

Say Something Back: An event exploring feminist artistic research¹

28th February 5 - 7pm, TS Eliot Theatre, Merton College, Oxford



Rebecca Fortnum, drawing from the *Prosopopoeia* series, 2019
(Sarah Bernhardt, Bust of Louise Abbéma, 1878)

She said: *What was that that you said?* I said: *Who said?* She said: *You said.*
I said: *Who me?* She said: *Yes you.* I said: *Not me, I'm dumb.*

Chantal Faust, 2019

Accounting for historical omissions is a tried and trusted method of feminist scholarship, lives and work are necessarily 'fished out of obscurity', as the poet and philosopher Denise Riley has put it. But when the traces from the past become thin on the ground, or a more intimate register is called for, what artistic strategies can be used to recover the histories and work of women's creative contribution?

The afternoon will feature presentations from six artists, all of whom will foreground research processes that use re-creations, re-enactments or suggest a possibility of entering into dialogue with the past. This conjuring forth of unknown or unseen lives and practices, as a kind of seance or act of ventriloquism, extracts women's voice from archives or texts, leading to the possibility of a recalibration of value.

¹ *Say Something Back* is the title of a volume of poetry by Denise Riley, published in 2016 by Pan Macmillan. 'Artistic research' here refers to practice based fine art research. The later quotation, 'fished out of obscurity' is from Riley's essay 'Does Sex Have a History?', published in *New Formations*, Spring 1987.

The event is organised by **Rebecca Fortnum**, current Visiting Research Fellow in Creative Arts and Merton and Professor of Fine Art at The Royal College of Art. It emerges from her project at Merton, *A Mind Weighted with Unpublished Matter*, that includes paintings and drawings of known and unknown female subjects from sculptural portraits in Museum collections, including the Ashmolean.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*, as well as *On Not Knowing; How Artists Think*, a book of essays that examines contemporary artists' processes. Other speakers are:

Marita Fraser 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 *Writing and Performing 'The Dative': New Forms of Notation for Scoring Excess*.

Juliette Blightman 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.

Caroline Douglas 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, and 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*. She will present her project *Newhaven Madonna*.

Sharon Boothroyd is an artist whose works are held in collections and exhibited in institutions such as the V&A, Tate Liverpool, Venice, Encontros das Imagem, 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. She will present her film piece *EROTOMANIA* which seek to discover whether 'hysterical narrative' can be rehabilitated to new ends. 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*.

Dr Chantal Faust is an artist, writer and Senior Tutor in Arts & Humanities at the Royal College of Art. Her research interests focus on the scanner as a conduit for the study of visualisations of touch, immediacy and blatancy, extending into a practice of works in video, performance, photography and painting. Recent exhibitions include *Solitary Pleasures*, Freud Museum, London (2018); *Natur Blick*, Koppel Project Hive, London (2018); *Antipodean Emanations*, Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne (2018); and *PUSH IT*, Lychee One Gallery, London (2016).

This event is part of the Merton Visiting Research Fellowship in the Creative Arts, and the VRF's studio is housed in the old music room in Fellows Garden. For further details please email Rebecca.fortnum@merton.ox.ac.uk. It has been developed with *Speaking of Her*, an open research network at the RCA that explores the ways arts practices can research women's creative legacies. For further details of their events please email speakingofher@rca.ac.uk

The event is free and open to all. Merton College, Merton Street, Oxford OX1 4JD