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MOVIE REVIEW | 'THE HERETICS'

Art in an Era of Consciousness Raising

By RACHEL SALTZ

It wasn't once upon a time, but just a few decades ago, Joan Braderman's exuberant documentary reminds us, that a woman could be told, "You paint just like a man" (a compliment) or you're "too cute to be an art critic."

"The Heretics" focuses on a group of feminists, including Ms. Braderman, who took matters into their own hands: they formed an art collective and put out a magazine, Heresies, that was as much about politics as it was about art. The same could be said of Ms. Braderman's film, which gives a joyful sense of what it was like to be a feminist in the 1970s, a time when "everything seemed possible."

This was the era of consciousness raising, and Heresies wouldn't have been possible without it. The women held endless meetings in Lower Manhattan lofts (they learned how to do wiring and plumbing to make them habitable) and talked endlessly about everything, including the protocol of talking in a group, and of course about Heresies, which in true democratic spirit changed editorship with each issue.

Ms. Braderman intercuts the story of the magazine and of second-wave feminism with recent interviews with the women, who include Ida Applebroog, Pat Steir and Lucy Lippard. Thirty-odd years later, they're just as passionate and engaged. It's a pleasure to spend time in their company.

THE HERETICS

Opens on Friday in Manhattan.

Written and directed by Joan Braderman; director of photography, Lily Henderson; edited by Kathy Schermerhorn and Scott Hancock; music by June Millington and Lee Madeloni; produced by Ms. Braderman and Crescent Diamond; released by No More Nice Girls Productions. At the Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters, Museum of Modern Art. Running time: 1 hour 35 minutes. This film is not rated.

