Workshop 1, “1968, Cinema and politics”
Tuesday, May 8th, 2018, 10am-3pm, with lunch 12-1pm
River Room, King’s Building, King’s College London, Strand campus, London WC2R 2LS

Convener Mark Shiel, Department of Film Studies, KCL (mark.shiel@kcl.ac.uk), with Ros Murray, Department of French, KCL, and Margaret Dickinson, filmmaker and author of Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain, 1945-1990 (BFI Publishing, 1999)

This workshop will consist of a morning session, 10am-12pm, and an afternoon session, 1-3pm, with a one hour break for lunch.

Part 1) Morning session

Attendees are asked to watch, in advance of the workshop, some short video clips online of relevant films made between 1967 and 1976 (please see list below for the clips). The morning session will consist of three short papers by Shiel, Murray, and
Dickinson, addressing these clips and related issues, with plenty of opportunity for discussion by the audience as a whole and in small groups too.

Margaret Dickinson will discuss the mix of British and foreign influences on three British radical film workshops, starting in the late 1960s – i.e. cinema action, Liberation Films and Amber – and with reference to some of the work of Simon Hartog, a largely forgotten activist who was one of the founders of the London Film Coop and who argued for the nationalisation of the British film industry.

Ros Murray will discuss the relationship between technology and reproductive labour in French feminist video after 1968, looking in particular at the feminist collective Les Insoumuses and its Portapak video *SCUM Manifesto* (1976). The video, by Carole Roussopoulos and Delphine Seyrig, was an adaptation of the 1967-68 manifesto by the American radical feminist Valerie Solanas, who advocated the repurposing of
technological advances to combat what she called the ‘dubious purpose of reproduction’.

Mark Shiel will examine film footage of mass protests, focusing on 1967-68 in Los Angeles, a city closely associated with escapist commodity culture (especially Hollywood) but also a hotbed of counterculture and leftist radicalism, as recorded in the historically-significant but little-known documentary film Century Plaza Demonstration (President Johnson, June 1967). This is a fascinating portrayal of the largest anti-war demonstration in Los Angeles during the Vietnam War, but it is one-sided, made by the Los Angeles Police Department and US Secret Service.

Online video clips:


Century Plaza Demonstration (President Johnson, June 1967) (U.S. Secret Service,
16mm training film, captioned “Century Plaza, June 23, 1967, compiled from footage and sound tracks of the Los Angeles Police Department and Local Television Stations,” item USSS #18502, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC; 27 mins)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFAqd2pW96Q

Unfinished film about the group ‘cinema action’ (12 mins, 2017)
https://vimeo.com/219028541

UCS1 (cinema action, 1971, 22 mins)
https://vimeo.com/ondemand/31689

[the clips below are optional extras, if you have time to watch them]

End of a Tactic (Liberation Films, 1969, 15 mins)
https://vimeo.com/193726552

All You Need’s an Excuse (Liberation Films, 1972, 11 mins.)
http://www.the-lcva.co.uk/videos/594bbb7d1c423d243c1b14a8

Various short clips from the ‘cinema action’ films,
Not a Penny on the Rents
(1968) and People of Ireland (1970)
http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/529319/

Suggested reading:
Margaret Dickinson, Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain, 1945-1990 (BFI Publishing, 1999)

Part 1) Afternoon session

This session will develop the discussion of “1968, Cinema and Politics” around a broader range of examples and issues, including multiple international contexts in which cinema and mass protest came together with particular volatility or influence (e.g. Tokyo, Mexico City, Milan, Berlin), including a range of types of representation (avant
garde or agit prop filmmaking, narrative fiction, documentary), as well as issues of production, distribution, and exhibition which shaped, facilitated or restricted the expression of progressive mass protest in moving image culture.

For this session, anyone in the audience who has a particular interest in this regard should email Mark Shiel (mark.shiel@kcl.ac.uk) with suggestions as to specific films, filmmakers, movements, or issues to bring into the discussion. The idea in this session will be to open the discussion as broadly as possible, including to discussion of the continuing influence of 1968 on film and video culture today.