



## Archive Materials: Feminism, Performance and Art History in the UK

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015, 1.30 – 6pm

Saunders Room, School of Art History, University of St Andrews

Speakers: Freya Gowrley, Georgia Horgan, Kerri Offord, Rachel Smith, Hilary Robinson

For a younger generation of feminists, the archive is not necessarily either a destination or an impenetrable barrier to be breached, but rather a site and practice integral to knowledge making, cultural production, and activism. The archive is where academic and activist work frequently converge.

Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (2013)

While the ‘archival turn’ of the 1990s prompted much self-reflection among art historians, feminist interventions within the discipline have always encouraged such reflexive critique. Feminist art history encourages the scrutiny and assessment of motivations and methodologies from the very first steps of research, which can often be traced back to the archive. The writer Kate Eichhorn has recently identified two significant transformations in twenty-first century feminist practice: the shift from a linguistic to materialist archival framework, and a re-conceptualisation of the archive from a sepulchral repository, to active – and activist – site of knowledge production. The archive is a site where the ephemeral and the material intersect, and where knowledge is both produced and performed.

This workshop takes this expanded notion of the archive as its starting point to address the long history of feminist art production in the UK, building on the rich array of recent scholarship that has focussed on feminist work of the 1970s and 1980s to include significant eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth century precedents. In particular, we are interested in how art historians and curators can conserve and analyse what are often intrinsically transitory and site-specific practices, without losing a sense of their complexity, fluidity and challenges.

In bringing together scholars to explore the intersections between curatorial, archival and performative thinking in UK-based aesthetic and historical production, we hope to explore the following questions:

- How do we create archives? What gets left out, and how might we develop strategies for negotiating gaps in the archives?
- Overproduction – is there simply too much material to archive, or might entropy and excess bring their own forms of knowledge?

- Do oral histories, or 'histories from below' retain a critical function in the digital age?
- Given the success of large-scale feminist exhibitions elsewhere, why has the UK not staged a similar show? Would we want one – and what would(n't) it look like?
- How does the archive function differently for researchers working on different time periods?

This event has been kindly sponsored by the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art. It builds on the work of the Writing Feminist Art Histories initiative, and an earlier workshop, Curating Materiality: Feminism and Contemporary Art History at the University of Edinburgh, funded by the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities. It has been organised by Victoria Horne (University of Edinburgh) and Catherine Spencer (University of St Andrews).

For more information and to register please contact [feministarthistories@gmail.com](mailto:feministarthistories@gmail.com)

### Event Timetable

1.30 – 1.40pm	<b>Introduction</b> Victoria Horne (University of Edinburgh) and Catherine Spencer (University of St Andrews)
1.40 – 2.00pm	<b>Title tbc</b> Freya Gowrley (University of Edinburgh)
2.00 – 2.20pm	<b>The Legacy of Mary Watts</b> Kerri Offord (Watts Gallery)
2.20 – 2.50pm	Discussion
2.50 – 3.10pm	Coffee break
3.10 – 3.30pm	<b>Title tbc</b> Georgia Horgan (Artist)
3.30 – 3.50pm	<b>Approaching Feminist Advocacy through Barbara Hepworth's Archive</b> Rachel Smith (University of York)
3.50 – 4.20pm	Discussion
4.20 – 4.30pm	Break with coffee refill
4.30 – 5.00pm	<b>Hilary Robinson (Middlesex University London)</b>
5.00 – 6.00pm	Discussion and roundtable Oriana Fox film screening
6.00 – 6.30pm	Wine reception