Co-directed by Maureen Blackwood and Isaac Julien, this first full-length feature film by Sankofa Film and Video Collective (1986) offers a radical and necessary interrogation of ‘post-colonial’ identities. Set against the tremendous political and social upheaval of 1980s Britain, the screening will be contextualised by film curator Karen Alexander. Following the screening, Alexander will be joined by actor Anni Domingo, who plays the female lead.
REWIND: SANKOFA

Sankofa was a conversation, not a consensus – Isaac Julien, 2015

The visionary collective Sankofa Film and Video was established in 1983 by five aspiring filmmakers – Martina Attilla, Maureen Blackwood, Robert Cruz, Isaac Julien and Nadine Marsh-Edwards. Their heterogeneous viewpoints coalesced around new black subjectivities and introduced British audiences to New Queer Cinema, black feminist theory and the politics and poetics of self-representation. To achieve this, the collective engaged in lively debate and held public viewings and screenings in order to actively seek out feedback and points of view from different communities.

The name ‘Sankofa’ refers to a Ghanaian Adinkra symbol meaning ‘putting a bird with an egg on its back, signifying taking what’s valuable from the past and applying it to the future.

THE PASSION OF REMEMBRANCE

Maureen Blackwood & Isaac Julien, 1986, 16mm film, 95 min

Featuring: Anni Domingo, Joseph Charles and Antonia Thomas

Portraying the richness and variety of black experience in British society, The Passion of Remembrance simultaneously challenges conventional narrative forms and filmic genres. Combining fictional drama with allegorical monologues, documentary footage and scripted drama, the film addresses the complexities of race, sexuality, gender and intergenerational family dynamics. It premiered at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1986 and had a 1987 theatrical release in London.

Intertwining two story lines, the film follows Maggie Baptiste (Antonia Thomas), a young British woman of West Indian parentage, who negotiates her personal and family experiences, juxtaposed with an intense debate raging between Woman (Anni Domingo) and Man (Joseph Charles) in an intergenerational family dynamics. It premiered at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1986 and had a 1987 theatrical release in London.

In 2006, Blackwood was selected for Guiding Lights, a year-long intensive training initiative with John M. Davis for racially- and socially-motivated violence and police brutality. Sources of this material include Richard Heslop, Shadow Film and Video Collective, and Newsroom Film Collective. The Passion of Remembrance is testament to a once-thriving collaborative culture of British creative expression, Sankofa’s legacy endures.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS:

Maureen (Mo) Blackwood (born 1960, London, UK)

After completing a degree in Media Studies at the University of Westminster, Mo Blackwood became a founding member of Sankofa Film & Video Collective. During her time with Sankofa, Blackwood developed her talents in the areas of writing and direction on several films. She co-wrote/directed Sankofa’s first feature film The Passion of Remembrance (1986), before going on to write and direct a range of award winning films such as the fiction film Perfect Image (1988), which won Best Film at the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame in 1990, and the documentary A Family Called Abrew (1992), which won the Biography Section at the Black Independent Film and Screenplay Competition, Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame in 1993.

Blackwood also wrote and directed the multi-award winning British Screen Channel Four short drama, Home Away from Home (1993), which was an official selection for Critics’ Week, Cannes Film Festival (1994) and Winner of Best European Short Film, films des Femmes, France (1995). In 2003, Blackwood graduated from a year-long intensive training initiative with John M. Davis for racially- and socially-motivated violence and police brutality. Sources of this material include Richard Heslop, Shadow Film and Video Collective, and Newsroom Film Collective. The Passion of Remembrance is testament to a once-thriving collaborative culture of British creative expression, Sankofa’s legacy endures.

Karen Alexander

Karen Alexander is a writer, consultant and an independent curator of film and moving image. Until recently Alexander worked as Senior Tutor in the RCA’s Curating Contemporary Art department, where she was responsible for the practice-based MA pathway Inspire. Prior to that, she worked as a film curator and freelance consultant on film exhibition and distribution. She has contributed to several books on film including British Cinema of the 1980s (London: British Film Institute, 1997), Women and Film: Sight & Sound (London: British Film Institute 1999), If Looks Could Kill (Koening Books and Fashion in Film Festival, 2008) and Cinema Made in the Middle East and North Africa (Utrecht, LM Publishers, 2015). From 1998-2006 she worked at the British Film Institute, with responsibility for the strategic marketing of BFI Distribution and Archive cinema releases. In 2015, Alexander was appointed Associate Fellow in Warwick University’s Film and Television Studies Department, based on them an ARC-funded Projection Project. She is currently a board member of the public art commissioning body, Artangel.

Anni Domingo

Anni Domingo was born in the UK and grew up in Sierra Leone. She trained to be an actress and a teacher of speech and drama obtaining numerous degrees including an MA in Creative Writing at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. Domingo has worked extensively as an actress in theatre, radio and films in the UK and abroad. In addition to The Passion of Remembrance, she has acted in the feature films Outland (1981) and Wondrous Oblivion (2003) and in television shows such Kavanagh QC, Judge John Deed, Holby City, Casualty, The Wire and The Bill. Domingo has also worked for BBC Radio and other radio stations as actress, writer, broadcaster, and interviewer.

Domingo currently runs the company Shakespeare Link, facilitating workshops on Shakespeare in schools, youth clubs and theatres. She teaches English and Drama in many Cambridge schools and is a lecturer on Shakespeare and Creative Writing at the University of Cambridge. Domingo works regularly as director for WriteOn Theatre Company in Cambridge. She has written several workbooks on Shakespeare and her children’s plays have been performed in schools around the country. Her poem Emptly Cradle was shortlisted in Slink Poetry Competition and published in the anthology Secret and Silent Tears and her short story Empire Girl has just been published in the Words and Women Anthology One. Domingo’s novel, Breaking The Mada chain, set in Africa, England and the US at the end of the slave trade has been shortlisted for the prestigious Lucy Cavendish College Fiction Prize.