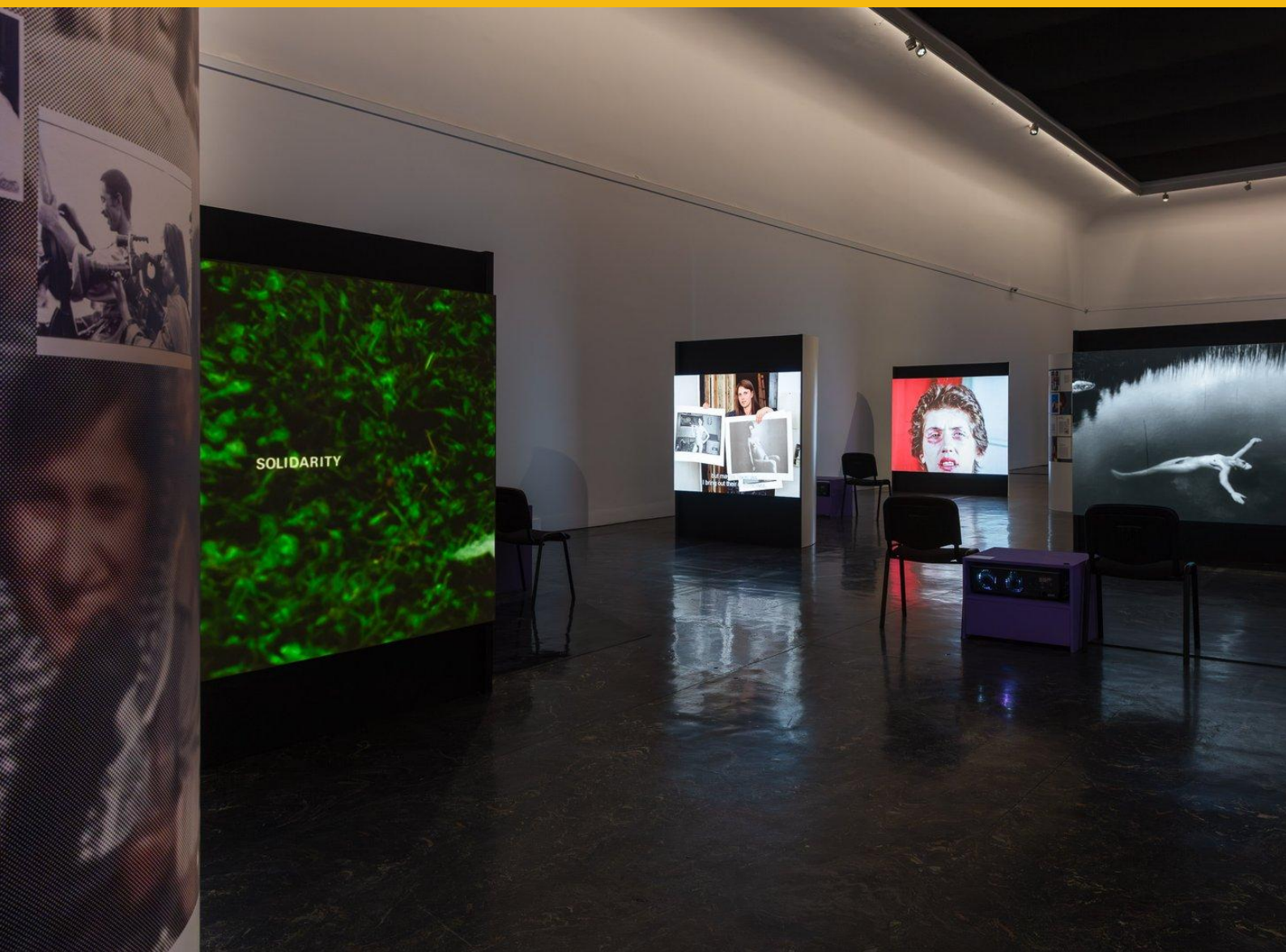


Feminist Worldmaking and the Moving Image

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PROJECT SUMMARY

The *Feminist Worldmaking and the Moving Image* project, led by Erika Balsom (Department of Film Studies), brought overlooked histories of feminist filmmaking to new audiences through exhibitions, screenings, publications and public programming. Devoted to documentary and experimental film and video that challenges industrial and commercial norms, the project showed how much the films made by past women's liberation movements still have to say to audiences today.

This funding supported the culmination of two long-running strands of the work: the Oslo iteration of the touring exhibition "No Master Territories: Feminist Worldmaking and the Moving Image," staged with Kunstnernes Hus, and the final year of *The Machine That Kills Bad People*, a bi-monthly screening series at the ICA London run with curator Maria Palacios Cruz and artists Beatrice Gibson and Ben Rivers. Both strands reached a significant milestone in 2026: the Oslo exhibition marked the final stop of an international tour that had already travelled to Berlin and Warsaw, while the Machine series closed after eight years with the publication of a co-edited essay collection and a presentation at an international conference of film programmers in Amsterdam.

HOW DID THE PROJECT COME ABOUT?

Both strands of the project grew out of long-standing collaborations. "No Master Territories" began in 2020, developed with curator Hila Peleg, whom Erika had first worked with in 2014 on the publication for the Berlin Documentary Forum. That collaboration grew into a large-scale exhibition on feminist film culture of the 1970s to 90s, which opened at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin in 2022, travelled to the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw in 2023, and, in its final iteration, opened at Kunstnernes Hus in Oslo in February 2026, curated by Erika with Silja Espolin Johnson.

The Machine That Kills Bad People began in 2018, when Erika and three collaborators - filmmakers Beatrice Gibson and Ben Rivers, and curator and publisher Maria Palacios Cruz - started a bi-monthly screening series at the ICA London, showing double bills of films by women and commissioning an accompanying essay for each screening. This funding supported the final stage of that project: attendance at a conference on film programming at the Eye Film Museum in Amsterdam, timed to coincide with the release of a book bringing together all of the commissioned essays.



WHAT HAPPENED?

At Kunstnernes Hus, "No Master Territories" opened in February 2026 and ran until early May, comprising a gallery exhibition, a film programme and a public discussion programme curated by Erika with Silja Espolin Johnson. The exhibition drew on research conducted in archives across six continents into the exhibition and production histories of feminist nonfiction filmmaking, and staged a deliberately global, intersectional account of women's cinema that moved beyond the small set of canonical "auteurs" typically foregrounded in existing scholarship. A weekend of public programme events followed in March, and the Oslo run generated substantial press coverage in both English and Norwegian, alongside installation photography that will feed into future evidencing of the project's impact.

In parallel, the final stretch of *The Machine That Kills Bad People* culminated in London in June 2026 with the publication of a co-edited book of the thirty-nine commissioned essays, published by The Visible Press. To mark the project's close, Erika and Maria Palacios Cruz travelled to Amsterdam in late May and early June for "The Future of Film Programming," a conference at the Eye Film Museum that brought together film programmers and archivists, alongside a smaller number of academics. There, Erika and Maria joined one collaborator and one other curator for a panel discussion of the project, timed to coincide with the book's release.

The award also supported a fellowship at the British School at Rome, which Erika took up in April to begin the next phase of her research. There, she began developing a small curated display, shown at the Hamburg Kunstverein last autumn, into a larger exhibition proposal concerning an Italian feminist collective featured in "No Master Territories." Travel costs for this leg of the project came in under budget. The savings were redirected to a trip to the Venice Biennale, where Erika held further meetings and visited an archive relevant to the Italian research strand.



WHAT WAS THE PROJECT'S IMPACT?

This funding covered the final stage of a much longer project: the culmination of two collaborations that had been developing for six to eight years, and the gathering of evidence for their impact to date. The Machine screenings gave commissioned writers a recurring public platform for film criticism over eight years, and the resulting book stands as the project's lasting record. Since "No Master Territories" first opened in Berlin in 2022, several works featured in the exhibition that had previously had little recent exposure have gone on to attract renewed scholarly interest and festival programming - a cumulative effect of the exhibition's multi-city tour, of which the Oslo leg supported here was the final stop.

The Oslo exhibition offered a chance to engage directly with programmers, artists, curators and wider publics in Scandinavia as the tour of "No Master Territories" came to a close. Rather than a handful of canonical female "auteurs," it foregrounded work from beyond the usual geographies of Western Europe and North America - film engaging with labour, embodiment, sexuality and ecology. Like its earlier stops in Berlin and Warsaw, Oslo drew strong attendance and press coverage, continuing a broader shift in public awareness of feminist filmmaking's legacy that has built up across the tour as a whole. The Amsterdam conference, meanwhile, gave the Machine collaborators a chance to reflect publicly on the series just as it concluded, sharing their work alongside academics and non-academic film programmers.

Collaborators at the partner institutions have also pointed to a shift in their own curatorial practice from working closely with an academic over the course of these long-running collaborations - a benefit built up over years rather than attributable to this final stage alone. More broadly, the project strengthened King's ties with cultural practitioners internationally, offering, at this particular moment, a special opportunity for collaboration with institutions and individuals in Scandinavia.

Looking ahead, the project continues to generate new research and public-facing work. It has fed directly into two further outputs - the essay "Reflections on an Exhibition" in *New Left Review*, and "Feminist Observation" in *Camera Obscura* - and is shaping Erika's next body of research: a book developing themes from a display shown at the Hamburg Kunstverein last autumn, on an Italian feminist collective featured in "No Master Territories."

ERIKA'S TOP TIPS FOR IMPACT

1. **Develop collaborations slowly and over time.** The relationships at the heart of this project - with curators, publishers and fellow programmers - were built up over many years, allowing trust and deep mutual understanding to grow.
2. **Learn to communicate outside the university.** Academia can be its own bubble, and the modes of engagement and discourse that feel natural within it are not necessarily shared by professionals in the cultural sector. Understanding how those other spaces operate is essential to working well within them.
3. **Use natural culmination points strategically.** A final stop on a touring exhibition, the publication of a book, the close of a long-running series; these are suitable moments to prioritise evidence-gathering and reflection, rather than treating documentation as an afterthought.

FURTHER READING

- Erika Balsom, Beatrice Gibson, Maria Palacios Cruz and Ben Rivers, eds., *The Machine That Kills Bad People*, London, 2026. Available from: <https://thevisiblepress.com/product/the-machine/>
- "Still So Much Left Unsaid," a review of "No Master Territories: Feminist Worldmaking and the Moving Image" at Kunstnernes Hus, *Kunstkrikk*, March 2026. Available from: <https://kunstkrikk.com/still-so-much-left-unsaid/>
- Erika Balsom, "Reflections on an Exhibition," *New Left Review* 139 (January-February 2023).



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