



Royal College of Art

SPEAKING WITH

12 June 2019, 10-4pm
Gorvy Lecture Theatre

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|---------------|------------------|---|
| 10:00 – 10:10 | Welcome | Marita Fraser |
| 10:10 – 11:00 | Session 1 | |
| | 10:10 – 10:25 | Caroline Douglas: <i>Sonsy fishwives</i> |
| | 10:25 – 10:40 | Armelle Skatulski: <i>Archive Sub-Versions</i> |
| | 10:40 – 10:55 | Marita Fraser: <i>Speaking with others</i> |
| 11:00 – 11:30 | Break | Refreshments in Dyson Cafe |
| 11:30 – 13:00 | Session 2 | |
| | 11:30 – 12:20 | Prof Carol Mavor: <i>Anti-Kleptocratic Happening</i> |
| | 12:20 – 13:00 | Panel Group Discussion
Caroline Douglas, Armelle Skatulski, Marita Fraser & Carol Mavor
Chair: Prof Rebecca Fortnum |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch | |
| 14:00 – 14:05 | Welcome | Caroline Douglas |
| 14:05 – 15:00 | Session 3 | |
| | 14:05 – 14:20 | Onyeka Igwe: <i>Specialised Technique</i> (film screening) |
| | 14:20 – 14:35 | Sharon Boothroyd: <i>A public display of confession</i> |
| | 14:35 – 14:50 | Juliette Blightman: <i>Room After Woolf</i> |
| | 14:50 – 15:20 | Nadia Hebson: <i>Artists for Re-creation</i> |
| | 15:20 – 15:50 | Panel Group Discussion & Q&A
Sharon Boothroyd, Juliette Blightman & Nadia Hebson
Chair: Prof Rebecca Fortnum |
| 15:50 – 16:00 | Closing | Dr Felicity Allen |
| 16:00 – 17:00 | Drinks | Please join us in the Dyson Cafe |

technē

This event has been organised by *Speaking of Her*: an open research network at the Royal College of Art, part of the Arts & Humanities PhD/MPhil Programme. Funded by AHRC Consortium – *technē*.

BIOGRAPHIES //

Felicity Allen is an artist and writer whose current work is mainly focussed in two forms, one developing her concept of the Disoeuvre, and the other producing series of Dialogic Portraits. She makes paintings, books and films, often collaboratively. Her neologism, the Disoeuvre, a feminist challenge to the conventional idea of the artist's *oeuvre*, is explored in her artists book, *The Disoeuvre: an Argument in 4 Voices (WASL Table); 6:27*, (Ma Bibliothèque, 2019). The first of her artists film series on the subject, made in collaboration with Althea Greenan, was recently exhibited in *Dark Energy*, (x-hibit, Vienna, 2019), along with her series of fifteen prints. She makes clusters of Dialogic Portraits through watercolour on paper as well as textual, audio and video recordings. Her first series produced the 2-volume artists book *Begin Again nos 1–21*, collected by Tate and the Getty. The third series, commissioned by Turner Contemporary, produced the film *As If They Existed* (2015). She is currently working on a fifth and a sixth series: with *Refugee Tales* and with the cross-disciplinary research project *People Like You*. As well as her recent artists book *Psycho-Neurological Poem in 3 Parts* (Litmus Publishing, 2019), she has published a number of articles, mainly relating to gallery education, including most recently 'Erasure, Transformation and the Politics of Pedagogy' in *A Companion to Feminist Art* (Wiley Blackwell, 2019) edited by Maria Buszek and Hilary Robinson.

Juliette Blightman (RCA) has exhibited in solo shows at Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland; South London Gallery and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin. Her performances and video works have been presented in; Hayward Gallery, London; Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne; Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria and at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. She has lectured in art schools, including ArtsCenter, Los Angeles; UdK Berlin and Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Her PhD by practice at the Royal College of Art researches the relevance of feminist literature of the last one hundred years to creative practice, technology and motherhood.

Sharon Boothroyd (RCA) is an artist whose works are held in collections and exhibited in institutions such as the V&A, Tate Liverpool, Venice, Encontros das imagens, Goa International Photography Festival, International Photography Awards, New York and Rencontres des Arles. She lectures at University of Roehampton, Ithaca College, London Centre and the Royal College of Art. The title of her PhD research project is *Boundaries and Slippages of the Self; A feminist interpretation, of 'hysterical narrative' as agency, through photography and autofiction*.

Caroline Douglas (RCA) was the recipient of the 9th Helen Keller International Award and Magenta Foundation Flash Forward Award (2016). Selected exhibitions include; Galerie Huit, Arles, Columbia University, Stills Gallery, Brighton Photo Fringe, Format Festival, Künstlerhaus Dortmund. Residencies include; School of the Art Institute Chicago, AiR Fondazione Fotografia, Modena and Proekt Fabrika. She was Visiting Scholar at the University of St Andrews in 2016. Her practice-based PhD at the Royal College of Art, is titled *Retouching The Archive: Unknown Women in Early Photography in Scotland*.

Rebecca Fortnum is Professor of Fine Art at The Royal College of Art, where she leads the School of Arts and Humanities Research Programme. She has recently completed a Visiting Research Fellowship at Merton College, Oxford where she developed her project, *A Mind Weighted with Unpublished Matter*, that includes paintings and drawings of known and unknown female subjects from sculptural portraits in Museum collections, including the Ashmolean. Fortnum has had solo shows at the Freud Museum and the V&A's Museum of Childhood and edited a book of interviews with British women artists, *In their own words* (2007) as well as *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think* (2013), a book of essays that examines contemporary artists' processes. Her new book, *A Companion to Contemporary Drawing*, which she has edited with Kelly Chorpeneing, will be published by Wiley Blackwell later this year.

Marita Fraser (RCA) is an artist, writer and researcher exhibiting internationally, including exhibitions with Kunsthaus Vienna, Städtisches Museum Engen, Atelierhaus Salzamt Linz, Kunstverein Wilhelmshöhe Ettlingen, MU Eindhoven, Concertgebouw Brugge and Perth Institute of Contemporary Art. In 2016 she was awarded the *ArtReview* Casa Wabi Residency Award and was resident at Museums Quartier Vienna (Q21). She is currently undertaking a PhD by practice at the Royal College of Art titled *Speaking With: New Forms of Notation for Scoring Excess*.

Nadia Hebson is an artist and Senior Lecturer at Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm. She works across painting, objects, large scale prints, apparel and text through subjective biography most recently exploring the expanded legacies of American painter Christina Ramberg and British painter Winifred Knights, who she conceives as fictional mentors. Her recent exhibitions and commissions include *Gravidity & Parity* & Hatton Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, *one on one: on skills*, The Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia, EKKM, Tallinn, *I See You Man*, Gallery Celine, Glasgow, *Alpha Adieu*, Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, *M HKA and Choreography*, Arcade, London. In 2014 with AND Public she published *MODA WK: work in response to the paintings, drawings, correspondence, clothing and interior design of Winifred Knights (an expanded legacy)*. In 2017 with Hana Leaper she co-convened the conference , at the Paul Mellon Centre, London. She is currently working on a new publication which explores the work of Christina Ramberg and her creative female circle.

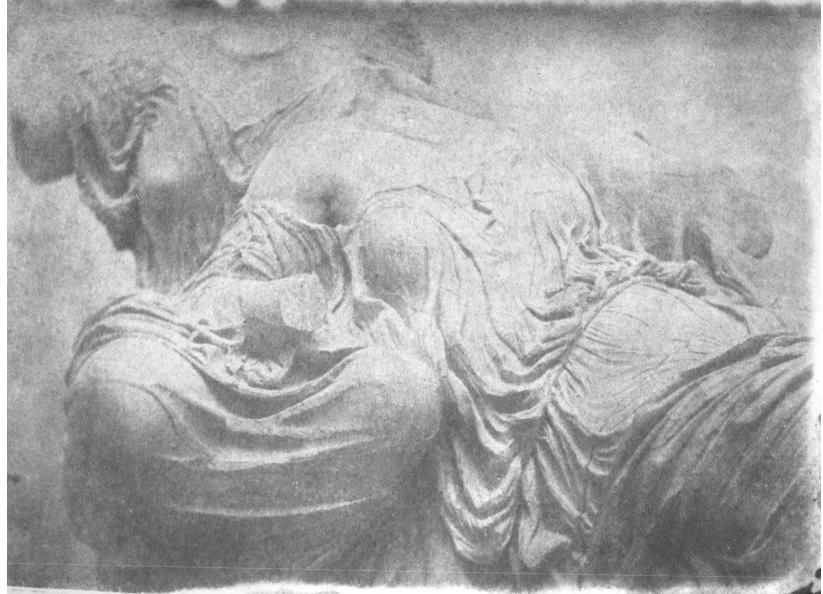
Onyeka Igwe (UAL) *Unbossed and Unbound: How can critical proximity activate British colonial moving images?* Archivisation and the visioning technology of cinema, fuels the transformation of the colonial imaginary. to fixed truths of the colonial black subject. To combat this, theoretical strategies of reading against the grain have emerged and this impetus has found a home in various moving image practices. Does this work sufficiently exist outside of the very knowledge systems that created totalizing and racist understandings of blackness? This research develops and deploys critical proximity; a methodology that embraces illegitimate forms, outside the bounds of Western Thought, to activate colonial moving images and produce audiovisual works that challenge hegemonic ways of knowing.

Carol Mavor is writer who takes creative risks in form (literary and experimental) and political risks in content (sexuality, race in America, child-loving and the maternal). Her *Reading Boyishly: Roland Barthes, J. M. Barrie, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Marcel Proust, and D. W. Winnicott* was named by Grayson Perry in The Guardian as his 2008 'Book of the Year.' Mavor's *Blue Mythologies: A Study of the Colour* 'coaxes us into having a less complacent attitude...even when it comes to something as apparently innocuous as a color' (*Los Angeles Review of Books*). Maggie Nelson describes Mavor's sixth monograph, *Aurelia: Art and Literature Through the Eyes and Mouth of the Fairy Tale*, as 'enigmatic, and full of magic as its subjects.' Currently Mavor is working on a new book, *Serendipity: The Alphabetical Afterlife of the Object*. She is also writing a trilogy of short novelesque texts on the art of the 1960s in Northern California: *Like a Lake, Like the Sea and Like a Tree*. For all of 2018, Mavor is the Novo Nordisk Foundation Professor Art History and Visual Culture at the University of Copenhagen. Listen to a new interview with her on the colour blue as part of Phoebe Judge's intriguing series on love: <https://www.thisislovepodcast.com/episode-10-blue>

Armelle Skatulski (RCA) is an artist and educator undertaking a practice-based PhD at the Royal College of Art supported by technē/AHRC, titled *Archive Sub-Versions: Photography, the Accident, and the Logic of Production*.

Caroline Douglas

Sonny fishwives



Elizabeth Johnston Hall was a ‘fishwife’ from Newhaven. She was one of the world’s first photographed subjects to be self-consciously presented as art (Stevenson, 1981:23).

This paper explores the history of women in early photographic practice through the case study of a C19th voiceless subject. This paper uses re-enactment and montage as methods to explore the limits and possibilities of getting close to one of early photography’s ‘unknown women’. In doing so, it interrogates Hall’s experience of being photographed into the ‘canon’ and asks how our understanding of early photography might be enriched by examining the medium through the lens of these working class, fisherwomen sitters, about whom we know so very little.

Armelle Skatulski

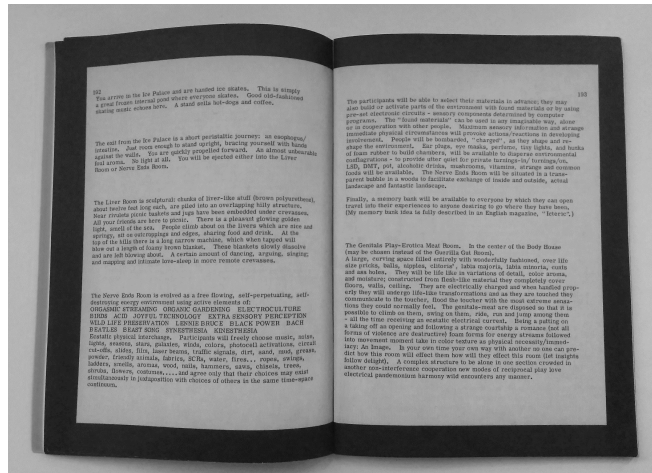
Re-enactment, the Accident, and the Archive



The accident is transmitted in a tension between the archivable and the un-archivable, life at work and the necro-political regime of surplus-value. This paper addresses the critical potential of the photographic documentation of work-related accidents as found in the (post)industrial archive. The accident can be interpreted as that which threatens the biopolitical mechanisms aiming at securing the productivity of a population while preventing the loss of vital capacities (Foucault, 1997; 2003). My concern however lies in how the accident escapes the normalising procedures of biopower. Re-enactment is socially inscribed in an aetiology of the accident that constitutes an exercise of power aiming to predict random elements that undermine the emergence of surplus-value. Re-enactment is considered as a forensic procedure in the accident report, and then as a model to re-think appropriation and the copy in re-assembling the archive through artistic practice. Speaking with and through the archive happens in making and writing through appropriated text and images to produce a new register that engages with the disjunctive agency of the photograph at the convergence of documentation, cognition, and affect. As the accident interrupts or destabilises economic homeostatis and the power to archive, I consider how it binds re-enactment to repetition, time, and value.

Marita Fraser

Speaking with others



How might text as sculptural material, allow for actions that enable visible gaps in knowledge, and unknowing to appear; making visible the unspoken, as it were? Further, in speaking of the unspoken, one must ask who is speaking, how are they speaking, and why are they speaking.

Parts of a body house (1957-1967) is a text that instructs the reader to spend time with cats, make love, garden organically, discuss revolution, make a film and experience rebirth, amongst other things. It is instructional, descriptive, narrative and non-linear. It has been published as text, as poetry, as architecture, with and without images. As a feminist text, it steps between instructional, poetic and performative tone and structure, de-centering the authority of Schneemann's voice to include the voice of the body, cats, the reader and revolution. Schneemann's interest in engaging with the body's personal and environmental materiality is presented through a negotiation of personal subjectivity with materials of culture, society and the body. It is a slippery work, being genre and form shifting. Fiction/Autofiction, prose, poetry, essay sculpture, architecture. An armature in which to rest the eyes, mind, body.

How then can text become a structure? A sculpture? A vessel for more than its parts?

Can it hold Carolee and Me, She and I and others?

Carol Mavor*Anti-Kleptocratic Happening*

In 1968, curious courtships between psychology, the women's liberation movement, population control, and ecological concerns erupted. One key figure is the philosopher and psychologist Xenia Godunova (whose early work linked female anorexia with kleptomania). Godunova viewed both as related rituals—forbidden secret activities—which compensate for threatened or actual loss. As Godunova said in a lecture at UC Berkeley (1968): 'Our irresistible tendency to steal things we do not need from the Mother (Earth), is klepto-parasitism, is kleptocratic.' The choreographer and dancer Anna Halprin (b. 1920), and her architect husband Lawrence Halprin (1916-2009), were at that lecture. My lecture unearths the effect that Godunova's radical philosophies had on their collaborative piece: *Driftwood City—Community*, performed as an environmental experiment at Sea Ranch, California, 1968. Of note is the fact that Halprin considers her dance practice as a feminist philo-sophia (love of wisdom) brought to life with phyto-philía (love of plants). In her words: 'my concern is form in nature—like the structure of a plant—not in its outer appearance, but in its internal growth process. The plant cannot be kleptocratic.' Mary Glass (b. 1936-2018), a student of Halprin, took phyto-philía into an imaginary ocean for her dance entitled 'Happening' (1970). Embodying the sea butterfly (scientific name *Thecosomata*)—colourless, very fragile and less than one cm in length—Glass danced with two wing-like lobes, with slow flapping movements, as one with the sea: 'like water in water' (Georges Bataille).

Onyeka Igwe

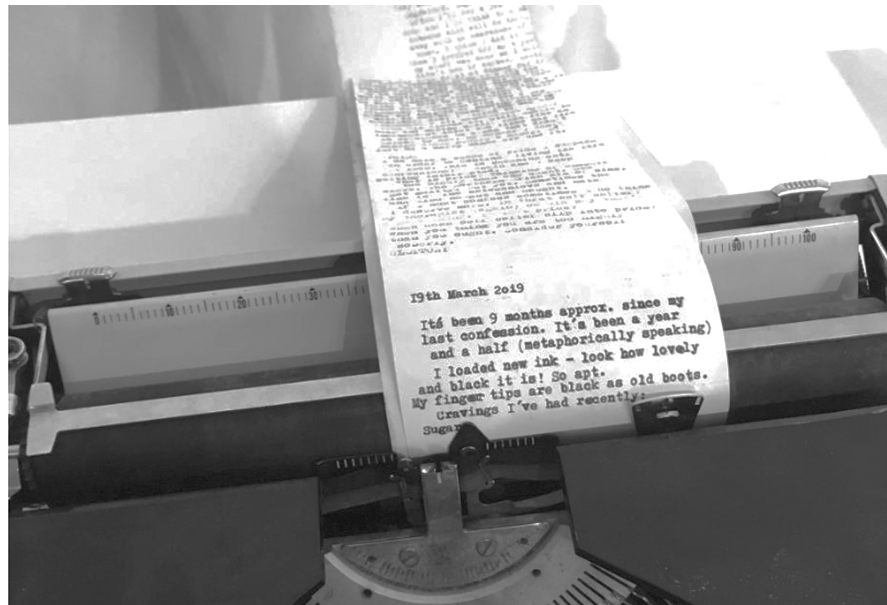
Specialised Technique



Specialised Technique is an experiment in critical proximity, a way of activating archival material that privileges being close to, with or amongst – illegitimate knowledge. The archive material featured in the film was conceived by William Sellers, who developed through the Colonial Film Unit, a framework for colonial cinema. This restrained British filmmakers in the unit to slow edits, no camera tricks and minimal camera movement. In an effort to contrast the calculated style of the colonial footage, I use critical proximity to infuse the old footage with life and respect.

Sharon Boothroyd

A public display of confession



“At times the truth seems to be enough, as long as I compress it and rearrange it a little.” Lydia Davis

In the form of a live, automatic writing performance I will present a re-enactment of my wedding day, fifteen years later to the day. I will question and reflect on the role of ‘truth’ and ‘memory’ in the shifting framework of the story-telling involved in personal histories. In exposing myself to the public humiliation of ‘oversharing’ I adopt an exaggerated performance of the ‘cringe-worthy memoir’ by forging, and forcing, a space to speak with an earlier version of myself.

Juliette Blightman

Room After Woolf



How does contemporary fragmented autobiography read in relation to Woolf's 'A Room of One's Own'? from 1928? Does it make sense to continue to use the methodology of tracing feminist literature from the past in order to research what we think of the present? Has technology (more specifically the internet and the smartphone) liberated society and our ability to work wherever we are? What about the Electro-Magnetic Field exposure and the architectural designs that now incorporate insulated homes to keep the waves out?

By making direct comparisons between feminist literature of the past, specifically feminist autobiographical texts such as *A Room of One's Own* (1928) and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1947). Whilst aiming to situate these within contemporary works, such as Olivia Laing's *The Lonely City* from 2016 or Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* from 2016, I hope to illuminate how the female voice has evolved in the last one hundred years. I am interested in repetition in relation to memory and technology and how this has played an active role in how feminist writers have expressed, recorded and remembered their past. I will show a series of visual images that examine the idea of (female) space through my own work which consists of observations and experiences today as an artist and a mother. I also question how social media has given agency to (female) space and the voice and the method of the blurring of facts through fiction.

Nadia Hebson

Artists for Re-creation



Artists for re-creation monitor present day comprehension through new iterations. Things don't mean the same thing forever. Most things disappear. Lynne Tillman, The Translation Artist

At the time of her death in 1982 Carla Lonzi, art historian, critic, feminist and activist was working on a book in which she was in conversation with a group of fifteenth century bluestockings. The book foregrounded Lonzi's notion of Resonance -a relationship that can be established between two or more women, who do not necessarily live in the same place or period of time, as a way of seeing one's own experience reflected in the experience of someone else. A form of mutual recognition.

Not seeking to reconfigure an extant canon, not inserting the less considered into established *narratives*, not responding to constraints shaped by patriarchal thinking, not finding ways to give clarity, singularity, elevation or authority, not addressing absences, nor delineating omissions, nor rehabilitating occluded artistic inheritances.

The writers Kate Briggs and Natasha Soobramanien in their respective work have each explored the *notion* of paying close attention, an act analogous to translation, which I have come to understand as a form of subjective, empathetic enquiry or a mode of resonance.

In *concert* with Carla Lonzi's radical politics I propose a suspension of the conventions which are said to motivate and significantly validate gestures of recuperation, re-enactment and thinking through deployed in contemporary art practice and literature, as a provocation to explore how a polyvocal circumstance can be worked towards; which draws on resonance not solely as a declarative position but as an intimate and potentially private exchange grounded in the complexities of subjective expression and empathetic enquiry.

Image Nadia Hebson, *Gravidity & Parity*, installation, including Marion Adnams Alter Ego, Hatton Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2018