



10:00 **Coffee and Welcome**

10:15 **Calling the Shots? Thinking about contemporary women filmmakers**

- *Dr Shelley Cobb and Prof Linda Ruth Williams*

Shelley Cobb and Linda Ruth Williams' research project, *Calling the Shots: Women in contemporary UK cinema 2000-2015* is building a comprehensive picture of the creative and working lives of women in the British film industry now, and securing their place in film history. Many of the most financially successful films this century were directed by women (Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It Like Beckham*; Phyllida Lloyd's *Mamma Mia!*; Sharon Maguire's *Bridget Jones's Diary*; Debbie Isitt's *Nativity!*). Britain has also produced some singular independent female auteurs working in smaller productions (Sally Potter, Clio Barnard, Joanna Hogg). However these are exceptional cases, and women particularly struggle to find work in areas such as cinematography and editing, as well as other technical roles. Drawing on the up-to-the-minute findings of *Calling the Shots*, this opening session introduces some key ways of understanding the unique work that women are undertaking in the film industry, and thinks about what often holds them back from full involvement in film production.

- 10:45 **“Sappy romantic comedies or Tinkerbell movies”:** limiting and suppressing the stories written by women screenwriters.
- *Dr. Natalie Wreyford*

Many more screenplays are written than ever get made, but men are still more likely to see a screenplay that they have written turned into a film. Women do write films but there is a considerable drop off between the percentage of women screenwriters working on films in development and the percentage on produced films. This session will consider how the currency of ‘taste’ in the UK film community works to suppress women screenwriters’ work. I will demonstrate how entrenched perceptions of women’s tastes, interests, preoccupations and skills lead to women screenwriters being restricted, overlooked and ghettoized. These gendered assumptions ignore a wealth of evidence of women’s success in a variety of screenwriting work. Drawing on interviews with both men and women screenwriters and their employers, I show that the British film industry still considers some stories to have more value than others, that only certain people are employed to tell these stories, and ask why directors and financiers may be unable to recognise the potential of many screenplays written by women.

- 11:30 **Coffee**

- 11:45 **Women in British documentary**
- *Ania Ostrowska*

While men directors make more films than women across cinematic genres, women directors are well represented in all production and exhibition contexts of British documentary filmmaking. There are many accomplished women TV documentary directors, a testament to public service broadcasting’s mission to showcase programmes representative of its viewership. There are also women arthouse documentarians who in their creative process encounter fewer gatekeepers, working with smaller budgets and crews. Finally, women from social groups normally underrepresented in filmmaking make films, including shorts, for online platforms and other alternative outlets. This session focuses on three films made by women documentarians working in Britain: Sue Bourne’s *Mum And Me* (2008), commissioned by and broadcast on BBC 1; Karen Guthrie’s *The Closer We Get* (2015), made independently through the director’s production company; and Daisy-May Hudson’s *Halfway* (2015), made on a zero budget while the director was homeless. These are all what critics call ‘first person documentaries’, where the director speaks from a

strongly articulated subjective position, challenging documentary ideal of 'disinterested objectivity'. All three films also involve the director pointing her camera at her closest family. With clips from all three films, this session considers how the work's intimate subject influences the director's creative decisions as well as technical aspects of filmmaking.

12:30 Lunch

13:30 Whose Heritage is it Anyway?: Making Space for the Woman of Colour in Amma Asante's *Belle* (2014)

- *Sarah Smyth*

Amma Asante's 2014 film *Belle*, a mainstream British heritage drama, tells the story of a woman of colour by a woman of colour. Despite Britain's multi-racial history, the heritage genre continuously constructs the nation's history and heritage as wholly white. As Andrew Higson argues, 'to identity as heritage cinema a body of films of dubious national identity, circulating a limited set of representations, is clearly to beg the question of whose heritage is being projected.' This session discusses the ways in which Asante represents her mixed-race female protagonist, Dido, and compares her with other female-authored heritage films such as Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park* (2007) and other adaptations of Austen's novels.

14:15 Coffee

14:30 Talking to women: filmmakers discuss their work

- *Dr Shelley Cobb and Prof Linda Ruth Williams*

Over the last three years Linda and Shelley have been interviewing women filmmakers about their work, collaborations and aspirations. So far they have recorded nearly 40 interviews with directors, producers, screenwriters, editors and cinematographers. This unique body of work gives a privileged insight into opportunity and diversity in contemporary cinema. This session will show highlights from these interviews, giving a contemporary perspective on how women work in the British film industry today and raising questions about what might be done to make it more inclusive and diverse.

15:15 Plenary, questions, discussion

- *with all of the day's speakers*

16:00 End of Day