

An Introduction to Cinenova

Cinenova is a non-profit organisation dedicated to distributing feminist moving image. Formed in 1991 from the merger of two feminist distributors, Circles and Cinema of Women, Each was formed in the early 1980s in response to the lack of recognition of women in the history of the moving image. Both organisations aimed to provide the means to support the production and distribution of women's work in this area, and played critical roles in the creation of an independent and radical media. Both collectives formed out of a women's consciousness raising group that met at the London Filmmakers Co-op in the late seventies. Some members of this group went on to form the distributor Cinema of Women in 1979. The focus of Cinema of Women initially seemed to be on activist, political documentaries and educational films as well as later moving into distributing independent feminist feature films. From their aims & objectives: Circles was started by women who were working and making films at the co-op and their aims were to distribute women's experimental film & video slide-tape and performance art as well as providing a space for women-only discussions and screenings.

These two organisations were forced to merge in 1991 forming Cinenova which then had its funding also withdrawn in 2001, since then it has been and remains to be unfunded and volunteer run. At present there are six members of a working group who volunteer time to perform the necessary labour for the organisation.

Cinenova currently distributes over 500 titles that include experimental film, narrative feature films, artists' film and video, documentary and educational videos made from the 1920s to the present. Cinenova holds a large collection of paper materials, books and posters related to works it distributes, and the history and politics of film and video production. The thematics in the work at Cinenova include oppositional histories, postcolonial struggles, domestic and care work, representation of gender and sexuality and also importantly the relations and alliances present between these different struggles, both historically and now.

Our work as volunteers is dedicated to the constellation of films, histories and politics that make up Cinenova, believing in the necessity of keeping the collection together and autonomous, rather than dispersed into larger and more general archives or distributors. The work for Cinenova is done in our evenings, we communicate via whatsapp message, google drive documents, completing Cinenova work whilst at our other paid employment positions, drawing on many resources to do the work necessary for the work to continue.

One of the more helpful qualities that we might take as a model, influence, or protocol for our practice is the care needed in attending to an organisation influenced by feminism, class-based analysis, race, questions of social justice and media representation. This movement between different ideas and practices is crucial to the work we do together, and in the process of doing it we are building relational and communication skills with others. We make no claims towards a radical method; we are doing the work that is necessary for the basic up-keep of the organisation, over a long period of time - but we are looking to structures and ways of governance for the organisation that do start to push what could be the possible shape and structure of an organisation that can hold a politics a feminist politics equal to the content of our collection. We're drawing on horizontal organisation structures, co-operative models and questions around the unpaid work we do and what it means to invite other into unpaid positions too

The group is responsible first and foremost to the film and video-makers that Cinenova represents. Some of these makers are active and very much in dialogue with the working group; some we have no contact with or contact information for (both is a large part of our ongoing work). The selection of works was made over the course of the organisation's history. We have decided to commit to this work and assist in its distribution and preservation. The working group shares a desire to see these works, and to talk about them in the context of the cinema, exhibition projects, and educational contexts.

We also try to make contact with as many of the previous distribution workers, administrators who are also integral to the organisations histories, it is so important that their labour and efforts are visible too.

In our current work we try to encourage dialogue around the screenings that we and others organise, through connections with existing groups in the places the work is shown or circulated, and by inviting people to watch, curate, and write about different works.

Please visit our website www.cinenova.org to read more about our collection and also to sign up to our newsletter.