

Film-Makers Cooperative Benefit Gala

Feb. 13, 2026

Inney Prakash Introduction - Maya Deren Award

Forgive me for reading off my phone. I'm usually more of an improvisatory, off the cuff kind of guy, but the person we're presently honoring always shows up prepared, and I didn't want to offer her any less.

I am so proud to call Lynne Sachs a friend. Over the course of her career she's built a resolutely independent, unapologetically feminist and disarmingly intimate practice and body of work that speaks to the nature of the image, the passage of time, the power of righteousness and the complexity and beauty of family, along with so much else, in a vernacular that has always pushed the boundaries of cinematic form and function (Structural films like *Drawn & Quartered*, personal ethnography *Which Way is East*, portraits and profiles like *Investigation of a Flame*, collaborative *Your Day is My Night*, deeply vulnerable autobiographical *Film About a Father Who*).

When an extraordinary artist is also an extraordinary person, that's something to be grateful for. Like some of the figures she's so lovingly turned her gaze upon, like the Berrigans and the Catonsville 9, Reverend L.O. Taylor, the tireless laundry workers of NYC and the iconic Silvia Federici, I don't think Lynne's work can be extricated from the way she lives her life, and not just because of how personal it is, but because it radiates with with abundant openness, warmth, curiosity, attention, presence and generosity. These are qualities you benefit from whether you're encountering her on the screen or at dinner.

Relatedly, and in light of the spirit of this gathering, I would be remiss not to remark upon Lynne's dedication to community. More than any other filmmaker of her stature I know, she shows up to see the work of young filmmakers, shares her knowledge, offers profoundly sensitive feedback, collaborates with them and always makes herself available.

In fact, the enthusiasm with which she cultivates and nourishes a sense of a community is very much reminiscent of the Coop's founder Jonas Mekas. It's no surprise that when, towards the end of his life, Jonas got into her car after an event, mistaking it for an Uber, she happily played the part and drove him home.

It's so fitting that her most recent feature, 'Every Contact Leaves a Trace', is about the marks we leave on each other as we move through this life. I know she's left a mark on mine, on so many of yours, and undoubtedly on the history of film and what we might dare to call experimental film in particular.

Lynne Sachs

Mary Deren -- her haunting, exhilarating presence permeates everything. My desire to find my own visual and aural language began when I witnessed her celluloid adventures -- always made with absolute candor, from a decidedly female perspective. My partner Mark Street and I even named our first daughter MAYA. In my film "Maya at 24" we see her at 24 years old, 24 frames per second, running, forward in space, and backwards in time. Fully in motion, like her namesake.

The artists who founded the Film-makers Cooperative believed that a radical artmaking practice could speak to the most concerning issues of their day. They had a visceral faith in the medium itself. Through play, experimentation, and the confidence to break every rule in the book -- the industry standards. These film artists wanted to spark their audiences to think in new ways about the world as they saw it. Like Maya Deren herself, they knew they could do it on their own and with very little money. They just needed to support each other. This is where the Coop began.

Tonight, we honor the vision of Ken Jacobs, -- a dear friend whom I visited just a few weeks before he bid us all goodbye. Ken was one of the FMC founders. He, along with a small group of his fellow members, did something extraordinary in 1967. With their cameras and their projectors in hand, they protested against the violence their own country was inflicting on the people of Vietnam. They called their collective movie-making effort FOR LIFE AGAINST THE WAR. I am sure they would do the same around Palestine.

In 2007, beloved comrade and former FMC Executive Director MM Serra and I felt similarly distraught by the US attacks on Iraq so we put out a call for films speaking against that war. We called it FOR LIFE AGAINST THE WAR, AGAIN.

Our society is now facing the horrors of authoritarianism -- and the attacks on the arts are touching groups like the FMC directly. Last fall, I worked with the Coop along with their sister collective Canyon Cinema to make a new unified voice of protest. Together we created an omnibus of 100 ten-second films we call FILMS FOR FREEDOM.

For 65 years the Coop has brought all of us together in love, in creativity and in defiance.

Tonight, I would like to thank my mother Diane Sachs who has always encouraged me and who flew from Memphis to be with all of us.

Jack Waters MM Serra Introduction

MM trailblazed the visibility of Queer experimental cinema at the coop through her curation of screenings of longstanding work in the catalogue, in her outreach to new generations, and in contextualizing under-represented artists like Marguerite Paris and Jerry Tartaglia, to name just two of many. MM advanced experimental film at-large by ramping up preservation and archiving efforts against all odds with such works as Charles Henri Ford's Johnny Minotaur that would have otherwise disappeared from the canon. MM is not deterred by controversy. With inimitable style and beauty Serra's individual popularity has never been the guiding principle behind her own remarkable creative output, whose proliferation is stunning in light of her selfless dedication to the work of so many artists, including my own.

We have benefited greatly from exposure in her curatorial selections, and by her ramping up the Coop's stature by programming at intimate theaters - starting with the Coop's own in-house screening room, at the Roxy Cinema, and Ludlow House - as well as at large houses such as the LA Pacific Design Center - and bringing global significance at world class museums such as the Pompidou Center in Paris, and most recently in the watershed Queer and Uncensored series at MoMa.

MM brought the Coop into the 21st century by resisting strong opposition to first bring video, then digital media into the Coop's then exclusively celluloid catalogue when she started at the helm. MM has NEVER been deterred by controversy. She is nothing short of legendary in her championship of women makers like Barbara Hammer, Su Frederich, Lynn Sachs, Peggy Ahwesh, Coleen Fitzgibbon, Anne Hannover, and the list goes on. I am proud to have co-written and play the leading role in the film Jason And Shirley made in response to A Portrait Of Jason by Shirley Clarke in whose honor MM is recognized tonight. Serra, tell us a little about your work with Shirley Clarke.

Jack Waters February 13, 2026

MM Serra Shirley Clarke Award

In the 1980s I was living in Los Angeles and working at the Academic Senate. I found out that Shirley Clarke was moving out west and was teaching at UCLA. A short two minute film class. Shirley was a vital force in the east coast avant garde cinema. She was a member of Warhol's factory. She was the only woman to pick up a camera and make movies. Living at the Chelsea hotel where she was friends with Patti Smith and planted tomatoes on the roof. Most important she was one of the founders of the Film-makers' coop. She was very political. Clarke was always protesting the war. Shirley's lecture hall was packed when I asked her to let me take her class for free. Students were getting on the seats and standing in the aisles. Since I was working class and needed to learn story telling from her. Of course Shirley said yes. Gave me the codes to the equipment room and said to work off the hours. Short films are the essence of what you want to say. In Shirley Clarke's course I learned not only to create short films but how to make films. Clarke not only taught me the language of film but how to live your life as an artist and how to advocate for positive change in the world. So I am grateful to Shirley Clarke for teaching me how to make a short film which is the essence of what I want to say.