

## M4C Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA)

PROJECT TITLE				
From Independent Film to Integrated Praxis: Regional and Historical Contexts to the Birmingham Film and Video Workshop (1979-1989)				
LEAD INSTITUTION				
Name of HEI institution	Birmingham City University			
Lead regional city	Birmingham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Coventry <input type="checkbox"/>	Leicester <input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham <input type="checkbox"/>
PARTNER ORGANISATION				
Name of organisation	The British Film Institute			
Website	<a href="https://www.bfi.org.uk/">https://www.bfi.org.uk/</a>			
<p><i>Project:</i>            This project examines the activities and impact of the Birmingham Film &amp; Video Workshop (BFVW), an influential West Midlands film organisation which operated between 1979-1989 under the leadership of Roger Shannon.</p> <p>By using funding streams from the British Film Institute (BFI), West Midlands Arts and Channel 4, BFVW proved innovative for fusing independent film production with its mentoring of diverse and regionally underrepresented communities. As a result of these methods, BFVW produced 25 film outputs, TV dramas, documentaries and trade union training materials. These productions represent an influential and significant body of work that documented the challenges facing diverse and diasporic communities (<i>African Oasis</i> [Yugesh Walia, 1982]), social exclusion as mediated through state structures (<i>Giro</i> [Dead Honest Soul Searchers/Jonnie Turpie, 1985]), issues of gender inequality across historical and contemporary settings (<i>Property Rights</i> Heather Powell, 1983) and explorations of youth subcultures mediated through an experimental use of new videotape technologies (<i>Out of Order</i> [Jonnie Turpie, 1985]).</p> <p>While the impact of BFVW's productions were more recently recognized through the BFI's 2022 Film Heritage project, it is still the case that wider significance of the organisation has yet to be fully recognised, a factor which this doctoral project will seek to address.</p> <p><i>Process:</i>            The project's key research questions are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What were BFVW's key production and education activities between 1979-1989?</li> <li>2. How can the historical significance of the organisation be assessed via archival materials stored at national and regional organisations?</li> <li>3. How can the organisation's working practices be assessed through ethnographic and oral history accounts from its key personnel?</li> <li>4. How did BFVW's regional focus differentiate it from other alternative film organisations operating in the UK at the time?</li> </ol> <p>It is expected that these research questions will be explored through a range of interdisciplinary methodologies that combine <i>socio-historical analysis</i> (of the organisation's impact), <i>archival review</i></p>				

(of relevant regional and national materials) and *ethnographic approaches* (of key BFVW's creatives). It would therefore be valuable for applicants to demonstrate interests and skills in film history, film criticism, archival analysis, and interview techniques as these will be key areas of review for the project.

*Place:*

This CDA project will be led by Professor Xavier Mendik (Birmingham City University, BCU) and Professor Justin Smith (De Montfort University, DMU), giving the researcher two institutional venues for the development of their research. At BCU, the researcher will join the *Film and the Digital Image* research cluster (led by Mendik), which brings together cinema scholars, practitioners and industry leads to consider new approaches to national and regional film cultures. Group members include Professor Roger Shannon (former director of BFVW) alongside BFI representatives who facilitate regular film training (such as an EDI film training course) that the applicant will be eligible to undertake. At DMU, the researcher will engage with the Cinema and Television History Research Institute (CATHI), a centre of excellence in archival screen heritage, which is led by Smith. CATHI specialises in evidence-based methods and oral history approaches to inform ground-breaking research. It also houses several unique collections including the Hammer Script Archive, the Cinema Museum's Indian Cinemas Archive, the Palace Pictures and Scala Productions Archive, alongside the ongoing Film is Fabulous! initiative devoted to preserving vulnerable film collections.

The CDA also benefits from the participation of the BFI as its primary industry partner. The BFI looks after one of the largest and most important collections of film and television in the world. Its experts ensure that the collection is preserved for future generations and widely accessible to today's audiences. This CDA dovetails with this key organisational responsibility, and their work across research and the impact of film on UK culture. The project will help the BFI better understand the BFVW movement and how its filmmakers contributed to our national film culture and diverse communities working with in it.

As part of the project, the researcher will be introduced to key colleagues across the BFI, will be given opportunities to visit the BFI National Archive and learn from experts in this area to better understand the work of the archive and the curatorial practices taking place to preserve the films produced by the movement under review.

*Person:*

The team is keen to receive applications from individuals with a strong profile in film studies-based research at undergraduate and/or postgraduate levels. Due to the nature of this project, the team would particularly welcome applicants who can demonstrate interests in British cinema, and/or the representations of class, gender and ethnicity within regional and national traditions of film.

**HOW TO FIND OUT MORE.** Please email the lead university supervisor if you want to find out more about this CDA project.

Lead HEI Supervisor:	Professor Xavier Mendik
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