

Screenings Programme

Monster Chetwynd

The Call of the Wild (2007)

We will use these discussion prompts as the basis for our online Zoom discussion on **Wednesday 15 April at 3.30pm**. Feel free to bring ideas and thoughts in relation to the film or to your own lives, research and readings.

/// 0 - Beginning

Commissioned by Collective as part of our One Mile programme in 2007, *The Call of the Wild* premiered as a special 16mm double-bill (showing with Jean Rouch's celebrated and controversial ethnographic film *Les Maîtres Fous* (1955)). The event was held in Mary King's Close, a network of hidden closes below the Royal Mile in Edinburgh. In a 2010 interview, David Lillington asked Monster (then called Spartacus) about paying the many collaborators who help with her performances. Monster's response touches on Rouch's film:

"Here is a long-winded answer about reciprocity and exchange that is not money: Jean Rouch's The Mad Priests [includes a] cathartic self-invented ritual in the clearing in the forest. The cycle of the film shows people at work: on the roads, as a guard, in the salt mines. The film shows them after the ritual, again at work, only this time smiling broadly into the camera. I took the film literally... I wanted to make my own cathartic self-invented relief."

The Call of the Wild is dominated by the intensity of Emma Sullivan's screeching voice. The film presents us with a group of women in two very different situations and states. Their urban, industrial work environment initially punctuated by the monotonous rhythm of the sewing machines; and the island landscape of the Outer Hebrides, both rough and wild, where the women come together and dance.

/// 1 – "It's all too much"

Humour, satire, comedy, pantomime and the "carnavalesque" all play an important part in Monster's work. While *The Call of the Wild* is one of her more stripped back, stark and aggressive

works, the carnivalesque (the spirit of carnival, of excess, of breaking out of the strictures of normal life) remains a strong force. Carnival, in its early forms, is thought of as a key point where society is turned upside down and dominant conventions and hierarchies are suspended. This acts as a necessary release of social and emotional pressure. An important question is whether, after the carnival moment, society simply 'resets' or if this upending of the norm produces change.

/// 2 – The Unknown Wilds

Monster was also influenced in making this film by two classic films set in Australia:

[*Picnic at Hanging Rock*](#) (1975) is a 'poetic horror' film that tells the story of the disappearance of several schoolgirls on an outing to the countryside in 1900. It is a journey in to the 'mystical unknown' of the natural world.

[*Walkabout*](#) (1971) presents a powerful nostalgia for nature and an archetypal story of the loss of innocence. Starting in refined enclaves of suburban Sydney, a teenage girl and her younger brother are abandoned in the Australian outback. They are rescued from the dangers of this harsh environment by a teenage aboriginal boy on his 'walkabout', who teaches them to explore the natural world.

/// 3 – Working Together

The way Monster builds relationships and communities of performers around her projects has been an important element in her practice since she was a student producing costume parties and then running the South London Cultural centre from her flat-share.

These performers are people she has met across her life (at bus stops, in clubs, at her performances) who she invites to participate. Through her openness these social dynamics are embedded in her work, reaching out across her life and the people she meets in different circumstances.