

Second-Wave Feminists Define an Era in *The Heretics*

By **Melissa Anderson**

published: October 06, 2009



Details:

The Heretics

Directed by Joan Braderman

October 9 through 15, MOMA

"Democracy is messy and nasty and *sensational*" recalls one of the talking heads in Joan

Braderman's spirited doc about the Heresies, the New York feminist art collective that published 27 issues of a journal of the same name from 1977 to 1992. Film- and video-maker Braderman, who joined the collective in 1975, tracks down 24 of her fellow second-wavers (one of whom I worked for briefly 12 years ago), scattered around the globe and ranging in age from 54 to 84, to reminisce about the endless downtown loft meetings and hair-splitting debates about whether "we were

Marxist feminists or feminist Marxists"—all part of the collective's mission "to examine every bloody thing in the world." If Braderman's voice-over narration drifts into nostalgia for a lost utopia on occasion, the testimony of her interlocutors reminds us that even though consciousness-raising groups are a thing of the past, the spirit of the group is very much alive, whether in the present-day work of '70s Heretics ("I don't think [second-wave feminism] ever ended," asserts architect Susana Torre) or the commitment of the Gen-Y founders of the feminist, queer LTTR collective. For a movement that was "fundamentally leaderless," Braderman's film gives its participants an opportunity to rightfully claim: "We thought we could change things—and, in fact, we did."