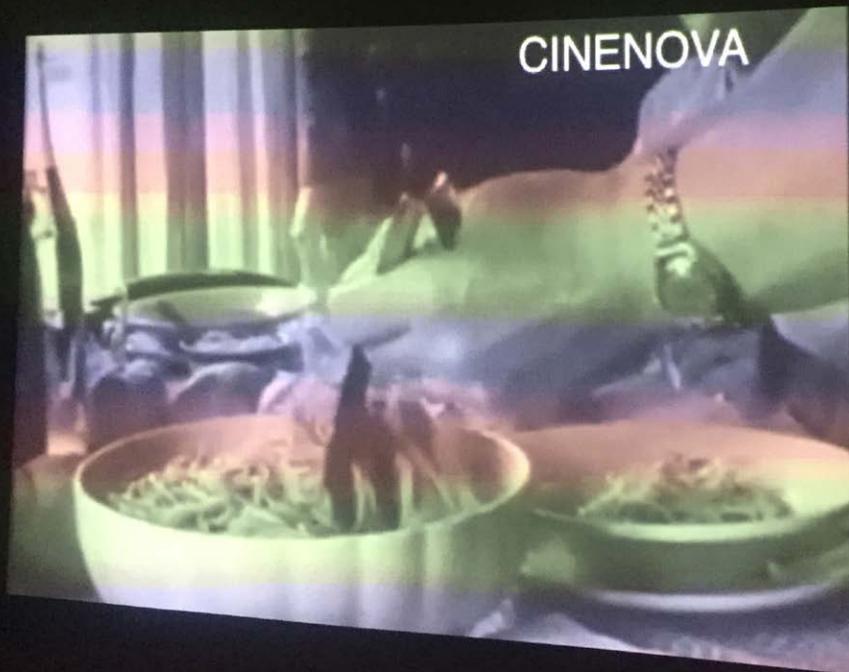
PW / Yes, go!

Wow, all that Italian cheese!

BD / It's nice to see the film being shot over dinner. All these conversations coming out over food and wine.

PW / Yes, I understand the women self-directed the first half of the film as a collective alongside Adriana Monti, so were really part of the film-making and I imagine conceived this in a way that felt in keeping with the school.

BD / Really interesting - a nice example of participatory film-making where the film is made *with* people, not just *about* people. It feels like Adriana Monti has embraced a reflexive process, where the making and reviewing the footage offers those women another layer of understanding and in turns allows for secondary conversations around the material that is produced.



Front Room projection of *Scuola Senza Fine*, Adriana Monti



Films for the Future, Kaleidoworks, film still, digital video, 2019

PW / Yes true, I feel that is something present in your practice?

BD / Yes it's something Lydia CS and I have been developing methodologies around with projects like *Films for the Future*, South London Gallery. The body of films were shot on Elmington Estate with the local children. We wanted to invite them into the post-production process in a meaningful and child-friendly way. So we pitched a screening tent on-site. They could watch the accumulating bank of footage and confront the images to react and reflect. A sound recorder captured their laughter, questions and perspectives on what was caught on film. This felt like a really valuable part of the process, aside from the fun and experimental uses of the camera, where the sound recordings somehow captured their age and relationships in a way the footage could not.

PW / What about the idea of a 'school.' I know you have worked on various projects in education settings. Does this school feel relevant in some way to your practice?

BD / A number of projects over the last few years have taken place in formal and informal education – across schools, adventure playgrounds and public realm settings.



Zeitgeist, by Kaleidoworks with Chestnut Grove Academy, Sacred Heart School, Ashcroft Technology Academy, film still, digital video, 2017

For me, this film brings into question what is school, or what school can be? The school in *Scuola Senza Fine* becomes more of a radical space for women to develop on a personal level, beyond the limitations of their domestic lives, without the goal of grades or finite outcomes. This makes me reflect on the possibilities at AMSI Secondary School where I am currently in one of Cubitt's Community Studios. Here I can instigate collective projects with young people and work outside of the typical school structures, again, making work collaboratively *with* and *for* those involved.

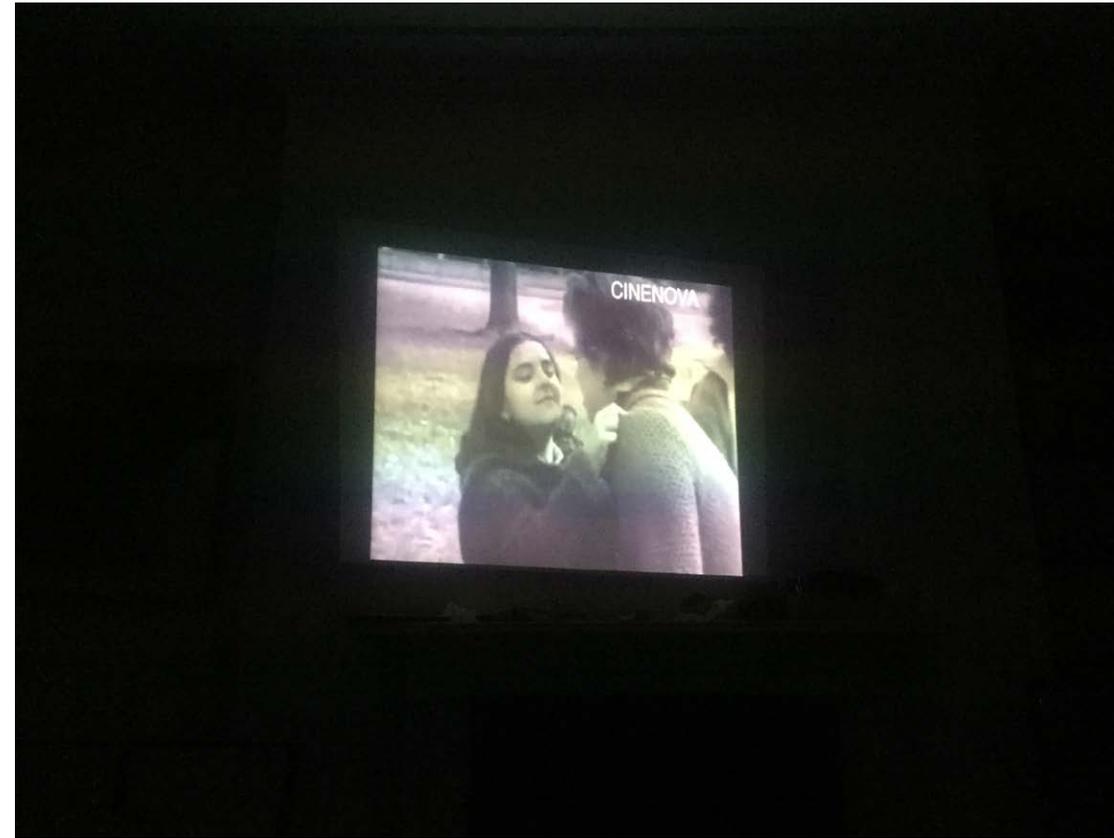
PW / Yes, there is something in *Scuola Senza Fine* which reveals how education can be a place to develop the individual and offer scope to contribute to culture. I think from the work of yours I have seen, you have balanced your artistic interests with the ideas and personalities of those you are working with.

BD / The film definitely highlights our human need for lifelong learning. I also view the projects I work on with children, young people and various community groups as a form of collective, continuous learning, that's often based around listening and story-telling.

PW / Being human right now feels very present in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. Can I ask what you think about the current situation we find ourselves in? We have found a way to work together, distanced by geography, but how might this period of isolation affect how you interpret the film or approach your work?

BD / I was just thinking about how we are observing these women emerge out of isolation, in an emotional and domestic sense. Whilst self-isolating in my own front room, I am being transported to Italy in the early 80s and witnessing these women articulate how they have overcome the limitations imposed by their roles and relationships. And what prevails is the need for connection, trust, friendships and space to laugh, dance, grow and take risks. So I think in this moment it's important to look to see how communities have previously built resilience in times of crisis, to think carefully about which way we should turn.

And right now, I love this process of simultaneous yet remote screenings – watching and typing to make the distance feel close.



Front Room projection of *Scuola Senza Fine*, Adriana Monti

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the University of Brighton

Betsy Dadd collaborates with Lydia CS to form KALEIDOWORKS, using experimental moving-image, sound, drawing and installation with diverse community groups, exploring the intersection of community and public space. Previous projects include: Tochio, no-mu Residency, Japan; Films for the Future, South London Gallery (2016-19); Zeitgeist, Battersea Arts Centre (2018); Soft House Noisy House, Camden Arts Centre (2018); Playing Field, Reading Room, Create Pembrokeshire (2017).

Polly Wright is Programme Producer at Brighton CCA.

This is part of COMMUNAL: Passages of Time, find out more at brightoncca.art.

In partnership with Cinenova

Credit: images courtesy of Adriana Monti and Cinenova