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EXCLUSIVE “The Heretics”: Women of the Heresies Collective

0 By Emily Wilson

[Tweet](#) *The author interviews the maker of a documentary that captures a prolific period of feminist art, focusing on the collective as, according to the film web site, “a microcosm of the larger international women’s movement, in which thousands of small, private groups of women met together in forms unique to their own settings.”*

Video artist and filmmaker Joan Braderman, who teaches at Hampshire College, moved to New York in 1971 to become an artist. She joined a women’s art collective that from 1977 to 1992 published a ground breaking journal, *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics*.

Braderman, whose work is in such permanent collections as MoMA and the Georges Pompidou Center in Paris, thinks without that group of women she might not have become a filmmaker. She decided to make a documentary about the group, “*The Heretics*,” which was the closing night film for the San Francisco Women’s Film Festival on April 11. Through interviews and digital motion graphics, Braderman tells the story of the art collective and their determination to change things for women. She said the idea came to her while she was on a monument in Mexico in 2006.

“I was depressed about the political situation,” she said. “I was able to get away enough from my life, and I was looking at the clouds, and I thought I don’t have to have my head in Bush World. It would be wonderful to visit this time when things seemed optimistic.”

Braderman traveled around looking up her colleagues, with whom she had spent six years going to meetings. The women dispersed from Spain to New Mexico to Maine and all of them are still in the arts—painting, writing, designing, or making movie. Braderman said the response to the movie has been encouraging, especially from young women who get inspired seeing women doing what they set out to do.

“There has been a lot of laughing and crying at the screenings and so much warmth and enthusiasm,” she said. “A lot of the you want to go out and start a group the next day.”

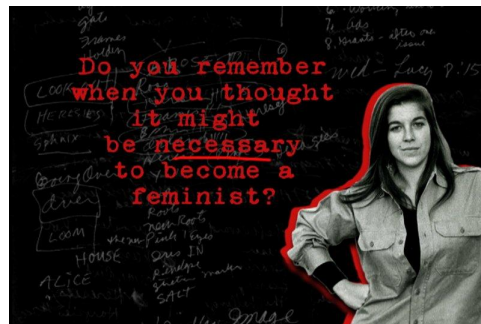
The women who started the Heresies Collective were quite a group. The fact that all of them are still making art says a lot about the collective and what drove the women to join it 30 years ago, Braderman said.

“We were all pissed off,” she said. “Everybody was realizing all the internalizing self doubt women had and that we had to make ourselves strong, and we couldn’t necessarily do that without support.”

Braderman wanted to make the film because some of the women were in their 80s, and she felt the story was important to tell. “It has been written about *Heresies*,” she said.

“We were suspicious of leaders, so we didn’t do media work or project any image of ourselves,” she said. “So it was left to us to define us, and they thought we were these hairy women who needed to get laid.”

In the movie, the women recall how no one did the same job on any two issues of the journal, and how they refused to have a business plan. Braderman laughed at the memory.



From the documentary “*The Heretics*”

All the women involved were excited to do the documentary, Braderman said, and she was glad to put them in a film.

“I work in media and teach film and video, and I’m so sick of seeing male movie stars getting younger and younger girlfriends. I want to have women on screen who just don’t care what they look like because they’re busy. I wanted to make looking at less scary. You never see an older face in this medium unless it’s grandmothers or people dying of cancer or something, not just busy, active human beings.”

Braderman said making the movie gave her and her colleagues a chance to reflect on what has been accomplished—and what they do.

“A friend of mine calls it enlightened sexism,” she said. “Everybody is pretending it’s all over and all the battles have been won. Different generations are going to have to take this on again and again and again and each generation is going to have to come to conclusions.”

The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author alone and do not represent WMC. WMC is a 501(c)(3) organization and does not endorse candidates.



Filmmaker Joan Braderman documents the collective that produced an influential feminist art journal

“People think you have to use the old models that are and don’t work,” she said. “We wanted to try something that was democracy at its most basic level and we committed to making that work.”

Crescent Diamond, a former student of Braderman and producer on “*The Heretics*,” says this kind of work is rare.

“The most impressive thing to me is that they actually produced 27 issues,” she said. “I’ve worked in collectives and one magazine out is a miracle.”


Distributing the magazine was also done in a collective. “Some of this is inconceivable to younger women,” said. “Someone said to me, ‘I’m sure the first place to distribute was to women’s studies and gender de I said, ‘Honey, we didn’t even have female prof loaded up an old van and dropped it off at newsstand’”


This entry was written by [Emily Wilson](#), posted on [April 12, 2010 at 8:28 am](#), filed under [*Feature*](#), [Entertainment](#), [Exclusives](#), [Excluded Articles](#), [Feminism](#), [International](#), [WMC](#), [Women in Film](#), [Young Women & Feminism](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#). Follow any comment

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1.  [kumkum pareek malik](#)
Posted April 12, 2010 at 9:22 am | [Permalink](#)
how can I obtain this documentary: The Heretics?


2.  [Joan Braderman](#)
Posted April 12, 2010 at 11:19 am | [Permalink](#)
It's so rare to do an interview and have an interviewer like Emily. She gets at the underlying meaning of what you are saying as we flavor of how you speak without including all the ungrammatical things that ordinary speech often contains. She really represented interview beautifully.

I know how hard this is as I have done hundreds of interviews (30 for THE HERETICS alone.) I know how hard this balance is – be you would like to say and what your subject actually said or what she actually meant when she said something a bit weird. So, mar thanks Emily. You did a brilliant job.

3.  [groove68](#)
Posted April 12, 2010 at 5:15 pm | [Permalink](#)
Watch Joan Braderman's classic 80s deconstruction of Dynasty "Joan Does Dynasty" (for Paper Tiger TV) as a video on demand stream
http://www.realeyz.tv/en/joan-braderman-manual-delanda-joan-does-dynasty_cont1686.html

4.  [admin](#)
Posted April 13, 2010 at 7:50 am | [Permalink](#)
Hi KumKum Pareek Malik, you can visit this site for information on the film's distribution: <http://helios.hampshire.edu/nomoreniceji/#distribution>

Let us know if this helps. Thanks!
WMC

5.  [catherine corpeny](#)
Posted April 14, 2010 at 1:22 pm | [Permalink](#)
Wonderful article. I just returned from the Congo and witnessed first hand the healing that takes place, and the ideas that are born out and practiced as a result of women's collectives. Very powerful.

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