TLC podcast jingle by Jackyn Elswyth plays: atmospheric banjo music

**Hannah Jones**

Welcome to T.L.C., a new podcast series featuring T.L.C. – trans-led and trans-loved cinema, creating a space for trans curators, writers and thinkers; a space for the trans community and for cis allies to celebrate, learn and share. This is an Inclusive Cinema project by Film Hub Wales using National Lottery funding through the British Film Institute. Over the next four episodes we’ll hear from a variety of trans and non-binary voices, speaking about films they love, films they programme and film’s they’ve made. Featuring four live events in cinemas from Kirkwall to Kensal Rise, we’ll be showcasing trans cinema from documentary to experimental film, from historical films to what’s being made right now.

Across in-depth intros, curious Q&As, friendly panels and engaged audience discussions, our amazing venues, programmers and speakers highlight the many ways to centre and celebrate trans cinema, through the rich insights and shared stories that emerge differently at each event.

At the start of the first episode, T.L.C. project consultant So Mayer, Trans+ on Screen founder Alice Blanc and Fringe! programmer Jaye Hudson share an overview of their experience and insights on great ways to create welcoming events and programmes that work for everyone. Offering a summary of those insights, there’s a screen-reader friendly written resource that accompanies this series, which can be found on the Inclusive Cinema website. So have a read, have a listen, and above all, have a great time with our fabulous programmers and speakers, with a big shout-out to them, the people who made T.L.C.: programmer Rebecca del Tufo and speakers Lillian Crawford, Juliet Jacques and Sarah Pucill at the Lexi Cinema; programmer Milo Clenshaw and speakers Rosanna Cade, Ivor McCaskill, Natalie Ferguson and Katie Somers in Hawick; and, for our 2023 bonus episode to come, programmer Bea Copland and her speakers at the Phoenix in Orkney. From all of us, welcome, with love and care, to T.L.C.

[TLC jingle by Jackyn Elswyth plays: atmospheric banjo music]

**Rebecca del Tufo**

My name is Rebecca del Tufo, I'm an independent programmer and producer. And this screening is part of TLC, Trans Led and Trans Loved Cinema, supported by Inclusive Cinema and the BFI, a space for trans curators, writers and thinkers. A space for the trans community and cis allies to celebrate, learn and share. Cinema can offer representation to communities. It can also offer others allies – or potential allies perhaps – the chance to sit with someone else's experience, walk in their shoes and see life differently. So a quick bit of housekeeping: the introduction to the film, and then the q&a are being recorded for future podcasts stemming from the screen screenings. So please if you can restrain any coughs as much as possible. Also, a huge thank you to this lovely cinema The Lexi, for hosting these screenings, do continue to show the love it deserves. And thank you to all the team. And now I'm delighted to introduce tonight's curator who will introduce the film and tell you about the q&a which will take place after the screening. Juliet Jacques is a writer and filmmaker based here in London. She's published four books and the volume of short stories. Her most recent book Frontlines: Trans Journalism from 2001-21 came out this summer, a seminal collection of writings on trans and queer art, politics and media during the highly turbulent period. She writes short fiction as well as journalism, essays and criticism and literature, film, art, music, politics, gender, sexuality and football. And she's made two short 16 mm films and directed a the documentary. Sarah Pucill is a London based film artist who has been making 16 mm films since completing her MA in 1990 at the Slade. Since then her films which have all received public funding, have been screened and won awards international festivals, and a big stage and museums and galleries. Sarah lives and works in London and is a Reader in Fine Art at the University of Westminster. And we're delighted to have the two of them who will be doing the q&a afterwards. I think Juliet will mentio this, but one apology to Sarah that we have got the wrong image up for this introduction, we'll have it sorted for the q&a. And we take that one has nothing to do with Sarah or Juliet. But now I'm delighted to hand over to Juliet to introduce the film for us all.

**Juliet Jacques**

So yeah, thanks for coming, everyone. So, yes, so I was asked to choose a film for this trans led and trans loved cinema strand. And I picked this film, because of the way Sarah addresses the works of Claude Cahun, the French, kind of proto-surrealist or sort of surrealist-adjacent writer and artist. So, as has been explained, this is not a still from Magic Mirror though it does, for one thing, show you how mirrors are a constant theme in Sarah's work. But Magic Mirror itself, draws from Cahun's only text published in in her lifetime. [Attempts to pronounce the punning title and Sarah echoes from the audience] Aveux non avenus. I mostly did German at school, the pronunciation's a lot easier. Which was released in 1928, in a print run of 500 copies, and is a collection of quite fragmented texts of dealing with in a very complex way, subjectivity, identity, gender identity, and sort of features a number of images can also took a lot of photographs with with her partner or their partner, I'm not quite sure which pronouns to use for Cahun, who wrote in the book "Neuter is the only gender that always suits me". So you may find that Sarah and I sort of switch between she/her and they/them kind of interchangeably. But also took a lot of photographs, self portraits, or have either alone or with the partner, Marcel Moore, whose really inventive self portraits that again are doing a sort of similar quite playful work around identity and construction of identity. And, and Sarah's film stages a lot of those photographs along with, I think, original translations from from the text.

**Juliet Jacques**

Magic Mirror is the first of two films taking this approach to Cahun's work. So I think it's good to know that this is just one half, and the second half is a film called Confessions to the Mirror, which was filmed in colour and came out in 2016, and is also really worth seeing once you've watched this. I think that's all I'll say for now. Obviously, Sarah and I will be in conversation after the film and there'll be a chance for you guys to, to ask questions as well about this work and about Sarah's other work should you wish. So without further ado, let's watch Magic Mirror. Thank you.

[TLC jingle by Jackyn Elswyth plays: atmospheric banjo music]

**Juliet Jacques**

Okay, thanks everyone for being with us. And I hope you enjoyed seeing that either for the first time or again, I really enjoyed watching it for at least the second, maybe the third time. So, Sarah I'm gonna open with a really left field question that's gonna come completely out of nowhere, and you'll see like what I get the big bucks for, for hosting these events. What sort of prompted you to make a film based on this work by Claude Cahun?

**Sarah Pucill**

I've always known her work. Since I was introduced to her work when I was studying at the Slade, by Sharon Morris. And that was really before she was well known, because the first exhibition of photographs at the ICA was soon after my tutor told me about the work. So throughout the time of the work I've been making over the last three decades, two decades, whatever it was, before this time, I'd always known her work. And that it informed how I thought and and certain – even one film I made, Cast, was partly based on the images of her and Suzanne in the mirror. So she'd informed my work always, I'd always loved it. I'd never – I hadn't read her text enough, she'd written these sort of fairy tale stories, but I always looked at them and I loved the images, partly because there's a lot of questions around them. And what actually was she doing in that surrealist time? Was she feminist? How advanced was she? Because I haven't got the evidence, not explicitly. And people were saying, Oh, she's a postmodernist? No, she's not really, you know, whatever. It's not really engaging – I didn't quite know anyway. So I could have done this, maybe I did with the short stories, because it's quite explicit in them. But I hadn't, I still wanted to know more.

And then when this text was published at the Tate in 2007, when I saw it, I was gobsmacked. Suddenly, all the questions I've ever had were just – all that she was giving me, not just that, but more and more and more. And I could see connections with what she was saying, and the writing and the image. And I found that so fascinating. Because the images gripped me. As I was watching it just now I was thinking how much I enjoyed putting those images into a theatre, into movement and sound and so wasn't so much the thing of restating it, that was just meant that I could own it. But to actually bring it into the present through performers now, to actually play with it. And allow that to happen quite easily, because I made the sets and everything very quickly, very easily so that I could just get the idea there and not have to worry. So when I got the book, I thought Oh I'd love it if I could do something like this. I didn't want to do a documentary because two filmmakers had done that, Lizzie Thynne and Barbara Hammer. And I had, did feel partly that that wouldn't work for camera, because she's not about definition, or you'd have her as an object to document and say things about… will they be the right thing?

So I thought this idea that they are sort of side by side, rather than the object over her, kind of thing. Trying to be creative with all these wonderful things that she's left would be a great thing to do to – to do that. So that's what inspired me. But first of all, I was very nervous about it, thinking I can't do it. I won't you know. But then eventually – I know what it was. I think it was [name is unclear] wrote something about my photographs and saw something in my photographs, i.e. nothing to do with this, but in relation to that. And when I read that, I thought, Wow, that's it. That's it. So that's what it's an odd thing to say. But that really pushed me like, I've got to do it now.

**Juliet Jacques**

Yeah, I mean, there is this idea that sometimes a subject chooses you, right? I mean, it's very easy to sit here and sort of say, well, as artists, these are our processes, but sometimes you just encounter someone else's work, and you're really just compelled to create something in response to

**Sarah Pucill**

It just helped my confidence, that's all I'm saying. Yeah, that's just pushed me into.

**Juliet Jacques**

Yeah, I mean, certainly. I mean, I remember that the English translation of Aveux non Avenus, translated as Disavowals, the text that Cahun first published in the small print run in 1928. And this did feel like quite an event. I've been very interested in the Surrealists.

**Sarah Pucill**

Was it translated into English?

**Juliet Jacques**

That was the first translation, wasn't it? In 2007 –

**Sarah Pucill**

This was… Oh, 2007, sorry, I'm giving it a different date, 2006… 2007. Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

**Juliet Jacques**

And it felt like a real event to me. I've long been interested in modernist and particularly surrealist writing, had always been trying to find sort of like queer, and particularly maybe kind of trans or proto trans aspects within that, that modernist culture. And so this is a reemergence of Cahun as this this writer who was talking about neuter being the only gender that always suited me, and is that sometimes assuming kind of very feminine positions, and making accordant statements, and is sometimes taking up like male positions and masculine positions in the text. That struck me as being really kind of interesting. And it was interesting to me, I think, not so much because it spoke of a kind of a fixed trans identity, but because it's sort – there's something about quite a fragmented subjectivity there that I felt I could really relate to. And I wonder if the sort of fragmentary nature of the texts and the fragmentary nature of some of the images and the sort of playfulness with the identity? Was that a big part of the appeal of Cahun for you?

**Sarah Pucill**

Yes, very much. I mean, I could say you now, an invert thing, you know, that the gay woman in it, the lesbian was an important element in it. But I think something deeper, and that she was speaking about it, which she did within the relationship. She doesn't use the word lesbian, but she does speak about a female-female thing going on? And which is in there, I did – And now, I'm nervous, because I was going to talk about seeing something trans in it this time that I hadn't seen before, and thinking about that. So that's sort of really I think it sort of is in there, but I hadn't thought about in terms of that word. But a sort of alienation of the body, of a relation to the body. And I don't know what that is. But that's in there. And I relate to that. But it from whichever perspective. But the fragmentation, yes, completely, completely. And I think that's what I love. It sort of goes deeper, it starts off was that was what it was, but I think what's in the book that I loved, that's then sort of almost separate to her images. But that I could take them back to the images was, oh, it's hard to find words, because I do think that once you start to do that, you undo some of the magic in it. I think there's an element of magic, metamorphosis, shaking out of definition, shaking out of how you think about something and making you rethink about words, all the way through.

It's quite big, philosophical, or engaging in structural, all kinds of different perspectives that I think Cahun approaches her subject. So it's quite oblique, even now listening to this I don't understand what – They're they're sort of creating a space around words and ideas. That's what I feel, that's what I get from it. That is the sort of constant poetry of a kind, but it's kind of making a space. And that that is about the fragment, fragmentation, and maybe being alienated from a lot of things, almost like within the, her own body, when maybe that is also about – Anyway comes from feeling alienated culturally, for all sorts of different, complicated reasons that –

So I think there's a sort of existential, engagement with self that split, which is there any way split, in terms of you with psychoanalysis or other approaches, the self as multiple, changing, all these things, fluid, unknown to the self. And then again, play all the time with linguistics with words. And a sort of denouncing of the self, or you know, recognition of how the ego will stop you seeing really, what is this notion of self? And I think, maybe self is the world as well, you know, or is it? How do you know what that is? There is a real interrogation that unloosens and challenges an idea that identity is something, that it’s attached to your body. It sort of undoes that individualness, but his whole opening out that goes deep, deep and gets into the eyes, and gets into particular… And I think it's, I think, really elastic

**Juliet Jacques**

Yeah, I mean, one thing I, I really was struck by a lot more watching at this time was your use of the voice. And there are seven different voices reading Cahun's texts.

**Sarah Pucill**

Is it seven?

**Juliet Jacques**

I think it's seven. Anyway, there's a lot more than one, which is the –

**Sarah Pucill**

I'm glad it seems like seven.

**Juliet Jacques**

– the crucial point. And so it seems to me there that there's a kind of, you bring this this fragmentation and this separation into the voiceover as well, because obviously, by having all these different voices, the character that we see on screen is not speaking to you directly, there's some juxtaposition between the image and the sound. Can we talk a bit about, like how you chose the people doing those voices, and whether you tried just having one voice, or whether it was always from the, from your conception, to have these different voices.

**Juliet Jacques**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Sarah Pucill**

I wanted the multiple voices, because there's something about being peopled by others, that having a self is multiple, in the sense that others are – people – we are peopled by others, others are within us. And, and the argument with the self, the splitting of the self, to really put that up as well. So there are times when there's a sense of arguing with herself, maybe there's more than two or two or… and not really being in charge. And exploring that multiplicity within the self, basically, I think is fascinating. And that can also be the others jumping in. Like… So, that's there in Cahun's images, it's also in the writing. So it would be going against that to have one voice all the way through.

So it needed to be, and I wanted to sort of make the identity – sometimes you see one costume, so it's one photograph, one costume, but then you have to have two in it to, to enable this idea of fluidity, where somebody else can come into that dress and be that one, and then someone else can come in, and then leave it and go into another. And then to do the same thing with the voice. So you mix up, you don't just get – I didn't want that I didn't want the audience to identify with a character, "Who is the Cahun character?" Yeah, that's what I wanted to undo. So that didn't happen. So it was like you don't quite know, you keep seeing her, slightly different, is it that one, you're not interested in that. And then the same, I just wanted to do that with words. But I noticed when I did it that I liked the voice speaking together, because I'm thinking about relationship with the reader and the performer and the initial photograph, and a sort of, you know, the interplay between all of those. And so to bring that, so that the viewer's on a journey with you. Does that make sense? It just made logical sense to have that.

**Juliet Jacques**

And something with the voices that just struck me, that one of the voices has, you know, very sort of received pronunciation. And I would have sworn that this was the voice of Lis Rhodes, the London Filmmakers Co-Op filmmaker, and I was quite surprised when the credits came up, and her name wasn't there. I would have sworn that was her and that was something I wanted to say to you, really. It's not really a question. You then made another film, Confessions to the Mirror, in 2016. And you made it in colour, and it's based on a Cahun text that's not been published in English yet. Can we talk a bit more about that film? And, you know, after you made Magic Mirror, what made you want to continue working in this, in this vein?

**Sarah Pucill**

Partly, I had an idea that I didn't want this to be the only – it's a bit of a bonkers thought. But this is – what I thought was that this would be fixing what I would do with Cahun, and then its affect would be definite. And it's like, well, that's my thing. One that was more of a kind of thought, the other was, I – there's so much that I've left out, I did think, God, it'd be really interesting to do the stuff with colour. I did feel – Maybe it was comments that had come, you know, that I could try colour or what that would be, and that how come I hadn't mentioned any of that time in Jersey, and which, and also that I hadn't really acknowledged Cahun's partner, Suzanne, who was an important part. And there's been a lot of discussion around the importance of that. I did feel oh, that was a problem. And that also, then I just thought that the second text, um, Confidences aux Miroir which… some other academics have considered that this text was intended to be like, a second text from Confessions Denied, whatever, this first one. That it would be just the right kind of thing to do that, moving to Cahun in Paris, Cahun then in the war in Jersey, to make that. And it coincided with a different sort of part of time for me but that's not important. But that's that's the reason why –

**Juliet Jacques**

Yeah, I mean, let's unpack a little bit more –

**Sarah Pucill**

I think I wanted to approach the work differently. So I did. So it ended up that well, I couldn't do this, I couldn't work in the same way with a second film. So I worked in a different kind of, the film is a little bit more. It's slightly structured differently. But having said that, is all images of Cahun. Loads of images, the more you know, her images, the more you'll see, sometimes taking parts of a photograph and redoing something with that, with her tech, so it's the same method anyway.

**Juliet Jacques**

Yeah, I mean, let's just unpack a little bit of Cahun's biography here, because you refer to Cahun and Marcel Moore or Suzanne Malherbe as is also known, Cahun's partner, who's often in the photographs with Cahun, or is taking the photographs or helping to compose them. So, they were based in Paris in the 1920s and most of the 1930s and then when do they go, they go to Jersey in 1937, is that right?

**Sarah Pucill**

Yeah, exactly, yeah.

**Juliet Jacques**

So they leave France which of course is being increasingly surrounded by fascism, Cahun is dealing with anti-Semitism as a Jewish person as well as a Catholic, in France. And so Cahun and Suzanne or Marcel move to Jersey, which of course is then occupied by the Germans in 1940. I want to say around then.

**Sarah Pucill**

Yeah, they came about two years later.

**Juliet Jacques**

 So not too long after the start of the war, and are there until I think 1944, or maybe even '45.

**Sarah Pucill**

'45.

**Juliet Jacques**

And Cahun and Moore are involved in quite a lot of often quite creative and often quite high-risk resistance, despite sort of British government orders not to resist, to keep calm and carry on, if you will. And they just about get through the war right, I think they are actually sentenced to death at one point, they're caught by the Germans and sentenced to death but it's quite late in the war and that –

**Sarah Pucill**

They're imprisoned, obviously. And they attempt suicide. Yeah. And it is quite harsh. It's very cold, [inaudible] for a lot of time they’re not together.

**Juliet Jacques**

So it's a pretty sort of extraordinary story they have in Jersey, and then I think Cahun lives until the mid-1950s I think, but doesn't publish any more books beyond those two, I think.

**Sarah Pucill**

She died in '54.

**Juliet Jacques**

Yeah. So that's just to give a bit more biographical detail to what we've been talking about. Just to go back to Magic Mirror for a moment because there was something that really struck me which is that the moment towards the end of the film where you come in, obviously, you've had different people playing roles in the film. And I just yeah, I mean, I was really struck by that moment where you come out of the wardrobe with a mirror. And I wonder if we could talk a bit about, you know, that decision to put yourself in front of the camera right at the end of the film.

**Sarah Pucill**

I'm glad I did it for some reason. I think I was planning to actually be in it from the beginning, I was going to do it, I wanted to, but… And I did initially film something, I got somebody to film me, but it just didn't work, they couldn't film me. I can't remember exactly what the problem was, why they couldn't. I needed to be behind – I did have a cameraperson not for all of it but for a lot of the time, but I needed to be with, I needed to be directing, I just couldn't, it wouldn't. I think the first bit just didn't work at all. So I had to be in front of the camera. Until I did that I actually think that no one was behind the camera on that anyway, so I have filmed myself. And that's why I laugh when I watch what's happening. That you didn't quite see, the marriage thing, I went to pull her head out the thing I didn't put the head back. I don't think anyone was, but I think I had got so that I was, by that time, by the time you've been working on that, you're knowing what's going on you can kind of just judge this.

**Juliet Jacques**

Okay, I think that's a nice time to throw it open to the audience. So does anyone have any questions for?

**Sarah Pucill**

Can I say one thing? I think she was considered – her mother was Catholic, and but gave that up in order to marry us, I think Cahun was established as Jewish. Okay. Maybe it's helpful, so I don't know if we didn't say about the book. Someone wants to speak. But if not, I've got something to say, which is just the nature of the book, Aveux non avenus, that is divided into 10 chapters. Maybe you did say that, I don't know. Often I'll say that. And that's what those chapters that's. It could just be a question.

**Juliet Jacques**

Yeah, yep.

**Audience Member**

I found so much space in it, to think, and I'm interested, I think, which is something that often happens with art more than with non-artists cinema. Are you happy, are you comfortable that people will be finding different things in those spaces and thinking different things? Obviously, you're directing the journey. But how much do you want people to be finding their own spaces?

**Sarah Pucill**

Yeah, well, very much. Yeah, I think, it is, as you say, and I think that's a good point to make. This is a sort of viewing. It's not a film form. It's a long film. But it's not a film form. It's… They're photographs that have been staged, and then there's the writing is, is poetry really is poetry. It's not a story. We're not given a story, and the poems and then scattered, very fragmented. So in a sense, it's a fragmented experience. And I think, Cahun's book, people say it's very difficult. It's very fragmented. And it's hard. You know, maybe that's quite, it's, but… I think there is an openness that allows people to, well, I think it's playful, it's playful. And I think that's where things can come out that other people can experience like, I could see this time, how many references, there are something that could be trans, I could see that. And I think that's nice that if you're just playing other things will come out, but you don't know. Like visuals, more like a dance or something. But then…

**Juliet Jacques**

I think I've watched his film in three different ways, now. Because I've seen it in a cinema now. I have the DVD. So I've seen it at home on DVD. And I've seen it in a gallery. So it's a very different context where you're kind of walking in and out and you're maybe, you know, seeing different bits, you're seeing the film in fragments in a different way than you would in the cinema. And at home, I probably watched it in more than one setting because my concentration span is so important that even a relatively short film, I will probably watch in more than one go. So I think there's something about the film as well, that lends itself to different ways of watching it.

**Sarah Pucill**

Yeah, I mean, I think this film can actually be on a loop. And you get that sense of the loop anyway, with the merry go round. And I think, unlike the film that follows, that I think is more sort of linear and a bit more emotional. And there's more work on the sound in my second film to carry it, carry you through. Anyway.

**Juliet Jacques**

Yep.

**Audience Member**

Just a question about influences. So sometimes the aesthetic, especially with the mirrors, reminded me of Cocteau, and also the black and white. Even [inauduble]. And the atmosphere also. So I was just wondering if that was something that…

**Sarah Pucill**

Well I love Cocteau's films, particularly Blood of a Poet. And yeah, early black and white Surrealist film, Maya Deren, and all these people are – I don't know if you know Maya Deren – are all important references. It would otherwise be on a 16mm, but I didn't get the print. Yes, Blood of a Poet was [inaudible], the statue, there isn't…

**Juliet Jacques**

I don't think it's as direct.

**Sarah Pucill**

No, it's not direct but it's evocative. The water. It's the mirror and the water and the hand. I was also thinking about paintings. I mean, I was thinking of Narcissus, painting her, to be painted by different – Caravaggio and other painters, when the hand goes in shows. And it's also sort of homoerotic, the Narcissus story.

**Juliet Jacques**

But yeah, I mean, one thing I found interesting about Cahun, when I first learned about the work is this kind of adjacency to the Surrealist movement, and, you know, not being a kind of member of the official Surrealist group, so not being able to be, you know, directly kicked out of it.

**Sarah Pucill**

I thought she was a member.

**Juliet Jacques**

I don't think so, I think André Breton, the Surrealist, you know, kind of founder and sort of, you know, arbiter, ultimate arbiter of who was and wasn't a Surrealist, I think, was sort of quite fascinated by Cahun, and they had quite a complicated relationship. But I don't think was ever part of the official group, and probably a blessing was never invited to these really quite weird seminars that the Surrealist had on what sort of sexuality and sexual practices were and weren't acceptable, which was largely just –

**Sarah Pucill**

There's a picture of her that's connected –

**Juliet Jacques**

They moved in the same circles, I think. I mean, they discovered each other in Paris. And they would have definitely, definitely acquainted. I mean, to be honest, by the time Breton met Cahun, I think a lot of the more interesting Surrealists been thrown out anyway. I think sort of Artaud was out of the group by then.

**Sarah Pucill**

It was very difficult at the beginning because of the homophobia of Breton, then they did become friends. And he was a promoter of her work. And they did write, and he visited her in Jersey and promoted this book a lot. I mean, Aveux non avenus. I mean, I thought she was.

**Juliet Jacques**

I mean, it's…

**Sarah Pucill**

There's a picture of her because they've done a lot of work where she's on the side, and she's sort of cut out. Maybe that's what you're talking about. And I need to ask you about it. But the adjacent –

**Juliet Jacques**

Yeah, and I think, you know, there's some I mean, you mentioned Maya Deren as well, sort of, I think maybe Lithuanian originally, I want to say but like, based in the States, I think so.

**Sarah Pucill**

Ukrainian.

**Juliet Jacques**

Ukraine, yes, Ukraine. Sorry. That's right. So yeah, Ukrainian based in the States and making these absolutely beautiful, kind of 10 or 15 or 20 minute, quite dreamlike films, a lot of which are available online, I really recommend finding them, because they're really wonderful. And yeah, Cocteau, as well, who you know, unlike Cahun was just unambiguously not welcomed and not liked by the Surrealists. But you know, his work was also very sort of dreamlike, and I think brought a lot of the dream imagery.

**Sarah Pucill**

I think she was an unusual member of the Surrealists because she was an older member, she was older, and spoke out. In her diary notes, she said that she spoke out about feminist issues, I think, and there was no support, something like that. She's an interesting figure that way. And that's also about why she was of interest. To me, because I've been looking, I've been really keen on Surrealism, but I hadn't found this kind of voice.

**Juliet Jacques**

I mean, a lot of the most famous French Surrealist novels are basically men kind of chasing an obscure object of desire around a city. So really,

**Sarah Pucill**

There was a lot of misogyny, in the painting, from what the women were saying, it played into that.

**Juliet Jacques**

Any more questions? Yes, there's one here and then one there.

**Audience Member**

Thanks for the beautiful film. Really great to watch. I really enjoyed the way you put them together. You mentioned Narcissus a few times.

**Sarah Pucill**

Did I?

**Audience Member**

I mean in this conversation, and I think in the film.

**Sarah Pucill**

Narcissists?

**Audience Member**

Narcissus. Sorry, have I imagined that?

**Juliet Jacques**

Definitely came up in the conversation.

**Audience Member**

And in the film, obviously, because it's the mirror. And the thing about the Narcissus myth, one of the things, is about the, that it's the death driven methods and in death, it's about the death drive, in many ways. I mean, certainly in psychoanalytic theory, I think, say that. And also, you know, falling in love what you said wanting to drink himself which would end up in a kind of death I wanted to bring the depth and because in relation to us narcissism in film, because that there's something very like you've been saying like alienating sort of, even though it's moving kind of static and masts and mirrors and the whole wave feels is quite death driving and when you've been saying, playful, it's like, I don't experienced it, it's playful. It's got a real strong death drive to it, I feel but there was one moment in the film, this isn't really a question. It's, it's just an observation in this bit, that bit of the film, where suddenly the human bits, the body, like it's, it's breathing, you see the breaths going up and down. And it's really amazing. That bit it kind of like, it's like a point at which the whole film kind of sort of like a vertex or something. It seemed to be a comment on something about the life and death drive in relation to narcissism and Narcissus. Sorry, I'm being long-winded.

**Sarah Pucill**

No, I'll respond, I'll respond. That moment you've just described? Yeah, I did make a choice to really take that longer than one would be expected to.

**Audience Member**

It's great.

**Sarah Pucill**

And for me, one can think in terms that you've just outlined. But one can also see those things, I believe, in ways that isn't, doesn't have an attachment to that thing, which can – I see it as animate/inanimate, the dead/the living, the living, dead, living and dead in one sense, you can be dead but present through ghosts through your work, she mentioned that at the end was "all I've got to do is appear". And I thought that's a message about all the photographs, well, what she's got to do, is appear, just as a corpse. And I'm into – I think those themes around transformation, metamorphoses, and as elements of magic, something like that, about how creative process can have this magic, in the sense of the mysterious, or something like that. So that's what I was thinking about.

People have written and my interpretation of what Cahun writes and her perception as she's written, and people have said, that she has a take on the negative elements of narcissism, and that was, maybe in Freud, where she has her own, where she said actually, it's the desire – and also comes from the painter, Alberti, that the desire of the image in the water is the desire for painting, for creativity, for art, the water – always that beautiful image is, does it have to be, say, the image of the person looking. It's also the beauty of reflections in water, which is similar to film anyway, by the way, and so Cahun writes in there, what does she say about seeing the image, that the world is – it's that the artist has an idea of a better world. And that's what she's connecting with, because she was angry with the idea that narcissism is then death drive is then queer desire, because it's connected with being similar to yourself.

So it's a critique and our re-writing about that element, but also it's in the lines in the film and I can't remember it now, but about the perfect? And those are her lines in it. Well, I'm talking about the bit in the water because that was the bit where you said it's the death drive, and that it's narcissistic. Cahun has a critique on that. It's about what the artist might imagine is, she – the artist prefers that than to what's in the world. But that's another idea. But she's got these ideas about it and I know that Cahun was doing it was to, trying to attack – along with Oscar Wilde was also doing that, to re – to attack this idea that narcissism therefore negative therefore queer desire.

**Audience Member**

I think my point is that I was seeing that critique in the breathing. So my point was that breathing seems amazing because it kind of gives new, like you said you decided to make it longer. Was that in order, cause it's literally like, there's this amazing bit that gives life and breath like so is that –

**Sarah Pucill**

Well I can only say, I mean, Cahun is dead. But in her time, her photographs, she was very, very upset that her work wasn't recognised and she actually, in her writing said, even worse than what happened in the war, which was really traumatic, in terms of even behaviours of people that they knew in Jersey and what happened and that it wasn't at the end of the war, those who had collaborated with the Nazis had financially done very well, have bigger houses, got something from it. And people who – the Russians, for some reason, were treated like dogs. And if you were seen in Jersey to just be talking to or have anything to do with a Russian, you will be sent to the camp. And so people would tell people – All this was going on, and then all of that then opens up and it's very much present at the end. And they'd had all their valuables in the house stolen as well, and came back, as well as loads of photographs burnt, as we know. Now I've forgotten the point now, where we're going.

**Juliet Jacques**

Well, I think we're –

**Sarah Pucill**

I was trying to say something – you were asking…

**Audience Member**

I just wanted to jump in on the kind of controversy over, did you, like, I was just wondering, um, just to throw in, like Kristeva's take on Narcissus, in Tales of Love. She talks a lot about it. And she coined this term "narcissusm", which is, she makes a distinction between. She says, the problem with Narcissus isn't that he kind of fell in love with his reflection, but that he didn't realise it was a reflection, he thought it was himself. And that's why he dies because he thinks it's real. So he tries to merge in it. He didn't see it as an image. He didn't see it as an artist. He tried to merge it with himself. He saw it as a self, rather than an image. That's why he drowned. So that's like the opposite of seeing the image, he didn't recognise the other in himself, if you like.

**Sarah Pucill**

I see.

**Audience Member**

She goes into it, obviously, in great depth. But then she says, you know, and this is a narcissism quality, which is very kind of creative, you know, as opposed to, you know, kind of narcissusm-narcissism that's, we think of it you know, which is a death drive thing, kind of selfish thing. So I'll just throw that out. Because –

**Sarah Pucill**

I think Cahun was dealing with a lot of difficult things in her life. So I when you say the death drive, I don't know how to –

**Audience Member**

No, I wasn't meaning she was –

**Sarah Pucill**

It felt like it, death drive always sounds like it's in – I think there's a working through of a lot of things that are very dark. And for me, when I read something that has a lot of darkness in it, it’s dark-meets-dark, actually, it's a release for me, it's a relief, it's very therapeutic for me. And with, in dark times, you know, and certainly at that time, it washer mother was incarcerated all her life, or you know, beaten up, everything's going on. So if you're sensitive, the more sensitive you are, the more traumatic and the more, the darker it will be for you, because you have an idea of something that could be better and you want that and you care about it. And you work hard to try to do whatever, whether it's your work or your organisation with others or whatever it is. And so – And that can break you. It can bring you down, it can break you. She did die earlier than she would have done because of what happened in the prison. I mean, they both risked their lives for what they did. And it hadn't, it had, her siblings weren't, didn't, there was there was a sort of fallout in the family over the gayness and everything.

So there's a darkness and I think we all really relate to darkness in different ways, and some people were saying well that dark, I don't like that, stop it, that's a death drive thing. And on the other hand, for somebody else, it's like, well I really can engage with that, it brings healing for me. I'm relieved. It brings me relief and release. So it depends. I mean, yeah, so I think they're tricky things. They're not static and stable. It's an open field, and different people at different points pick it up in different ways. But maybe there is a difficulty in that. I mean, that's what people find difficult. And it's, you know, it's whatever we mean at different times. I mean, what do you think about what I'm saying?

**Audience Member**

I wasn't thinking of it in a biographical way, or about the problem with difficulty, it was more of the breathing shots, that body there, when there's a longer shot of the breathing, you go [breaths in], you can see the chest going up and down, up and down, that that had this feeling for me, bringing into sharp relief, the kind of different atmosphere of the way the images were on the rest of the film. So that in a way, what I'm trying to say is that if there is a critique of the death drive, like you're saying, it is for me expressed most beautifully and poignantly in the breathing body. So I wasn't trying to say anything about the film itself being driven by a kind of darkness, whether it is or isn't, I was trying to think about the way the images are put together, that that breathing body in that sequence that we've got there just jumped out at me as the kind of breath of life, which maybe comes from what you're talking about.

**Sarah Pucill**

I don’t think… I could say simply, many, many of Cahun's photographs, I didn't quite get to say, are restaged in these film. Am I breathing life into those photos? They're performed. And I tried all the way through to try to hold back on the performance in a sense. They don't do things, they're often just held still, not doing much. And I think that they're the ones that work the best. And I wanted to emphasise that, yeah, this breathing. And I think that's the same with the text about breathing, where you literally enliven it with voices, or more than one. So it's about breathing into. And spirit. So there is – we can use different words, but some kind of coming to life. Walter Benjamin talks about that.

**Juliet Jacques**

Okay, we're running out of time now. So we've got one more question. So yeah.

**Audience Member**

That's actually a beautiful segue. Because I was curious if you could talk a little bit about your choice of which images go with which text. Obviously, sometimes, the poetic parallels are very clear. And other times I can say breathing life into these still images, at a time there was [inaudible] film. And so here's what, how you – Tell us you thought about bringing this movement, transforming these various unconscious beautiful things in their own way, and joining them to a different medium within a 30s form. You'd spoken at the very beginning about that this was a way to make her and her thoughts and her work kind of your own. And so I was curious how you went about animating these shots? You're obviously very well researched within her diaries and her life? And I guess it's a two part question. It's the power.

**Sarah Pucill**

It's something that's been really important to me. And I've written a bit about it in terms of intermediality. My ambition over and above being very keen on Cahun and wanting to do something with her work. There's something separate to that, which is, what is it that you can do in film, by taking an artist who's no longer here? Taking their images? Restaging them and putting them with text? What can you do there? What is there you can do? And is it this way? Because of, you know, not doing a documentary, but actually bringing something I don't know, maybe you can't do is. But there's something on its own, that actual method is important to me. And I'm now doing something else. I did it a little bit with other images, and I'm doing it with some other images of my late partner. So – which is not the same thing. But which images was a really key question, and really tricky. Images that I related to a lot and loved and felt I could restage relatively easily. Texts that I loved, could relate to, but often I was thinking that just to bring those together is great because it's a kind of research or scholarship, I felt, on Cahun at the same time, by how I could link, how I might be linking pieces, which for me was like so brilliant that I've discovered this link.

But what happened when I put it together was people say, that's really literally, there's repetition! Because often I was having to take it out, I did that one my second film, but I loved it being in there. Because, she said that, she said that and it's in the image. And – but then, I guess you could say, well, yes, I suppose that would happen. But I'm very interested in the parts. So sometimes I take just a mask from an image, which you sort of see, and then do something else with that. And it's almost like trying to get behind the scenes. They've left all this stuff. And I'm trying to put the person back together. It's a sort of complete madness. But maybe it's sort of what we do anyway, when people have left, what they've left, you know, how you can put that together, especially if they don't have their life in their time in a way. So that's what I was saying about the photographs. When they were there, they didn't, but now, they're there now. Yeah.

**Juliet Jacques**

Well, that seems like a nice place to finish. I think so. Yeah. We'll have to wrap up there, I'm afraid but thanks to you all for coming. And thank you, Sarah, for the film. Okay.

**Sarah Pucill**

Thank you, Juliet. Thank you for coming.

**Juliet Jacques**

Yeah, and obviously thank you to Rebecca and Rosie and everyone at the Lexi. Hope to see you here again another time.

[TLC jingle by Jackyn Elswyth plays: atmospheric banjo music]

**Emeric Bernard-Jones**

You have been listening to T.L.C. This is an Inclusive Cinema project by Film Hub Wales using National Lottery funding through the British Film Institute. Thanks to our wonderful venue partners The Lexi Cinema, Kensal Rise, London; Alchemy Film and Arts in Hawick, in the Scottish Borders; and the New Phoenix Cinema in Kirkwall, Orkney.

Thanks also for their support to Trans+ on Screen, and to our fabulous intro and outro voice artists Emeric Bernard-Jones, pronouns they/them, and Hannah Jones, pronouns she/her. The music heard in each episode is by Jacken Elswyth, pronouns she/her. Thanks to our producer Daniel Fuller, pronouns he/him.  Remember, there are four episodes of T.L.C. to enjoy, with our final bonus episode arriving in March 2023, so don’t forget to subscribe! The written resources and social cards for T.L.C. were designed by jas calcitas, pronouns they/them.

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