

Julia Holderness

Ever Present Archiving

methodologies for
art histories through
fabrication, invention
and social practice

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To my brothers and their families, thank you for providing encouragement, love and impromptu childcare. Henry, Tomomi, Bianca, Manon, John, Anna and Evie. Thank you to Andy's parents, Bronwen and Geoff Johnson, for your interest and practical support over the years.

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Tēnā koutou katoa

Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of another degree or diploma at a university or institution of higher learning.

Signed

10 March 2022



Fig. 1. Florence Weir watercolour (*Scene in Ngaio Marsh's living room*), 2021.

Abstract

Ever Present Archiving explores the ways in which an installation-based practice might critique assumed forms of collected knowledge. The thesis explores modes of fabrication, invention and social practice to interrogate archives and their construction of art-historical narratives. Focusing particularly on how representations of the past constitute 're-presentations,' this project revisits particular moments in the art history of Aotearoa (such as The Group, the Ōtautahi Christchurch-based art collective; and an all-women painting studio in Ōtepoti Dunedin 1939–40) and imagines their possible entanglements with international movements (including the Bauhaus). Through artworks, exhibitions and the use of an invented persona, Florence Weir, the thesis traces alternative histories of modernism in Aotearoa, while exploring questions of truth, representation and temporality in historiography. In creating narratives that might or might not have existed, this project deliberates on the role of fiction in both the collection and interpretation of material histories, and critiques traditionally held divides between art-historical scholarship and artistic fabrication. This practice involves collaboration with other practitioners, intersubjective research methodologies and attention to a social kind of art history where stories are told through friendships, relations and social settings. The making of installations, objects and assemblages based on archival fragments and conversational-based research becomes part of an original practice-led methodology for art-historical investigation that highlights both the productive nature of the archive, and gaps and slippages within the information it stores. In privileging design, decorative and domestic categories, this practice traces alternative histories of modernism in Aotearoa, in a reflexive and haptic research process that contributes to a feminist rethinking of the archive.



Fig. 2. *Florence & Friends*, (installation view), 2015. Flotsam & Jetsam.



Fig. 3. *Florence & Friends*, (installation view), 2015. Flotsam & Jetsam.



Fig. 4. *The Studio*, (installation view), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Photograph by Justin Spiers.



Fig. 5. Edwards Arthur Phillips, Photograph of Doris Lusk in the studio, c. 1940.

Preface

Upon entering *The Studio*, my most recent installation, at Dunedin Public Art Gallery in October 2021, the viewer pauses to read some dark-blue introductory wall text to their left. There are two quotes under the title *Productive arrangements*. The first quote, by art historian Linda Tyler, is dated 2020 and reads:

In order to provide continued support to each other to paint and exhibit, Doris Lusk, Mollie Lawn and Anne Hamblett established an all-women's art gallery and studio in 1939 in central Dunedin. The space was always filled with fresh flowers in vases and pots. Extraordinarily for their time, this group of women shared a vision that they would all become professionals with a lifetime of painting ahead of them.¹

The second quote, attributed to 'Florence Weir from 1936,' is italicised and begins:

*I have always longed for a shared studio space. I imagine that at times it would be used as an exhibition space and a place for coming together. I can see long tables that can be reconfigured depending on the activity, with various arrangements of objects set in the middle...bowls of fruit, vases with fresh flowers, interesting fabrics. Comfortable nooks for tea drinking and conversation. Shared bookshelves & cabinets; supplies set up in attractive storage. A range of plants for still life set-up, easels or the life drawing model. Space dividers, framing materials, essels... In all reality, I'm probably best suited to working on my own. Though it's good fun to imagine this other studio.*²

Alongside these quotes are two framed, historical black-and-white photographs of an interior. One shows a young woman, dressed formally in a skirt and knitted top. She is standing in front of Victorian furniture and a wall covered in framed pictures. There is a cushion-covered divan to the right and vases of flowers on the table surfaces. The other photograph frames the scene from the opposite side: there are large skylight windows, more paintings and more flowers. Moving into the gallery, the viewer sees an archival cabinet full of documents, drawings, photographs; a long, narrow table full of objects; upright hessian-covered screens that are weighed down with sandbags at the back. Walking beyond the screens, a divan can be seen in one corner

¹ Text edited by Julia Holderness from Linda Tyler, "Anne Hamblett: Early Works," Michael Lett, <https://michaellett.com/exhibition/anne-hamblett/> and Linda Tyler, ed., *A Table of One's Own: The Creative Life of Anne McCahon* (Auckland: Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, 2016).

² Text developed for *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Ōtepoti, July 10 – October 25, 2021.



Fig. 6. Edwards Arthur Phillips, Photograph of Doris Lusk in the studio with her *Portrait of Anna McLeod*, c. 1940.



Fig. 7. Frances Hodgkins, *Untitled (Textile design no III)*, c. 1925. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Gouache on paper. Purchased 1998 with New Zealand Lottery Grants Board funds.

of the gallery. It has vibrant, patterned cushions on it. The walls are painted a blue–grey, and the eye is also drawn to prominent wall labels that are mint green in colour. There are framed paintings and textiles on the walls. Small, circular fabric-covered surfaces jut out from the walls in between these works. On them sit ceramic vases that resemble the ones in the paintings and that the labels call *replicas*. Reading the wall labels, the viewer takes in the titles, the artists' names (Doris Lusk, oh yes, a reasonably well-known Canterbury painter) and various quotes and information about them. The framed textile works are attributed to Julia Holderness as the maker, but have titles such as *Florence Weir, Autumn Study, c. 1938*.

A significant fabrication in the practice is the artist figure of Florence Kowhai Cuninghame Weir (1899–1979), who participates across the various projects.³ As an invented character, she can be used to complicate and expand various narratives, and through this project she is being established. Founded in 2015 by artist and friend Richard Orjis and myself, Florence Weir is imagined⁴ and was conceived of as a lesser-known member of The Group, and an expatriate New Zealander who lived most of her life in the UK. She also might be the only New Zealander to have studied at the Bauhaus design school in Germany, on a postgraduate visit in 1926. The Group was an association of Christchurch artists who exhibited together annually from 1927 to 1977. In his history of the arts in Christchurch (1933–53), art historian Peter Simpson points out that The Group was dominated by women artists, with the majority being female contributors up to 1938. Simpson also noted that original member Evelyn Page “believed The Group was created to allow her and her female friends to escape the stifling conservatism of their home life: ‘It was necessary to have somewhere to get away out of the Victorian atmosphere.’”⁵ Ōtautahi-based curator Melanie Oliver writes that the women in this group “played an active part: they were independent, opinionated, successful artists,

³ Florence's middle name, Kowhai, is a nod to the fashion of Pākehā using Māori names in the early twentieth century, such as Ngaio (Ngaio Marsh) and Rata (Rata Lovell-Smith). There is also a ‘Kowhai’ vase and several other ‘Kowhai’ titles listed in The Group exhibition catalogues. Cuninghame is my paternal grandmother's maiden name. Joan Cuninghame was a landscape painter and attended Ilam School of Fine Arts in the 1930s. She took my father and aunts to the annual Group exhibitions and knew some of the artists.

⁴ The word ‘imagined’ is useful for the project. As an antidote to ‘fiction,’ it is perhaps less tainted. ‘Imagined’ implies the image-making ability of the mind. Thus the word signals the inherent invention, and has less of a negative association than the character who is not ‘real.’

⁵ Peter Simpson, *Bloomsbury South: The Arts in Christchurch 1933–1953* (Auckland University Press, 2016), 84. Evelyn Page's quote is cited from Janet Paul and Neil Roberts, *Evelyn Page: Seven Decades* (Christchurch: Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 1986), 24.



Fig. 8. Casting moulds, Studio Ceramics, 2015.

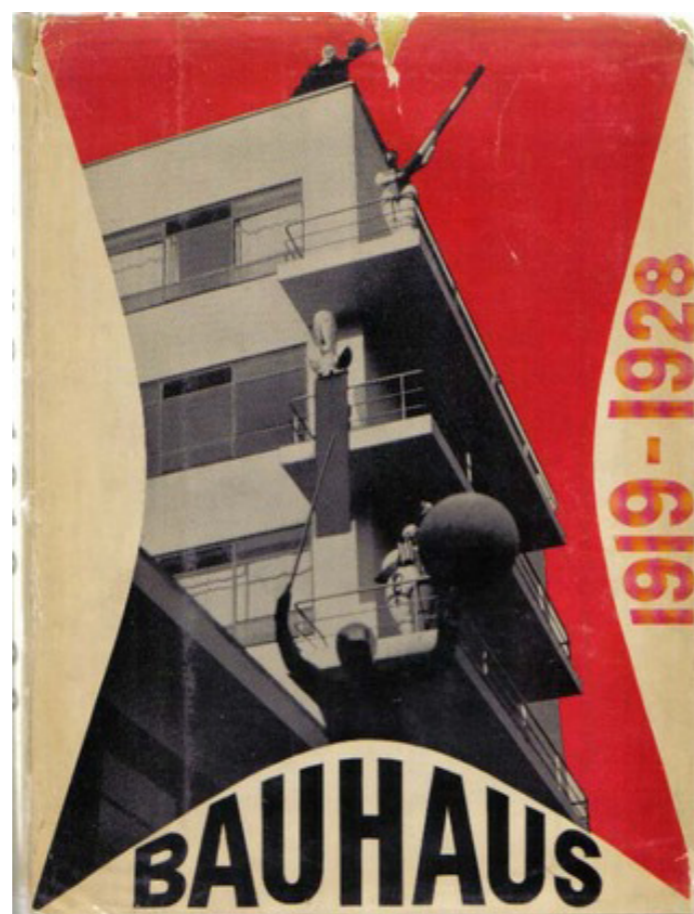


Fig. 9. Cover of *Bauhaus 1919 - 1938*, The Museum of Modern Art, 1938. First paperbound edition, 1975. Edited by Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius and Ise Gropius.

and examples of their work are held in our museum collections.”⁶ Florence was created as a homage to these strong women of The Group. Her persona is designed to feel both distant and familiar, which echoes the lives of other women artists of her generation. Lives that were sometimes split between time in Europe and time at home in New Zealand.

In the Introduction to my 2015 Honours dissertation “Art and fiction,” I note that three distinct archives “offered physical and material starting points for fabrication”⁷ within the practice. The first archive, located on the Christchurch City Libraries website, comprises a series of PDF scans of *The Group Show* catalogues. The second I call a ‘personal’ archive of art resources I collected as a teenager: a collection of old black-and-white Bauhaus publications purchased from a library sale. The third, an ‘unofficial’ archive, is the series of casting moulds and bisque-ware range sourced from Studio Ceramics that was used to create the first outing and output for Florence Weir. While the sources and archives have grown since then, these three are still important to the trajectory of the practice and the way it entangles and overlays. Since then, I have conducted research at Kā Kohika o Macmillan Brown; Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago; Dunedin Public Art Gallery; the EH McCormick Research Library at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki; and the resource library at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, amongst others. This builds context for Florence, enhances her fabrication, and is where I learn about the historical figures that accompany her. She is constructed through knowledge of artists and networks from similar timeframes. Research sources for the project also include conversations, spoken memories, Google images, historical photographs and artworks.

⁶ Melanie Oliver, “Silk, Linen, Leather, Denim, Grass, Cotton, Felt,” in Emma Fitts: Fit-Out for Olivia Spencer Bower (Christchurch: School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury, 2015), 9. Contrary to Oliver’s opinion, I have noted that not all these women have been included in our museum collections or received much recognition.

⁷ Julia Holderness, “Art and Fiction,” unpublished exegesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2015, 4.

In 2015, before this PhD project began, I created an exhibition called *The Group: homewares* (figs. 10-13), which supposed that Florence Weir returned to New Zealand for a visit, and, inspired by the Omega Workshops (1913–19) in England, set about persuading and organising members of The Group in Ōtautahi Christchurch to stage an exhibition of objects for the home. This invented frame imaginative exercise played out through an exhibition that emphasised the decorative arts and homewares, with the range of ceramic and textile and painted-furniture objects included presented anonymously. In this context, Robert Fry insisted that all Omega work was produced anonymously, because he believed that objects and furniture should be bought and valued on their own terms, rather than because of the status and reputation of the artist.⁸ Textiles presented included cushion covers, napkins and fabrics displayed on folding screens, a direct nod to the painted screens Vanessa Bell produced under Omega (fig. 13). This “counter-memory”⁹ proposed that Florence Weir created connections between the work of The Group (formed in 1927), the Bauhaus (1919–33) and Omega workshops. These groups and movements are still of great interest to the project.

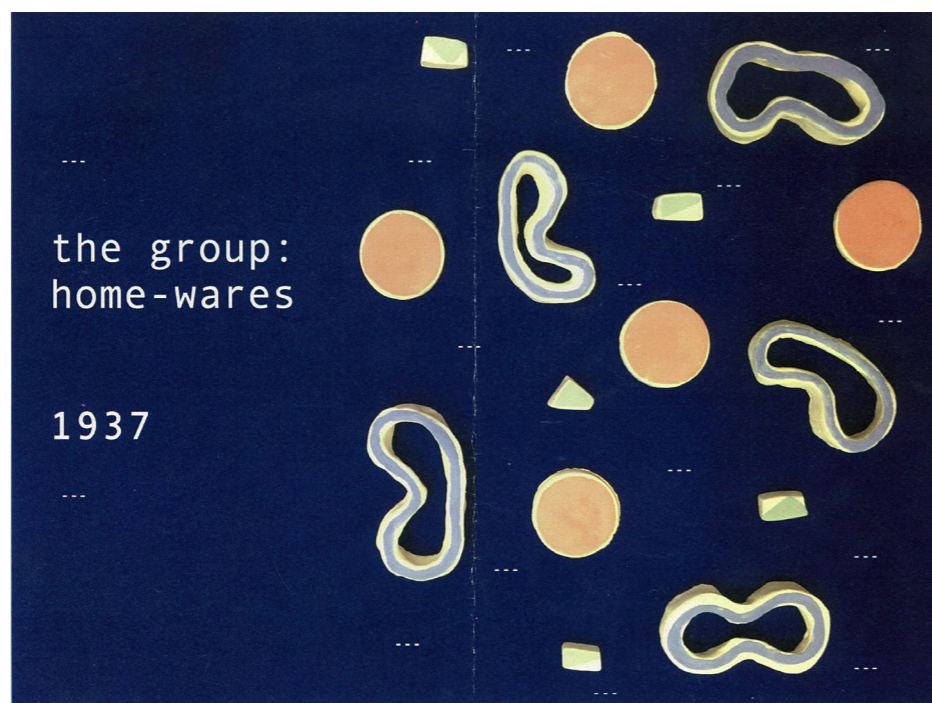


Fig. 10. Fabricated catalogue for *The Group: homewares*, 2015.

⁸ “Look Closer: The Story of the Omega Workshops,” Tate, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/o/omega-workshops/story-omega-workshops>

⁹ Charles Merewether, “Art and the Archive,” in *The Archive: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel and The MIT Press, 2006), 14.



Fig. 11. *The Group: homewares*, (installation view), 2015. Auckland University of Technology.



Fig. 12. *The Group: homewares*, (installation view), 2015.
Auckland University of Technology.



Fig. 13. *The Group: homewares*, (installation view), 2015.
Auckland University of Technology.

List of exhibitions

The exhibitions and works that were made during the course of the research are listed chronologically:

Florence & Friends

Flotsam & Jetsam, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

26 September – 11 October 2015 (pre-PhD)

Florence & Friends was a two-week exhibition presented in the upstairs room of an antique shop in Ponsonby. With a focus on domestic wares, this show launched the reproduction of Florence Weir ceramics from some of her overlooked watercolour designs. Alongside Florence's works, there was a selection of works by contemporary makers, celebrating the era in which Weir lived. These pieces included ceramics by Kirsten Dryburgh, print works by Gavin Hurley, a garment work by Emma Fitts, jewellery by Hannah Upritchard, weaving by Christopher Duncan, and paintings by Kirstin Carlin, Kristy Gorman and George Hamilton.

The Group: homewares

Objectspace, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, 30 January – 27 February 2016

The National, Ōtautahi Christchurch, 12 July – 6 August 2016

Inspired by lists of pottery items from original catalogues, Holderness revisits the applied arts and objects from the historical exhibition series *The Group Show* in Christchurch. Holding annual exhibitions from 1927 to 1977, *The Group* gained their reputation for showcasing the latest trends in contemporary New Zealand art, including painting, sculpture, prints, pottery and textiles. Using the exhibition catalogue lists as an inventory, Holderness reassesses the position of the applied arts and in particular, pottery and textiles within the arts domain. By revisiting particular epochs in New Zealand's art history and conflating it with international movements such as the Bauhaus (1919–33) and Omega Workshop (1913–19) workshop, this installation explores appropriation, aesthetic lineages and design archives as sources for contemporary fabrication.

Gallery 91

SCAPE Public Art, Ōtautahi Christchurch, 7 October – 18 November 2017

Aigantighe Art Gallery, Timaru, 2 December 2017 – 21 January 2018

In 1959 Barbara and André Brooke established Christchurch's first contemporary dealer art gallery at 91 Cashel Street, showing and promoting New Zealand painting, ceramics, drawing, sculpture and textiles. It positioned New Zealand contemporary art that engaged with Western ideas of modernism as a desirable, exciting and important part of local culture. They showed June Black, Helen Brown, John Coley, Louise Henderson, Colin McCahon, Milan Mrkusich, Olivia Spencer Bower and Toss Woollaston, among other artists. The Brookes cultivated a sophisticated, social atmosphere at Gallery 91, serving freshly percolated European coffee, and were open late into the evenings. Through examination, remaking, and re-presentation of archival material, ephemera and testimonies, Auckland-based artist Holderness and Timaru-based art historian Fishburn offer a consideration of the legacy of Gallery 91.

Overlooked Details

Bartley & Company, Pōneke Wellington

11 April – 5 May 2018

'Crimson circles, mustard squares and a grey rectangle on blue ground' a rug by Florence Weir

In this exhibition, Holderness creates felted appliqué works and a video work referencing geometric rug designs by Florence Weir, who spent time at the influential early-twentieth-century German Bauhaus art school. Further research into her time there has confirmed she spent time in the weaving workshop and experimented with both traditional and industrialised weaving techniques. Based on the description of one of Weir's geometric rugs, from a letter to Winnifred Hunt, Holderness works through possibilities for what these textiles might have looked like. This exhibition reanimates the work of an overlooked figure in New Zealand's design history.

Florence & Florence: other textile histories

Ilam Campus Gallery, Ōtautahi Christchurch

5 September – 4 October 2018

Working with a range of archival materials from the Macmillan Brown Library and Heritage Collections, Julia Holderness explores her own textile making alongside that of artist and teacher Florence Akins (1906–2012). Akins' documents relate to her teaching of textiles at the Canterbury College School of Art, and include lecture notes and other instructional resources such as colour diagrams. Holderness reworks them and presents their possible entanglement with the international Bauhaus movement. Connections are also made with Florence Weir (1899–1979), currently the only known New Zealander to have studied at the Bauhaus. In 1936 Weir designed the costumes and sets for a local Christchurch production, and these were said to have been inspired by her time at the Bauhaus. The production was never staged publicly, and in the absence of any surviving documentation, Holderness imagines these designs in an appliqué series.

The Studio

Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Ōtepoti Dunedin

10 July – 25 October 2021

In *The Studio*, Julia Holderness uses her research and practice-based approach to explore the history of an all-women art studio and exhibiting space in Ōtepoti Dunedin (1939–40). Considering the 'group studio' as a site of practice, social connection and support, Holderness extends this narrative by imagining historical artist Florence Weir's possible interactions in this context, alongside work by other historical and contemporary artists, to explore the possible impacts and influences of this collective environment. *The Studio* includes work by Florence Weir, Doris Lusk, Anne Hamblett, Mollie Lawn, Julia Holden, Tatyanna Meharry, Max Walker, Kirstin Carlin, Richard Orjis and Erica van Zon.

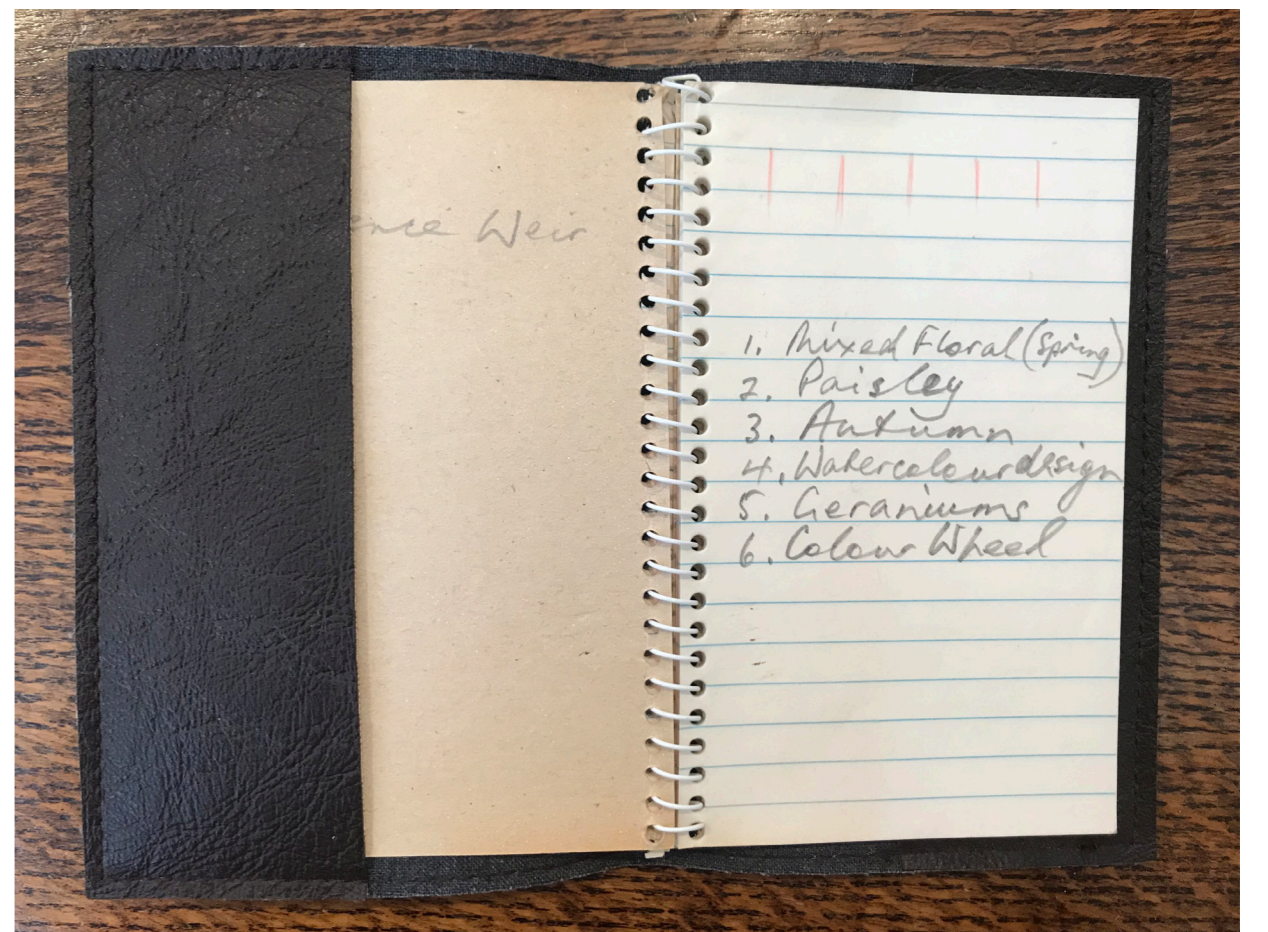
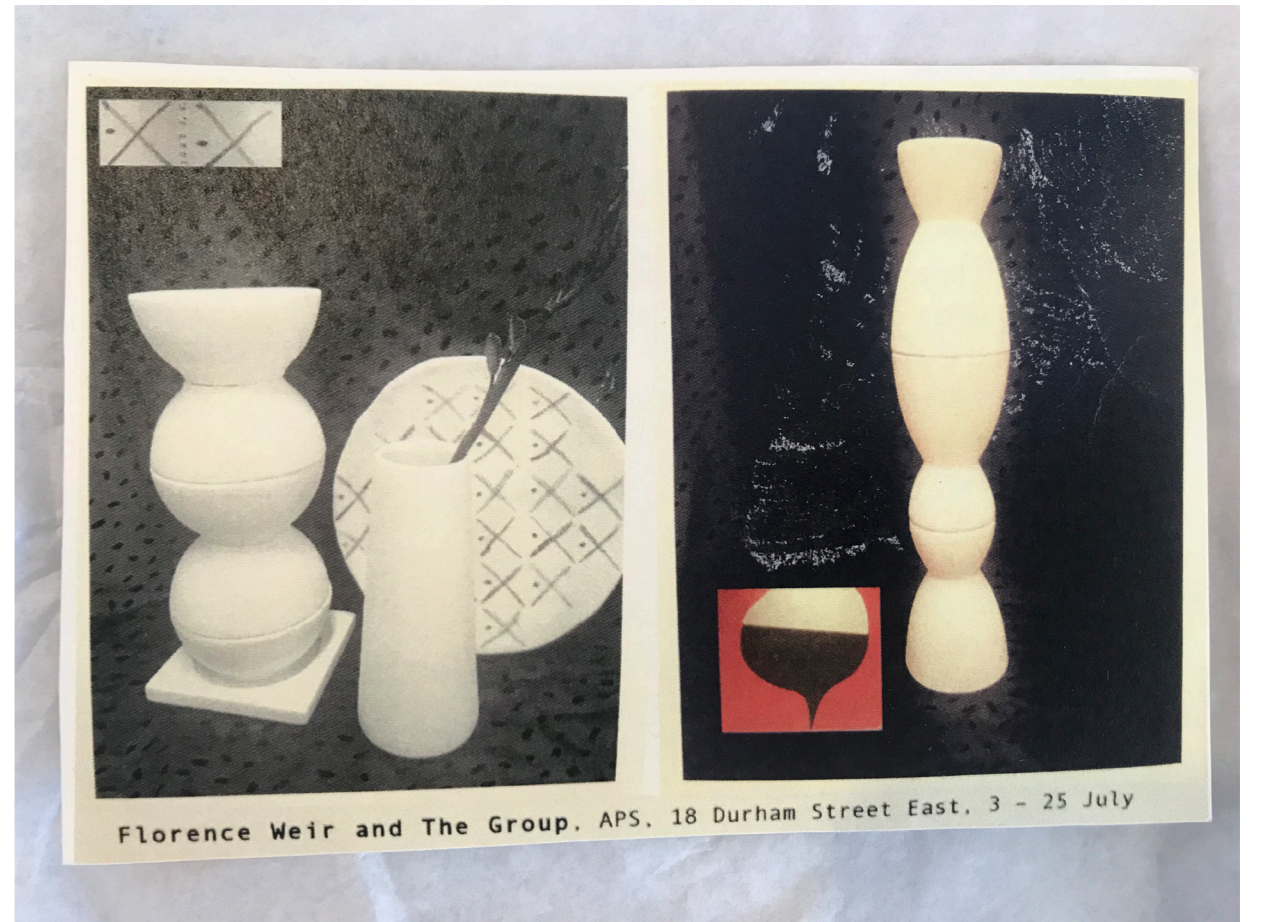


Fig. 14. *The Group: homewares*, (installation detail), 2016. Objectspace.
 Fig. 15. *The Group: homewares*, (installation detail), 2016. Objectspace.

Fig. 16. Fabricated posters, *The Group: homewares*, 2016. Objectspace.
 Fig. 17. Fabricated Florence Weir notebook, *The Studio*, 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery.



Fig. 18. Digital image developed for fabric printing, image derived from *Poppies* by Anne Hamblett.

Fig. 19. (Above) Digital image developed for fabric printing, image derived from *Mixed Flowers* by Doris Lusk. See page 197 for a figure of this painting.

Fig. 20. (Left) Anne Hamblett, *Poppies*, c. 1937. Oil on board. John and Ethel McCahon bequest, 1973. Hocken Pictorial Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago 73/58.



Fig. 21. *The Studio*, (detail of printed fabrics), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Florence turned back, deciding to take the folder of sketches, designs and lino prints out of the drawer.¹⁰ She then placed them on the surface of the oak table. She would like people to go through them, to see her thinking. Someone might even want to buy one for a few shillings. The preview would begin in thirty minutes. She needed to go back to her room, freshen up, put on a dress. The list of works was pinned neatly to the left of the studio entrance. Rows of sherry glasses stood next to a vase of irises. It was so useful having so many surfaces and tables in the studio.¹¹

Perhaps it was her thought that New Zealand galleries only seemed to serve sherry that reminded her, but as she got to the top of the stairwell, she suddenly thought of Martha.¹² Her kind, dark eyes, the colourful skirts she made herself, her large hands. Martha was the warmest friend from Florence's time at the Bauhaus. She had met her at a party she went to in her first week there. It was at a gallery in the centre of Dessau. They had shared a cigarette out on the street in the cool wind, loud trams going past. She couldn't remember how they began talking, but Martha spoke perfect English, and asked questions about London. Martha visited her the next day in her room, and from then on, they saw each other nearly every day. Martha knew of all the best parties and late-night avant-garde shows.

Her stay in Germany was shorter than she had planned. Returning to a series of painted furniture commissions and a planned watercolour exhibition that would later become designs for folding screen textiles, Florence needed her London studio with all its familiar tools. She had designed some rugs¹³ in Dessau, and thought she might return to fabricate them in the workshop with other students. However, her next trip was to the South of France. She saw a new line of textiles for scarves and cushions covers, developed from gouache, that would be simply called 'Mediterranean.' Max thought they would be commercially strong and advanced her train fare. She could stay for three weeks in a diplomatic villa that local artists took over in the summer months. She wanted to study the local flora and get the coastal colours just right. That would appeal to Londoners, too; that the series had been created in situ. She could have some photographs of the villa and gardens in the exhibition too.

She never went back to Germany or Martha. Returning to New Zealand, friendships were rekindled and exhibitions organised. Working in London with occasional visits to New Zealand made the most sense now. Back in her small room, she took out the dress Martha had given her. An edging in black velvet stood against the neckline, and the lines extended down the bodice, contrasting with the dark-red-coloured fabric.¹⁴ She didn't suppose her friends would notice or care to ask her where the dress was from. But later, Mollie remarked that she had never seen a dress like that before in Dunedin.

¹⁰ This folder, I imagine, is similar to the one Doris Lusk's daughter Rachel Hooper showed me. It contained sketches, incomplete drawings, motifs, lino prints, life drawings and studies. It can be seen in the photograph of Doris standing in front of her *Portrait of Anna McLeod*.

¹¹ Florence Weir visited the all-women's studio that was rented by Doris Lusk, Mollie Lawn and Anne Hamblett in September 1940.

¹² It is thought that the Martha whom Florence refers to is either Martha Erps or Martha Weber.

¹³ See the designs in *Overlooked Details*, Bartley & Company, Pōneke, 11 April – 5 May 2018 for a potential reference.

¹⁴ See the garment in Leo Bensemann's *Untitled (Imaginary Portrait on Cloth)* (undated).



Fig. 22. *Women's Work: Textile art from the Bauhaus*, 2017. Felted wool appliqué. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.



Fig. 23. *The Group: homewares*, (installation detail), 2016. The National.



Fig. 24. *Gallery 91*, (installation view), 2017. SCAPE Public Art. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.



Fig. 25. *Gallery 91*, (installation view), 2017. SCAPE Public Art. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.

Introduction

Ever Present Archiving: methodologies for art histories through fabrication, invention and social practice aims to provoke a thoughtful and innovative rethinking of Aotearoa art histories, with a particular focus on the attention given to the so-called ‘minor’ and ‘applied’ arts, and the women involved in those practices and movements. This practice-led research uncovers histories that have previously been sidelined and untold, and reassesses the contribution made by women artists, their work, and the venues and organisations that supported them. In this respect, the thesis contributes to art-history discourses and methods through a complex engagement with a practice that challenges assumed forms of historical knowledge. The project aims to comment on the constructed nature of art-historical narratives and picks away at the apparatus of conventional ‘objective’ art-historical enquiry. Developing the idea of what an archive can be and how it might be generated, arranged and interpreted, the research critiques dominant art-historical structures such as classification systems, and linear evolutionary narratives and presentations. Through the use of invented personae, artworks and exhibitions, the thesis traces alternative histories of modernism in Aotearoa, whilst exploring questions of truth and representation in historiography. The installation practice often comments on the curating of museums and the production of art history, exploring the ways in which this mode of practising can further complicate histories that are already beguiling and duplicitous. By presenting artefacts and objects, narratives, and potential falsehoods that interrupt assumed forms of spectatorship, this research demands that audiences become active viewers, and asks them to be aware of acts of storytelling and the possible fictions within art histories. *Ever Present Archiving* is therefore concerned with producing a flexible version of the past that is fabricated out of reproductions, encounters and influences.

The project is also embedded in a notion of integration of design, craft and art practices. This manifests as an embodiment and close interest in the discourses and, what scholars Grace Lees-Maffei and Linda Sandino call, the “complex matrices” in the relationships and affinities between design, craft and art.¹⁵ In their essay “Dangerous Liaisons: Relationships between Design, Craft and Art”, they argue that more recently, questions about the hierarchies and status in these histories and discourses have been replaced

¹⁵ Grace Lees-Maffei and Linda Sandino, “Dangerous Liaisons: Relationships between Design, Craft and Art”, *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 17, No 3 (2004): 207.



Fig. 26. Poster for *Florence & Friends*, 2015.



Fig. 27. *Knotted Bauhaus Rug*, 2015. Pencil on paper.

with “an understanding of the development of these cultural strains” as “parallel development, or convergence...”¹⁶ Florence Weir is inspired by other multi-disciplinary women artists like Frances Hodgkins, whose own work as a textile designer has been largely overshadowed by her painting oeuvre. As Claire Regnault, Senior Curator, New Zealand History & Culture at Te Papa Tongarewa writes, this “is an aspect of Hodgkins’ career that has often been relegated to footnote status or described in somewhat dismissive terms (alas even a colleague has written about how Hodgkins ‘resorted [my italics] to working as a fabric designer’).”¹⁷ The Bauhaus is both research content and inspiration in *Ever Present Archiving*, in its “insistence that design, craft and fine art can be taught, practiced and seen together, rather than separated in a hierarchy.”¹⁸ The Omega Workshops is another significant historical reference for the project, where utilitarian, domestic and decorative objects were produced under collaborative relationships between artists and craftspeople. Florence’s outputs involve design and craft processes and practices, and these aspects are just as important and visible as the objects which may be read as ‘art objects’. In this way, the project explores liaisons between design, craft and art and this position of convergence is reinforced through the practice and Florence’s diverse career.

Focusing on ceramics and textile design, as well as fabrications that restage exhibitions, gallery venues and studios from the past, the various installations include oral-history accounts and the production of contextual information and writing. The practice sometimes responds to key movements such as The Group, the Ōtautahi Christchurch-based art collective, or venues such as Gallery 91, Christchurch’s first contemporary dealer gallery, and an all-women studio in Ōtepoti Dunedin, and engages with the historical publications and archival documents related to these histories. Attending to aspects of these documents and records makes reference to their materiality, aesthetic, style, motifs, organisation, typeset, or narrative. And from these, fictitious personae or events might emerge. The installations aim to trace alternative histories of modernism in Aotearoa, and to this end they privilege the decorative, the domestic, and design—‘feminine’ categories that are often overshadowed by the dominant narrative of ‘fine arts’ in the art histories of Aotearoa. The project also aims to give prominence to the social aspects of artistic life, and in particular how these might play out for women: the importance of networks,

¹⁶ Ibid, 207.

¹⁷ Claire Regnault, “More than a Footnote – Frances Hodgkins’ textile designs,” Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, <https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2013/11/21/more-than-a-footnote-frances-hodgkins-textile-designs/>

¹⁸ Lees-Maffei and Sandino, “Dangerous Liaisons: Relationships between Design, Craft and Art”, 10.

relationships, communities, the sharing of resources and other support structures.

The title of this PhD project, *Ever Present Archiving*, is significant. The word *Archiving* is intentional; the gerund is used to indicate an active, performative and self-conscious sense of activity and to express the ‘doing’ nature of the project. This acknowledges that ‘archiving’ is an active process of collecting, accumulating and recording that *remains in progress*. Using the gerund also avoids the conception of the archive as a physical site or location; an object. Some of the ‘archives’ in this project are often not visible or physically manifested. However, many of the materials and records I have handled and worked with are in fact tangible objects and documents. There is continuity between all these factors and I do not wish to exclude any type of archive. This is an expanded use of archiving, to encompass the various ways I look back on the past and the diverse historical materials and sources that are utilised. Rethinking the archive as continuous is integral to an ‘ever present’ archiving and the project’s ongoing nature. ‘Ever-present’, is an adjective used to describe being omnipresent, a condition of existing or occurring at all times; “something that is always there.”¹⁹ The title departs from a standard hyphenated use of ‘ever-present’ to assert the two respective meanings and to highlight the project’s use of an expanded temporality. The project goes on for ‘ever’ and is always attending to the ‘present’ in its relationship to the past.

The remaining words in the title are intrinsic to the project’s structure. *Fabrication*, with its dual meaning, emphasises both the physical making and its storytelling nature. *Invention* highlights the imaginative components, and the notion that this project contributes something original that has come out of study and experiment. The *social* parts of this practice include collaboration, the research methodologies and the attention to a social kind of history making. The project’s methodologies sit in an expanded concept of art-historical ‘evidence.’ Making use of unofficial sources such as spoken memories, personal insights and anecdotes, the research forms knowledge that is often gleaned from my encounters and conversations. Through these casual and informal conversations, *Ever Present Archiving* embodies a social approach to practice that attempts to register invisible affects and presence. These ways of working encompass the project’s motion towards an alternative. I see it as a new direction for art-historical research.

¹⁹ Definition obtained from Cambridge Dictionaries Online: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ever-present>, accessed 13 January 2022.

I situate the research, *Ever Present Archiving*, here in Aotearoa—a multicultural and bi-sovereign country with diverse histories. I view this creative research project as a commitment to untethering dominant, rigid and monologic narratives by creating alternatives for knowledge formation. With many histories in this country being undocumented and left out of any official record, an embodied, materialist approach to history and the past is relevant in our multicultural and bi-sovereign context. As Australian feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz said:

the important feminist insight regarding temporality is that the past is never over, we cannot forget it or overcome it because questions from the past remain even as we attempt to forget them. The history of each nation or territory remains part of the present and propels us to attempt to make a future different from the present using these unused up residues of the past...²⁰

I wish to acknowledge my ‘residues’: I am Pākeha, I was brought up in a middle class family, with access to education and travel. With this privilege I inherit dominant discourses. There is also some embodiment of my privilege that inevitably flows into the project: my sensibilities, tastes, interests and my own subjectivity. I wish to acknowledge the spaces/experiences from which I speak – my positionality – as this inevitably informs *how* I might research. This is connected to the sort of subjectivity that is within the project – an artistic, feminist, relational subjectivity. I wish to acknowledge that feminism is not a singular ideology but actually a plural. Here relationality and intersectionality are really important as women do not experience being a ‘woman’ or ‘feminism’ in the same way.

The women I research feel somewhat familiar; I think of them as my art ancestors. I know some of the places they worked and studied and I personally know some of their descendants. My paternal grandmother Joan Holderness (née Cuningham) attended Canterbury College of Art in the 1930s and took my father and his siblings to exhibitions by The Group. Joan painted landscapes and still life pictures. My maternal grandmother Dora White (née Wild) spun and dyed her own wool, was a member of an active spinning group and an accomplished craftswoman. I am also part of a local and national art community. I also need to acknowledge that I have a twenty-

²⁰ Karmakar, Goutam and Sarkar, Somasree, “Feminism, Body, Sexuality and Time: A Conversation with Elizabeth Grosz”, *Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 30, Issue 4 (May 2021), 498.

first century sensibility. I cannot help but be influenced and associated with current day interior design and the graphic arts. I take as a given in my practice the convergence of art and craft practices. As a celebration of the activities of Florence Weir, and her association with other artists, the project is to some degree focussed on middle class women who, like me, had the privilege to pursue creative practices. Whilst this points to a social history aspect, the class structures and class politics of the periods that I researched were not a particular focus. While these women artists were from the middle class, and were afforded an education, I wish to note that not all them were of excessive privilege in their daily lives: some worked to earn a living, others were sometimes reliant on friends for accommodation, some of them supported their families through selling their work, and several lived independently of men.

Many of the artists, writers and theorists I have discussed and quoted are women. This is intentional, and a reflection of the feminist lens inherent in the project. Noting that Aotearoa-based novelist, art writer, and editor Thomasin Sleigh is the most quoted writer in this exegesis, I wish to acknowledge her unique scholarship and voice, and also her energy and creative outputs, especially her 2018 novel *Women in the Field, One and Two*, an imagined art history. As in my practice, where I invite collaborators to work with me, this is a question of influence, acknowledgement and visibility. In a broader sense, the practice of citation is an honouring of other people. I want to support, connect and work with artists, writers, academics and various people in the arts community who have similar aims to me. Sleigh is a feminist writer, a woman around my age, and interested, like me, in a refiguring and reframing of art-historical practice. She might have been the sort of figure—like her character Ruth Bishops, a curator—who struggled and was eclipsed in the confines of a traditional art history. In this project, I am prioritising ‘her’ voice. Some of the conversations I have had with writers and art historians like Amelia Wallin, Melanie Oliver, Linda Tyler, Julia Waite and others emerge through the written, academic structure of this exegesis and, in my view, produce another form of collaboration and encounter in some sense.

Collaboration is an important aspect of the social-practice elements of the project. I have chosen to discuss this across various chapters as it intersects the chapter themes in multiple ways. For me, collaboration first emerged in a previous project titled *Fitts & Holderness* (2001–12), in which I worked with Aotearoa artist Emma Fitts. This collaboration saw the production of

participant-based, immersive fictions with an investigative focus. Nearly all our projects centred on the search for an invented missing figure. Although *Ever Present Archiving* is independent of the Fitts & Holderness practice, there are significant methodological links and influences, and its existence provides a history or ancestor for my current project. Elements such as inviting participants to inhabit our practice, the constructing of fictitious narratives, and our interest in the archive all have a strong relationship to how I work now. *Asa Ragnarsdottir: Six interviews in Reykjavik* (2010), is a documentary project based on a fabricated missing-person case and oscillates between fact and falsehood. In the gallery presentation at Adam Art Gallery, we included an ‘archive’—a cabinet of fabricated items presented fictitiously as if on loan from the Reykjavik Police Station. Alongside fabricated items that included a witness’s lock of hair, photographs and the missing girl’s recovered belongings, we placed a particularly sharply pointed and large pinecone as “a compelling symbolic object relating to the disappearance of Asa.”²¹ This object was left unlabelled, leaving it open ended; however, we hoped it might read as a found weapon of sorts. Reviewer Mark Amery wrote that we were relocating the documentary back into art and “dealing with memory as embedded in objects.”²² In 2015, I wrote that in presenting this object, I thought

we might have been suggesting that we live in a time where legitimate sources of knowledge can now be our memories. This reminds us that histories are not definitive and chronological, nor are they stable. Histories are constantly evolving. Perhaps in presenting this object, this piece of hearsay evidence (*she told me that he found it on the road*), we hoped it might spark memories and associations yet to be recorded, new theories about her disappearance.²³

These ruminations encapsulate methodological interests that are still a focus for this thesis and its search for lost figures from history.

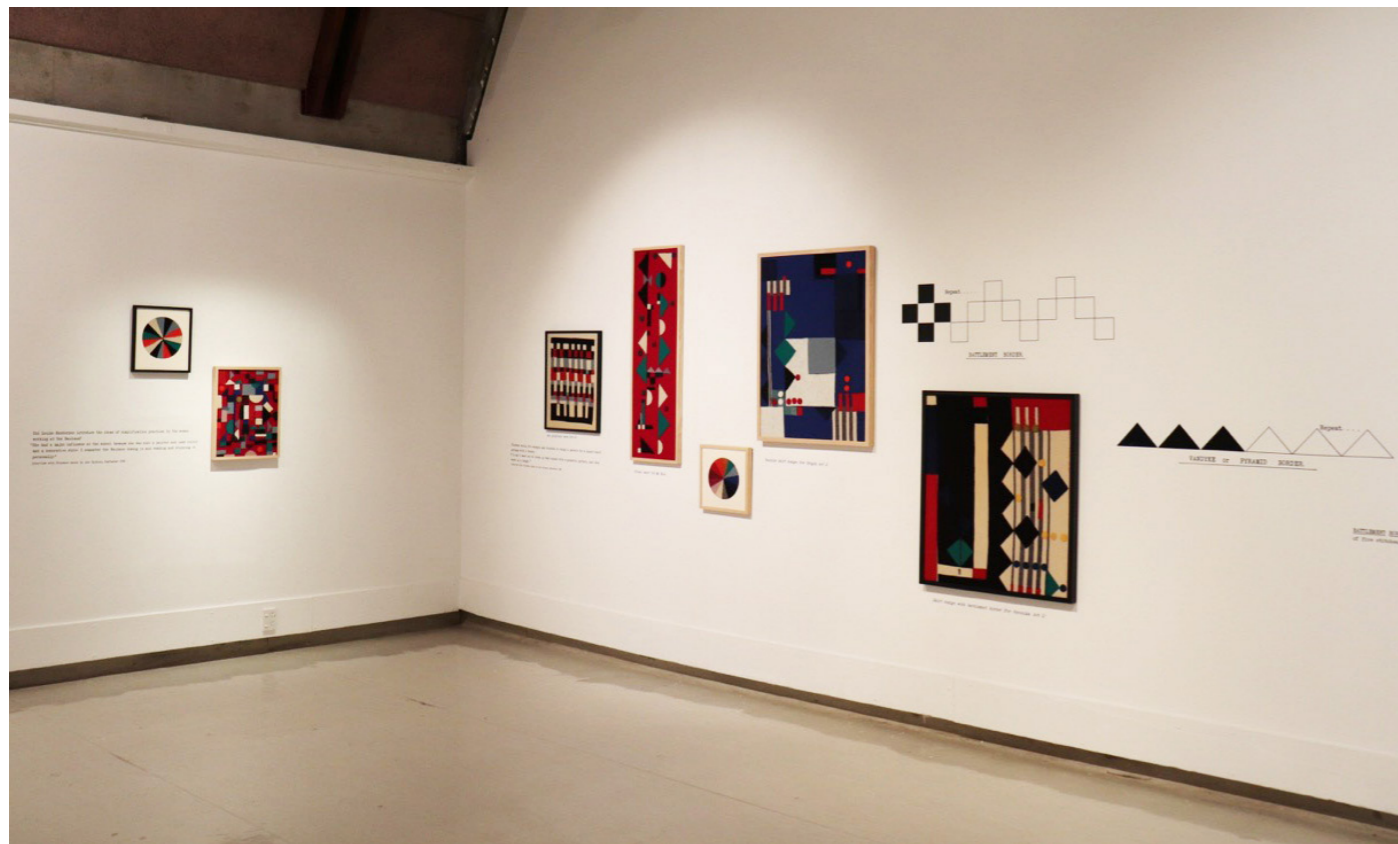
For *Ever Present Archiving*, collaborations take various forms in the practice. Aotearoa artist and close friend Richard Orjis and I co-created the overlooked New Zealander and “modernist pioneer,” Florence Weir (1899–1979) before I embarked on this PhD project, *Ever Present Archiving*.²⁴ We

²¹ Mark Amery, “Objects and Memory, A Review of *Object Lessons: A musical Fiction at the Adam Art Gallery*,” *The Dominion Post*, September 2, 2010.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Julia Holderness, “Art and Fiction,” unpublished exegesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2015, 6.

²⁴ Richard Orjis and Julia Holderness, “Florence Weir,” Facebook, accessed January 30, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/FlorenceWeir/>



Figs. 28, 29. *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, (installation views), 2018. Ilam Campus Gallery. Photographs by Thomas Herman.

designed her first objects, a range of ceramicware produced in partnership with Studio Ceramics.²⁵ Other contemporary practitioners were invited as collaborators, also with specific outcomes in mind. For example, a portrait commission with Aotearoa painter Julia Holden unfolded partly as a collaboration. I provided props for the background and costume elements, and also sat for Holden. Some of the challenges and effects of working in this way are discussed in Chapter Four: *Queer and Affective Approaches, Feeling Things*. Collaborations with art historians are also present within the PhD project. In 2016, I worked with art-history scholar Petrena Fishburn to produce an installation for SCAPE Public Art's 2017 season. Starting from Fishburn's 2014 University of Canterbury art-history thesis project on arts administrator Barbara Brooke, we attempted to make an exhibition out of the archival and oral-history research she had conducted. Fishburn was also involved in fabricating the installation. She produced sewn items, and together we devised the installation layout. Later on, in Chapter Four, I explore my various roles in the research as facilitator, researcher and artist. These roles are complex, and entangled with an overlay and merging of capacities and outputs. This is where I seek to challenge the traditional divides between artistic fabrication and scholarly art-historical research. The various collaborations that form the work have evolved in the process of my making and researching. These interactions constitute an ecology that, in further collaboration with the spectator, becomes the work. This practice proposes that it is more fertile to produce multiple, overlapping, rhizomic versions of knowledge and history, and collaboration is a way to achieve this outcome.

Ever Present Archiving: methodologies for art histories through fabrication, invention and social practice is comprised of six chapters. Chapter One: *Construction and Fabrications* focuses on how fabrication, invention and construction operate in the practice. Central to the thesis, these creative outputs, approaches and ways of practising ground the reader in the project's core operations and defining features. The chapter also aims to provide an understanding of how the artwork might be experienced by audiences. It introduces the construction of historical persona Florence Weir and how she enables entanglement, inflection and infusion of a variety of histories such as the Bauhaus and Omega Workshop with local histories. Central to the

²⁵ Studio Ceramics, which closed in 2017, was a ceramic manufacturer in Glen Eden, Tāmaki Makaurau. I noted in my 2015 Honours dissertation "Art and fiction" that it "can be viewed as the successor to the Crown Lynn enterprise in that after its closure, Studio Ceramics acquired the building, production hardware and endless shelving units, as well as the mould-maker who began his own career at Crown Lynn and developed many of the existing moulds." Orjis and I used these moulds to create the Florence Weir ceramicware range.

practice, Florence Weir ushers in artistic fictions, invented historical frames and narratives, and determines the way objects and archives are fabricated. Accordingly, art historians Charles Merewether's and Giovanna Zapperi's explorations of how artists use archives to both *represent* and *produce* the past is a key discussion in this chapter. Other constructed and artistic personae, such as Barbara Cleveland (Australia) and Reena Spaulings (USA), are discussed alongside practices that deal with history, storytelling and appropriation. With reference to essays by art historians Amelia Jones and Mechtild Widrich, the politics around documentation and re-enactment of performance and ephemeral art opens out a discussion on the recirculated and viral nature of discourses built around past artists and their work. Enacting a dispersed sort of subjectivity, I also examine how Florence Weir's fabrication relates to art-historical models and troubles the discipline's preoccupations with forgery, attribution and coherence.

Chapter Two: *Power and Limits, Blind Spots and Biases* positions the project within its relevant conceptual territory and discourses, and outlines how hierarchies and processes of art-historical canon formation have excluded and diminished women artists and applied arts practices and their specific meanings. This review of knowledge aims to explore relationships with other contemporary thinkers, and includes critique of art-historical ideologies that ascribe value and significance in ways that might constrain and marginalise certain practices, particularly those of women artists. This chapter introduces Barbara Brooke, Florence Akins and the shared studio of Anne Hamblett, Mollie Lawn and Doris Lusk (Ōtepoti, 1939–40). These are the particular figures, subjects and histories I have conducted research into, and I review how these figures from the past have been overlooked or misrepresented. Expanding the canon by giving visibility to women artists who have been silenced or overlooked—adding women back into the system—is understood as an imperfect but necessary step in feminist work as women are still being left out. However, it is a movement towards troubling the actual structures or processes of canon formation that is important to a feminist art historical method. This project contributes through its particular research methods that include embracing contingent narratives, creating fictional characters, disrupting linear temporalities, working collaboratively and focusing on the multiple and fragmented. I discuss various creative projects that extend, challenge and reframe the canon, including Swiss American artist duo Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler's series of projects on artist Flora Mayo, and Australian artist Diana Baker Smith's films on dancer Phillipa Cullen. While

each chapter includes literature review, Chapter Two specifically examines and challenges assumed forms of art-historical knowledge and scholarship, and discusses how an alternative feminist archive might be formed and generated.

Chapter Three: *Fiction with Footnotes, a Creative Art History* looks specifically at writing practices in the project. I explore the use of an expanded ekphratic method, text-based works, object labels and wall texts utilised within the installations. With a focus on art-historical language as description, translation and storytelling, this chapter explores the inventive, imaginative and creative potential in art-history writing, including the role of narrative, using Florence Weir as both witness and ventriloquist. The practice of Australian artist Alex Martinis Roe introduces a number of ideas, including the representational limits of language, intersubjectivity and modes of deconstructing art history through a feminist lens. The practice of *écriture féminine* (women's writing) offers the potential of embodied and feminist writing, and I look at how this can avoid the distance and supposed neutrality of traditional art history and conventional art-historical language. Through these gestures, I embrace a creative, imaginative art history that prioritises female, artistic, relational subjectivities through an emphasis on friendship and group activities.

Chapter Four: *Queer and Affective Approaches, Feeling Things* explores queer theory and the project's interest in a sensory historiography and construction of an embodied archive. I discuss a variety of creative practices, including the work of Aotearoa artist Emma Fitts, as examples of affective and personal investments to queer the archive and produce new and unpredictable forms of knowledge. With queer theorist Elizabeth Freeman's "*feeling the historical*"²⁶ in mind, this chapter sets out the ways in which queer historiographic methods are appropriate for my acts of retrieval and revival. I also look at research methods, covering collaborative, heuristic, reflexive and autoethnographic approaches, which acknowledge and accommodate subjectivity, emotionality and the researcher's own influence. Haptic and tactile approaches to history lead into a discussion on how materials are used in the practice.

Chapter Five: *Friendships and Conversation* focuses on the expansion and legitimisation of different sorts of art-historical resource. There is a debt

²⁶ Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 93.

to queer art historian Gavin Butt, and his compelling argument for a richer, more expansive concept of historical evidence. In addition to Butt, various approaches by Irit Rogott, Carla Lonzi, José Esteban Muñoz and Amelia Jones signal new directions for art-historical research and writing. Discussing how a multiplicity of voices used in the research process can become sources of art-historical inquiry, this chapter examines how the project makes use of oral histories, ‘conversational research,’ hearsay and anecdotal accounts, and content that is reminiscent of rumour and speculation. Of significance here is a social kind of art history where stories are told through friendships, social settings and relationships. Examining texts by Alex Martinis Roe and Céline Condorelli, I also discuss how sociality, relationality and intersubjectivity can become a structure for ways of working within the practice.

Chapter Six: *Temporality and Presence* explores notions of historical time in the project. It considers how porous, liminal and polytemporal treatments of time avert a segmented, ‘joined-up’ or fixed sense of historiography. It also includes an exploration of how a feminist time might be constructed. Projects by Aotearoa artists Louise Menzies and Ann Shelton, and American artist Zoe Leonard, amongst others, are discussed along with the spiritual practice of Swedish artist Hilma af Klint. Examining the ways in which presence and voice are given to figures from the past, I examine ideas of ghosts and hauntology to explore and sometimes problematise this occurrence. This develops into discussions around concepts of historical remnants, and how haunting as an influence and habitation intersect the practice. I explore the ways in which Florence Weir is a spectral remembering and collaboration across time that involves my own subjectivity.

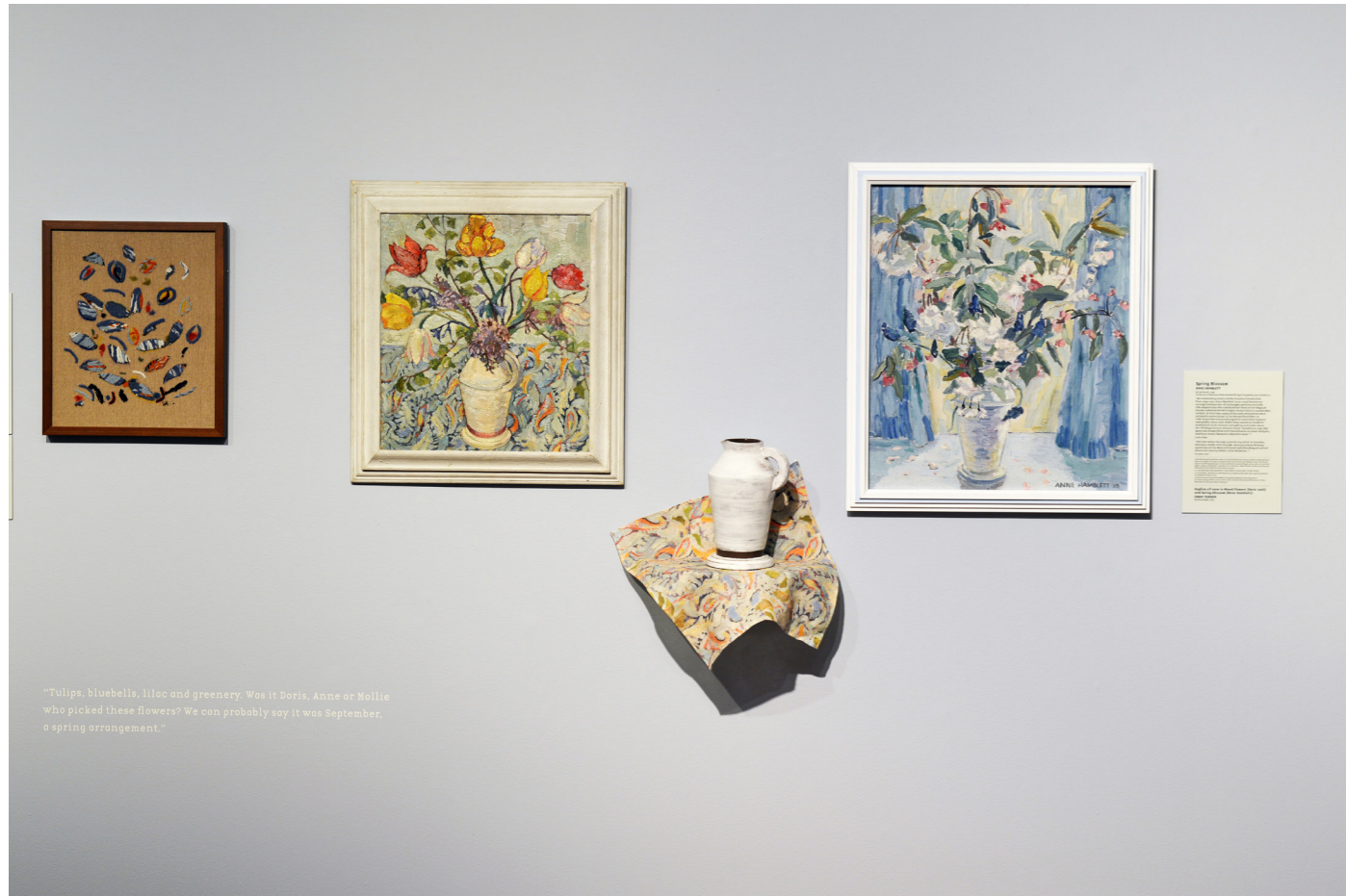


Fig. 30. *The Studio*, (installation view), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Photograph by Justin Spiers.

Research questions

The research questions relate to various overarching themes, including invention, storytelling, temporality, collaboration and a practice methodology that elevates the subjective, affective, haptic and sensory:

How can the discipline of art history benefit from invention, storytelling and the writing of fiction? Key to this question is the constructed artistic persona/figure of Florence Weir and the way she operates across this project.

How do we give back presence and voice to figures from the past? This question explores different forms of voice and their manifestation in different types of texts and images.

In the context of a practice-led feminist temporality, how might we rethink notions of historical time?

In the context of creative practice, how do the complexities of co-authorship, collaboration, social practice and group exhibition-making shape and contribute to a feminist art-historical enquiry?

How might a feminist historical method contribute to a reframing and a rethinking of the art-historical canon and archive? In this context, what are the benefits of an expanded and subjective historical knowledge? This question probes the complexities of non-traditional records such as anecdotes and casual comments, as well as feelings and affective encounters.



Fig. 31. *Shapes* by Sophie Taeuber-Arp, 2016. Felted wool appliqué.

A note on *Slips* one to thirteen

Alongside the exegesis text, I have provided supplementary texts that significantly underpin the project. I have named them as a series of *Slips*, connoting ‘paper,’ ‘addition’ and ‘insert,’ perhaps something light to touch, and overlaid. The definition of ‘slip’ also connects to verbs such as ‘slide,’ ‘trip’ and ‘tumble,’ reflecting the project’s unease with the well-trodden path towards knowledge formation, and a willingness to open up gaps and pockets, to work around the edges. I am attempting to write myself into the text with creative passages, reflections, reflexivity and research notes that might not have been smoothed out into the form of academic writing. The *Slips* are adjunct pieces, acting similarly to a footnote, an appendix or parenthetical information. Some of them are short in length, some span several pages.

Enclosing and surrounding the ‘primary’ exegesis text, these highly personal asides and afterthoughts, ideas and feelings function as a way of feminising the conventional, formal, academic art-historical critique. They are conceived of as an attempt to offer another way of entering the project and engaging with the practice and theory. Recalling Algerian French poet and philosopher Hélène Cixous’s writerly feminist interventions, the *Slips* are intimate and personal (like a silk undergarment), rather than discussions developed from a critical distance. They aim to reflect movement and fluidity rather than firmness. Relating also to art historian Mary Kislser’s *Finding Frances Hodgkins*, these texts are intended to be a less official record, attempting to engage with a similar lightness of touch. In these ways, reflexivity intersects the project as both an orientation to the research and as a way of inhabiting the installations (such as the use of wall labels). Psychology academic Mark Freeman suggests moving towards a “more poetic way of writing” in research, “using words in such way that they can carry the weight, and depths, of the phenomena in question.”²⁷ Such writing, he goes on to say, “will be less orientated towards arguing, convincing, making a definite case, than toward appealing, suggesting, opening, pointing toward the possible.”²⁸

²⁷ Mark Freeman in Paul Sebastian Ruppel, Martin Dege, Molly Andrews, and Corinne Squire, “Tackling Problems of Qualitative Social Research: A Conversation,” *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 9, no. 1, art. 41 (January 2008), 25. <https://repository.uel.ac.uk/download/5f17429422425979999b80d33f7b7e34095db139355cd9b2ce90b989af4921b8/363383/Ruppel%2C%20PS%20%282007%29%20FQSR%20%281%29.pdf>

²⁸ Ibid.

For a subjective involvement with the archive, feminist art historian Giovanna Zapperi outlines that the feminist historian must “be situated within her own emotions.”²⁹ Indeed, in the *Slips*, my subjective voice, emotions, and intuition will highlight my position as the researcher and artist, rather than concealing it as it might be in more conventional academic writing. This speaks directly to the discussion of autoethnographic methods and is an apparatus used to capture other information: the connections, the colloquial, tangential encounters with these art histories, both present and past. My hope is that the *Slips* will reflect how I am actively embedded in the research, the roles I take in the work and my experiences, meeting people, visiting places and archives, experiences that have shaped the project, particularly the collaborative aspects. The relationships with artists and family members of artists, friends, curators, researchers, writers and my supervisors have evolved in the process of making—interactions and encounters that constitute an ecology.

Chapter One

Constructions and Fabrications:

Invented personae,
archives and narratives

²⁹ Giovanna Zapperi, “Woman’s Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art,” *Feminist Review* 105 (2013): 26.

Chapter One: Constructions and Fabrications

Invented personae, archives and narratives

Avery Gordon: *We haven't yet talked about imaginary friends, of which I have many. I think we would both agree that all friendships involve a degree of fantasy or imagination, and some might say that that the best friendships are those where the attachment to the fantasy is greatest. But, I mean the imaginary friends we invent.*

I have many friends that are characters in books, who are definitely my friends and have been so for a long time. When I was a child, my first friends were imaginary and they were very dear to me....Even as a child, they were considered 'childish' and then later a pathology, but I was very loyal to them. Others were inventions or people who lived in my dreams. They're still important to me, and raise this question: when you are thinking to whom are you talking? Who is your audience, who is your immediate interlocutor?³⁰

This chapter will explore how practices of construction, fabrication and invention are used in this project. Central to the research is the invented/imagined historical persona, Florence Weir. The various projects of *Ever Present Archiving* also employ a range of art-historical frames such as a group studio space (Ōtepoti, 1939–40) and a textile course at Canterbury School of Art that was taught across several decades. These frames are entangled, extended and expanded by artistic interventions and invented narratives. Structures and frames within the installations support these inventions such as exhibition display mechanisms, and reconstructed and appropriated archival modes and documents. Throughout this PhD thesis, the key term 'fabrication' embodies both definitions of the word. The *Lexico* online dictionary defines the noun firstly as "the action or process of manufacturing,"³¹ with a sub-definition of the noun reading "an invention, a lie."³² In my understanding, the common usage of the term covers both the making or creating of something physical, and also the 'making up' for the purpose of the story. This duality is useful for the project. Florence Weir's

30 Condorelli, Céline, *The Company She Keeps*, (London: Book Works, 2014), 43.

31 Accessed January 10, 2022, www.lexico.com/definition/fabrication

32 Ibid.

fabrication will also be discussed in relation to art-historical preoccupations with fakes and forgeries, attribution and coherence. I compare other invented artistic personae across both contemporary and historical models. This chapter will also reflect on the use of fiction in the project as related to art-history narrative, which includes speculative storytelling and imaginative scenarios. An examination of parafiction, a term used to describe artworks that operate between fact and fiction, is also considered useful for exploring the nature of Florence Weir's construction and the invented narratives around her. How can creative strategies negotiate and draw attention to the gaps and misleading qualities of archives in productive ways? This project seeks to question how fabrications, such as storytelling and invented artistic personae, can be used to examine and highlight art-historical fixations and the potential falsehoods in dominant historiography.

Historical productions

Exploring a contemporary impulse of artists who work like archivists, American art critic and historian Hal Foster described this archival trend as one that “seek(s) to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present,” in his frequently cited text “An Archival Impulse.”³³ His statement implies this sort of work involves acts of retrieval and recovery, yet it is also a creation. He also discussed archival art as not only drawing on informal archives but *producing* them as well, in a way that “underscores the nature of all archive materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private.”³⁴ It was in a similar vein that Canadian artist Vera Frenkel constructed *The Cornelia Lumsden Archive* (1979–80), a multi-media documentary project that includes installations, video works and performances. Frenkel traces “through her veritable absence, the shadowy presence of a fictive twentieth-century woman writer; she does [this] by scrupulously emulating the archival modes that would have preserved her, had she existed.”³⁵ In a one-hour video titled *The Secret Life of Cornelia Lumsden: A Remarkable Story, Part 1, Her Room in Paris* (1979), Frenkel plays four stereotyped roles, each bearing witness to a different truth regarding the missing novelist: Lumsden's Friend, her Rival, the Expert on her life and work, and the CBC Commentator. These faux testimonials explore the contingent nature of historical ‘truth.’

33 Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse,” *October* 110 (2004): 4.

34 *Ibid.*, 5.

35 Irit Rogoff and Daniel J. Sherman, *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), xv.

Art historian and curator Charles Merewether thinks that for artists working with archives, it is “intervention in the archive...a gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory which can harbour the possibility of an unexpected utopian dimension.”³⁶ As a constructed persona, Florence Weir acts as a counter-memory; a constructed memory. In *Woman's Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art*, feminist art historian Giovanna Zapperi asserts that artists make use of “archival documents as visual matter and locate themselves in a liminal space between the representation and production of the past, between the factual and the fictive, the private and the public, the objective and the subjective.”³⁷ Merewether's and Zapperi's related explorations of how artists negotiate archives are significant for *Ever Present Archiving*, as the artistic figure of Florence Weir is situated at the boundary between representation and production of the past. Her invention proposes that a fabricated history can act as a placeholder for neglected histories, and her fabrication enables imaginative versions of the period during which she was active. For example, in *Florence & Florence: other textile histories* (2018), Weir's designs for Ngaio Marsh's Canterbury University College Drama Society's productions offer an alternative output to the ones on record.³⁸ These are imagined as stylised avant-garde productions akin to those produced at the Bauhaus, twenty years prior. The fabricated workbook designs show colourful appliqué-patterned costumes and sets with geometric shapes “which bring the rhythms of modernism into play.”³⁹ Art historian Linda Tyler connects these designs to another artist, noting that they “skirt around Swiss artist Sophie Tauber-Arp (1899–1943), hinting at the asymmetry of her Hopi Indian-inspired costume.”⁴⁰

With Zapperi's production of the past in mind, the artistic figure of Florence Weir might be compared to Barbara Cleveland, an Australian artist collective directed by Diana Baker Smith, Frances Barrett, Kate Blackmore and Kelly Doley, who worked together first as members of art collective Brown Council. With the same initials, BC, Barbara Cleveland is an invented performance artist, whom the collective claim they “recovered from the

36 Merewether, “Art and the Archive,” 14.

37 Zapperi, “Woman's Reappearance,” 27.

38 Ngaio Marsh directed productions for Canterbury University College Drama Society in the 1940s. With a strong emphasis on Shakespeare, and a theatrical style based on London and Stratford, I have assumed these repertory productions were in a style of realism.

39 Linda Tyler, “Through the Eye of Her Needle: Women's Textile Histories in Canterbury,” in *Florence & Florence: Other Textile Histories*, Julia Holderness and Linda Tyler (Christchurch: School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury, 2018), 3. Accompanying publication for Julia Holderness, *Florence & Florence: Other Textile Histories*, Ilam Campus Gallery, University of Canterbury, September 5 – October 4, 2018.

40 *Ibid.*

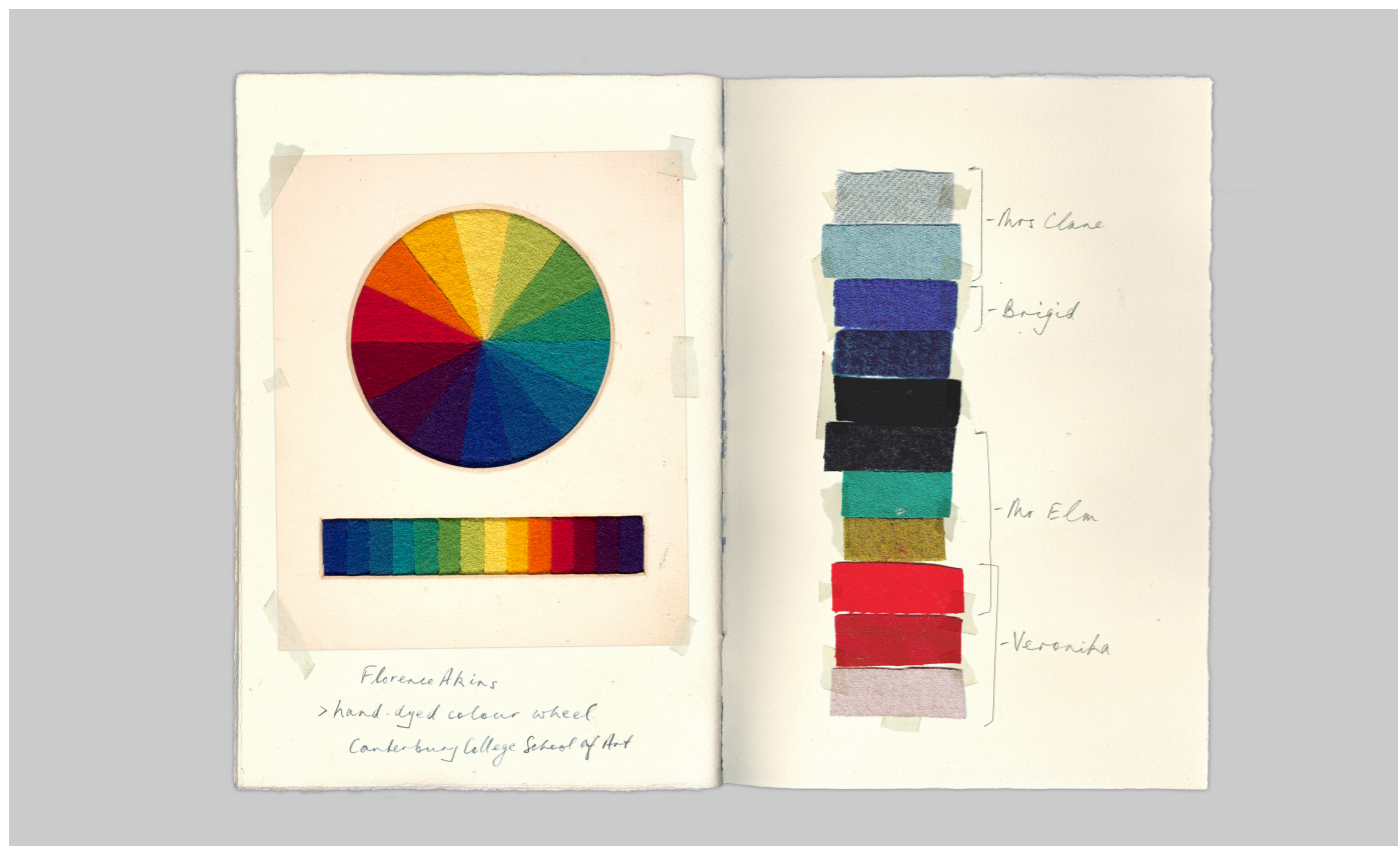
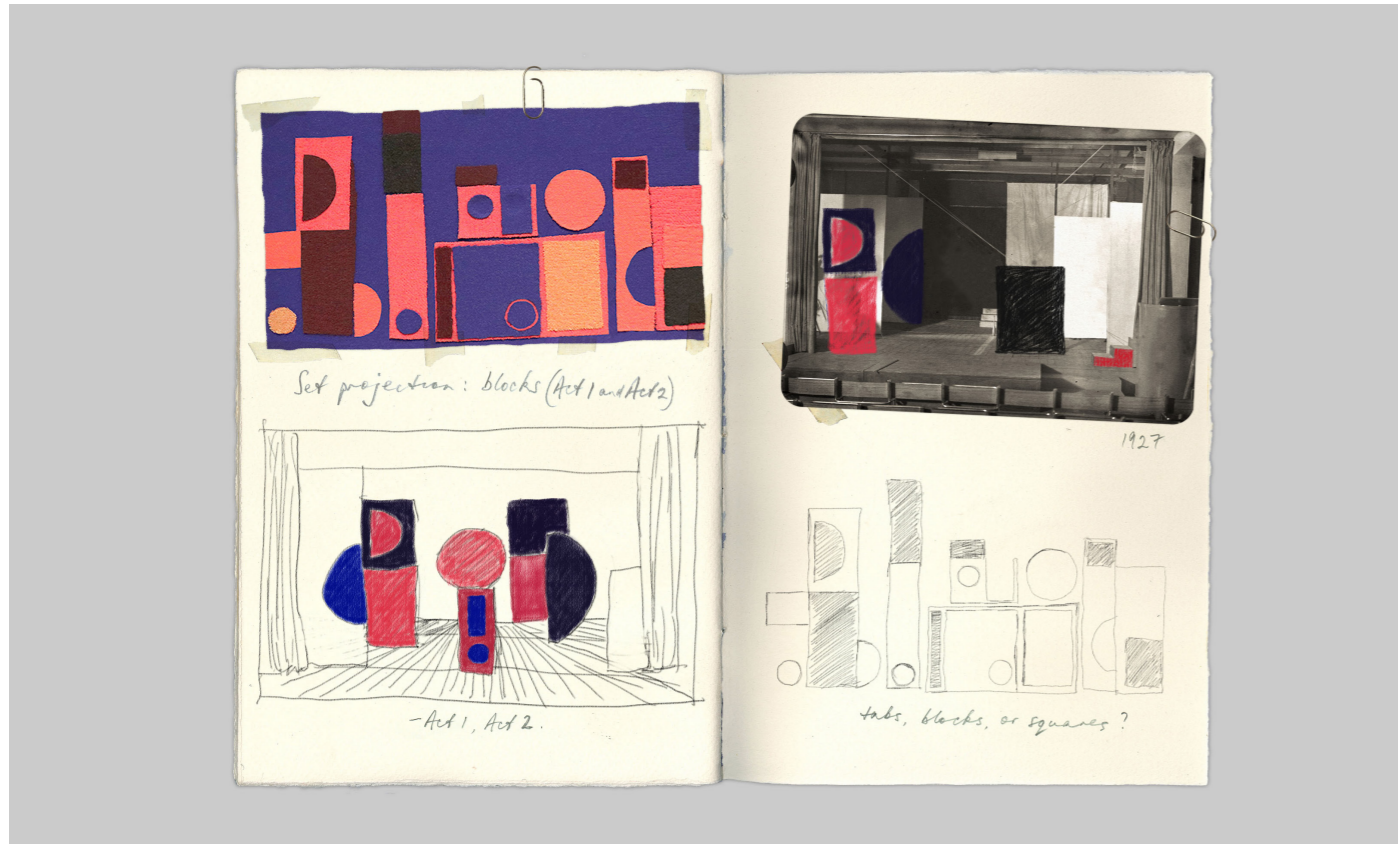


Fig. 32. *Workbook, Florence Weir (c. 1936) V*, 2018. Digital print.
 Fig. 33. *Workbook, Florence Weir (c. 1936) VI*, 2018. Digital print.
 Exhibited in *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*.

margins of Australian art history,"⁴¹ and with whom they have been working since 2010. Akin to Weir's inception through a 'discovery,' the original catalyst for Cleveland was Baker's fictional find of an archive box at Sydney College of the Arts that was full of transcripts of Cleveland's performance lectures, a lock of her hair and some blurry photographs of her performing. The collective call her 'mythic,' and in this way, she is used to explore "the relationship between 'live' actions and their material traces, as well as the legacy of ephemeral art forms that tend towards disappearance."⁴² Over a period of several years, the collective re-enacted a series of her performance lectures, as well as reanimating her works through documentaries and video works. In 2016, art critic Anne Marsh delivered a lecture on feminist performance art in Australia, titled *Archives, Performance Art and Feminism/s in Australia*, which inserted Barbara Cleveland into the history. Performance artist Mike Parr also created and recorded his own memories to add to the Cleveland story. According to Parr, Cleveland adopted personae in her performance works. For instance, as 'Barbara Johnson,' "she performed a scarifying piece at Central Street Gallery in 1973."⁴³ Writer Lucy Stranger notes that rebuilding the memory of Barbara Cleveland has been a collaborative experience, and states, "Whether true or fictitious, the shared memory of Cleveland overcomes the idea of an objective history or absolute truths."⁴⁴ Australian writer and curator Ameila Wallin's account of her participation in a Barbara Cleveland work titled *The History of Performance* (2016) begins, "The year was 2016, and it was the 20th Biennale of Sydney."⁴⁵ Recounting this collaborative experience, she writes:

I took part in *I Remember*,⁴⁶ a performance in which a microphone was passed around a circle of participants who shared memories of performances, beginning each time with the refrain *I Remember*. As the memories accumulated, a history was shaped: one which was shared, local, multidirectional, specific, and entirely relative to who was in the room.⁴⁷

41 Kelly Doley, "Barbara Cleveland," Kelly Doley, accessed April 4, 2021, <https://kellydoley.com/Barbara-Cleveland>

42 Anneke Jaspers, "In Search of Barbara Cleveland," *Look Magazine*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, November – December 2016, <https://www.sullivanstrumpf.com/assets/Uploads/2016-Look-Magazine.pdf>. This article takes the form of an interview with Barbara Cleveland.

43 Barbara Cleveland, interviewed by Anneke Jaspers, "In Search of Barbara Cleveland."

44 Lucy Stranger, "Barbara Cleveland: Bodies in Time," *Art Almanac*, October 31, 2016, <https://www.sullivanstrumpf.com/assets/Uploads/2016-Art-Almanac.pdf>

45 Ameila Wallin, "The Labour of Friendship: Barbara Cleveland's Thinking Business," accessed December 13, 2019, <https://ameliawallin.com/The-Labour-of-Friendship>

46 The correct title of this work is *The History of Performance*.

47 Ibid.



Fig. 34. Barbara Cleveland, *This is Barbara Cleveland* (still), 2013. Single Channel HD Video, 16:42mins. Image courtesy of the artists.

Australian curator Anneke Jaspers surmises that all these Barbara Cleveland events and activities “simultaneously seek to redress and complicate her [having been] ‘written out’ of Australian art history while asking what it means to remember, how we remember, and to trouble the notion that the archive is conclusive rather than selective.”⁴⁸ With original work often missing, Florence Weir’s practice is pieced together via fragments and anecdotes. In this way, my projects similarly question how we remember, and specifically how art history remembers. In the same way that Barbara Cleveland’s presence is developed alongside other artists and beside actual art history, such as Mike Parr’s performance history, Florence Weir exists outside the official recorded memory, yet she is felt and remembered alongside individuals (such as Florence Akins), movements and groups, both recorded and imagined. This construction, via a series of relationships with other artists and groups, also helps to reject the idea of an objective history or a singular narrative. Barbara Cleveland specifically examines and complicates the politics of recording and remembering live, ephemeral performance art. The debates around re-enactment and documentation that arose in the late nineties and 2000s are relevant here. American art historian Amelia Jones discusses the hierarchy between performance and its record in her

48 Jaspers, “In Search of Barbara Cleveland.”



Fig. 35. Barbara Cleveland, *The History of Performance*, 2016. Performed as part of Making History, presented in the 20th Biennale of Sydney. Photograph by Jessica Maurer and courtesy of the artists.

compelling 1997 essay “‘Presence’ in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation”. She writes that the “the specificity of knowledges gained from participating in a live performance situation.... should not be privileged over the specificity of knowledges that develop in relation to the documentary traces of such an event.”⁴⁹ In a similar way, Barbara Cleveland deconstructs the notion of the ‘originary’ event, building a dialogue around the mediated status of performance documentation. For example in *Bodies in Time*, a 2017 video installation they produced at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the movements and actions by dancer Angela Goh that are supposed re-enactments of Cleveland’s score are further translated into video, which are presented as the work. Florence Weir is a visual artist and designer, and this enables an exhibition-making that focuses and plays with the tangible record of art history. Her presence is constructed through fabricated archival documents, lateral objects and artefacts, often housed in vitrines and museological cases, such as workbooks, drawings and materials. These documents and remnants often stand in for missing or unavailable works and attempt to prevent a privileging or focus on the ‘originary’ object or exhibition.

However, while we draw on similar terrain, there are also differences in how Florence Weir has been developed and constructed. While Barbara’s life and work is localised in Australia, Florence is constructed as an expatriate

49 Amelia Jones, “‘Presence’ in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation”, *Art Journal*, (Winter 1997): 12.

artist. This has several consequences. Living and working abroad is a naturalistic biographical device for her construction, reflecting many women artists from Aotearoa whom Julia Waite, Curator of New Zealand Art at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and researcher, argues “had to leave to learn their trade, and Paris and London were where one went to learn how to be an artist in the company of one’s peers.”⁵⁰ Waite cites American feminist art historian Linda Nochlin’s observation that “exile has often provided stimulation and inspiration to the painter; especially the woman artist who finds herself freed from the conventional boundaries of feminine identity in her country of origin.”⁵¹ However, as Waite points out, while mentioning the overlooked practice of New Zealand artist Helen Flora Scales, “living abroad also estranged women artists from their national art history,”⁵² creating a state of “unbelonging.”⁵³ An expatriate existence also, therefore, has significance for the made-up writer *Cornelia Lumsden*, mentioned earlier; in the staged scenario *Part 1: Her Room in Paris* (1979), the artist-in-exile construct that Frenkel employs exposes ingrained tendencies of Canadian culture such as parochialism and latent colonialism. Suggesting that “absence is a condition of acceptance,”⁵⁴ Lumsden reflects Frenkel’s broader concerns with the construction of transient subjects, and notions of belonging, exile and nationalism. These concerns echo modernist preoccupations in New Zealand culture: our location was represented as peripheral and distant, a deferral to Europe, and especially to Britain, which was viewed as the ‘centre.’ In his 1974 essay “The Provincialism Problem”, art historian Terry Smith positioned these attitudes as a construct. He wrote of them as “primarily an attitude of subservience to an externally imposed hierarchy of cultural values.”⁵⁵ Florence Weir’s being away, being elsewhere, accounts on one level for her lost art-historical presence, but it also critiques it, and draws attention to other forgotten names such as Flora Scales and Gwen Knight.⁵⁶

50 Julia Waite, unpublished lecture notes for “Exiles and Expatriates: Modern Women and States of Unbelonging,” her 2019 Julie King Memorial Lecture, at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū. Provided to the researcher by Waite.

51 Linda Nochlin, “Art and the Conditions of Exile: Men/Women, Emigration/Expatriation,” *Poetics Today* 17, no. 3 (1996): 317, quoted by Julia Waite, lecture notes, “Exiles and Expatriates.”

52 Waite, lecture notes, “Exiles and Expatriates.”

53 Ibid.

54 Agnes, “Frenkel, Vera,” <https://agnes.queensu.ca/explore/collections/object/the-secret-life-of-cornelia-lumsden-a-remarkable-story-part-i-her-room-in-paris/>

55 Terry Smith, “The Provincialism Problem,” *Artforum* 13, no. 1 (September 1974): 1.

56 In her lecture “Exiles and Expatriates: Modern Women and States of Unbelonging at Christchurch Art Gallery,” at Te Puna o Waiwhetū in 2019, Julia Waite mentioned these artists, along with Helen Stewart: “women artists who trained in Europe... acknowledged for their role as agents of modernism who aided the transmission of information from centre to periphery. But I’d argue that we have yet to acknowledge the strength of their work beyond that of paintings that held a code for others.”



Fig. 36. *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, (detail of archival vitrine), 2018. Ilam Campus Gallery.



Fig. 37. *Workbook, drawings, Florence Weir*, (studio view), for *The Studio*, 2021.

Where the Barbara Cleveland works emphasise “historical distance through the mediating effects of documentation,”⁵⁷ Florence Weir emphasises the residual presence of artists through their relationships to others. *The Studio* (Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 10 July – 25 October 2021) attempted to reflect this, elevating the spoken memories and anecdotes that often get built around artists and their histories. Cleveland is also interested in this, evident in how the work *The History of Performance* (2016) assembled a history relative to those present at the performance, those in the room.⁵⁸ Related to this is Austrian art historian and curator Mechtild Widrich’s essay “Can Photographs Make it So?”, which explores Austrian artist VALIE EXPORT’s 1969 performance titled *Genital Panic* and subsequent re-enactments of it by Marina Abramovich in 2005. Writing about the documentation of performance art as the moment of the performance where “cultural representation, and thus history begins”, she argues “history continues to be built through palimpsests of discourse and image that continue inexorably from this moment – including critical reviews, interviews and artist’s statements, art historical texts, exhibitions and catalogues essays...”⁵⁹ Jones writes that Widrich’s extensive research into EXPORT’s performance, which included interviews, reveals

the way in which the actuality and provenance of this “performance” ... is highly questionable; whatever this work consisted of is and was largely signalled by a separate performance for a photograph, tirelessly recirculated and recontextualised by EXPORT and others through the contradictory mythical discourses that surround it.⁶⁰

Jones goes on to say that Widrich’s “...scholarly project in a sense proves the...notion of performance as ‘viral’: as existing in and through discourse, rather than as having some originary status as ‘real’.”⁶¹ As mentioned, Florence Weir has a different disciplinary area and territory to Barbara Cleveland’s live performance art. Her scattered outputs represented via various mediums, patchy documentation and various discourses allow me to play with the idea

⁵⁷ The Physics Room, *Embodying the Archive*, September 5 – October 10, 2015, https://physicsroom.org.nz/media/uploads/2016_02/Roomsheet_finaltext.pdf

⁵⁸ Wallin, “The Labour of Friendship.”

⁵⁹ Mechtild Widrich, “Can Photographs Make it So? Repeated Outbreaks of VALIE EXPORT’S *Genital Panic* since 1969” in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield, (Intellect, The Mill, Bristol, 2012), 97.

⁶⁰ Amelia Jones, “Introduction: Theories and Histories” in Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (eds), *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, (Intellect, The Mill, Bristol, United Kingdom, 2012), 44.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Florence, I am trying to find you in the studio, seated beside Doris Lusk. I think it was you who brought up the large stems of lacy white blossom, and that you arranged them loosely in the tallest vase on the shelf. You then placed it on the circular table in front of the grey curtains. In *Spring Blossoms*, Anne Hamblett made the curtains blue.

Perhaps you will pop up in one of Jancis’s, Doris’s daughter’s, spoken memories? (But you don’t.)

* * *

Florence, I am trying to find you in the creamy, cool pages of the *Bulletin of New Zealand Art History*. A brief glimpse, perhaps. I scan the footnotes, too, under the line, as you might have slipped down there in the fine text that comments, expands or queries. Sometimes I see you. You are there behind the formal art-historical language, walking away down the street with close female friends on either side. I see you.

Similarities. Seminal. Imagery. Wild speculation. Enigmatic shapes. Close associations. Beyond.

I mine the essays and cut the words out that point to you. Cut them away from the other artists they are attached to, the known names that do not refer to you. But you knew them, perhaps. (Did you?)

Neglected episode. Woman artist. Attracted favourable notices... resulted in a considerable body... identified a period... A body of works... correspondence is lost.

I read the essays and pretend that you are the subject, in the main role.

Commenting with a note of despair... exhibition opportunities much reduced... virtually stopped after that period... potentially devastating consequences of such a move... Exile.

Instead, I find a poem. At the end of the *Bulletin*, after pages and pages of essays that look the same, I find a single page with creamy, cool space. The only page with some breathing room. It contains a short poem by Riemke Ensing of twenty concise lines with some marginalia⁶² catching my eye on the left-hand side. It is titled: *Another Exile Paints a Spring Portrait of Katherine Mansfield*.

This poem describes a still-life portrait and is based on an imagined encounter between Frances Hodgkins and Katherine Mansfield. There are notes in the margins in brackets. The poet evokes a painting style, without naming the artist. You often have that same treatment, Florence. (Yes, you.)

* * *

Florence, I am trying to find you at one of Tilli Frankel’s salon evenings in Beckenham. (Are you there?)

⁶² Markings or notes made in the margins of a book or other document, which could be scribbles, comments, glosses, critiques, doodles, or illuminations. Embellishments. Definitions obtained from *Merriam Webster* and *Oxford Reference*, accessed February 15, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/marginalia> and <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199576128.001.0001/acref-9780199576128-e-0643>

of reproduction. Weir is not a pseudonym as I am acknowledged in exhibition material and as facilitator. Rather her fabrication is embodied, and by positioning myself as artistic fabricator, collaborator and commissioner, I can create ambiguity between myself and her work. For example in the artwork labels for the felted textile works in *The Studio*, her name was part of the title, and my name was part of the materials line, drawing out ideas around the copy and the proximate (Appendix Eight). In this way, her construction draws attention to assumed modes of art-historical scholarship and record collections. Barbara Cleveland and Florence Weir both enact mythical discourses as part of their representations. Referring to “‘Presence’ in Absentia” in a footnote, English art historian Victoria Horne states that Jones argues that the privileging of the live event in performance art, giving access to the performer’s body over access through photographic documentation is a “cultural myth” that “serves to maintain an illusory belief in the coherency of the subject and of stable historical truth.”⁶³ From this perspective, my project that aims to redress the absence of women artists from the canon, might at first seem best served by illuminating its public about the relatively unknown practitioners and practices that Florence Weir and her outputs are based upon. However, the choice to invent a fictional persona is an attempt to trouble the fixed, solo authorship structure of the canon. Florence Weir foregrounds the relational co-becoming of artistic subjectivities through the elaborate production of works and exhibitions with an evolving aesthetic identity. And privileging her social contexts by presenting supplementary items and other materials supports a relational understanding of selfhood. She is remembered and constructed through multiple voices, stories, traces and collaboration, and in this way her representation opposes a stable, fact based and singular historical view.

Modes of travelling are enabled

Florence Weir’s art-historical presence in both national and international art histories allows for a fluid representation. Her travelling abroad means that New Zealand histories have the potential to be inflected with varied influences, such as the Omega Workshops (London, 1913–19) and the Bauhaus design movement (Germany, 1919–33). Ōtautahi-based Emma Fitts is an artist who generates associative installations and ‘referential assemblages’ that rehabilitate, reconsider and revisit various women’s histories. It is a

⁶³ Victoria Horne, “the personal clutter... the painterly mess...” Tracing a History of Carolee Schneemann’s Interior Scroll”, *Association for Art History*. Vol. 43 Issue 5, (2020): 22.



Fig. 38. Emma Fitts, *Jacket Cut Out 2*, 2019. Flashe paint on canvas with Beech frame.

Courtesy of the artist and Melanie Roger Gallery. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.

Fig. 39. Emma Fitts, *Hooded Jacket for Lee Krasner*, 2019. Acrylic and Flashe paint on canvas.

Courtesy of the artist and Melanie Roger Gallery. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.

practice of expansive story or history telling and she does this by forging together surprising variables and different strands of research. Like me, she revisits and combines both local and international histories as content. In *IFF: An Ideal Museum* at Melanie Roger Gallery in Auckland (2020), she referenced American abstract expressionist painter Lee Krasner and New Zealand cosmologist Beatrice Tinsley, alongside Cold War radar identification, knowledge she learned about while on her 10-week stay at the Headlands Centre for the Arts in San Francisco in 2019. Fitts says:

I enjoy asking questions that are often perceived as impossible to answer. What happens if we introduce Beatrice Tinsley’s discoveries of spatial infinity to the life of artist Lee Krasner? Does this help our understanding of either Krasner or Tinsley?⁶⁴

The exhibition included photographs of a textile installation at a Cold War radar site, *Flight Jacket for Beatrice Tinsley*, and *Hooded Jacket for Lee Krasner* and a series of bright *Jacket Cut Outs* that nodded to Krasner’s collages from the 1950s, and recycled parts of cut-up previous paintings she had cast aside. “Collage speaks to movement in layered and almost temporal form,”

⁶⁴ Emma Fitts quoted in Bronwyn Lloyd, “An Art of Unbounded Storytelling,” *Art News New Zealand*, Autumn 2020, 62.

Fitts explains. She also notes that these “small collages gather up the pieces that fall through the net of the larger art-historical canon that was slow to admit Lee Krasner.”⁶⁵ The exhibition looked at the work of several women, layering them together and, in doing so, offering up new connections. Another project titled *In the Rough Parts 1, 2 & 3* was realised across three different locations, and combined the practices, ideas and biographies of several modernist women—Anni Albers, Romaine Brooks (a portrait painter) and Eileen Gray (an interior designer)—as well as contemporary photographs by Neeve Woodward of Fitts’ textile works in situ at the former home of Anne and Colin McCahon in French Bay; and reconfigurations of her own past exhibitions. In thinking about these strategies of connecting and her artistic relationship to history, Fitts states:

I’ve always been interested in alternative histories...in non-linear storytelling and random, meaningful links, which allow for a telling of a life that is more expansive—more fluid.... The moment has passed for us to go back and give a more detailed and accurate account of these women, and we can’t time travel, so in my practice I’m working with the histories we have but trying to bring up new information through forming new connections between them.⁶⁶

While I agree with Fitts that we cannot physically go back in time to comprehensively flesh out these missing or partial histories, that it seems more pertinent to renew and reinvent, I employ different strategies in my practice for informing new connections. Through the fabrication of Florence Weir, I am in some sense proposing a form of ‘time travel.’ However, this voyaging and movement is not always a form of specific time travel that is defined by dates or periods. Through imagined connections and relations, her insertion enables a traversing across art movements, styles and mediums, and it also forges new and hypothetical collaborations. In *Florence & Florence: other textile histories* (2018), I imagined what Weir’s costume and set design might have looked like had she worked alongside Ngaio Marsh for theatre productions at the University of Canterbury. Making use of research into the Bauhaus theatre workshops, these drawings (figs. 32, 33, 40, 41) were presented as a series of working designs from an ‘uncovered’ workbook. I used Photoshop to fabricate archival-looking paper stocks, adding yellowed Sellotape, creases and marks, and my father’s cursive handwriting (learnt as

65 Ibid, 62-63.

66 Ibid, 62.

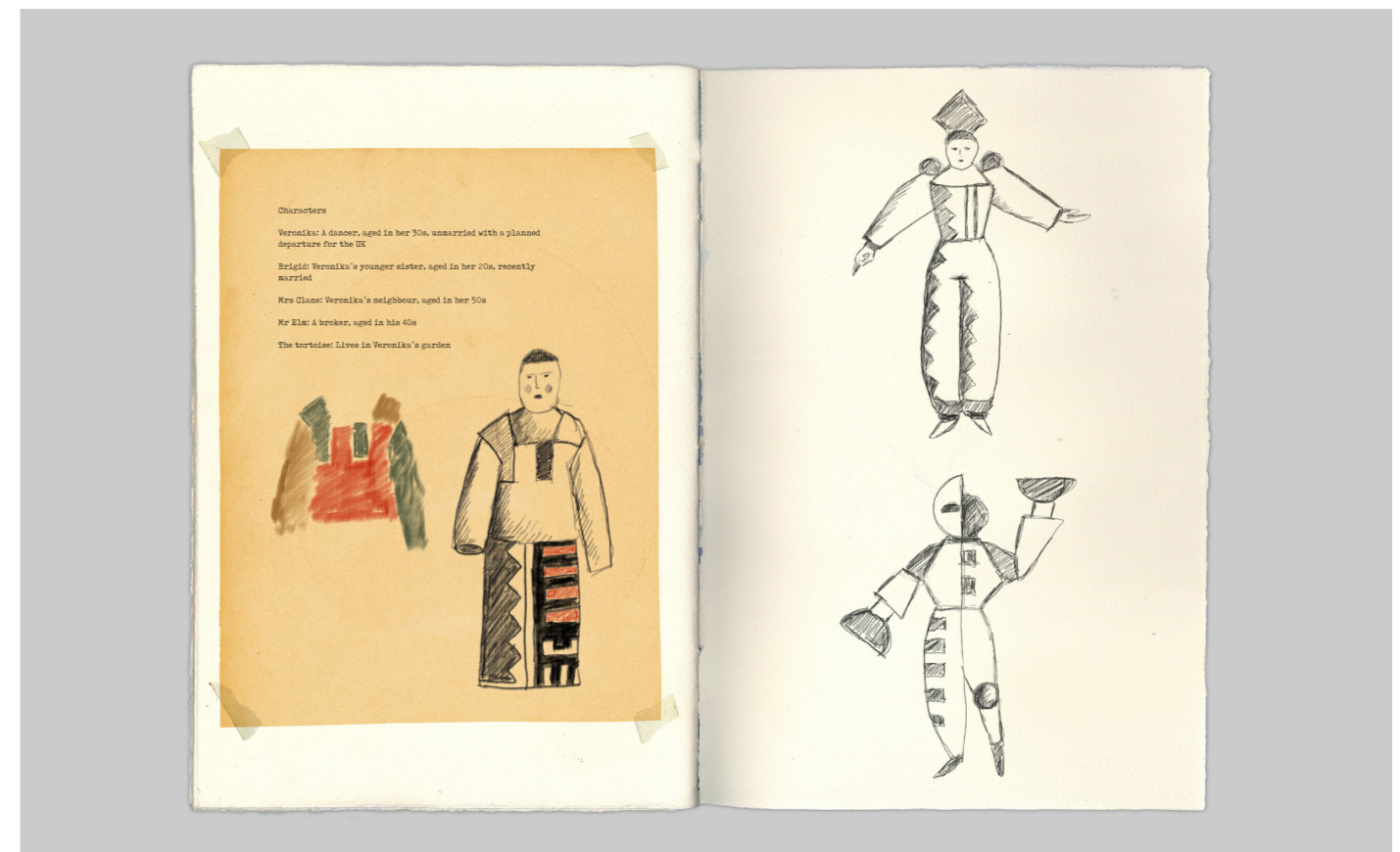
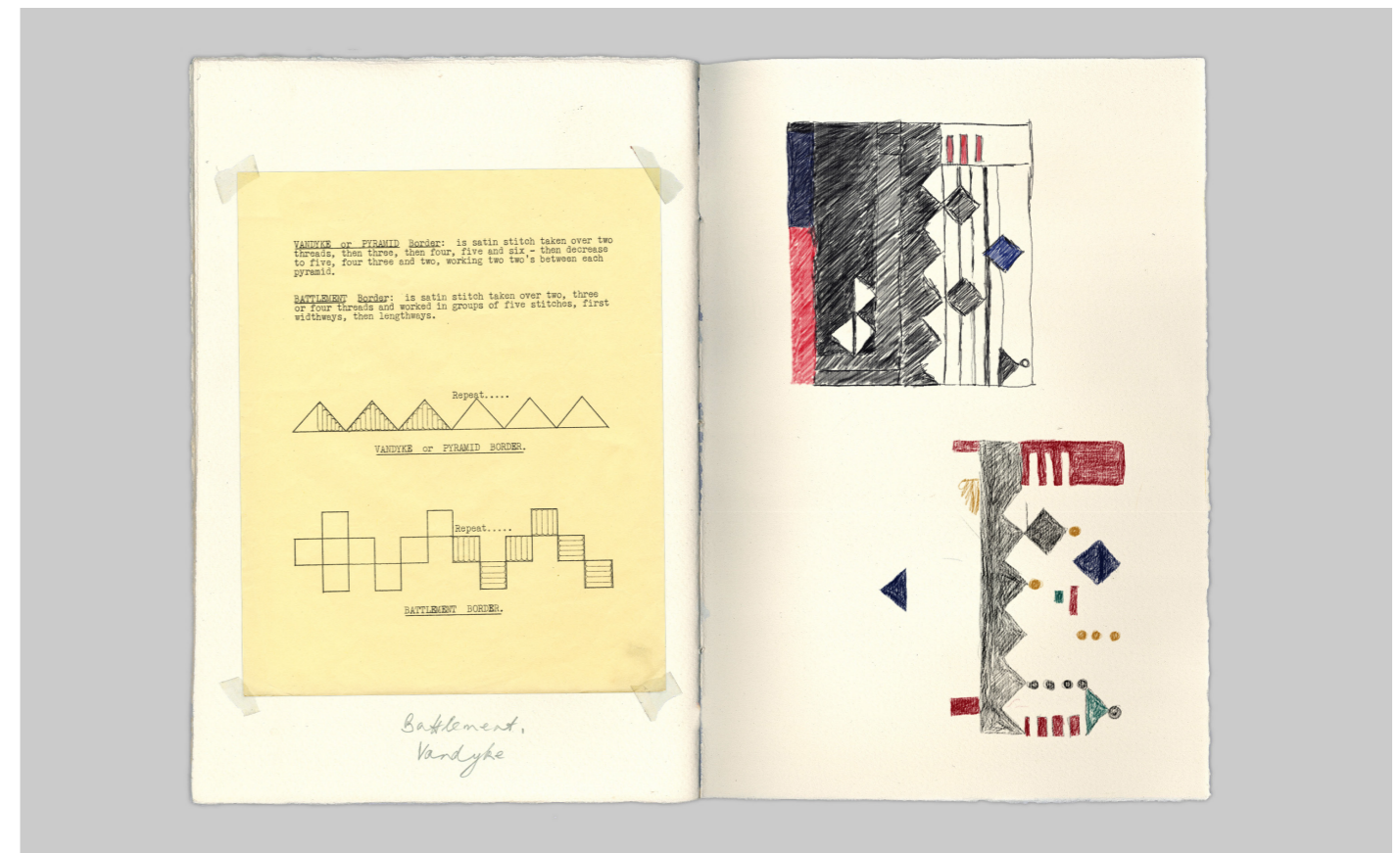


Fig. 40. Workbook, *Florence Weir* (c. 1936) I, 2018. Digital print.

Fig. 41. Workbook, *Florence Weir* (c. 1936) III, 2018. Digital print.

a child in the 1950s) was lent as Florence’s annotations inserted alongside the drawings. Coming back to the idea of fabrication, these documents oscillated between their manufacture and, for the purpose of the story, their invention. The images were printed and photographed, and then produced in the exhibition as a slideshow of eight images on a digital screen (fig. 53) As mentioned by Tyler, in her essay for *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, some of Weir’s costume designs for Marsh’s made-up production resonated with Sophie Tauber-Arp’s geometric costumes. Linking Weir with Tauber-Arp, she wrote that they are “fellow travellers, interested in using the body to put avant-garde ideas into motion.”⁶⁷ Fitts’ practice does not engage with fictional elements. However, there are leaps of fancy and made-up parts, which stem from conflating and fabricating research threads and creating hypothetical questions and conversations. In my project, the missing data and erasures are overwritten with potential collaborations, reimaginings and an even looser speculation. In this sense, my practice differs from that of Fitts in that I propose time travel as a form of temporal engagement with both the past and present. For example, because there are limited black-and-white photos of Ngaio Marsh’s theatrical productions in existence, I found room to construct an alternative look and feel via the creativity of Florence Weir. As Ōtepoti-based writer Robyn Maree Pickens points out in her review of an exhibition by Aotearoa artist Louise Menzies titled *In an orange my mother was eating* (2019), although the “three subject artists are no longer alive, Menzies’ work appears collaborative.”⁶⁸ Menzies’ exhibition referenced various projects by deceased artists Joanna Margaret Paul, M. C. Richards and Frances Hodgkins. Pickens goes on to write about Menzies’ approach: “She herself is travelling with her subjects, in a mode of inhabiting and being inhabited.”⁶⁹ Here the artist’s travelling is invoked as something very much embodied and reflects French philosopher Jacques Derrida’s notion of hauntology, which acknowledges the effects of the past in the present. This will be expanded upon in Chapter Six: *Temporality and Presence* through an examination of haunting and ghosts within a discussion on this project’s relation to temporality. Florence Weir haunts and inhabits me when I go about creating fragments from her practice such as drawings, designs and motifs.

67 Tyler, “Through the Eye of her Needle,” 3.

68 Robyn Maree Pickens, “We are Recirculated Assemblages: Louise Menzies at Hocken Collections,” *The Pantograph Punch*, March 2019, <https://www.pantograph-punch.com/posts/louise-menzies-hocken>

69 Ibid.

Fakes, forgeries, parafictions

Possibly as an extension to the notion of fabrication, *Ever Present Archiving* explores related ideas such as the copy, the forgery and the proximate, and opens out the problems associated with the notions of ‘authenticity’ and ‘truth.’ In this, it draws on American art historian Donald Preziosi’s compelling examination of art history as “the coy science” in 1989.⁷⁰ By this he meant that it “was reserved or concealing of its means of operation.”⁷¹ In *Rethinking Art History*, Preziosi scrutinises his discipline’s engagement and fixation with artistic attribution. For him, art history’s profound concern with “what is proper(ty) to an artist” forms the ground for the art market and museum system, and he argues that this concern also “works toward the legitimization and naturalization of an idealist, integral, authorial Selfhood.”⁷² Preziosi argues that without this concern, the entire discipline of art history and the commodified art market could not function. He goes on to say that the “concern for fakes and forgeries” is a system that makes visible the “disciplinary, legal, and commercial lines of power” that “converge and support each other.”⁷³ In this way, my so-called forgery in constructing the artistic persona of Florence Weir, and the ‘fraudulent’ artworks created by her, is engaging in a critique of the idea of an idealist and essential ‘author.’ Critical to this assumption around the idea of what Preziosi calls “authorial selfhood” is that the “property of artists be clearly distinguished from each other, the artist must be true to himself in all his works...and his work over time must be woven together as a coherent fabric.”⁷⁴ The series of exhibitions, artworks and projects produced under the persona of Florence Weir resists this assumption of and desire for attribution and coherence. By distributing and dispersing her personhood across diverse artefacts, periods, mediums and outputs, I seek to destabilise this notion of attribution or a singular oeuvre. And while Jones argues that it is body art performances that enact “the dispersed, multiplied, specific subjectivities of the late capitalist, postcolonial post-modern era”⁷⁵, I would argue that the production of Florence Weir (her fabricated life and work) and other personas can also enact this sort of subjectivity. By distributing and dispersing Florence’s personhood across diverse artefacts, periods, mediums and outputs, I seek to destabilise this notion of attribution or a singular oeuvre. Jones goes on to write that it is the “relationship of

70 Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Mediations on a Coy Science* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

71 Ian Verstegen, “Is Art History Still a Coy Science?” *Journal of Art Historiography* 15 (December 2016): 1.

72 Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History*, 33.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Jones, “‘Presence’ in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation”, 12.

these bodies/subjects to documentation...that most profoundly points to the dislocation of the fantasy of the fixed, normative, centred modernist subjects...”⁷⁶ Florence as a subject is rendered and represented through traces, documentation, discourses, her relationship to others, and this makes her construction a gesture of undoing and unfixing, as much as she is a remaking. In this way she is at odds with the “fixed... centred” modernist subjects that Jones identifies.

Florence Weir’s fragmented reappearance manifests across the various artworks and installations produced by me, and also under collaborations with other artists; for example, her watercolour designs were relaunched across a ceramic range by Richard Orjis and myself in 2015. This collaboration with Orjis involved developing both the ceramic forms and their decoration, and the exhibition *Florence & Friends* at Flotsam & Jetsam⁷⁷ in 2015, which positioned the range in the company of antique objects and contemporary artworks. A similar refusal of the various assumptions surrounding the notion of the author can be seen in the practice of the ‘ready-made’ artist Claire Fontaine. She “adopts positions that pseudonymity enables: the denial of individual skill, authority and originality,”⁷⁸ and does this through “the collective détournement of signs, symbols, images and objects available in contemporary visual culture.”⁷⁹ This is in line with the postmodernist idea that a fixed identity is virtually impossible, making the idea of an oeuvre as a “coherent fabric”⁸⁰ problematic and questionable. This is useful to the project, as Weir’s practice appears disjointed and inconsistent because of the nature of her record in the archive: partial, sketchy, fragmented. Yet it is also disjointed because the objects are created by various people, for example Richard Orjis. This point is relevant to my imminent discussion on the constructed artist Reena Spaulings, whose output is created by an extensive list of artists. As both an artist and a dealer, Reena Spaulings’ dual identities allow her to question the art market’s preoccupations with property and labour, as examined by Preziosi. She “thus embodies a provisional alternative to the role of the artist demanded by the market and its notions of authenticity.”⁸¹

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Flotsam & Jetsam is located in Ponsonby, Tāmaki Makaurau. It was an interesting venue for the project because it sits somewhere between a junk and an antique shop. Eccentric and historical wares sit alongside the owners’ object collections and found art by unknown painters. We used one of their upstairs rooms, usually reserved for storage. We displayed the ceramic range and other artworks in and around furniture that was variously items for sale and display pieces used in the shop downstairs: chests, dressers, tables, cases.

⁷⁸ “Claire Fontaine,” *Frieze*, March 4, 2007, <https://frieze.com/article/claire-fontaine>

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History*, 33.

⁸¹ “Reena Spaulings,” *Manifesta 13 Marseille*, <https://manifesta13.org/participants/reena-spaulings/index.html>



Figs. 42 - 44 *Florence & Friends*, (installation views), 2015. Flotsam & Jetsam.



REENA SPAULINGS FINE ART
165 EAST BROADWAY
NEW YORK, NY 10002

Fig. 45. Reena Spaulings logo, courtesy of Reena Spaulings Fine ART, NY/LA.

Contemporary art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty cites Israeli artist Michael Blum's project for the 9th Istanbul Biennial, titled *A Tribute to Safiye Behar* (2005) as an example of the "tactical lie, a truth-bending practice"⁸² that she calls the 'parafictional.' In her essay, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," Lambert-Beatty offers a definition of 'parafiction':

Like a paramedic as opposed to a medical doctor, a parafiction is related to but not quite a member of the category of fiction as established in literature and drama. It remains a bit outside. It does not perform its procedures in the hygienic clinics of literature, but has one foot in the field of the real.⁸³

Blum constructed a detailed history of a woman who did not exist. However, instead of simply telling a story, it also poses as fact. Through the inventions of official-looking archival documents, and household and personal belongings, captioned and presented in display cases, he led viewers to believe the former President of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had a secret Jewish lover who was a feminist and a socialist. Viewers fell for Blum's compelling ruse, revealing our tendency to believe in naturalistic, historical-looking detail. In her column titled "On Bullshit, Lies, Truthiness, and Parafiction," artist and curator Michelle Grabner writes that "forms of falseness held in check by truth are common vehicles for the artistic imagination and critical commentary."⁸⁴ Listing several projects that consist of invented figures, she writes that, "fiction, truthiness, hoaxes, pseudonyms and satire are prevalent in contemporary art."⁸⁵ Florence Weir exists in this parafictional context characterised by an overlap between fact and fiction.

82 Michelle Grabner, "On Bullshit, Lies, Truthiness, and Parafiction," *X-TRA* 11, no. 3 (Spring 2009), <https://www.xtraonline.org/article/on-bullshit-lies-truthiness-and-parafiction>

83 Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," *October* 129 (2009): 54.

84 Grabner, "On Bullshit, Lies, Truthiness, and Parafiction."

85 Ibid.



Figs. 46 - 48. Michael Blum, *A Tribute To Safiye Behar*, (installation views), 2005, 9th Istanbul Biennial. Courtesy of the artist.

Constructions by collectives

Beginning with Marcel Duchamp's Rose Sélavy, a female alter ego who emerged in collaborative photographs with Man Ray, other constructed personae have found what American curator and writer Beau Rutland has described as "new ways to deploy the artistic alter ego as provocation and diversion."⁸⁶ As with the group of artists behind Barbara Cleveland, figureheads are often founded by collectives, which enables a denial of "individual skill, authority and originality."⁸⁷ Fae Richards, the imaginary African American lesbian film star and singer invented by artist Zoe Leonard and filmmaker Cheryl Dunye, is a construction whose ancestry Grabner asserts "goes back to Duchamp's Rose Sélavy."⁸⁸ *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* (1997) is a work comprising eighty-two staged photographic images that document the life story of Fae Richards. It also constructs a narrative tracing her early life, her screen career through the Civil Rights era, which was hindered by racism, through to her later years as an unknown figure. Artist Reena Spaulings, mentioned previously, was birthed by a collective novel in 2004, which was written by multiple and anonymous writers and artists.⁸⁹ Like the collective memory of Barbara Cleveland, the various episodes and narrations written in isolation from each other combined to construct Reena Spaulings' life story. Out of this collectively authored process novel, the Spaulings figure assumed various identities, including an artist who makes solo exhibitions and a gallerist. Visual theorist Penny Rafferty declares, "She does not comply with the normative reality of painting production, either by method or means."⁹⁰ And author Xandra Eden sees that the Reena Spaulings persona allows for any artist to participate in a larger collective force, "which aims to dismantle the artist's hand and association of one person to the work."⁹¹ By comparison, Florence Weir's 'truthiness' is offered in a more opaque fashion: creative outputs are often 'imagined' or 'remade' from her archival traces/drawings/plans. Rutland goes on to call Reena Spaulings a "trickster whose position between creator and creation destabilizes both of

⁸⁶ Beau Rutland, "Reena Spaulings: Museum Ludvig," *Artforum*, October 2017, <https://www.artforum.com/print/reviews/201708/reena-spaulings-71252>

⁸⁷ Frieze, "Claire Fontaine."

⁸⁸ Grabner, "On Bullshit, Lies, Truthiness, and Parafiction."

⁸⁹ The fictional artist named Reena Spaulings and the New York-based gallery named Reena Spaulings Fine Art (founded by John Kelsey and Emily Sundblad) emerged in 2004 from Bernadette Corporation's novel of the same name. Core members of Bernadette Corporation include Bernadette van Huy, John Kelsey and Antek Walzca.

⁹⁰ Penny Rafferty, "Between the Art World + Anarchy: On the Collective Imagination of Reena Spaulings inside the Institution," *AQNB*, June 28, 2017, <https://www.aqnb.com/2017/06/28/the-collective-imagination-of-reena-spaulings-inside-the-institution/>

⁹¹ Xandra Eden, "Reena Spaulings: Haswellediger & Co., New York," *C: International Contemporary Art* (Summer 2005): 46, quoted in Wikipedia, "Reena Spaulings," accessed August 13, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reena_Spaulings

those constructs and the systems in which they are embedded."⁹² This bears a relationship to my thinking around the definition of fabrication within *Ever Present Archiving*. Those constructed systems of creator and creation are embedded in the idea of the trickster or the lie. However, Florence Weir is less interested in tricking her audience, lying and developing an elaborate ruse. I leave signposts to her construction and would prefer the audience to be aware of her invention. Julia Holden's portrait of Florence Weir, completed in 2021 for *The Studio*, is an example of this. The wall label cites this contemporary date, rather than trying to posture it as a historical artefact, a portrait executed in Florence's time. In the same way, Leonard's inclusion of a casting list of the women hired to play Fae Richards acknowledges the project's artifice, and allows the viewer to recognise that the story is fictional.

The Grantchester Pottery is another artistic enterprise relevant to the project. Founded in 2011 by English artists Phil Root and Giles Round, it takes the framework of a decorative arts company. Drawing historical precedent from Omega Workshops (London, 1913–1919) as well as others like Atelier Martine (Paris, 1911–1930) and Hammer Prints (Essex, 1954–1975), the group offers interior-design services, utilitarian ceramics and decorative household items such as textiles, murals and wallpaper. For example, *The Artist Decorators* (2013) was an exhibition that took over the Fox Reading Room at London's ICA. The decorated interior included hand-painted murals, wallpapers, folding screens, hand-woven rugs and a range of ceramics. British curator and writer Elinor Morgan explained in 2015:

The Grantchester Pottery is a construction. It is a workshop and an approach to making. It is two people (Giles Round and Phil Root), their circle of friends and people whose work they admire.... The Grantchester Pottery is a fictional proposition. Its name shrouds the group in mysterious anonymity. The Grantchester Pottery is not a collection of ceramicists and they are not based in Grantchester.⁹³

Writing in 1992 about the emergence of postmodernism, British artist and writer Victor Burgin saw that:

art practice was no longer to be defined as an artisanal activity, a

⁹² Beau Rutland, "Reena Spaulings: Museum Ludvig," *Artforum*, October 2017, <https://www.artforum.com/print/reviews/201708/reena-spaulings-71252>

⁹³ Elinor Morgan, "Painting the Stage," *Jerwood Arts*, accessed April 3, 2015, <https://jerwoodarts.org/exhibitionsandevents/writing-and-media/painting-the-stage/>



Figs. 49 - 52. The Grantchester Pottery, *Studio Wares*, 2013, (installation view). David Dale Gallery. Courtesy of the artists and David Dale Gallery. Photography by Max Slaven.

process of crafting fine objects in a given medium. Rather it was to be seen as a set of operations performed in a field of signifying practices, perhaps centred on a medium but certainly not bounded by it.⁹⁴

The Grantchester Pottery reflects and draws on specific historical modes of working within a set of operations and signifiers. For example, they often work with other artists and craftspeople, yet any individual artistic authorship is eliminated by the fact that the work remains unattributed, with the ceramics marked only by the TGP emblem. This “ensures that there is always an open exchange of ideas and forms, as pieces are completed stage by stage, passing from one hand to another, gaining and losing individual traces.”⁹⁵ It is also a reference to the Omega design collective, in which no artist was allowed to sign their work: the wares produced were marked with an Ω , the Greek letter Omega. The aim of this collective, known for bright colour and bold patterns, was to bring the innovative aesthetic of post-impressionism into the design of everyday functional objects such as furniture, drapery and tableware. The premises in Bloomsbury, London, included studios where products were designed and fabricated by artist designers, and showrooms for the public to browse. It was directed by Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, who were part of the literary Bloomsbury Group. Like The Grantchester Pottery, the ongoing series of exhibitions that deals with Florence Weir’s legacy similarly operates in this “slippery field of signifying practice and appropriation.”⁹⁶ In turn, her construction and the events we build up around her question how much and what sort of detail is needed for a compelling reproduction.

Plausibility

Thinking about what constitutes a compelling reproduction, I will now discuss how the operation of Florence Weir relies on plausible surrounding structures that support her construction and can be seen as interventions. These interventions are the way details are built into the story and also the manner in which they take shape. For example, the text that framed the exhibition *Florence & Friends* (2015), which was disseminated via social media and press releases, contained information about where the ceramic motifs had

⁹⁴ Victor Burgin, “The Absence of Presence,” in *Art in Theory, 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 1097.

⁹⁵ “Artist Decorators: The Grantchester Pottery at the ICA,” *Designcurial*, August 13, 2013, designcurial.com/news/artist-decorators-the-grantchester-pottery-at-the-ica

⁹⁶ “Décor: An Exhibition by the Grantchester Pottery,” *This is Tomorrow*, October 26, 2012, <http://thisistomorrow.info/articles/decor-an-exhibition-by-the-grantchester-pottery>

surfaced from (see Appendix Seven). And a series of posters for exhibitions by Florence Weir positioned her alongside The Group in Christchurch (figs 150 and 152) within Chapter Five: *Friendships and Conversation*). The construction of Cornelia Lumsden, which I think of as an early parafictional work, was so plausible that until Frenkel confessed to her construction in the 1990s, people were trying to search for her in libraries and on the internet. When Florence Weir first emerged in 2015 in Tāmaki Makaurau, an art dealer tricked her husband into her existence. He was reportedly so interested that he posted information about the exhibition in the news section of his website, believing the story was real. Art historian Kate Warren argues that for Lambert-Beatty, “the key to parafictionality is not whether a fictive construct is strictly possible but whether it is plausible.”⁹⁷ Experiencing the fictions as fact relies on an element of deception, as Lambert-Beatty outlines:

In parafiction, real and/or imaginary personages and stories intersect with the world as it is being lived. Post-simulacral, parafictional strategies are oriented less toward the disappearance of the real than toward the pragmatics of trust. Simply put, with various degrees of success, for various durations, and for various purposes, these fictions are experienced as fact. They achieve truth status—for some of the people some of the time.⁹⁸

Warren argues that “plausibility and believability are defining factors for parafictions because they bind the fictive elements of the project to pre-existing understandings of reality.”⁹⁹ Phil Root and Giles Round use the structures of historical design collectives as the basis for their concept for The Grantchester Pottery, while Barbara Cleveland’s black and white videos borrow from the aesthetics of 1960s and 1970s feminist performance practices. The binding to reality that I use is also an emulation of established cultural contexts, and historical ephemera and documents. I take cues from museological practices and conventions, such as the way items are labelled. The established cultural contexts that this project relies on and borrows from are archives, collections and art-historical language. Structures such as press releases and wall texts are used to set up believable contexts for Florence Weir’s practice. Exhibition text for *Florence & Friends* (2015) included this information:

97 Kate Warren, “Double Trouble: Parafictional Personas and Contemporary Art,” *Persona Studies* 2, no. 1 (2016): 59.

98 Lambert-Beatty, “Make-Believe,” 54.

99 Warren, “Double Trouble,” 59.

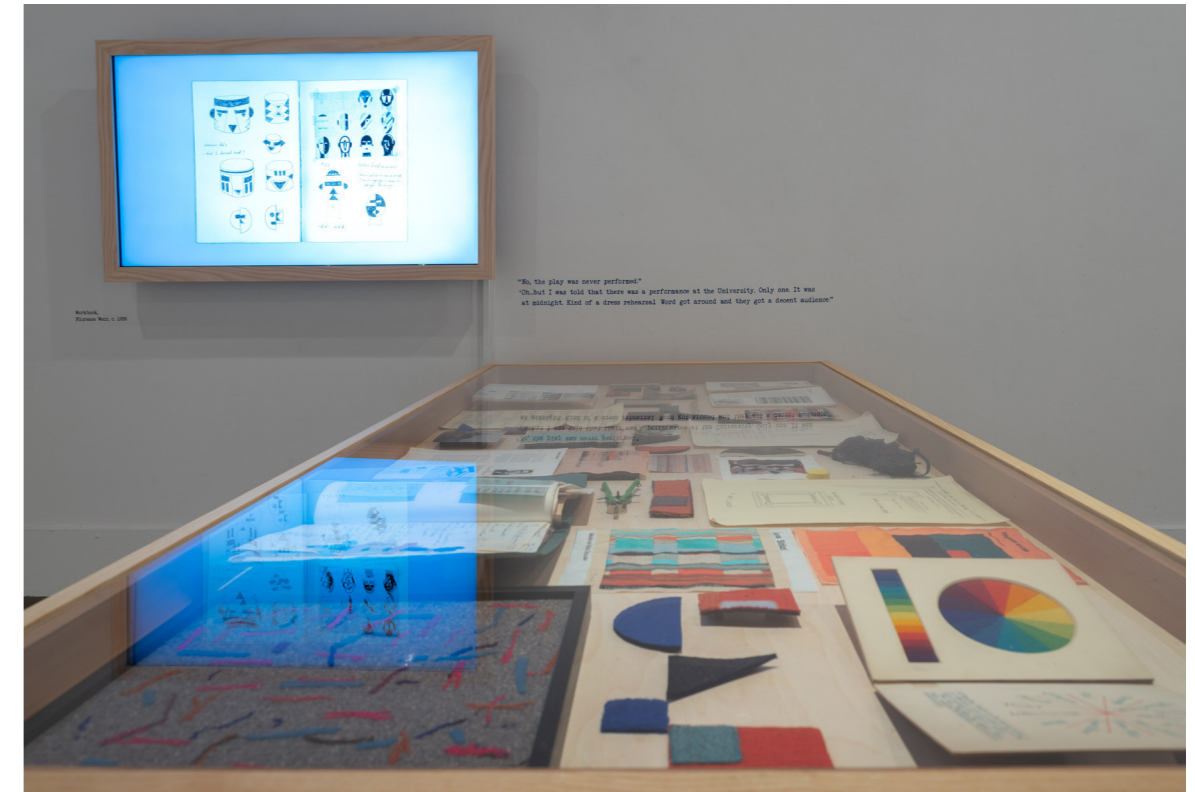


Fig. 53. *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, (detail of screen), 2018. Ilam Campus Gallery. Photograph by Thomas Herman.

Recently, some textile designs were discovered in the personal collection of Thomas Wild, a relative based in Auckland. It is not known why they were sent back to New Zealand and excluded from her meticulously preserved estate in Sussex, England.¹⁰⁰

Linking Florence Weir’s archives with reports of other official-sounding collections—a personal family one or her own “meticulously preserved estate”—gives their ‘resurfacing’ a credibility. I also cloak the fabricated archives and made-up details in established gallery display mechanisms, further enhancing their believability or position in reality. For example, the series of workbook pages depicting in-progress designs for set and costume that were purported to have been used for an unrealised Ngaio Marsh production were presented on a digital screen. This display method was borrowed from an exhibition at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, where a Gordon Walters workbook was photographed and the pages appeared in series on a digital screen. I also copied the way the screen was set in a picture

100 Richard Orjis and Julia Holderness, text developed for press release and room sheet information for *Florence & Friends* (2015), Flotsam & Jetsam.



Fig. 54. Zoe Leonard, *The Fae Richards Photo Archive*, (detail), 1993-96. Installation view, 1997 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, March 12-June 15, 1997. Gelatin silver prints and chromogenic prints with type-written text on paper. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Contemporary Painting and Sculpture Committee and the Photography Committee 97.51a-dddd. © Zoe Leonard. Photograph by Sheldan C. Collins.

frame, to hide the technology and monitor appearance. Wall labels and the use of wall vinyl are other examples of this strategy. They act as an institutional authority, generating credibility for my various made-up claims, by situating them in established exhibition contexts and practices.

The photographs in *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* had black mounting corners to make it look like they had been removed from a personal scrapbook. They had been manipulated to include fading, creases and other patinas of age. The captions were both handwritten and produced on a vintage typewriter. In an interview with *Camera Obscura*, Leonard said:

every decision about how I photographed it and how everything was printed was made so that the project could be read as a work from that time. It's a facsimile and we knew it would only work if it could 'pass.'¹⁰¹

Yet it is not just the authenticity of the simulated archives and objects that make these imaginary personae such as Fae Richards so plausible. Lambert-Beatty highlights the importance of the spectator's knowledge and experience, arguing, "Parafictioneers produce and manage plausibility. But plausibility (as opposed to accuracy) is not an attribute of a story

¹⁰¹ Zoe Leonard quoted in Huey Copeland, "Photography, the Archive, and the Question of Feminist Form: A Conversation with Zoe Leonard," *Camera Obscura* 28, no. 2 (2013), 184.

or image, but of its encounter with viewers, whose configurations of knowledge and 'horizons of expectation' determine whether something is plausible *to them*."¹⁰² These representations carry weight because the real-life equivalents of Fae Richards and Florence Weir might well have been unknown, undocumented. Art-history scholar Alyssa E. Schwendener writes, "regardless of the inherent inauthenticity" of *The Fae Richards Photo Archive*, "the combination of a lack of knowledge and the strong desire for historical precedent leads to a willingness to suspend any disbelief regarding Fae's existence."¹⁰³ Florence Weir also underscores both this desire for and absence of recognition of this kind of figure, and in this way she is a projection.

Other fabrications: objects and archives, narratives

With Zapperi's 'liminal' perspectives in mind, the extrapolations and fabrications within my exhibitions purposefully make room for invention and the surfacing of small and overlooked details. For example, in response to my discovery of *The Group Show* catalogues in 2015, I began fabricating my own exhibition labels, extracting information from the original inventories of objects. In 2015 (pre-PhD), I made a series of installations with extracted text fragments from these categories. First names, objects and titles were used to fabricate my own labels. The word 'inventory' developed from the late Middle English word *inventorium*, derived from the Latin word *invenire*, which translates as 'to come upon' or 'to find.' That the word 'invent' has the same Latin root (*invenire*) as 'inventory' highlights the possibility of the documentation (the inventory) inventing the event. From this perspective, Charles Merewether's idea of 'counter memory' also has resonance with the project's drive to construct and fabricate.

In his essay "Questions of Legacy," Merewether claims that the "task of historians and artists is to intervene and appropriate the records not only in order to expose the falsifications and erasures they embody but to offer a re-elaboration, a working through."¹⁰⁴ I see a possibility of augmenting Merewether's call for 'intervening' and 'appropriating' the records. Rather than, or as well as, offering a 're-elaboration,' the artist can actually use fabrication and invention as a 'working through,' to expose the notion that

¹⁰² Lambert-Beatty, "Make-Believe," 72-3.

¹⁰³ Alyssa Schwendener, "The Most Fantastic Lie: The Invention of Lesbian Histories," master's thesis, California State University, 2016, 71, https://www.academia.edu/25371737/THE_MOST_FANTASTIC_LIE_THE_INVENTION_OF_LESBIAN_HISTORIES

¹⁰⁴ Charles Merewether, "Questions of Legacy," *Grand Street* 66 (1998): 156.

the record (and the archive) can never be complete or fixed. Jacques Derrida's notion in "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression" (1995) that the archiving process produces as much as it records the event is relevant to the way in which invention operates in my practice. Acts of invention, fabrication and production operate on several different scales in the practice. While the fabrication of an artistic figure sits on one scale, there are also moments of subterfuge on a minor scale. This might be seen where material fabrications and props stand in for the original or unavailable object. In *The Studio* (2021), I presented a series of reproduced objects depicted in the historical paintings. These fabricated still-life props were a way of connecting the paintings. I commissioned a ceramicist to remake a pink teacup (fig. 113) and a specific vase that appears in paintings by New Zealand painters Doris Lusk and Anne Hamblett (figs. 30 and 131). In another translation, I approximated a vase from *Poppies* (c.1937) by Hamblett (fig. 20). The ceramic vase was found in an op shop, and then repainted and varnished taking cues from the vase depicted in the painting, such as where the light hit on one side. In this contemporary installation these fabricated objects act as understudies for the primary actors, which were featured pictorially. The range of materials I use to make objects varies from print, clay and textiles to drawings and found objects.¹⁰⁵ My research treats both the archival records and the fabricated versions of objects as equally productive in their own right. As outlined, archives are sometimes fabricated in the practice as simulations, for example workbooks or design sketches by Weir. These fictitious documents are often used or quoted in other works. This is relevant to Lambert-Beatty's observation that parafictional art "centres on physical objects and material processes of making,"¹⁰⁶ and that in these parafictional objects "two traditional functions of the artist come together: the artisan, or materiality specialist; the artificer, or maker of fictions."¹⁰⁷ This extends the notion of artistic fabrication as a dual practice.

As well as parafictional objects, *Ever Present Archiving* fabricates potential narratives and art histories. Narrative is defined as a spoken or written account of connected events—a story. The specifics of written textual accounts will be addressed in Chapter Three: *Fiction with Footnotes, a*

¹⁰⁵ A vase made for an installation in 2015 from air-dried clay was built around a Pump water bottle. It was made to look like a 1960s terracotta vase thrown in a potter's studio, but it was in fact a fabricated prop. Labelled as the 'branch pot' that is listed in the 1961 exhibition, it became a substitute for the original and unavailable object. It also sat unattributed to any particular artist.

¹⁰⁶ Carrie Lambert Beatty, "Lost Wax: The Parafictional Object," MIT Architecture, accessed August 2020, <https://architecture.mit.edu/history-theory-and-criticism/lecture/lost-wax-parafictional-object>

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.



Figs. 55, 56. *The Studio*, (installation views), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Photograph by Justin Spiers.



Creative Art History, in which art history is discussed as a storytelling act of sorts, a written practice of making connections. Another 2015 project was centred around the invention of an art history and the influence of the Bauhaus in New Zealand art and design. This test installation, titled *Bauhaus Influence in New Zealand 1947–1959 (and 1964)*, combined assembled documents, ceramic items, digital prints, textiles, books and drawings, an assemblage of personal research, all stemming from my desire for evidence of Bauhaus design in our local culture. This concept was partly inspired by a wall label at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, in which curator Julia Waite wrote that Louise Henderson’s painting *Dieppe* (1959) “evinces Henderson’s familiarity with Bauhaus art and design,” which demonstrates how existing or official art-historical analyses are imported and made use of in my artwork narratives. Recorded influence was placed alongside the fabricated, and in this way the presentation moved between hobby and more-expert approaches. Waite’s wall label was included in my installation alongside a ceramic tray that had a colourful glazed reproduction of two thirds of the *Dieppe* painting. An iconic Bauhaus object, a teapot by Marianne Brandt, also appeared, translated from its original metal finish into a softer clay reproduction. Approximating existing forms like this, and also objects and motifs, is another strategy for fabricating these alternative histories. In this early installation, I introduced Weir’s period at the Bauhaus with a fabricated archival photograph of her room in Dessau and conflated the Bauhaus with The Group. *The Group Shows* often included a selection of textiles, as one list from the 1946 catalogue reads: “Wall rug, Wool rug, Rag rug, Floor rug.” A secondhand copy of a now-dated Bauhaus publication provided me with the inspiration for the wall-rug design produced for a display I made that incorporated and quoted this aforementioned list (see fig. 91). The book states it is a knotted rug design by Martha Erps in Smyrna wool, but there is no date or further information about this exquisite object. In the study-like installation *Bauhaus Influence in New Zealand*, my drawings were copies from these black-and-white documentation images of Erps’ knotted rug, which were then reproduced as colourful linen cushion covers. In these amateur study assemblages-come-displays, I am free to make connections and produce an erroneous past or new narratives that are fabricated out of endless copies, reproductions and invented influences.

In a wall label accompanying a Doris Lusk work, *Pink Roses* (c. 1935), in *The Studio*, a piece of dialogue introduces her friendship with a woman



Fig. 57. *The Group: homewares* (detail of ceramic teapot based on Marianne Brandt’s 1924 teapot), 2016. Objectspace.

Fig. 58. Marianne Brandt, *Théière et passe thé*, c. 1924, silver and ebony, © The MET, © ADAGP, Paris.

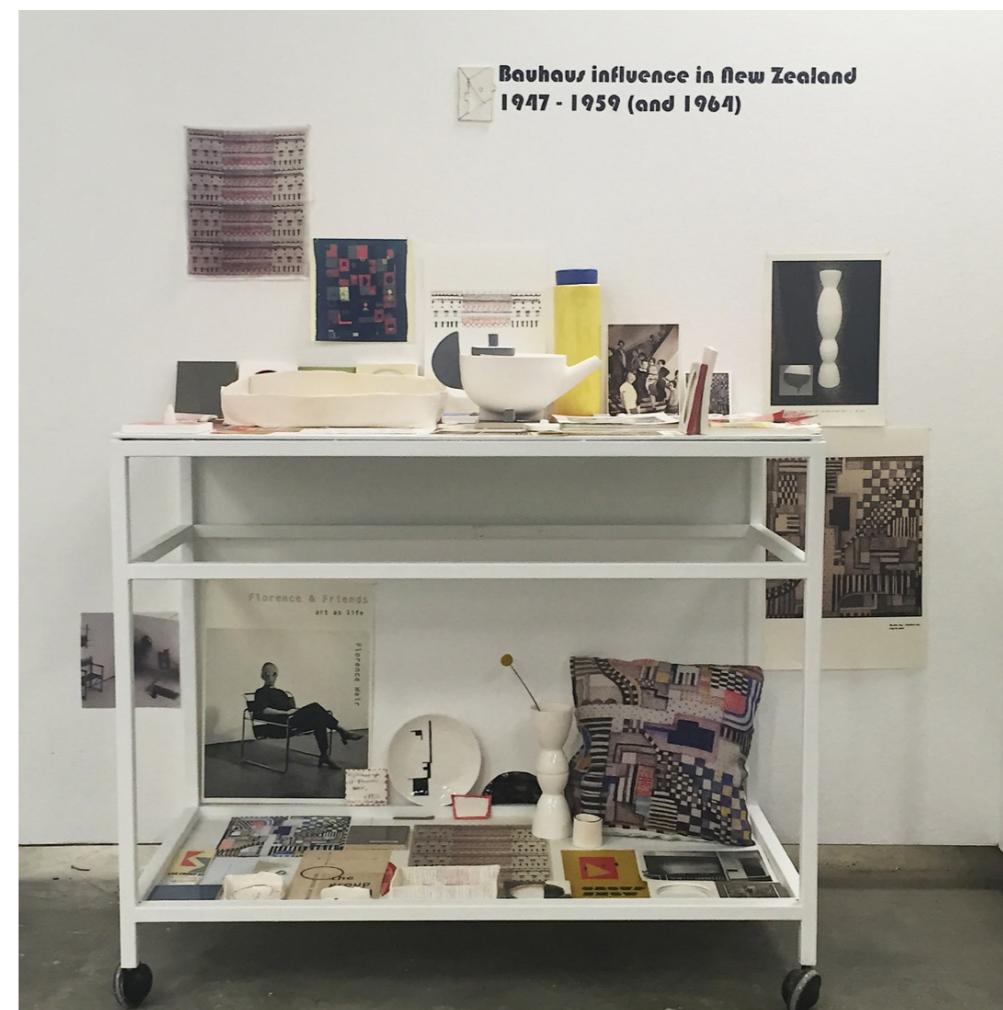


Fig. 59. *Bauhaus Influence in New Zealand 1947–1959 (and 1964)*, 2015. Test installation, Auckland University of Technology.

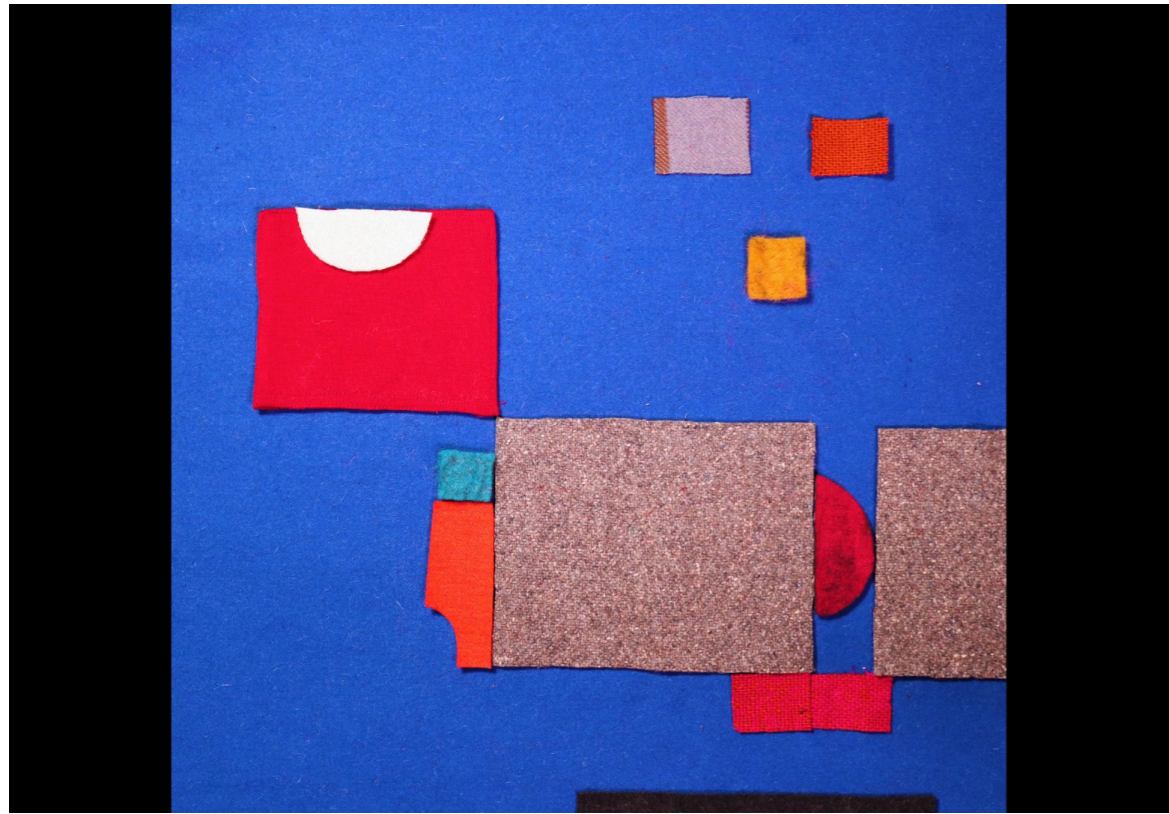


Fig. 60. *Florence and Winnifred*, (still), 2018.
Video animation. Bartley & Company.

called 'Joan,' who is a 'great colourist'¹⁰⁸ and whose clothing choices inspire Florence (see *Slip three*). In this way, the project draws out and develops sets of relations with both recorded histories and imagined ones. Tyler, writing in *Art News New Zealand* about my work, says the practice offers "a joyous cross-pollination of artists and influences across the centuries."¹⁰⁹ In a textile video animation from 2018, a friendship with 'Winnifred' is introduced. For Tyler, it was English modernist Winnifred Nicholson (1893–1981) that "the legendary Florence is put into dialogue with...in a stop-motion animation where colourful geometric cut-out bits of woollen fabric jump around in syncopated rhythms in a way that would have made Len Lye proud."¹¹⁰ However, the work titled *Florence and Winnifred* (exhibited at Bartley & Company, Pōneke Wellington, 2018) could also be referencing Winnifred Hunt, the reviewer of Gallery 91 in 1959, which was used as a recorded transcript in the installation. Tyler concludes her article by saying, "the invention of our very own Bauhäusler is a conceit that offers infinite scope for locally inflected variations."¹¹¹

108 Artwork wall label, *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021.

109 Linda Tyler, "The Bauhaus – Alternative Facts," *Art News New Zealand*, Spring 2018, 75.

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.

Inventing a persona as an art-historical device

Thinking about methods of appropriating and fabricating as ways of working through the records brings me to examine the invention of personae as an art-historical device. Personae are at once a construction and a lie. Reinventing and reimagining figures in art history has historical as well as contemporary precedents like that of Barbara Cleveland. In his essay "Connoisseurship, Painting, and Personhood," Jeremy Melius discusses Bernard Berenson's 'Amico Di Sandro.' Berenson was an American art historian who specialised in the attribution of old masters. Berenson's creation Amico Di Sandro was a fictional character that first appeared in his text of the same name published in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in 1899. This artistic personality he created, whose name translates to 'Sandro's Friend,' was on some level a hoax perpetrated by Berenson. The works supposedly executed by the painter were later almost all attributed to Filippino Lippi, Sandro Botticelli's student. As Melius summarises:

Berenson invents a distinct personality as author of a scattering of late 15th century Italian paintings variously ascribed at that time, between Sandro Botticelli and his student, Filippino Lippi. In this discovery of a third, mediating hand between these painters, neither Botticelli nor Filippino but partaking of both, the 'Amico' personified all that separated these artists, but also all they shared.¹¹²

Florence Weir performs a related role, acting as a proxy to artists and artistic communities, and a friend to many. As Italian art historian Francesco Ventrella contends, "Berenson's ability to give birth to artistic figures...would facilitate the stylistic match among old masters in his virtual archive."¹¹³ This idea of the virtual archive is pertinent to my work, in which it functions as a space where the invented figure facilitates connections that go beyond recorded histories, and has the potential to fill in gaps. Florence Weir can and has been inserted into a multiplicity of histories, groups or movements (for example, The Group, a studio in Dunedin), and is a fantasy persona, a stand-in and a device used to bridge various movements, periods and people.

112 Jeremy Melius, "Connoisseurship, Painting and Personhood," in *Creative Writing and Art History*, ed. Catherine Grant and Patricia Rubin (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 290.

113 Francesco Ventrella, "Under the Hat of the Art Historian," in *Creative Writing and Art History*, ed. Grant and Rubin, 98.



Fig. 61. Rita Angus, *Portrait of Tilli Frankel*, 1939. Pencil on paper. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22451559. Ref: B-060-001.

Locally, there are also precedents of personae and possible invented artistic ‘lives.’ Of particular relevance to this project is a German woman called Tilli Frankel (formerly Donsbach) who, along with her wheat-scientist husband Otto, was involved with Canterbury artists, thinkers and architects. They arrived in Christchurch, from Berlin, in 1929 and together they hosted Berlin-style salon evenings in their Beckenham home, for conversation about art and culture (see *Slip four*). Their friends included Karl Popper and Ernst Plischke, amongst artists, musicians and writers. She exhibited occasionally—in 1933 with the New Zealand Society of Artists. Frankel also modelled for various artists, including Rita Angus, Evelyn Page and Francis Shurrock, “all of whom celebrated her lively personality, self-possessed manner and strong features.”¹¹⁴ Leonard Bell notes in his 2017 book *Strangers Arrive: Emigrés and the Arts in New Zealand, 1930–1980*, that she also “caught the attention” of writers, citing Helen Shaw and Frank Sargeson.¹¹⁵ In internet searches she is named as an ‘artist,’ along with ‘salonist’ and ‘sometime muse.’ In his book, Bell suggests Frankel was one of several emigrés who were “prone to weaving tales”¹¹⁶ about their past lives, laying claim to being at the Bauhaus before she

¹¹⁴ William McAloon, “Enchantress,” Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/35964>

¹¹⁵ Leonard Bell, *Strangers Arrive: Emigrés and the Arts in New Zealand, 1930–1980* (Auckland University Press, 2017), 125.

¹¹⁶ Leonard Bell, *Strangers Arrive: Emigrés and the Arts in New Zealand, 1930–1980* (Auckland University Press, 2017), 125.

It might go something like this:

“Florence Kowhai Cunningham Weir (1899–1979) was born in Christchurch, but spent most of her life in the UK, where she built a successful career as an artist–designer. Florence Weir is the only known New Zealander to have studied at the Bauhaus in Germany, when she was on a postgraduate visit in 1926. In the UK, she was known for her ceramic ranges,¹ small print editions and hand-painted furniture. Weir was also a textile designer for a brief period, working at the Calico Printers’ Association, Manchester. Some of Weir’s designs from that time became popular furnishing fabrics; however, it is believed that the eight gouache designs recovered in New Zealand in the 1980s were never commercially produced. Weir travelled back to her country of birth several times in the 1930s, where she exhibited in Christchurch with The Group, and in Dunedin at the Otago Society of Arts.”

Or this list:

Keywords: portrait, artist–designer, studio, collaboration, watercolours, textiles,² paintbrushes, colour wheel,³ gouache designs, 1930s, green skirt, beaded necklace

I am trying out her voice. Remembering her voice, and her enthusiasm:

“The sort of arrangement I put on the dresser in my guest bedroom when a friend comes to stay. Speaking of which, Joan is coming to stay next month. I must clear the wardrobe. Her ensembles always inspire me. Such a colourist!”

Now I’m thinking about Florence Weir writing to a friend about sharing a studio:

I’ve always longed for a shared studio space. It would also be an exhibition space and a place for events and coming together. I can see long tables that can be reconfigured depending on the activity, with bowls of fruit, fresh flowers, and interesting fabrics set up in the middle. Comfortable nooks for tea breaks and conversation. Shared bookshelves and abundant supplies set up in attractive storage. A range of plinths for still-life set-ups, sculptures or the life-drawing model. Space dividers, framing materials, easels... In all reality, I am probably best suited to working on my own. Though it’s good fun to imagine this other studio.

** Florence Weir, 1936

(I see this text appearing as an introductory text in the installation in Dunedin, setting the scene. I will insert a date, too. I think I’ll make it 1936. It will sit next to Linda Tyler’s quote about the shared women’s studio. This is a way of conflating the two spaces. The art-historical fragment, a short-lived venue of importance in the careers of three female artists, and also a virtual studio, imagined by Weir, my imaginary figure from art history. The two spaces are thus conflated and layered.)

Notes:

1. See exhibition *Florence & Friends*, Flotsam & Jetsam, 2015, curated by Julia Holderness and Richard Orjis.
2. The depicted woven textile held by Weir was made by art student Ann Macarthur in the 1960s under tuition of Florence Akins, Canterbury College School of Art.
3. The colour wheel is a translation of a teaching resource used by Florence Akins in her textiles course at Canterbury College School of Art. UC-MBL-1808, UC Art Collection, Macmillan Brown Library, Christchurch, New Zealand.

came to New Zealand. While Tilli Aldrich—she later remarried and lived in Napier—donated some jewellery to the MTG Hawke’s Bay Tai Ahuriri museum collection that they list as “Bauhaus,” Bell emphasises in his book that there is no record of her actually being at the Bauhaus.¹¹⁷ Yet neither is there evidence to prove she was *not* there.¹¹⁸ In a letter to Robert McGregor, then Director of the Hawke’s Bay Museum and Art Gallery (now MTG Hawke’s Bay), in 1985, four years before her death, she wrote of a round brooch by designer and master craftsman Naum Slutzky: “the original model [of this object] is in the Weimar Bauhaus. Slutzky and other Bauhaus masters opened a branch in Berlin where I studied and worked.”¹¹⁹ I have researched this some more, and can see no reason to doubt her claim. I named a textile work after her, *Kundenentwurf für Tilli Frankel* (2018), which translates to ‘Custom design for Tilli Frankel.’ I was thinking about objects and furnishings that might have been used when she was hosting her salon evenings, which was how she developed community and networks in her new city. I have in mind some future projects that will make use of Tilli’s undocumented experiences at the Bauhaus, layered in with those of Florence Weir. This picks up on my earlier point about how inventions can create connections that go beyond recorded histories, such as connections to the Bauhaus in Aotearoa, which I explored in 2015 in *Bauhaus Influence in New Zealand 1947–1959 (and 1964)*. *Ever Present Archiving* is more interested in making use of undocumented claims than in trying to prove them one way or another.

The enigmatic Bauhäusler Bella Ullmann-Broner used numerous aliases and frequently changed romantic partners and places of residences throughout her life. She often supplied incorrect information about herself to Bauhaus researchers, creating an unstable record of her identity which may well have been intentional. This is interesting in relation to Melius examining how the invention of Amico di Sandro “opens onto a conceptualization...of what anthropologists call the ‘distribution of personhood.’”¹²⁰ Melius looks at British social anthropologist Alfred Gell’s notion of the ‘distributed person’ to examine how personhood “need not be...centred on the body at all, but rather may be...spread ‘beyond the body-boundary,’ across the social milieu

117 There is no record of Frankel’s existence at the institution, as noted in Leonard Bell’s *Strangers Arrive: Emigrés and the Arts in New Zealand, 1930–1980*

118 In a conversation with my father’s friend Stephen Erber, he urged me to not be too suspicious of her claim. He pointed out that the Nazis destroyed a lot of cultural records, including those of the Bauhaus archive. Erber was taught piano by Tilli Frankel as a child, and is himself a German-born Jew and refugee.

119 See *Slip four* for more detail and the email conversation I had with the MTG Hawke’s Bay museum, and the inclusion of notes from her letter, to then director Robert Macgregor.

120 Melius, “Connoisseurship, Painting and Personhood,” 293.

as a whole.”¹²¹ In Pōneke art writer Thomasin Sleight’s imagined art-historical novel *Women in the Field, One and Two* (2018), which is set in the 1950s, the artist and curator characters are partly inspired by real figures from history. This allows Sleight to explore a range of themes and cultural conditions. Referring to the history of selecting works for New Zealand’s national collection, she notes in an interview that the story explores what might have happened “if someone with a more radical, or just a bit more experimental taste had been in this role in the 50s.”¹²² I will expand on how this enabled a discussion around historical conditioning and bias in Chapter Two: *Power and Limits, Blind Spots and Biases*. As previously mentioned, Claire Fontaine, the ready-made artist founded in 2004 by a Paris-based collective, demonstrates the invented figure’s ultimate liberty. Fontaine once declared, “forever young, she can be whoever she wants to be and make whatever she wants.”¹²³ The figurehead of Florence Weir also employs this artistic freedom, enabling her to work across various media and styles. Gaps or major shifts in her oeuvre do not have to be evidenced or accounted for, her artistic record is spread out over time and place. Attributing objects to Florence Weir in installations that explore Bauhaus influences in New Zealand (2015, 2018), I have created possibilities for New Zealand artists to have participated in canonical art-historical chapters previously less associated with local art histories. The narrative around Weir attempts to create social links between artists and movements that I have otherwise not yet located. The ‘project’ is committed to elevating the biographies and social lives of artists, reflecting Gell’s notion of personhood laid out across the social milieu, rather than confined to the limits of one person or body. From this perspective, a social approach to art history is discussed in Chapter Five: *Friendships and Conversation*. As Melius argues, Berenson’s impulse to fill the space between artists with a “personality, an internal history, and something like a name”¹²⁴ reveals the “constructed-ness of artistic personhood itself.”¹²⁵

121 Ibid.

122 Holly Walker, “Imagined Art History: An Interview with Thomasin Sleight,” *The Pantograph Punch*, February 2019, <https://www.pantograph-punch.com/posts/imagined-art-history>

123 Claire Fontaine, “Short Bio,” accessed July 21, 2021, <http://www.clairefontaine.ws/search/bio>

124 Melius, “Connoisseurship, Painting and Personhood,” 293-293.

125 Ibid, 290.

Art historian Linda Tyler has an extensive cultural knowledge of Aotearoa. My chats with her are always fruitful. She knows I am interested in Tilli Frankel, a resident of 1930s Christchurch, and her claims to have studied at the Bauhaus. The salon-style evenings she hosted were based on similar events held in Berlin during this period. She invited poets, artists and thinkers to her home for lively discussions over refreshments. I think of her when I walk around the streets of Beckenham. She must have had quite a presence, as Rita Angus, Evelyn Page and Francis Shurrock all painted or depicted her in their works. Linda once mentioned to me that Tilli had a collection of Bauhaus jewellery and donated it to the Hawke's Bay Museum. Today I finally got around to emailing the Collections Manager to ask for more detail. Collections Co-ordinator Sara Perrett sent me a PDF document of three records with tiny, square 'thumbnail' photographs attached. There is a necklace, a bracelet and a brooch. I had expected more items and, to my disappointment, there is no mention of the word 'Bauhaus' in the collection records. The three items are described like this:

Open silver bracelet with raised decoration of alternating hexagons and 'eyes.' Has been broken and repaired.

String of silver beads consisting of alternating spherical and lattice beads. Has a lever style catch.

Art Deco style round brooch with concentric rings from the outside: silver, deer horn, shell, another ring of shell, silver and an opal at the centre.¹²⁶

I had imagined pieces that would strongly evoke the Bauhaus. I am not sure now what they would have looked like, but I didn't expect these art deco pieces that would probably not even catch my eye in a museum display. I think I imagined strong, geometric shapes, vibrant colour, something evoking the avant-garde?

I wrote back to Perrett, 28 July 2020:

Is there any information on file that was provided by Tilli at the time she gave them to the museum? It would be great to know when she gave them, etc. And perhaps how she acquired them? I see your PDF is labelled 'Bauhaus' jewellery, are we able to say for sure that they were pieces made in the Bauhaus workshops?¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Information obtained from "Bauhaus Jewellery" PDF, MTG Hawke's Bay museum.

¹²⁷ Email correspondence between Sara Perrett and myself, July 28, 2020.

Sara responded, 28 July 2020:

We do have the following notes on record for 85/307:

Original model [of this object is] in the Weimar Bauhaus [Design School]. Slutzky and other Bauhaus masters opened [a] branch in Berlin where I studied and worked."- (Tilli Aldrich letter to Robert McGregor, 14 July 1985.)

Concentric pendants made of various metals combined with wood, mother-of-pearl and stones.

Slutzky started making these circular pendants at the Weimar Bauhaus about 1922 and continued during the following years while he was living in Berlin (1924-27).

(Email correspondence from Dr Klaus Weber, curator Bauhaus Archive, Berlin to Lucy Hammonds 2013).

I do not know whether the other ones are Bauhaus, sorry.¹²⁸

There it is! It sounds like Tilli Frankel did study at the Bauhaus in Berlin. I look online and find further information on Slutzky. Deborah Norton writes that "he favoured geometric shapes, especially concentric circles, yet without the machinelike precision that characterized later Bauhaus work. He combined diverse materials, often incorporating wood and ivory as well as semiprecious stones into his designs. His bold pieces, obviously influenced by Expressionism, may also have been inspired by German folk art."¹²⁹ This helps extend my preconceptions about Bauhaus design, an essence that moves beyond the 'machinelike precision' I often associate with it. And so, it does seem to stack together. Even though the objects disappointed me, the story is exciting and still alive!

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Deborah Norton, "Naum Slutzky Jewelry at the Bauhaus," Ganoskin, accessed October 6, 2020, <https://www.ganoskin.com/article/naum-slutzky-jewelry-bauhaus/>

Chapter summary

This chapter has examined how fabrication, invention and construction operate in this practice-led PhD. I have discussed how Florence Weir ushers in artistic fictions, and invented historical frames and narratives. Weir is inserted into various histories, groups or movements such as the Bauhaus and The Group and, as such, she makes connections. Like Tilli Frankel and Bella Ullmann-Broner have shown us, tales around the Bauhaus are often murky and blurred. I have also looked at the way objects and archives are fabricated and narrative frames are employed. Art historians Charles Merewether's and Giovanna Zapperi's understandings of how artists deploy archives to both *represent* and *produce* has enabled relevant discussions on both my practice and a variety of other constructed and artistic personae. Barbara Cleveland (Australia) and Reena Spaulings (USA) have been discussed alongside practices that deal with history, storytelling and appropriation. I also examined art historians Amelia Jones and Mechtild Widrich's debates around documentation, recirculation and the re-enactment of performance and ephemeral art. Parafiction and plausibility have also been explored to look at how fiction and fact are blurred, and how the viewer's existing knowledges are utilised. I have also examined collective authorship, how Florence Weir's fabrication relates to art-historical models, and the discipline's preoccupations with forgery, attribution and coherence. As stated, the project is committed to putting the social lives of artists centre stage, and Florence Weir is important for this. I have connected this to Alfred Gell's notion of personhood laid out across the social milieu rather than confined to the limits of one person or body.

2

Chapter Two

Power and Limits, Blind Spots and Biases:

Art-historical
practices, productive
inputs into the canon

Chapter Two: Power and Limits, Blind Spots and Biases

Art-historical practices, productive inputs into the canon

Ever Present Archiving joins a growing number of contemporary art practices that “engage not only in storytelling, but more specifically in history-telling.”¹³⁰ It uses a creative feminist methodology as a “productive input into the canon”¹³¹ to extend and reinterpret the contribution of Aotearoa New Zealand women practitioners and professionals. The project seeks to question how practice-led research might expand, critique and challenge assumed forms of art-historical inquiry, knowledge, scholarship and archive presentation, and offer possibilities for their formation and interpretation. These are significant questions for the thesis project. The practice explores how a feminist historical method contributes to an alternative form of archive, one that intervenes, fabricates, generates and rehabilitates. It embraces methods that trouble processes of canon formation, and in this way, *Ever Present Archiving* is in part a critique of art-historical practices and assumptions, a movement toward doing things differently. In examining art-historical practices across both their “power and limits,”¹³² this chapter will open out these various assumptions and discuss how a different art-historical archive might be formed and generated. Opposing an objective distance, historical conditioning and classifying practices, the introduction of a series of diverse voices and other creative feminist methods attempt to problematize conventional processes of canon formation and uncover different meanings and readings of the past. In recent years, contemporary art and curatorial practice have seen a renewed interest and currency in revisiting the work of historical women artists, and what could be called art-historical moments. In art critic and writer Jennifer Higgle’s *The Mirror and the Palette: Rebellion, Revolution and Resilience – 500 Years of Women’s Self-Portraits*, she writes that the history of art is “the history of many women not receiving their dues.”¹³³ This is further affirmed by reviewer Norma Clark, who calls the book “a riposte to Renoir and centuries of unknowing and misjudging.”¹³⁴ Major exhibitions such as retrospectives on Lee Krasner, Agnes Martin and Hilma

¹³⁰ Dieter Roelstraete, “The Way of the Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art,” *e-flux Journal* 4 (March 2009), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/04/68582/the-way-of-the-shovel-on-the-archeological-imaginary-in-art/>

¹³¹ Katja Kobolt, “Feminist Curating Beyond, In, Against or For the Canon?” in *Working with Feminism: Curating and Exhibitions in Eastern Europe*, 1st ed., ed. Katrin Kivimaa (Tallinn University Press, 2013), 41.

¹³² Christina Barton, “Lost and Found,” in *Louise Henderson: From Life*, ed. Felicity Milburn, Lara Strongman, and Julia Waite (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, 2019), 172.

¹³³ Norma Clark, “Review of Jennifer Higgle, *The Mirror and the Palette: Rebellion, Revolution and Resilience – 500 Years of Women’s Self-Portraits*,” *Literary Review*, March 2021, <https://literaryreview.co.uk/the-female-gaze>

¹³⁴ Ibid.

af Klint¹³⁵ reflect both the public's desire to see surveys of women's art and a wide acceptance that women's creativity has often been underrepresented in major institutions. Closer to home, major monographic exhibitions produced by public institutions include recent surveys of Louise Henderson and Joanna Margaret Paul.

Canon formation and problems

Whilst this desire to uncover women practitioners who might have been previously overlooked, considered minor, obscured, side-lined or who are missing altogether is important to the project, it is important that 'we' also reassess and challenge the structures and processes of canon formation that have led to women being ignored, blocked or marginalised. The 'canon' of art history is understood in this project to be the term and context for a conventional timeline and selection of artists who are broadly considered 'worthy' or 'great.'¹³⁶ Feminist theoretician Linda Nochlin's seminal essay, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971), laid out the structural oppression of women in the art world, such as their exclusion from the academies. This is a widely accepted reality. Therefore, the canon framework represents not only certain ideals of beauty and knowledge, but also reflects systematic conditions of exclusion and a patriarchal "bias in favour of art created by those who have occupied the most socially, politically, and economically powerful positions in culture."¹³⁷ Griselda Pollock's book *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art Histories* (1999) begins with a critique of the patriarchal canon, identifying it as, in reviewer Shannon Hunter Hurtado's words, a "gendered and gendering institution intent on excluding those who differ from its hegemonic structure of European male power..."¹³⁸ Pollock then describes the two main feminist approaches that try to deal with this problem. The first tries to add women artists to the existing canon, while the second attempts to enhance the value of female artists and female art forms. Writing about feminist historians who insist on the value of women's crafts such as needlework, Pollock and her research collaborator Rozsika Parker together argue in *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (1981) that, "asserting their value in the face of male

135 *Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings*, curated by Sue Cramer, was exhibited in Aotearoa at City Gallery Wellington, 4 December 2021 – 27 March 2022.

136 In my mind, this translates also to those who have a substantial institutional record.

137 "Questioning the Canon," The Baltimore Museum of Art, accessed January 12, 2022, <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/questioning-the-canon-baltimore-museum-of-art/HQLiHC1bTnB0Kg?hl=en>

138 Shannon Hunter Hurtado, "Griselda Pollock: *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Arts Histories*", [review] RACAR, Canadian Art Review, University Art Association of Canada, Volume 25, Number 1-2, (1998): 125.

prejudice does not displace the hierarchy of values in art history."¹³⁹ And in "Feminist Interventions: Feminist Imperatives", a review of *Old Mistresses*, Deborah Cherry cites the American quilts from the 1800 and 1900s that made their way into institutional exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of Modern Art and others. Cherry argues that through this example, Pollock and Parker demonstrate that the gender of the maker affects the value given to objects, writing that "appropriated as abstract designs, a modernist sleight of hand which divests the quilts of their female makers, as well as their specific meanings."¹⁴⁰ These 'specific meanings' are personal, political and social, an abstract language that communicates the day to day experiences, labours and particular histories of those communities. Pollock and Parker write that "when the quilts are appreciated as decorative wall hangings or examples of abstract *design* rather than as structures of abstract symbols, it is this specific language that is suppressed and denied."¹⁴¹ Even though Nochlin believed in the importance of challenging the structures of the canon, she still curated (with Ann Sutherland Harris) exhibitions like *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (1976-77). Nochlin herself has been criticised for this exhibition that endeavoured to place women in an art historical narrative fundamentally hostile to them, rather than challenge the ideological system that excludes them. Their exhibition used a chronological organisation and conventional methodologies. However, while being aware of this paradox, we can acknowledge that giving visibility to women artists and practices that have been overlooked is still an imperfect but necessary step in recovering forgotten art histories. Rather than rejecting the canon altogether as obsolete, even if it has served to marginalise and obscure womens' representation, feminist curator Katja Kobolt argues that "a productive input into the canon, by extending, revising and constantly interpreting it, has been one of the subjects of a feminist agenda."¹⁴² My project participates in this agenda by researching a number of lesser-known New Zealand women artists and arts professionals such as Florence Akins, Barbara Brooke and Anne Hamblett. I aim to rehabilitate and reframe these lesser-known histories and figures, extending knowledge of them and attempting to reveal the "blind spots."¹⁴³

The texts by Nochlin, Parker and Pollock underpin how a feminist art

139 Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 65-66.

140 Deborah Cherry, "Feminist Interventions: Feminist Imperatives" [review of Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses*], *Art history*, 5; 4 (December 1982); 505.

141 Pollock and Parker, *Old Mistresses*, 8.

142 Kobolt, "Feminist Curating Beyond, In, Against or For the Canon?" 41.

143 Anneke Jaspers, "Barbara Cleveland," AGSA, <https://www.agsa.sa.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/2018-adelaide-biennial-australian-art-divided-worlds/barbara-cleveland/>

history needs to challenge the structures and art historical apparatus that has created the systems that exclude, marginalise and suppress. Pollock's alternative feminist strategy outlined in *Differencing the Canon* is to disrupt the binaries that establish patriarchal dominance with something multiple. Pollock uses the gerund *differencing* "to stress the active re-reading and reworking of that which is visible and authorised in the spaces of representation in order to articulate that which, while repressed, is always present as its structuring other."¹⁴⁴

Curator Julia Waite remarked, when introducing her lecture at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū (2019), which focused on a group of lesser-known New Zealand women painters of the 1930s and 1940s, that she hoped her audience would glimpse

a new story—one that does not rely on the patriarchal scaffolding of previous art history. A story that through this remarkable group calls into question many of the assumptions that we keep passing on about art in New Zealand.¹⁴⁵

This questioning and revising is exactly the approach that Pollock, Parker and Nochlin call for and what *Ever Present Archiving* is working towards. Indeed, in Nochlin's updated essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? Thirty Years After" (2006) she writes that "feminist art history is there to make trouble, to call into question, to ruffle feathers in the patriarchal dovecotes....At its strongest, a feminist art history is a transgressive and anti-establishment practice meant to call many of the major precepts of the discipline into question."¹⁴⁶ From a similar perspective, Waite describes how New Zealand painter Flora Scales shared notes and learning from her European art tuition with young New Zealand painter Toss Woollaston. She then argues that in spite of this service or influence, Scales was "reduced to shadowy figure" and had only a "bit part in Toss Woollaston's narrative of advancing modernism"¹⁴⁷ in Francis Pound's 2009 book *The Invention of New Zealand Art & National Identity 1930 – 1970*. Waite titled her lecture *Exiles and Expatriates: Modern Women and States of Unbelonging*, and I am interested in how she conceives of a lack of recognition within the canon as

144 Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Arts Histories*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 8.

145 Waite, lecture notes, "Exiles and Expatriates."

146 Nochlin, Linda. "'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' Thirty Years After" in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, ed. Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 102.

147 Waite, lecture notes, "Exiles and Expatriates."

an almost physical state of untethering. *Ever Present Archiving* is a project that is attentive to and led by these 'new' stories, and a desire to challenge and possibly even reset art-historical assumptions and entrenched modernist narratives. Nochlin writes that:

There is still resistance to the more radical varieties of feminist critique in the visual arts, and its practitioners are accused of such sins as neglecting the issue of quality, destroying the canon, scanting the innately visual dimension of the artwork, and reducing art to the circumstances of its production...¹⁴⁸

Addressing this, I wish to outline how *in addition to* trying to foreground the voices and practices of obscured women artists by bringing them into existing art histories, I am also employing processes that trouble the patriarchal structures of the canon. These are approaches that adopt the imagined, the partial, the fragment and the polyvocal, amongst others. Methods that highlight contingent narratives, constellations, relationality and collective activity.

The alternate (marginal, different, second, possible, substitute)

In Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications*, I explored the 'mythic' figure of Barbara Cleveland and how her construction through a shared memory critiques the forming of history. *Bodies in Time*, a video installation they produced at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2017 explored the limits of archival traces, and the legacies of ephemeral and performance art practices that are not easily archived or recorded. In their words, the project takes "as its starting point one of Cleveland's performance scores called *Bodies in Time*... which...recalls fleeting, 'marginal' moments from art history—performances that survive as fragments of footage, grainy images and unstable memories."¹⁴⁹ Working with choreographer and dancer Angela Goh, "the artists reanimate Cleveland's score to consider how performance is transmitted between bodies and across time periods."¹⁵⁰ The video has overlaid sound of a voice recounting performance art memories of works by Bonita Ely and Joan Jonas. Situated in the last room of the twentieth-century Australian galleries, the space that

148 Nochlin, "'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' Thirty Years After", 101 – 102.

149 Cleveland quoted in Jaspers, "In Search of Barbara Cleveland."

150 "Bodies in Time," Barbara Cleveland, accessed March 1, 2022, <http://www.barbaracleland.com.au/#/bodies-in-time/>



Fig. 62. Barbara Cleveland, *Bodies in Time*, 2016, installation image at Art Gallery of New South Wales. This work was commissioned by the Art Gallery of New South Wales as part of the Contemporary Projects series, which supports new work by living artists at the progressive edge of contemporary practice. Photograph by Felicity Jenkins/AGNSW and courtesy of the artists.

would usually display work from Cleveland's era, *Bodies in Time* "insists on the relevance of performance to a history of Australian art."¹⁵¹ Working in this museum context allowed the collective to critique the archive as a "kind of biased, partial apparatus."¹⁵² This approach is part of a wider critique interested in revealing the selective actions inherent in curatorial and art historical processes such as "the ways in which collections are sorted, archived and displayed, and how historical narratives are constructed."¹⁵³ As Cleveland notes:

Collections are, of course, never comprehensive, nor are they neutral; they continue to revolve around nations, art movements, masters and masterpieces. Museum collections, like the writing of art history, are dependent on a process of selection—a process that has historically tended to favour the work of white men.¹⁵⁴

While many public galleries in Aotearoa are attempting to address these problems, there is still ongoing bias in curatorial work. American art activist group the Guerrilla Girls graphed Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's exhibition history since 2011 in a collaboration with the institution. The data

151 "Bodies in Time," Art Gallery of New South Wales, accessed March 1, 2022, <http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collective/works/380.2016/#about>

152 Cleveland quoted in Jaspers, "In Search of Barbara Cleveland."

153 Ibid.

154 Jaspers, "In Search of Barbara Cleveland."

was displayed in a poster as part of the group's major survey show there, *Guerrilla Girls: Reinventing the 'F' Word – Feminism!* (8 March – 13 October 2019). The exhibition presented the anonymous collective's artistic practice from 1985 until 2016, with a particular focus on their bold and provocative street posters which criticise ongoing gender biases in art and society. This particular poster revealed a marked gender bias at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki: since 2011, 67% of solo exhibitions have been male artists, whereas only 33% have been female. Beneath the graph, the poster declares: "While we were aware that just 15.1% of the artists in our collection are identified as female, we thought our recent exhibition activity might look better than this."¹⁵⁵

In her essay "Lost and Found," which was included in the monograph *Louise Henderson: From Life* (2019), art historian and curator Christina Barton examines her selection processes, reassessing an exhibition she curated twenty-eight years ago on French-born New Zealand painter Louise Henderson. In this essay, Barton explores the late Henderson's relegation in the art-historical record. This failure manifested in what can be only be described as an overdue recognition of her work and the glaring absence of any monograph (until 2019). Barton goes on to outline how Henderson is also missing from self-consciously feminist publications of that era¹⁵⁶—even admitting she was missing in Barton's own book *Alter-Image: Feminism and Representation in New Zealand Art 1973–1993*. Exceptions to the rule—Francis Pound and feminist scholars Elizabeth Eastmond and Merimeri Penfold—included Henderson in volumes that Barton argues "used images with minimal commentary to construct their alternative canons."¹⁵⁷ Barton appears to be arguing that a pictorial focus can be a powerful way to push back against "the blind spots and biases that haunt art history."¹⁵⁸ Barton's comments also reinforce New Zealand critic Andrew Paul Wood's view that "women artists have long been poorly served by art publishing."¹⁵⁹ Of this contemporary moment, Barton notes what she calls a "new mood in the air and a desire to find alternative figures to respect—anything to topple the powerful hold of the white male artist who has prevailed through art history."¹⁶⁰ *Ever Present Archiving* reflects and participates in this current

155 Poster viewed in photograph taken by Monique Redmond (March 28, 2019).

156 I am referring to the 1990s, when Barton curated her exhibition on Henderson.

157 Barton, "Lost and Found," 177.

158 Jaspers, "Barbara Cleveland."

159 Andrew Paul Wood, "Albrecht and Hodgkins Publications," *EyeContact*, April 9, 2019, <https://eyecontactmagazine.com/2019/04/albrecht-and-hodgkins-publications>,

160 Barton, "Lost and Found," 175.



Fig. 63. Thomasin Sleigh, *Women in the Field, One and Two*, Lawrence & Gibson, (date).
Cover design: Judith Carnaby.

mood; it is a review of the status quo and a search for the alternate. This can also be seen in recent literature. One of the artists featured on the Bowdown Instagram account (another project by Jennifer Higgin) is Natalia Goncharova. A modernist pioneer in early-twentieth-century Russia, Goncharova is likely to be the primary inspiration for the character of artist Irina Durova in Thomasin Sleigh's art-historical novel *Women in the Field, One and Two* (2018), introduced in Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications*. Irina Durova is the central subject of the novel, which is set in London in the 1950s. She is a Russian avant-garde painter, who has been overlooked in Britain's art-historical patriarchal biases. In the 1950s and 1960s, New Zealand employed British 'experts' to suggest paintings for New Zealand's National Art Gallery. In this story, Ruth Bishops, a woman 'art keeper'¹⁶¹ at a London gallery, discovers Durova's work and the plot follows the process of her work being acquired and presented for the national collection in Wellington. Sleigh's imagined art history explores possibilities and alternative decisions for this collection, played out through a curator character who was essentially ahead of her time. Located within similar territory, my project sets out to reposition and question aspects of canon formation, and to open out some of this entrenched

¹⁶¹ 'Art keeper' is an outmoded term for 'curator.'

historical conditioning.

Given the appetite for toppling the dominant male artist in history and thinking about reframing with an alternative focus, Irish-Swiss-American artist duo Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler's series of projects on Flora Mayo are a pertinent example. They examined a missing figure from art history, that of real artist Flora Mayo. Moving to Paris from Denver, USA, to study art in 1926, Mayo met and became friends with Alberto Giacometti. In Paris, they studied together under Antoine Bourdelle, depicted each other in bust sculptures and were also lovers. Mayo's own work was never preserved and was therefore lost, along with her presence and contribution in the art-historical record. Hubbard and Birchler first found a photograph and a scant mention of Mayo in a 1985 biography on Giacometti by American writer James Lord.¹⁶² Here, she is relegated in the scholarship with an account that dismisses her as an artist and focuses on her appearance in a demeaning way. Hubbard was so shocked that she memorised Lord's description. From her memory, it read as follows: "She's attractive but not beautiful. And there's something weak in her face. It must've been apparent even then that she was one of those destined to be destroyed by circumstances."¹⁶³ Hubbard and Birchler see her presence here as merely a 'footnote.' Embarking on a search for Mayo, they eventually met her son, David Mayo, who shared with them his mother's photographs, documents and personal belongings that, until then, no one had ever requested to see. He had never known of the Giacometti connection. Their series of projects, *Flora* (2017), *Bust* (2017) and *Archive, Flora Luella Lewis Mayo* (2019–21), documents Mayo's life in a feminist rewriting of the archive. *Flora* (2017) is a double-sided film installation. Each side of the installation reveals a different story while sharing the same soundtrack. One side recreates Mayo's 1926 studio, in which she works on her sculpture of Giacometti, dances and shares a meal with him. The other side reveals Mayo's son, David Mayo, whom the artists discovered after an exhaustive international search. The overlaid sound combines a reconstruction of Mayo's voice (recorded with an actor) comprising thoughts and comments from her re-found letters and notes, and David Mayo's personal reflections on his mother's life and strength of character. In an interview in February 2020, the artists make clear that their aim is not about "reinserting Mayo into the canon

¹⁶² James Lord (1922–2009) was an American biographer and memoirist. He was the author of several books, including biographies of Alberto Giacometti and Pablo Picasso.

¹⁶³ Artist Teresa Hubbard's memorised quote from James Lord, *Giacometti: A Biography* (New York: Noonday Press, 1997), quote published as is, in Esteban L. Hernandez, "The Life of a Forgotten Denverite Who May Have Been a 'Kim Kardashian of Her Day' Is on Display at MCA Denver," *Denverite*, February 4, 2020, <https://denverite.com/2020/02/04/the-life-of-a-forgotten-denverite-who-may-have-been-a-kim-kardashian-of-her-day-is-on-display-at-mca-denver/>



Fig. 64. (Above) Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler, *Flora*, 2017, (installation detail). Synchronized double-sided film installation with shared soundtrack, 30 min, loop. Courtesy the Artists, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York / Los Angeles and Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin.

Fig. 65. (Left) Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler, *Bust*, 2017, (detail). Flora Mayo and Alberto Giacometti, with the bust she made of him, circa 1927. Photographer unknown. Original photograph belonging to Flora Mayo, kept under her mattress, lost. Film negative missing. Reproduction from only known duplicate print, archive of Fotostiftung Schweiz, Winterthur. Courtesy the Artists, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York / Los Angeles and Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin.

Fig. 66. (Right) Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler, *Flora*, 2017. Synchronized double-sided film installation with shared soundtrack, 30 min, loop. Courtesy the Artists, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York / Los Angeles and Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin. Photograph by Ugo Carmeni.



of art history.”¹⁶⁴ Recognising that the underlying structures need to change, they view reinsertion as too simplistic an outcome. In my view, their extensive research and hybrid storytelling, combining documentary and re-enactment, records and positions Mayo in a different, expanded historical narrative. And for curator Nora Abrams, Hubbard and Birchler’s work and extensive research bring Mayo “back to life and give her voice a platform that elided her during her lifetime.”¹⁶⁵ As an archival reconstruction, their project rehabilitates, and creates a richer, layered, subjective record of this woman artist in place of the previous, relegated or even absent one. For Australian writer and curator Amelia Wallin, archival research “can be an act of historical solidarity, knowledge production, historical revision, or simply an archivist doing their job.” Like the Flora Mayo projects, these first three acts are all relevant for *Ever Present Archiving*. Researching a number of lesser-known New Zealand women artists and arts professionals (Florence Akins, Barbara Brooke, Doris Lusk, Anne Hamblett and Mollie Lawn amongst others), I seek to privilege and potentially reframe these undocumented, incomplete histories. The project aims to achieve this by offering up alternatives through practising and exhibition. These gestures and methods will be discussed in the rest of this chapter, but are also present in examples from the project that are discussed in other chapters.

Canon conditioning

In her 2019 essay discussed above, Barton revisits her curatorial decisions made in the 1991 exhibition on Henderson, providing what Wood calls “valuable context of the critical/curatorial culture of the time, and the resources she drew on and/or rebelled against.”¹⁶⁶ Barton openly acknowledges her narrow approach: that her selection was limited, serving a narrative purpose. She states that “it seems timely to reflect on the processes of art historical reckoning—my own included—that have conditioned Henderson’s reception and to use this opportunity to demonstrate the power and limits of my still-evolving discipline.”¹⁶⁷ I am interested in Barton’s emphasis here on process: ideas and thinking that are shifting and not locked down. Barton’s exhibition, which was titled *Louise Henderson: The Cubist*

¹⁶⁴ Hernandez, “The Life of a Forgotten Denverite.”

¹⁶⁵ Norma Abrams, “Teresa Hubbard/Alexander Birchler: Flora,” gallery guide for *Teresa Hubbard/Alexander Birchler: Flora*, MCA Denver, September 20, 2018 – April 5, 2020, https://hubbardbirchler.net/wp-content/uploads/PDF/PUBLICATIONS_ESSAYS/MCA_Denver_Hubbard_Birchler_English_Gallery_Guide.pdf

¹⁶⁶ Wood, “Albrecht and Hodgkins Publications.”

¹⁶⁷ Barton, “Lost and Found,” 172.

Years 1946–1958, showed forty works in two linked spaces at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. Writing this essay twenty-eight years later, Barton questions the narrow frame of the exhibition, re-examines her curatorial decisions and is ‘willing’ to revise her ‘assessment,’ in the context of this new mood she has noted. Seeing in more recent years Henderson’s celebrated and large-scale series *The Twelve Months*, she admits she has questioned “the narrowness”¹⁶⁸ of her 1991 selection and approach. Barton chose to focus on her ‘cubist’ works, admitting she was not drawn to Henderson’s latter work—now widely recognised as her finest—and admits she used the 1991 exhibition to “enter the discursive fray, taking my pot-shot at the narrow focus on our nationalist art historians—in their privileging of landscape and their preference for a kind of hard-edged realism.”¹⁶⁹ In this statement, Barton acknowledges that in the original exhibition her selective focus and exhibition narrative were politically motivated.

Historical conditioning and bias are also at the fore in Sleigh’s *Women in the Field, One and Two* (2018). Brannavan Gnanalingam, author and production manager of the novel’s publisher Lawrence & Gibson, writes that “*Women in the Field, One and Two* charts a trans-hemispheric journey as relevant to today as to the time it was set,” and goes on to say that Sleigh “reveals the complex ways in which culture is formed: often by serendipity and personality, as much as planned decisions.”¹⁷⁰ In a 2018 interview, Sleigh explains that Bishops and Durova are inspired somewhat by real figures from history, such as Mary Chamot and Natalya Goncharova. Mary Chamot worked as an Assistant Keeper at the Tate Gallery in London and acquired works for the collection in Wellington in the 1960s and 1970s. However, Sleigh is clear that Ruth is *not* Mary, and has pulled back the time period to the 1950s. Chamot was an advocate for women modernist artists, and because of her advocacy the collection (now in Te Papa Tongarewa) includes a number of eminent European women artists working at that time, such as Goncharova and Eileen Agar. The novel’s plot follows the process of procurement of the artworks for New Zealand’s national collection from initial correspondence, confirmation and purchasing of the artworks, through to the transportation, exhibition and reception of them in Wellington. Echoing Jasper’s comments on museum and curatorial systems, Sleigh writes that “every art collection will have these very weird stories. You think of it as a kind of neutral professional process by which

168 Ibid, 173.

169 Ibid.

170 Lawrence & Gibson, “Thomasin Sleigh’s New Novel: *Women in the Field, One and Two*,” Scoop, July 31, 2018, <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/CU1807/S00311/thomasin-sleighs-new-novel-women-in-the-field-one-and-two.htm>

things are acquired, but there’s all these weird human behaviours and strange decisions that create this national collection.”¹⁷¹ Like Barbara Cleveland, Sleigh underscores how biased collections can be. *Ever Present Archiving* attempts to foreground these biases, while also offering them up as productive opportunities for reconsideration.

Resisting tidy and consistent narratives

Picking away at art-historical assumptions, *Ever Present Archiving* attempts to complicate the narrative desire for consolidation, attribution and consistency. I am reminded of a curatorial wall label at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū that I noticed on a visit to the gallery in 2018, which I think acknowledges this tendency and desire for a ‘tidy’ or resolved narrative, a desire that sustains the modernist, patriarchal system. It read: “It’s tempting for art historians to pinpoint dates, pin down moments or crucial factors for developments in an artist’s oeuvre and solidify an artist’s transformations in their work.”¹⁷² This statement was made in relation to painter Tony de Lautour’s shift from figurative to abstract work, and the rest of the label discussed how it was a slow process that unfolded over several years. Significantly, some women artists from history appear to have intentionally obscured a clear, linear or solid view of their lives and work. In *Bauhaus Women: A Global Perspective* (2019), researcher Andrea-Beate Dippel outlines how Bauhaus student Monica Bella Ullmann-Broner supplied incorrect names and a later birth date to the authors of an earlier Bauhaus history book titled *50 Years: Bauhaus* (1968). Ullmann-Broner used aliases, was itinerant and had multiple romantic partners. Dippel writes that this case “is further evidence that the legacies of female artists, particularly those without children, are far less frequently preserved than those of their male colleagues”¹⁷³ and concludes that Ullmann-Broner seems to have been “uninterested in leaving behind a seamless and flawless life story for posterity.”¹⁷⁴ Perhaps Ullmann-Broner’s willingness to slip from and possibly upset the official records, as well as her possible agency in this obscurity, draws attention to this gendered imbalance and troubles the patriarchal system. Florence’s life and work is intentionally murky: timeframes often do not add up and timelines overlap. For example, in *The Studio* (2021), according to my wall label text, a textile design from

171 Walker, “Imagined Art History: An interview with Thomasin Sleigh.”

172 Artwork label produced for *US V THEM: Tony De Lautour*, curated by Peter Vangioni, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, May 5 – September 16, 2018.

173 Andrea-Beate Dippel, “Monica Bella Ullmann-Broner,” in *Bauhaus Women: A Global Perspective*, ed. Elizabeth Otto and Patrick Rosslet (London: Herbert Press, 2019), 140.

174 Ibid.

Florence's oeuvre is influenced by the Doris Lusk work exhibited at the Otago Society of Arts (see *Slip five*), at a time when, according to other narratives purported within installations, Florence Weir was living and working in London. *Ever Present Archiving* resists urges to 'solidify' and 'pinpoint' a seamless narrative, or a neat timeline, acknowledging instead that histories are fragmented, messy, leaky: they overlap and are often inconsistent. The project questions the system by being interested in this incoherency; the shifts in artistic practice that are difficult to store, trace and document. This is because I believe these practices are deserving of documentation, visibility and acknowledgement, however challenging they might be to record.

Rehabilitation, a feminist return, acts of speculative reinvention

In thinking about this research as a rehabilitation, I am interested in how Wallin frames it, arguing that:

to return connotes that something is unfinished, incomplete, or ongoing; a feminist return to the archive is a project of expansion, a process of making room to account for those experiences that cannot exist wholly in the documents, that is to say the embodied experiences of daily lives that resist or deny documentation.¹⁷⁵

Australian artist Diana Baker Smith's return to the work of the late Australian dance artist Phillipa Cullen (1950–1975) involves rewriting and remaking. Baker Smith made a series of works which revisit Cullen's legacy, and specifically a durational performance work called *24-Hour Concert* performed at Sydney's Hogarth Galleries in 1974. In her video essay *The Lost Hour* (2021), Baker Smith visits the sites where Cullen staged the performance and where her archives now reside. However, as a way of expanding and thinking through the existing traces of the performance, such as grainy footage, photographs and written recollections, Baker Smith performs what she calls "embodied acts of remembering and misremembering."¹⁷⁶ These include approximations of Cullen's instructional movement scores¹⁷⁷ as well as self-conscious acts of active research: questions, observations and physical gestures. Hogarth Galleries, now housing a menswear boutique, is closed on

¹⁷⁵ Amelia Wallin, "Feminism in the Archives and the Archive in Feminism: Propositions Gleaned from Alex Martinis Roe's *To Become Two*," *Performance Paradigm* 13 (2017): 137.

¹⁷⁶ Diana Baker Smith, "The Lost Hour," <https://www.dianabakersmith.com/the-lost-hour>

¹⁷⁷ One such score read "make a movement, make it for so long until you feel that you should stop," which Baker Smith then performs. Text excerpt from Diana Baker Smith, *The Lost Hour*, 2021, 05:50, <https://vimeo.com/413848096/a6c9081dc2>

the day she visits. Unable to enter the space, she performs movement scores as a way of engaging with and exploring, from outside, the space and its brick exterior walls. Baker Smith describes her process as "walking between what remains and what disappears."¹⁷⁸ During her research, Baker Smith discovers that because the performance coincided with the daylight saving time change, the performance lasted for 23 hours, hence her titling of this work *The Lost Hour*. Cullen herself had planned for a one-hour performance to make up the time, however this never happened. Cullen died the following year, aged only 25 years. In another video work, titled *The One Hour Concert* (2021) Baker Smith collaborated with dancer and choreographer Brooke Stamp. The performance took place in the menswear boutique, the former Hogarth Galleries site. Stamp improvised for 60 minutes, but, as Artspace director Bree Richards writes:

The duration of Stamp's improvisation is not represented in real time, but is instead communicated by the occasional interruption of a counter, flashing up on screen. The work runs for only ten minutes (contradicting its title), and at this point, you begin to understand that *The One Hour Concert* is something other than a straightforward performance document. As a speculative account of an event that never happened, *The One Hour Concert* is reimagined and remixed as a dance for camera.¹⁷⁹

Stamp's cues and movements are drawn from the original event's documentation and Cullen's instructional scores. It is contemplative and slow, during the performance she stretches, poses, walks, sits, and "becomes attuned to the space."¹⁸⁰ This performance and a poster designed by Aotearoa artist Ella Sutherland are speculative acts for a performance that could not be realised in Cullen's lifetime. Baker Smith's ongoing projects that deal with Cullen's legacy are "multivocal dialogue[s] across time and place"¹⁸¹ and a "project of expansion,"¹⁸² in that they extend her work into new contexts and include collaborations. In this way, they work to reactivate Cullen's practice, and through these active, participatory and self-reflexive research methods, Baker Smith performs historical solidarity and generates knowledge.

¹⁷⁸ Baker Smith in *The Lost Hour*, 2021, 06:18, <https://vimeo.com/413848096/a6c9081dc2>

¹⁷⁹ Bree Richards, *Turning and Returning: Diana Baker Smith and Phillipa Cullen's 24 Hour Concert* (Sydney: Artspace Sydney). Exhibition catalogue for Diana Baker Smith, *Tasks Yet to be Composed for the Occasion*, Artspace Sydney, May 20 – June 13, 2021.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Wallin, "Feminism in the Archives and the Archive in Feminism", 137.

I am remembering Florence and writing short accounts about her design work for textiles:

The vase in “Doris’s ‘Flower Study’ / ‘Mixed Flowers’ sits on a paisley fabric in various blues and oranges. I have borrowed this design for a new fabric, using leaf shapes in blues and rust. I recall that Hamblett also painted a ‘Flower Study’ in 1939. It was sold at the Otago Arts Society annual exhibition in 1940, but she wished she had kept it and given it to family. I think I remember a vibrant crimson against olive greens and a confetti-like tablecloth covered side table, sitting behind an ochre-coloured vase.”

And one from a friend:

“I was told that Florence often cut flowers from her garden, snipping petals and leaves into various shapes and slivers. Then let them fall onto coloured-paper backgrounds. She used gouache for most of her designs on paper. I wish I could see how they looked as fabrics, and also know what the fabrics were used for. It’s almost as if these designs are little outfits, worn arrangements from a cottage garden.” Courtesy of Florence Weir Studio.

I’m now describing Anne Hamblett works that I’ve never seen. I’m remembering the works—via Florence—as best as I can. Such a shame that *Studio Interior* and *Studio Window* are missing. I would have loved to have known how Anne described this space in paint:

“I can almost recall Hamblett’s painting ‘Studio Interior.’ It included a table and a divan in the scene. Glimpses of several works hanging in the background, with the suggestion of an easel and some kind of space divider on the left.



Figs. 67-68. Diana Baker Smith, *The Lost Hour*, (stills), 2021. Single channel HD video. Image courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 69. Diana Baker Smith, *The One Hour Concert*, (still), 2021. Single channel HD video. Image courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 70. Diana Baker Smith with Ella Sutherland, *The One Hour Concert; Tasks yet to be composed for the occasion*, 2021. Courtesy of the artists.

Research collaborations

Gallery 91 was a project I developed for SCAPE Public Art in 2017 in collaboration with art-history scholar Petrena Fishburn, which examined gallerist Barbara Brooke (1925–1980), a key advocate for contemporary New Zealand art and its developing professionalism in Christchurch throughout the late 1950s to 1980. Fishburn’s 2014 master’s thesis set out to assert “Brooke’s rightful place in the history of art professionalism of this country,”¹⁸³ pointing out that Warwick Henderson’s *Behind the Canvas: An Insider’s Guide to the New Zealand Art Market* (2012) “only records the men that Brooke worked alongside, leaving her unacknowledged when listing accomplishments she was involved in.”¹⁸⁴ Fishburn also notes that at the time of her research, the resource library at the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū contained an artist file for Andrew Brooke—Barbara’s ex-husband—but no file on Barbara, even though Fishburn believes that “her contributions to the local art scene surpassed those of her husband.”¹⁸⁵ Fishburn addressed this omission, conducting interviews with a number of Brooke’s contemporaries to gather oral narratives over a three-year period, a process of recovery, extending the archive and finding counter-narratives. While Fishburn’s thesis gave voice and recognition to Brooke’s significant contributions to young artists, it still employed standard art historical methodologies such as forming a readable and linear narrative, and organising her career into discreet chapters.¹⁸⁶

The memories Fishburn gathered were used in *Gallery 91* as vinyl quotes applied directly to the walls to create a sense of a partial conversation, a gesture towards the multiple and polyvocal. Through our collaboration, we moved away from a focus on solo artist subjects and a narrative-centric presentation. This installation foregrounded the artistic associations and the venue as a critical place of support. The final installation differed in content from Fishburn’s written chapter on the gallery, which detailed exhibitions by Colin McCahon and John Coley, amongst others. Instead, we tended towards emphasising the exhibitions of the lesser-known New Zealand artists such as June Black (1910–2009), a ceramic artist and painter, reproducing lost tactile details from the gallery such as a ceramic necklace, obscured in a

¹⁸³ Petrena Fishburn, “Barbara Brooke: A Trend-Setting Art Professional in New Zealand 1959–1980,” unpublished master’s thesis, University of Canterbury, 2014, iv.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 1.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ See Slip .. from more Petrena’s own reflections on her research.



Figs. 71 - 74 *Gallery 91*, (installation views), 2017. SCAPE Public Art, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.



Visitors to the gallery were invited to admire the water colours and oil paintings, prints and drawings, alongside the pottery and ceramics, wood carving, jewellery, fabrics and cushions, which were elegantly displayed on the gallery’s walls and throughout the space.⁵ (See Fig.9)

blurry historical photograph. This approach is expanded on in more detail in Chapter Four: *Queer and Affective Approaches, Feeling Things*. We elevated aspects of the holistic gallery experience, such as the design of the invitations and the modes of object display. We aimed to highlight the original Gallery 91's treatment of objects in the space and its hospitable nature, often mentioned in the oral interviews Fishburn conducted. This was established through the inclusion of furniture and attention to the display systems. Embodying Wallin's conception of a 'feminist return,' the project accounted for and fleshed out some of the experiences that were not recorded in the documents. A folding screen was upholstered with reproductions of paintings by June Black, and a mid-century wooden chair had cushions covered with reproductions of watercolours by Andrew Brooke. These decisions might also reflect one of Swedish theorist and art historian Dan Karlholm's twelve steps for a "manifest alternative"¹⁸⁷ to art history writing. The steps are outlined in his essay titled "Postcritical or Acritical? Twelve Steps for Art History Writing in the Anthropocene." The counter strategy he offers for "elitism and canonicity—an obsession with greatness, hierarchies and ranking"¹⁸⁸ is to study "constellations, associations, links, rhizomes, multiplicities, intensities and conglomerates regardless of fame or quality."¹⁸⁹ In *Ever Present Archiving*, I aim for the inclusion of lesser-known practitioners, such as Mollie Lawn and June Black and a focus on the structures surrounding artistic process such as galleries. This can help us think about alternative art historical methods for evaluation to create less hierarchical and more inclusive approaches.

Other textile histories: constellations, associations, links

My practice often positions and researches overlooked figures in pairings with other artists, or in group contexts with a set of relations. The exhibition *Florence & Florence: other textile histories* (5 September – 4 October 2018) at Ilam Campus Gallery, introduced a figure often missing from Canterbury art narratives, Florence Akins. I positioned and associated her alongside Florence Weir, her made-up namesake, also born in Canterbury. Textile teacher Florence Akins (1906–2012) attended Canterbury College of Art from age twelve and was appointed to the staff in 1926. She taught at the school for a considerable period, a variety of subjects including design principles,

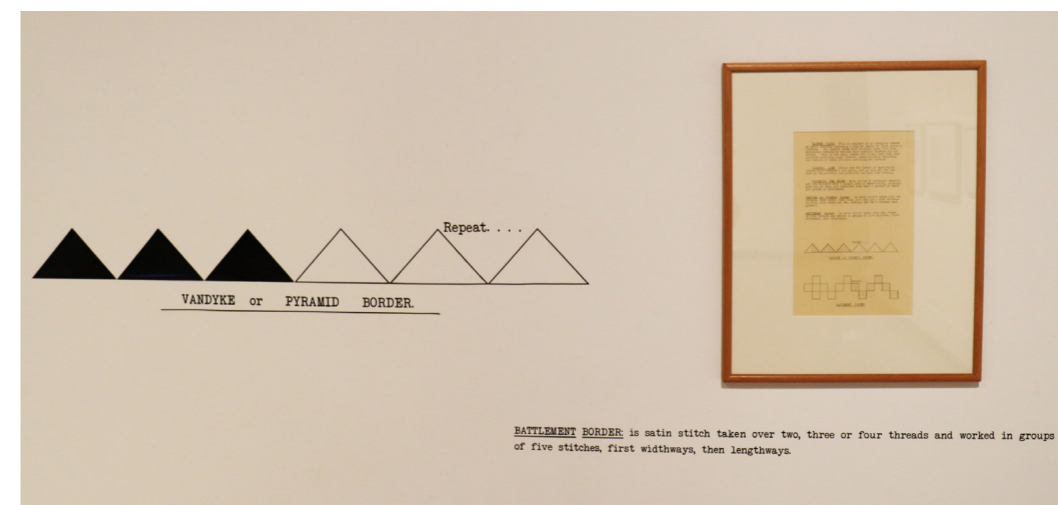
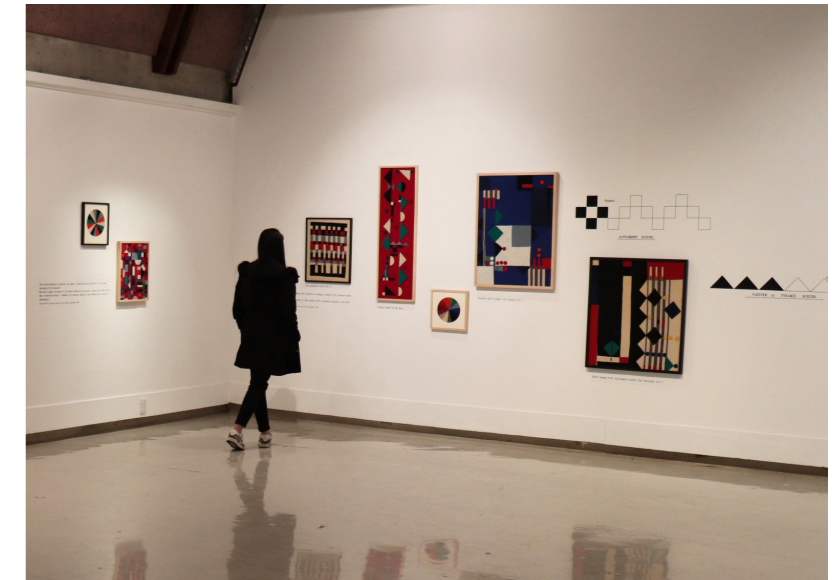
¹⁸⁷ Dan Karlholm, "Postcritical or Acritical? Twelve Steps for Art History Writing in the Anthropocene," *A Farewell to Critique, Journal of Art History* 89, no. 2 (2020), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00233609.2019.1704863>

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

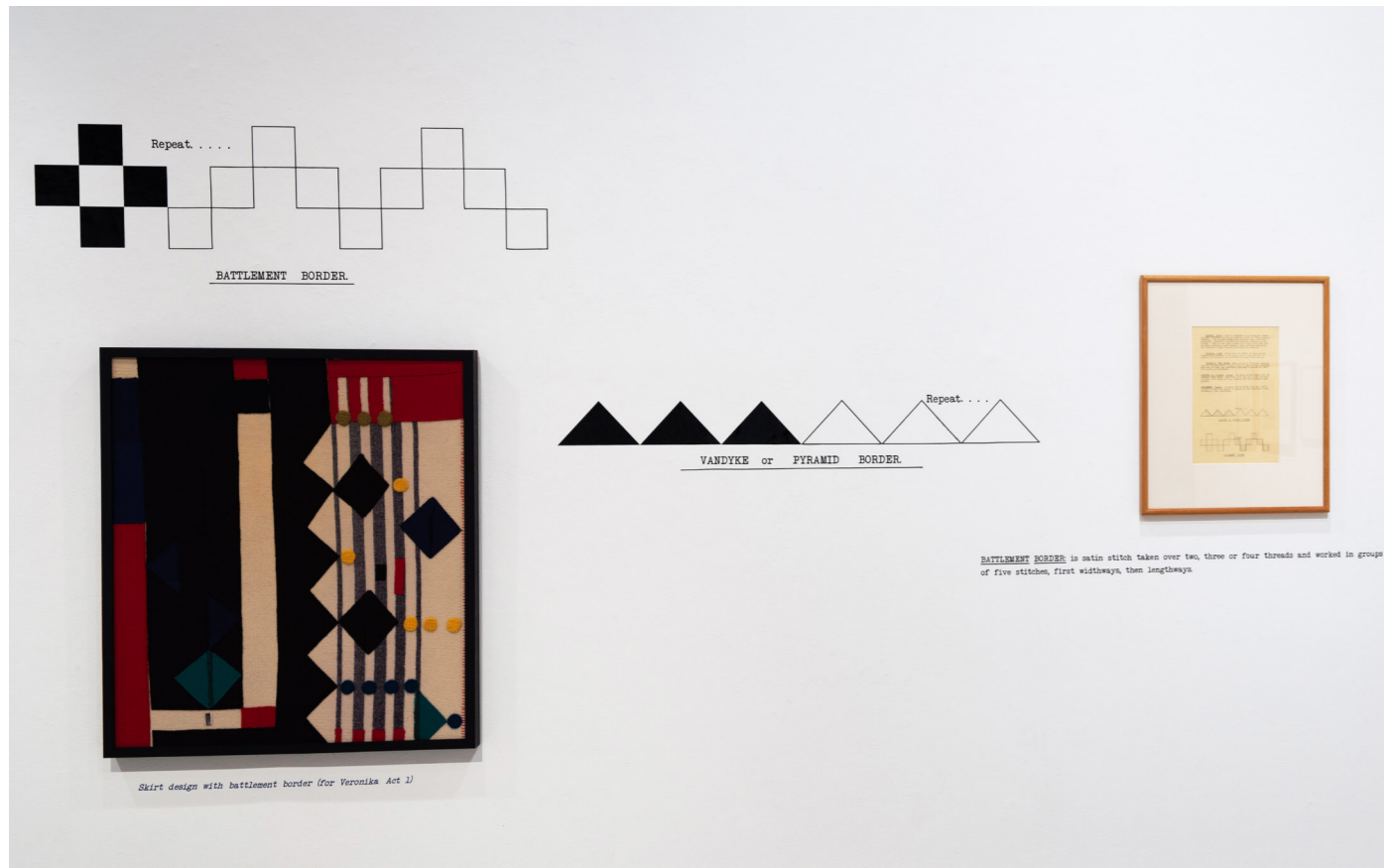
¹⁸⁹ Ibid.



Figs. 75 - 77. *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, 2018. Installation view, Ilam Campus Gallery.



embroidery, modelling and lino-cut, finally retiring in 1969 after forty-three years. In the mid-1940s, she established a weaving and tapestry course at Canterbury. Her profile is significantly less known when compared to her male teaching colleagues such as Francis Shurrock and Bill Sutton. In the exhibition, some of Akins' documents, borrowed from the Macmillan Brown Library and Heritage Collections, were displayed publicly for the first time. These items, which related to her teaching of textiles at the College, included lecture notes and other instructional resources such as colour diagrams, which were displayed alongside textual annotations of an interview with Florence Akins, conducted by Ann Calhoun for her 2000 book titled *The Arts & Crafts Movement in New Zealand 1870–1940: Women Make Their Mark*. This inclusion ensured the narrative would also be told through Akins' own words. Tyler writes that, through these objects and wall texts, "Holderness gives voice to



Figs. 78, 79. *Florence & Florence: other textile histories* (installation views), 2018. Ilam Campus Gallery.

a representative silenced woman artist and thereby points to the omissions and elisions of the official art historical record.¹⁹⁰ *Florence & Florence* is a strong example of how the project's installations aim to trace these kinds of alternative histories of modernism in New Zealand, and to this end they privilege the decorative, the domestic, and design—'feminine' categories that are often overshadowed by the dominant status and narrative of 'fine arts' in New Zealand's art histories. In her book *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, feminist art historian Rozsika Parker argues the "historical hierarchical division of the arts into fine arts and craft" has been a "major force in the marginalisation of women's work."¹⁹¹ In this regard, *Ever Present Archiving* is interested in erasing boundaries between function and aesthetics, craft and art, hierarchies that have withheld validation of female creative outputs and practices. In their essay "Dangerous Liaisons: Relationships between Design, Craft and Art", scholars Grace Lees Maffei and Linda Sardino identify the "patriarchal nature" of these hierarchies in visual practice where women are associated with "amateur and domestic practices and men with extra-domestic and professionalism."¹⁹² In *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, I included many different objects, multiple craft processes, and imagery that often referenced each other: for example Florence Akina's hand-dyed colour wheel teaching aid was re-made as a felted work I fabricated to be part of Florence Weir's designs for an invented Ngaio Marsh stage production. I made large textile works with woollen fabrics, referencing some of the embroidery border patterns from Akina's teaching notes. These pieces, such as *Florence Weir skirt design with Vandyke border (for Brigid, Act 1)*, used the 'Vandyke' and the 'Battlement' borders¹⁹³ in geometric-patterned felted textiles, and were positioned within the exhibition as my speculative remakes of costume designs by Florence Weir. I also fabricated textile translations of book covers of some of the reference publications I thought she 'might have used,' such as a book on the Bauhaus (fig. 79). I located this work next to a quote I found in an interview with Calhoun, where Akina said "I taught myself again. I bought myself books."¹⁹⁴ This inter-related and layered approach to the collections of archival materials and objects was an attempt to trouble the problematic hierarchical structures within the canon of art history.

190 Linda Tyler, "Review: Julia Holderness, *Florence & Florence: Other Textile Histories*," *Context* 28 (Winter 2019): 66.

191 Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), xii.

192 Lees-Maffei and Sandino, "Dangerous Liaisons: Relationships between Design, Craft and Art", 212.

193 These borders were obtained from Akina's embroidery teaching notes, Kā Kohika o Macmillan Brown, see Appendix One.

194 Ann Calhoun, interviews with Florence Akina by Ann Calhoun, 1992–1993, transcripts. Reference Code: FD1994.0004.0001, Kā Kohika o Macmillan Brown. I conducted this research in 2018.

Minor mentions and moments

Thinking about this project as a form of return to the ‘unfinished’ and ‘ongoing’ archive—in that it is “a project of expansion”¹⁹⁵—I am particularly interested in lost and little-known histories. *The Studio* (2021) developed and revisited a little-known art-historical moment about three women artists (Doris Lusk, Anne Hamblett, Mollie Lawn) who shared a studio and exhibiting space in Ōtepoti, Dunedin, in 1939–40, shortly after they graduated from art school. Works from that time by Doris Lusk and Anne Hamblett were readily accessible and available for loan from national collections such as Hocken Collections and Te Papa Tongarewa. However, the third member of the studio, Mollie Lawn, was not represented in any public collections and her artworks were difficult to trace, being in private homes, outside of any institution. I eventually tracked down her son, Neville Kershaw, and approached the family to loan some artworks, including a portrait of Lawn in the studio by her contemporary Max Walker.¹⁹⁶ Lawn’s still-life watercolour of ceramic vessels and apples that I borrowed for *The Studio* was her first work ever shown in a public institution. This was my attempt to expand this history, echoing the project’s overarching nature as an unveiling which draws Florence (and others) out of the records and margins. The project also considers Karlholm’s counter-strategy of focusing on “constellations, associations, links...multiplicities.”¹⁹⁷ This particular studio, a minor mention in our national art history, is given wider scope. The project researches the association, links and shared experience of three modest young women painters at the southern end of Aotearoa in 1949, who set up an all-women’s studio and exhibiting space that was “always filled with fresh flowers and pots.”¹⁹⁸ Shared resources such as still-life objects they worked from, as depicted in the loaned paintings, were fabricated—for example, a distinctive white ceramic vase that featured in both Lusk’s *Mixed Flowers* (1940) and Hamblett’s *Spring Blossom* (1939). The actual table featured in Lusk’s *Table with Flowers* (1942) was also installed in *The Studio*, borrowed from Jancis Meharry, Lusk’s daughter. Alongside these objects, imagined studio dialogue between the women was produced in wall labels and wall texts, such as “We need to clear out our easels and get hanging our works...”¹⁹⁹ as a nod towards their lived experiences. Further links and

195 Wallin, “Feminism in the Archives and the Archive in Feminism”, 137.

196 In a somewhat amusing discovery only a month or so before *The Studio* opened, Neville Kershaw, Mollie Lawn’s son, realised the work was by Max Walker. Prior to this I had been working to the assumption that it was Lawn’s self-portrait.

197 Karlholm, “Postcritical or Acritical?”

198 Linda Tyler, “Anne Hamblett: Early Works,” Michael Lett, accessed October 12, 2020, <https://michaellett.com/exhibition/anne-hamblett/>

199 Wall text developed for *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021.



Figs. 80, 81. *The Studio*, 2021. Installation view, Dunedin Public Art Gallery.



Fig. 82. Mollie Lawn, *Untitled (Still life)*, 1940. Watercolour. Collection of the Kershaw family.

associations were also made through the inclusion of contemporary artists I invited to participate in the exhibition. Painter Kirstin Carlin created a new oil painting, depicting the same flower varieties as in the Lusk and Hamblett paintings. She also referenced the vase that artist Richard Orjis used in his photograph of flowers gathered from his studio garden in Northcote Point, Tāmaki Makaurau. I invited the artists to write reflections on their works and these texts drew in a focus on artistic processes, production and day-to-day experiences. Again, this is a movement away from a focus on the individual artist. *The Studio* as an installation combined many different elements, and on a physical and spatial level operated as a parallel to the mix of history and timelines present in the exhibition. It reflects the dialogues that form, or drop away, the conversations that intermingle, that mislead and lead. I facilitate this by letting histories, spaces, voices, fictions and objects naturally coalesce.

Alternative methods for sorting and organising

Ever Present Archiving attempts to expose some of the underlying logics inherent in both the practice of art history and the art-historical archive. One of these is the way museological systems of taxonomy and classification dictate “to academic art history, the way objects are put together in groups

or classes, and are compared or contrasted.”²⁰⁰ In her 2007 book *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum*, feminist art historian Griselda Pollock claims that the apparatus of art history

“makes art intelligible by means of classifying practices by named artists, historical time periods, medium, styles and national schools creating narratives to account for either development, change, difference and to establish a canon of knowledge.”²⁰¹

Preziosi also writes about how these systems inflect the “entire disciplinary apparatus” of art history.²⁰² He argues that the Fogg curriculum²⁰³ (which he claims gave rise to the art-history discipline as we know it) “established the ways in which the archive was to be employed in the construction of historical and genealogical narratives, fixing historical, geographic and media boundaries.”²⁰⁴

Importantly, Pollock argues that “these categories of understanding...exclude other kinds of possible relations or connections.”²⁰⁵ Karlholm calls this problem “methodological reductivism”²⁰⁶—a concern for period styles, isms, schools, genres, etc. While acknowledging these categories “are useful in big museums and archives, they risk closing the art historical imagination and turn every work of art into a predetermined, imprisoned and chrononormative entity.”²⁰⁷ The counter-strategy he offers up is to “proceed bottom-up, not top-down and try to think of categories as results, not as preconditions or premises.”²⁰⁸ My archival installations respond to these limitations and shortcomings by classifying objects and artefacts in alternative systems such as by way of the social, provisional or physical qualities. As referred to earlier, in 2015 I made a series of installations and displays that re-presented *The Group Show* catalogues. In these works, I reformatted and regrouped the categories of objects, exposing the hierarchical classification in the catalogues

200 Griselda Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 17.

201 Ibid.

202 Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History*, 75.

203 “When the Fogg opened its 32 Quincy Street location in Cambridge MA, United States of America in 1927, it ‘brought together art conservation, museum study, and written research on works of art,’ allowing students to attend lectures, develop exhibitions to practice their curatorial skills, and even study the chemical makeup of paintings in museum labs. At the time, the Fogg Museum, with its rapidly growing collection of objects from diverse cultures and historical eras, ‘was unique in the United States’ as an art training facility.” I quote this text, which cites art historian Kathryn Brush’s tour notes: <https://harvardartmuseums.org/article/revisiting-the-fogg-museum>, accessed January 20, 2022.

204 Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History*, 75.

205 Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum*, 17.

206 Karlholm, “Postcritical or Acritical?”

207 Ibid.

208 Ibid.



Fig. 83. Joëlle Tuerlinckx, *1/MUSEUM*, (installation view), 2015. Ausstellungansicht, Galerie Nagel Draxler @ Kunsthaus Lempertz, Brüssel. Photograph by Simon Vogel.

of the objects by media. I cut out the lists of the applied-art objects—which always appeared on the end pages of the catalogues—and remade these objects in various materials (printed card, ceramic, textile) with titles that belonged to the listed paintings. In doing so, I brought the more ‘domestic’ items to the fore and presented them in a mixed, non-hierarchical field. For example, some of the applied-art items were reproduced as flat ceramic shapes, sourced from Leo Bensemann’s designs for the catalogue covers. This complex overlapping of mediums and categories of objects might also act to reject Karlholm’s notion of ‘reductivism.’ Belgian artist Joëlle Tuerlinckx creates exhibition situations in which objects relate to one another on various levels where they form a network of endless connections. For example, *1/Museum: 5 pieces selected for Kabinett Nagel Draxler* (2017) engages in a kind of liberation of objects from conventional modes of viewing by drawing connections between the materiality or colour of the objects, to their storage conditions and previous exhibition histories. In *The Studio*, I amplified the shared still-life props used by the women artists, focusing on a vase that Hamblett and Lusk both painted. In this review of the exhibition, New Zealand curator Grant Banbury noted: “Hanging the paintings side-by-side for the first time highlights how studio objects get shared.”²⁰⁹ Liberating objects from

²⁰⁹ Grant Banbury, “Holderness’ ‘The Studio’ in Ōtepoti Dunedin,” *EyeContact*, December 12, 2021, <https://eyecontactmagazine.com/2021/12/holdernesss-the-studio-in-dunedin>

conventional modes of art-historical inquiry means this type of practice has the potential to uncover new knowledge, relationships and pluralities such as revealing how artwork is made and shared resources in social situations. This highlighted the studio as a site of production and community.

German scholar of art and culture Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1924–29) relates to this idea of creating novel modes of inquiry and revealing unseen relationships. Warburg developed and designed this epic art-historical project to provide a pictorial representation of the influences of the ancient world in the Renaissance and beyond to early twentieth-century contemporary culture. Extending temporalities, his method consisted of pulling together and rearranging canonised images and looking at them across various epochs such as ‘Classical nudes.’ Warburg studied the interplay of images and photographs from different periods and cultural contexts to explore the idea of a collective or societal memory. His accumulation of visual materials and arrangement practices built an inventory, an attempt to sample, chart and trace recurring visual themes, gestures and patterns across time. My research shares a similar impetus to collapse boundaries between practice and scholarship. I conceive of Warburg as an *artist–art historian*, as his art-historical ideas manifested in a physical object, not just in a text. This sort of practice-led research tries to work contrary to the canon, challenging assumed forms of historical inquiry. Pollock’s *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum* critiques gender bias in art history, particularly as manifested in the institutional model of the modernist museum. Through her virtual encounters between artists and a series of imaginary exhibition rooms, reviewer Susan Funkenstein asserts that “women reclaim the art history that has objectified and excluded them...and art history is told not as a narrative of progress, but as a history of ruptures, traumas, and difference.”²¹⁰ Pollock’s concept uses the laboratory model of Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* to explore time, space and archive. According to art historian Catherine Grant, Pollock “uses a Warburgian approach to collect images and through them trace feminist readings which are placed in tension with traditional boundaries of art historical investigation that delineate topics under categories of ‘nation, period, medium, artist, genre.’”²¹¹ She goes on to say that “text becomes one element in the curation and interpretation of objects,”²¹² and in their virtual scenes of encounter, “critical distance is

²¹⁰ Susan Funkenstein, “Book Review: *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space and the Archive* by Griselda Pollock,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 30, no. 1 (2009): 55.

²¹¹ Catherine Grant, “A Narrative of What Wishes What it Wishes it to Be’: An Introduction to *Creative Writing and Art History*,” *Art History* 34, no. 2 (April 2011): 235. Special Issue: *Creative Writing and Art History*, ed. Catherine Grant and Patricia Rubin, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/14678365/2011/34/2>

²¹² Ibid.

replaced by an interplay of bodies, interpretations and historical moments.”²¹³ In my project, critical distance or an objective position is replaced by multiple texts, voices and viewpoints, a layering up of memories, borrowed and quoted imagery, a reordering of genres, and the remediation of objects in different materials. These elements and methods all serve to erase and unfix any kind of boundary, and draw out other narratives, meanings and relations. The following two chapters will expand on my use of multiple voices within the project and discuss how my exhibition texts and wall labels try to disrupt the fixed or singular treatment of voice in phallogentric narratives. Chapter Six: *Temporality and Presence* also discusses the formation of feminist counter-canons relevant to the questions within this chapter.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I began by discussing reflections on curatorial conditioning and bias and the deselection of women artists by Waite, Barton and Sleigh, and the Guerrilla Girls, an activist collective. I explored the ways in which the specific subjects of my research (Barbara Brooke, Florence Akins and a women’s painting studio) have been overlooked and somewhat neglected in art-historical scholarship. *Part* of the work of a feminist art history has been to recover and narrate the stories of women artists who have been overlooked. However, alongside this is a need to trouble the processes and structures of canon formation and conditioning and texts by Nochlin, Parker and Pollock help unpack these concerns. I have discussed a variety of creative and productive responses that extend, expand and revise entrenched art historical narratives and methods. This is an exploratory art history of difference, extended meanings and contexts. As I have noted throughout the discussion, the project participates in this by embracing the imagined, the partial, the fragment, the multiple and working under collaborations with a focus on constellations and relationality. Creative projects have been discussed from Flora Mayo, a missing figure from art history, Diana Baker Smith’s recent films on the late Australian dance artist Phillipa Cullen, and the fictional Russian painter, Irina Durova, in Sleigh’s art-historical novel. Thus, processes of rehabilitation and historical solidarity have been examined, both in my project and others, in order to discuss the ways I have extended and reframed the canon through feminist-historical methods. This chapter has also explored art-historical projects, namely, Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1924–29) and Pollock’s *Virtual Feminist Museum* (2007), as they relate

²¹³ Ibid.

to the creation of new modes of inquiry and scholarship. Accordingly, my project seeks to revitalise understandings of what an art-historical archive can be, and to propose new focuses and other possibilities for how these records can be presented and organised. These feminist-historical methods contribute to an archive that generates and speculates. *Ever Present Archiving* reframes the canon by offering alternatives to assumed historical conditioning, objective distance and other art-historical practices. Through an interplay of subjectivities, diverse viewpoints and a privileging of the local, constellations and connections, my practice supports opportunities for different stories, meanings and emphases to emerge. Whilst this project cannot radically transform or do away with the structures of the canon, it is a partial and exploratory movement along the way, a contribution toward doing things differently through expansion, disruption and inversion.

Chapter Three

Fiction with Footnotes, a Creative Art History:

Text and writerly practices

Chapter Three: *Fiction with Footnotes, a Creative Art History*

Text and writerly practices

Exploring modes of creative writing about art, this chapter considers the ways in which the discipline of art history and the writing of fiction can be related. As such, it attempts to discuss how flexible, contingent and partial historical narrative is, and focuses on forms of writing and textual practices within the project. This explores the first research question: How can art history benefit from storytelling and the writing of fiction. While Chapter Two: *Power and Limits, Blind Spots and Biases* looked at how the archive is formed and generated in the project, *Fiction with Footnotes, a Creative Art History* examines how the archive is narrated and constructed in storytelling and writing practices that emphasise an embodied subjectivity. Addressing my second research question and extending the idea of a feminist method, I explore how using a multiplicity of voices can make room for disruption and intuition, highlighting and forming empirical and subjective knowledge. Examining the mode and potential of ekphrasis and other textual practices, I will discuss how the visual can be reshaped. Exploring how suppressed contributions can be retold and rehabilitated, I examine poems that respond to and imagine artworks, the record and transcript in the work of Alex Martinis Roe; a piece of writing commissioned by Ann Shelton for a project on the feminist history of her home; Andrea Geyer's *Audrey Munson Project*; and the inclusion of conversational and casual accounts in my project wall labels. Imaginative writing and the role of conjecture using Florence Weir as witness and ventriloquist will also be discussed. This chapter will examine how art history's privileging and priority of the material object over the intangible and ephemeral avoids accommodating missing, overlooked and unavailable records, the ones that are difficult to store and trace. Writing practices offer potential to make use of these problems in creative modes. Adopting practices of *écriture féminine* (feminine writing) a term coined and a practice developed by Hélène Cixous, offers modes of embodied and feminist writing that refuse the critical distance of traditional art history and the submission to conventional art-historical language. These gestures embrace a creative, imaginative art history that acknowledges it can never be neutral.

Conjecture, speculations, imaginative exercises

Art historian Jaś Elsner has described art history as “fiction with footnotes,” “calling for an acknowledgement of the playful and creative aspects of the discipline, aspects that emerge in and through its writings.”²¹⁴ In his essay titled “Art History as Ekphrasis” (2010), Elsner argues that art writing is a form of ekphrasis, a translation, and “a movement from art to text.”²¹⁵ He claims that the footnotes act to “chart a careful series of ‘true,’ or at least generally accepted or empirically attested, parameters within which we steer our fictive imaginations,”²¹⁶ and calls for the discipline of art history to be less embarrassed about this central procedure. From this context, art historian Nicholas Chare asserts that art writing, “in both its critical and historical forms, is an imaginative exercise.”²¹⁷ Considering these views of the fictional and embodied elements of art history, *Ever Present Archiving* attempts to demonstrate how flexible, contingent and partial historical narrative is. A compelling example of Chare’s so-called ‘imaginative’ art writing is demonstrated by art historian and transdisciplinary scholar Gavin Butt’s inclusion of fictional and personal passages in a scholarly text on Jasper Johns, a chapter in his book *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963*. Butt’s fictional passages are differentiated from his critical discussion with the use of a different font and the use of first names, which positions them more like prose in a novel. In the main text, the protagonists are referred to with full names or by their surname as per academic convention. In art historian James Boaden’s review of the book, he writes that the chapter is “greatly enlivened by passages where Butt fills in the blanks and ventriloquizes his protagonists.”²¹⁸ I am interested in this positioning of giving back speech as a ventriloquising, connecting it to an act of performance. One of these imagined scenes reads as follows:

Jasper was slightly worried. When Leo came around the corner he looked excited, but there was a slight furrowing of his brow which suggested something wasn’t quite right. “The museum wants to buy your painting but wants to shut away the genitals.” Jasper was slightly

²¹⁴ Nicholas Chare, “Writing Perceptions: The Matter of Words and the Rollright Stones,” *Art History* 34, no. 2 (April 2011): 253. Special Issue: *Creative Writing and Art History*, ed. Catherine Grant and Patricia Rubin. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/14678365/2011/34/2>

²¹⁵ Jaś Elsner, “Art History as Ekphrasis,” *Art History* 33, no. 1 (February 2010): 12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8365.2009.00720.x>

²¹⁶ Ibid, 24.

²¹⁷ Chare, “Writing Perceptions,” 253.

²¹⁸ James Boaden, “Review of Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963*,” CAA Reviews, September 19, 2007, <http://caareviews.org/reviews/1033#.YXICqtMzbUI>

perturbed by the request. He had wondered himself if he’d gone too far with the penis, has the wellspring of his desire betrayed him a little more than he would have preferred. What was he to do? He certainly wanted the boost to his standing that museum acquisition would bring, but could he compromise his integrity in order to get it? And could he risk the self-exposure that his painting might bring about if he became the subject of controversy? Did he really want his secrets to become known? Too many people already were whispering about him and Bob.²¹⁹

These parallel passages augment the narrative, lending live dialogue, inner worlds and thoughts to these art-historical figures from the past. In Butt’s own words—he explains, “mimicking the sensationalist narratives of pulp novels”—these inclusions allow him to entertain some of his more “‘idle’ fantasies in a fictional form unhindered by the burden of historical proof.”²²⁰

In her introduction to *Creative Writing and Art History*, which includes historical examples of art-historical writing that have a creative element, and examinations of contemporary modes of creative writing about art, Catherine Grant says:

The writing of a history is always to some extent a story, a narrative that the author smoothes out in front of the reader, leaving the red pen scrawled across drafts separate from the final flow of words.²²¹

In my mind, the writing of Florence Weir’s biography should be full of marginalia: red pen marks, scribbles, glosses and questions. The narratives that focus in on certain events in Florence Weir’s life are formed through exhibition frames. However, I attempt to retain the side notes, contradictions and gossipy scribbles through offering an abundance of materials and details. In *The Group: homewares* (2015) there were wall texts whose purpose was to give lively voice to the artists and makers, and in the vitrine there were fabricated written notes between Florence and friends. Inserting fictional characters, venues and events (such as invented exhibitions) into existing historical frameworks renders the practice of art history a creative one, a

²¹⁹ Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 156.

²²⁰ Ibid, 19–20.

²²¹ Grant, “A Narrative of What Wishes What it Wishes it to Be: An Introduction to *Creative Writing and Art History*,” 240.

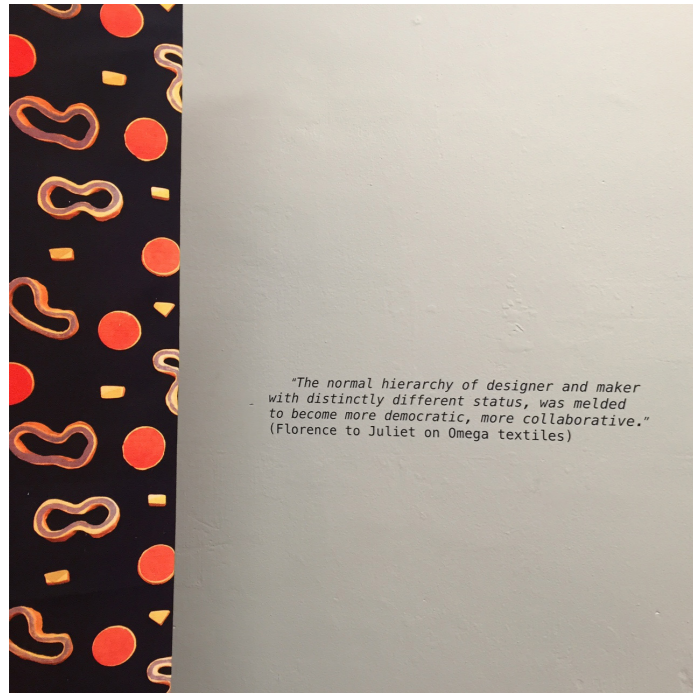


Fig. 84 *The Group: homewares* (detail of wall text), 2015. AUT.

Fig. 85 *The Group: homewares* (detail of wall text), 2016. The National.

Dear Leo,
Did you realise your last catalogue cover follows Itten's colour theory: yellow is best for triangles, red for squares and rectangles, and blue for circular shapes....?"

constructed narrative. Florence Weir embodies potential, where potentiality signifies a loss of archival control or any sense of specific historical conditioning. In presenting peripheral and provisional narratives, art history as *construction* and *story* is made evident. In sketching potential and variant histories through a multiple set of components, I am making a comment about what Grant has framed as the “idiosyncrasies, experiments, conjectures and erasures that take place in the construction of narratives around art, artists”²²² and their histories. In *The Studio* (2021), conjecture around Florence Weir’s association with Doris Lusk is put forward. The label for *Florence Weir, Fabric design from Doris Lusk’s “Flower Study/Mixed Flowers”* includes the voice of Florence, who says: “Doris’s ‘Flower Study’ / ‘Mixed Flowers’ has a paisley fabric in various blues and oranges. I have borrowed this design for a new fabric, using leaf shapes in blues & rust.”²²³ Conjecture is formed on the basis of incomplete information, and takes advantage of that. Where there are narrative gaps, the project speculates, imagines and fictionalises.

Ekphrasis and art history

Created by the ancient Greeks, the word ‘ekphrasis’ is used to describe a work of art in literature. It is a kind of commentary or visual description of art used as a rhetorical device to evoke a “visual stimulus, object or scene”²²⁴ in the

222 Grant, “A Narrative of What Wishes What it Wishes it to Be,” 233.

223 Wall label, *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021.

224 A definition obtained from the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, accessed December 9, 2021, <https://oxfordre.com/classics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-2365?product=orecl>

listener’s (or reader’s) mind. It can be thought of as a translation in which one medium of art tries to relate to another. Art historian Marjorie Munsterberg writes that the goal of this literary form, rooted in the Greek oral tradition and art of persuasion, “is for the reader to envision the thing described as if it were physically present.”²²⁵ With significance for *Ever Present Archiving*, many of the subjects of ekphrasis are imaginary, and never actually existed, “making the ekphrastic description a demonstration of both the creative imagination and the skill of the writer.”²²⁶ Munsterberg goes on to reference Ruth Webb, in her article “Ekphrasis” in *Grove Art Online*, concluding that ekphrastic texts were studied “to form habits of thinking and writing, not as art historical evidence.”²²⁷ Sleight’s discussion in her essay “Every Story Tells a Picture,” written for *The Pantograph Punch* in 2018, centres on the contemporary relevance of ekphrasis for both writers and artists of ekphrasis. She writes that “artists and writers continue to be drawn to each other’s work: the two art forms won’t leave well enough alone, they prod and pester and nibble, inspired and frustrated by each other in equal parts.”²²⁸ One of the writers she discusses is Aotearoa poet Therese Lloyd, whose book *The Facts* (2018) includes poems that respond to artworks by American painter Edward Hopper. Sleight writes that Lloyd’s poems “not only give voice to the women in Hopper’s art but also act as a form of art criticism.”²²⁹ Lloyd, who said once in an interview that “poetry can talk about art in a way that nothing else can,” points to the way Hopper’s women are objectified. Sleight contends that Lloyd

uses ekphrasis as a way to reframe the way women are depicted and constrained within Hopper’s paintings. Her descriptions of the paintings allow for multiplicity and embodiment, as we are encouraged to inhabit the minds of the paintings’ subjects, and see the world through their eyes. Instead of looking at, we are looking with these women, and, as such, the poems resist the anonymising wash of Hopper’s paintings.²³⁰

For reviewer Rebecca Hawkes, Lloyd’s use of ekphrasis lends “inner worlds”²³¹

225 Marjorie Munsterberg, “Ekphrasis,” *Writing about Art*, accessed June 5, 2020, <https://writingaboutart.org/pages/ekphrasis.html>

226 Ibid.

227 Ibid.

228 Thomasin Sleight, “Every Story Tells a Picture,” *The Pantograph Punch*, October 2, 2018, <https://www.pantograph-punch.com/posts/every-story-tells-a-picture>

229 Ibid.

230 Ibid.

231 Rebecca Hawkes, “Book Review: *The Facts*, by Therese Lloyd,” *The Reader*, April 17, 2018. <https://booksellersnz.wordpress.com/tag/therese-lloyd/>

to Hopper's depicted women, writing that she "inhabits their restless stillness, their ambivalence between settling down or abruptly rising, without ever forcing a narrative or solution upon them."²³² In the poem *Eleven a.m. (after Edward Hopper)*, the line that reads "I am waiting to see what will happen when I stand" gives agency and future to an otherwise inert female subject.²³³

The online *Oxford Classical Dictionary* definition calls ekphrasis a 'summoning up' and an 'impression.'²³⁴ This summoning up is relevant when thinking about Riemke Ensing's 1993 poem titled "Another Exile Paints a Spring Portrait of Katherine Mansfield," and how it operates. This poem describes a still-life portrait and is based on an imagined encounter between Frances Hodgkins and Katherine Mansfield. More specifically, the poet is imagining a portrait of Mansfield that Hodgkins might have painted. She summons forth Hodgkins' painting style without directly stating the artist's name, in a playful ekphrastic puzzle that asks the reader to guess who the artist is. The italicised line "still-life portrait" is a giveaway. Hodgkins' well-known work *Still life: Self-portrait* (about 1935) is a representation of identity through a stacked collection of personal objects. Art historian and biographer Joanne Drayton says these "accoutrements of femininity: a high-heeled shoe, handbag, mirror, beret, belt, and scarf...[are] evidence of a creative life."²³⁵ For Mansfield's portrait, the objects Ensing has imagined suggests the scene on a writer's table: "a paperweight," "flying sheets of paper," "an apple" and "a teapot."²³⁶ The poem suggests to me a portrait through objects that also has some landscape content. There is description of "sky" and "light" and "green" and "a view through an open window." Ensing reverses the usual "figure in a landscape" to become "landscape in a figure." She is locating a sense of place into the portrait of Mansfield, which is interesting because she is reminding us that Mansfield, like Hodgkins herself, is "Another Exile." Writer Lucy McAllister argues Ensing's poem is playful writing that "requires the reader to interact with the text on an imaginative and intellectual level: to solve puzzles, and decode the implications of the text,"²³⁷ and notes that her poetry is characterised by references and allusions which are often hidden in titles,

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Therese Lloyd, *The Facts* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2018), 75.

²³⁴ "Ekphrasis," *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, <https://oxfordre.com/classics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-2365?product=orecl>

²³⁵ Joanne Drayton, "Frances Hodgkins: A Portrait of Queer Love," Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/discover-collections/read-watch-play/history/lgbtqi-histories-aotearoa-new-zealand/frances-hodgkins>

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Lucy McAllister, "The Puzzle of Poetry," *Deep South* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1996), <https://www.otago.ac.nz/deepsouth/vol2no2/lucy.html>

subtitles or dedications. Ensing also places clues highlighted by italicisation and other details in the marginalia. This poem reveals how ekphrasis can move beyond its traditional model of mimesis. Ensing requires her reader or listener to participate in an active way, turning the imaginary work of art into a translation, an impression that creates new meanings. This relates to the way Elsner views the role of ekphrasis, and indeed of art history itself: "to make the reader or the listener 'see' more than they saw before, when they encounter the object next."²³⁸

Sleigh's article "Every Story Tells a Picture" also explores the use of ekphratic approaches when an artwork is not physically present. She discusses a novel titled *Autumn* by Scottish author Ali Smith, which uses a "fictional frame to look at the real-life fate of painter Pauline Boty."²³⁹ Boty's paintings were stored in a barn on her brother's farm after her untimely death aged only 28 in 1966. They were rediscovered in the late 1980s, renewing interest in her work and contribution to the 1960s British pop art scene. Sleigh writes: "Underscoring the novel's concern with art and memory, Smith scatters small *ekphratic* moments throughout the book," and argues these descriptions are necessary because the works are actually missing, "both physically, and in the patriarchal canon of art history."²⁴⁰ Descriptions of artworks is a device used in the textual elements of my exhibitions and are usually included in the installations via wall labels and wall texts. In *The Studio*, I also created wall labels for works that were either 'missing' or unavailable.

I remember Anne's painting *Studio Interior*. There was a table and a cushion-covered divan in the scene. Glimpses of several works hanging in the background, with the suggestion of an easel and some kind of space divider on the left. We liked to sit together and solve all the world's problems.²⁴¹

Here, Florence as witness and ventriloquist, is remembering paintings that were not able to be located, and her remembering is, of course, my creative imagining. I painted placeholder shapes on the gallery walls for the missing paintings, as a challenge to art history's preoccupation with the material artefact. However, these missing works also point to the fact that there is a lot missing from the overall discussion.

²³⁸ Elsner, "Art History as Ekphrasis," 26.

²³⁹ Sleigh, "Every Story Tells a Picture."

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Vinyl wall text developed for *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021.

CATALOGUE.	
PORTRAITS.	
26. Florence	
27. Max	
28. Anna	
29. Colin	
30. Joyce	
31. Mollie	
TEXTILES.	
32. Mixed Floral (Spring)	
33. Paisley	
34. Autumn	
35. Design in watercolour	
36. Cosmos, geraniums, salvia	
37. Colour Wheel	
WATERCOLOURS, PRINTS ETC.	
38. Still Life (fruit)	
39. Flower Study	
40. Moray Place	
41. Studio Interior	
42. Teacup	
FLOWERS & STILL LIFE.	
43. Auricula	
44. Still Life & Roses	
45. Chrysanthemums	
46. Spring Blossom	
47. Poppies	
LANDSCAPES.	
1. Glendhu Bay	£3. 3. 0
2. Ruts, Pembroke	£4. 4. 0
3. Road to Pembroke	£5. 5. 0
4. Clutha River, Alexandra	£4. 4. 0
5. The Dredge, Cromwell Gorge	
6. Lake Scene, Kawea	£3. 3. 0
7. Down the Bay	£3. 3. 0
8. Back Garden	£3. 3. 0
9. Snow on Flagstaff	£5. 5. 0
10. Melting Snow, Flagstaff	£2. 2. 0
11. Fountain, Gardens	£1. 1. 0
12. Blossom, Seachiff	£4. 4. 0
13. Trees, Woodhaugh	£3. 3. 0
14. Woodhaugh Pool	£2. 2. 0
15. Boat Harbour	£1. 1. 0
16. Gasworks	£2. 2. 0
17. Nelson Landscape	£2. 2. 0
18. Bridge, Anderson's Bay	£2. 2. 0
19. Landscape, Portobello	£2. 2. 0
20. Trees at the Gardens	£1. 1. 0
21. Mapua, Nelson	£1. 1. 0
22. Mapua Road	£2. 2. 0
23. Moeraki	£2. 2. 0
24. Karitane	£2. 2. 0
25. Wingatui	£1. 1. 0
PORTRAITS.	
26. Lavitide	
27. Max	
28. Anna	
29. Colin	
30. Joyce	
FLOWERS & STILL LIFE.	
31. Auricula	£2. 2. 0
32. Roses	£3. 3. 0
33. Still Life & Roses	£3. 3. 0
34. Mixed Flowers	£5. 5. 0
35. Chrysanthemums	£4. 4. 0
36. Still Life	
WATERCOLOURS, PRINTS ETC.	
37. Nelson Landscape (colour print)	£3. 3. 0
38. Mapua Road (colour print)	£2. 2. 0
39. Pembroke (colour print)	£2. 2. 0
40. Riverton	
41. Hills, Pembroke	£2. 2. 0
42. Wanaka	£1. 1. 0
43. Shacks, Pembroke	£1. 1. 0
44. At the Gardens	15. 0
45. Karitane	15. 0
46. River & Sea, Karitane	15. 0
47. Scabious	15. 0
48. Flowers	£2. 2. 0
49. Daughter of Jairus	
50. Horses	
51. Shed and Carts (etching)	£1. 1. 0
52. Moray Place	£2. 2. 0
53. Poppies	£2. 2. 0

Fig. 86. *The Studio*, (detail of wall text), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Fig. 87. List of works in catalogue for Doris Lusk exhibition, (1939/1940).

Lusk artist file. Pictorial Collections, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago.

A piece of wall text in *The Studio*, which was based on Doris Lusk's printed list of works in her solo 1939 exhibition, was reimaged as a group exhibition or collection of works and artists. I repeated the categories from the 1939 list, such as *Portraits*, as well as adding other categories that were not present in the original list, for example *Textiles*. The formatting and fonts were lifted from the original works list document, which was located in the Hocken Archives and presented in *The Studio*'s vitrine installation. Through this new text work, the list of items and works, unattributed to any one particular artist, became another way to view the collection of objects within *The Studio* exhibition at Dunedin Public Art Gallery. This textual intervention also acts to introduce the range of media and artworks included in *The Studio* installation: portraits, still-life works, textiles, prints. As in other project installations, there is an overlapping of mediums and subjects. Watercolours I produce are translated into prints on fabrics, and historical paintings by Lusk and Hamblett lend imagery to these textiles. The word 'print' in Doris Lusk's list refers to conventional printmaking mediums such as etching, but in *The Studio* list, the word is a departure for new outputs. It can refer to the linen fabrics *printed* with imagery, or the workbooks of textile designs by Florence Weir displayed in the archival vitrine. This list disrupts the idea of a solo exhibition, and by doing so, the installation, as a whole, gestures towards a collective output, a constellation of shared influences. Rather than focusing on art-



Fig. 88. *The Studio*, (installation view), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Photograph by Justin Spiers.

Fig. 89. *The Studio* (detail of fabric prints and fabricated workbooks), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

historical records, evidence and concrete objects, these ekphratic gestures employed in text-based aspects of the installation offer creative potential and develop ideas around art—both its translation into language and narrative, and its record in history.

I just read a poem by Aotearoa poet Riemke Ensing titled *Another Exile Paints a Spring Portrait of Katherine Mansfield*, which is based on an imagined encounter between Frances Hodgkins and Katherine Mansfield. I am told the author read it at the end of the Hodgkins Symposium, which was held at the University of Otago in 1997. Ensing describes a painting, focusing on details, the shapes and smells: “The portrait is a yellow table / a ginkgo leaf shaped fan you think / might smell of sandalwood.”²⁴² Ensing details the colours: “a Chinese / vase of ‘yellow-grey, 2 blues and brown.’”²⁴³ She summons forth Hodgkins’s painting style without directly stating the artist’s name. The italicised “still-life portrait” is a giveaway. Hodgkins’ well-known work *Still life: Self-portrait* (about 1935) is a representation of identity through a collection of objects. As Joanne Drayton writes:

Hodgkins is there in the metaphor and the accoutrements of femininity: a high-heeled shoe, handbag, mirror, beret, belt, and scarf. But she is also invisible. Missing from the work. The title cleverly confounds our expectation. This is not a representation of self. It is an expurgation.²⁴⁴

The usual “Figure in a Landscape” becomes “landscape in a figure,” a reversal of a painting genre which makes me think of a body lost, missing its homeland, bush-laden hills pushing at a lonely heart. I felt like this in Japan with acute homesickness when my Grandmother died in 2004 and I didn’t return for her funeral. Drayton goes on to describe:

The absence of Hodgkins’s body from *Still life: Self-portrait* does not for a minute suggest that she didn’t have one. We are happy, in fact, habituated, to make a forensic read of the objects, patterned and swirling, as evidence of a creative life.²⁴⁵

Could I create these sorts of descriptions for absent Florence Weir works? This seems relevant for works that cannot be located. So often researchers and curators are frustrated by missing works. Early works sold in Arts Society exhibitions, whereabouts unknown. Like Anne Hamblett’s *Studio Interior* and *Studio Window*, which I long to view. Private homes conceal them, perhaps with owners unaware. They exist in title only, and can only be imagined. I write a description of a Florence Weir textile drawing, a wall label for a missing work:

Three Circles with Lines (textile drawing)

Creamy wool background, a square in red-pink
Dark circles: three of them, hovering
and then triangles, folding back and forth
and now black lines, two at right angles, intersecting
and anchoring the solid shapes
the four colours she used are the red-pink, a mustard,
jade green and a Cornish blue.

²⁴² Reimke Ensing, “Another Exile Paints a Spring Portrait of Katherine Mansfield,” in *Bulletin of New Zealand Art History*, Special Series 4 (1998): 129.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Drayton, “Frances Hodgkins: A Portrait of Queer Love.”

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

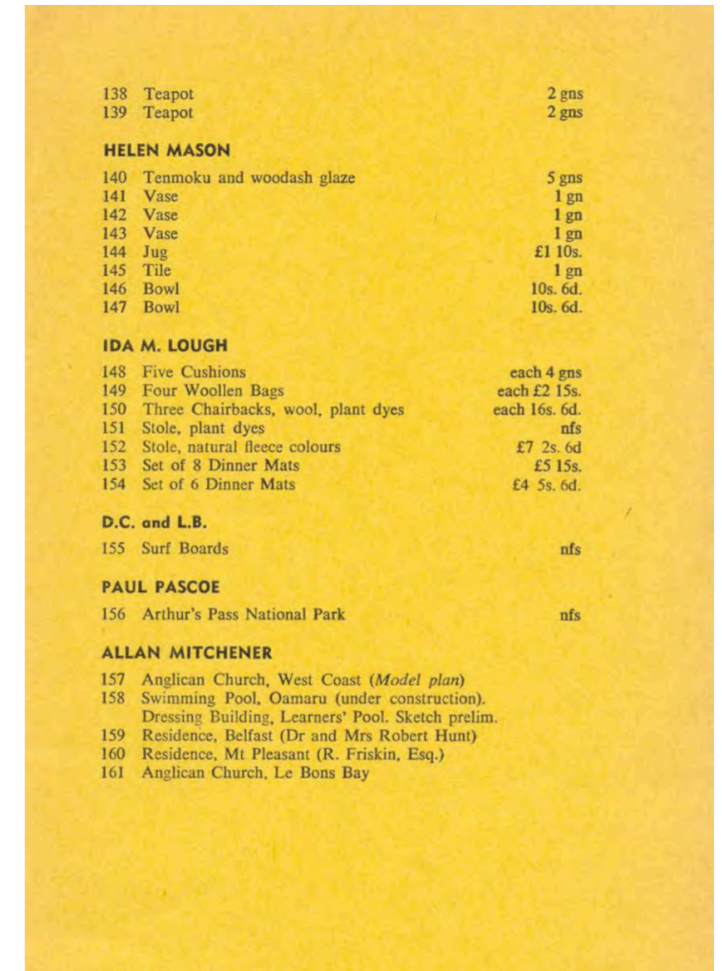


Fig. 90. Page from The Group 1961 exhibition catalogue. Designed and printed by Leo Benemann. Collection of the Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.

Extended ekphratic methods: documentation, encounters, transcripts

Liberating objects from conventional modes of art-historical inquiry means this type of practice has the potential to uncover new relationships, meanings and pluralities. In my handling of *The Group Show* catalogues, I noticed early on that the listings of the applied arts objects—textiles, pottery, ‘Dinner Mats’—were always in the back pages of the catalogue, while the paintings were at the front. I made the assumption that this layout was a translation of the physical journey taken by visitors through the exhibition space, where the ‘fine-art’ works would have been encountered first. Each publication acted as an incomplete and malleable memory; a recall, a record and an index of the artists who were in the group that year, what they made, their relationships and multiple histories. The extraction process I used in my catalogue interventions became a mode for making objects—for example, without having access to the original object, or any image of it, I made what I thought the ‘raisin dish’ by Olive Jones (listed in one of the catalogues) might be. Evoking this object that exists only as a text in a historical catalogue document employs an ekphratic method of sorts. It is, one could say, an ekphratic reversal in which the ‘description’ bestowed upon the text fragment

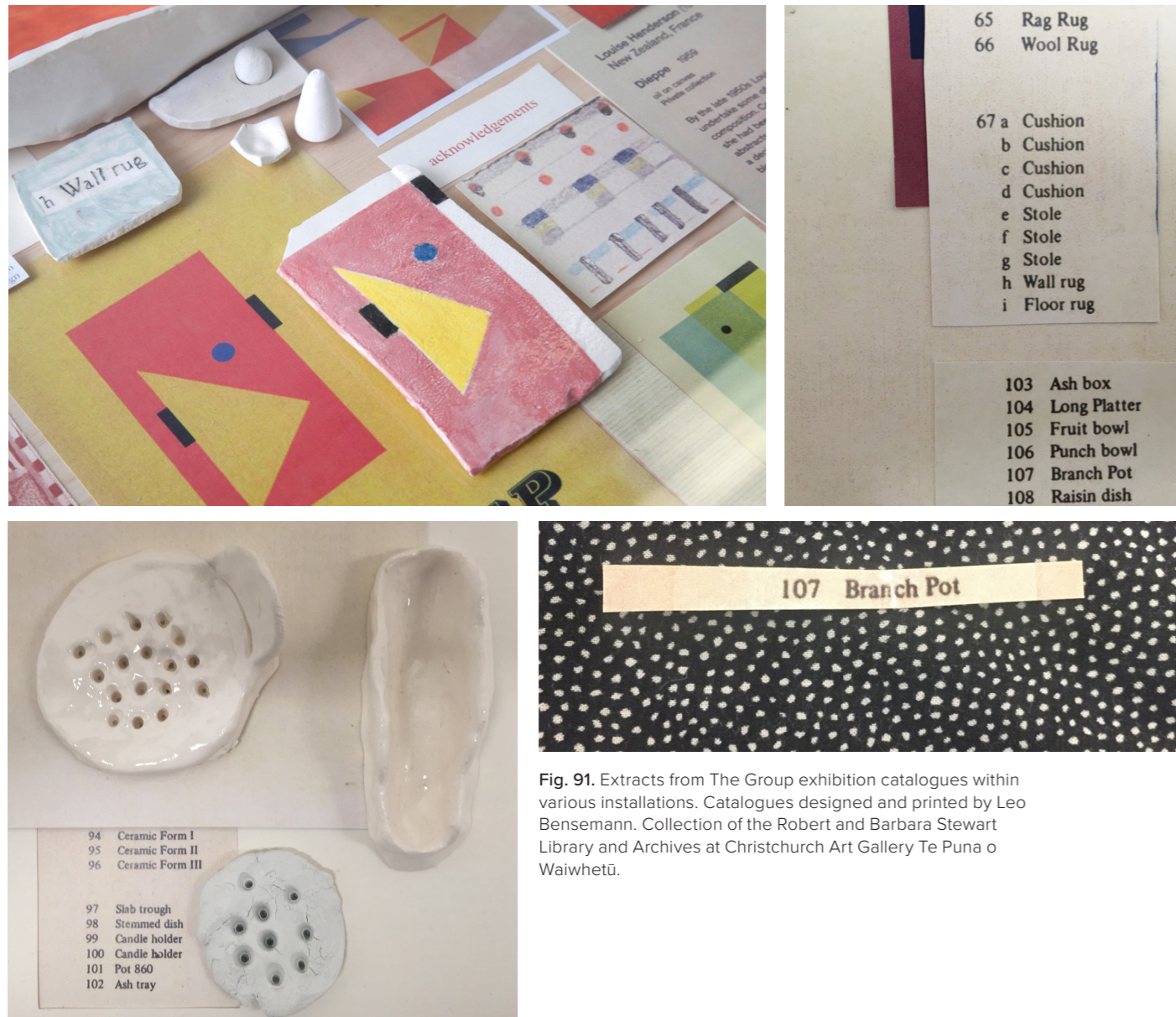


Fig. 91. Extracts from *The Group* exhibition catalogues within various installations. Catalogues designed and printed by Leo Bensemann. Collection of the Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.

is in this instance a translation, rendering or fleshing out into the visual. And as Elsner points out about written translations, these material translations will be interpretive acts that are unique to me. This echoes his discussion on the photograph as a “visual ekphrasis—interpretative, angled, chosen, made possible by a particular circumstance, the presence of a photographer in a specific time and place.”²⁴⁶ By accessing and potentially reordering these curious lists of domestic objects (‘raisin dish,’ ‘kowhai vase,’ stemmed platter’),²⁴⁷ I imagined an alternative inventory. This is in some ways a cultural fantasy, a reordering of categories of objects that might not have had much attention previously: ‘raisin dishes,’ ‘wall rugs’ and ‘branch pots.’²⁴⁸ In my

246 Elsner, “Art History as Ekphrasis,” 13.

247 Excerpts from *The Group Show* catalogues 1955, 1959, Caxton Press, Christchurch.

248 Ibid.

exhibition lists, there are remediations that attempt a democratisation of different art forms—painting titles become textile works and pottery items get listed ahead of sculptures (see Appendix Ten). These gestures remould and re-present the written records and documents.

The record and transcript is of central importance to the practice of Australian artist Alex Martinis Roe, who makes documents (films, objects and texts). Her current research centres on genealogies of feminist practice in Europe and Australia; however, in a series of performance works around 2010–12, it was the record of encounter that was subject matter. These projects explored relations, and the limits of representational documentation and focused on deconstructing the gallery space as a site for feminist critique. These works, with their conversation or dialogical modes, open up what I think of as ekphrastic method. Martinis Roe’s project titled *Encounters: Conversation in Practice* (2010) facilitated one-on-one interactions within Limbus Europae, a project space in Berlin. This project involved encounters at a table between visitors to the project space and the artist, who transcribed the events that occurred through various notational actions. These actions included her creating a series of continuous looping marks that appropriated German conceptual artist Hanne Darboven’s ‘non-writing’ (an abstract form of writing) from her artwork *Daily Writing* (1973), while also drawing diagrams and taking Polaroid photographs. These transcriptions then acted as both the document of each encounter *and* the instruction for the following encounter, facilitating a co-authorship of the relations that were each uniquely created. This performance dynamic present in Martinis Roe’s work explores “both the encounter itself and the artist’s contribution as the stenographer of events.”²⁴⁹

The notion of representing documentation without disclosing its content was also explored in *non-writing histories* (2012) a performance that made an overall gesture at a deconstruction of art history. Martinis Roe (again) used Darboven’s ‘non-writing’ to transcribe her encounter with a visitor who was invited to sit opposite and listen to her reciting a list of artwork details, which was synced to a slide projection of corresponding abstract artworks. Using a method of erasure to modify the images, these slides were abstractions of abstract works. Martinis Roe says of this work:

249 “Feminist Art Base: Alex Martinis Roe,” Brooklyn Museum, accessed December 20, 2021, https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/about/feminist_art_base/alex-martinis-roe. Text, images, audio, and/or video in the Feminist Art Base are copyrighted by the contributing artists.

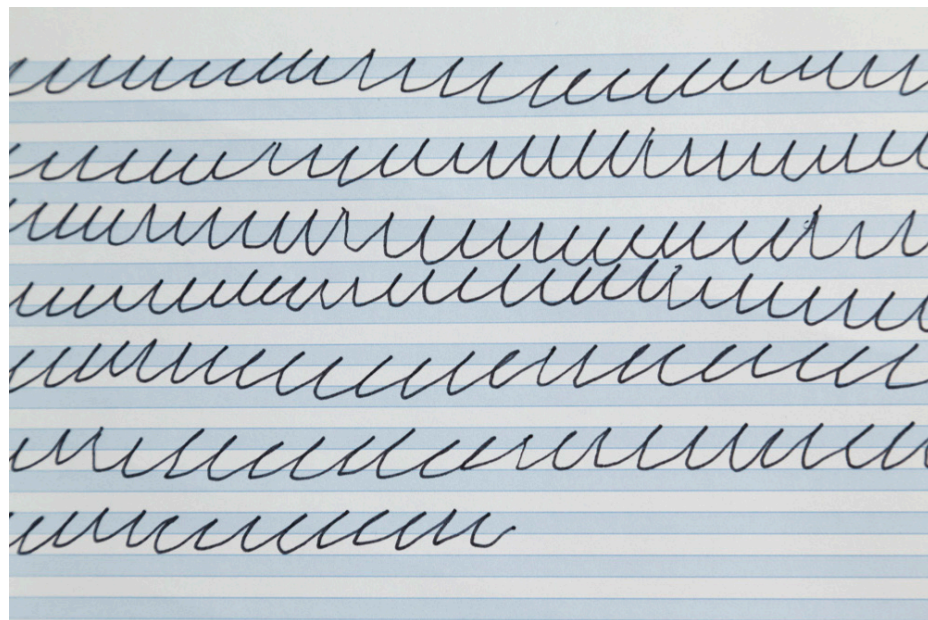
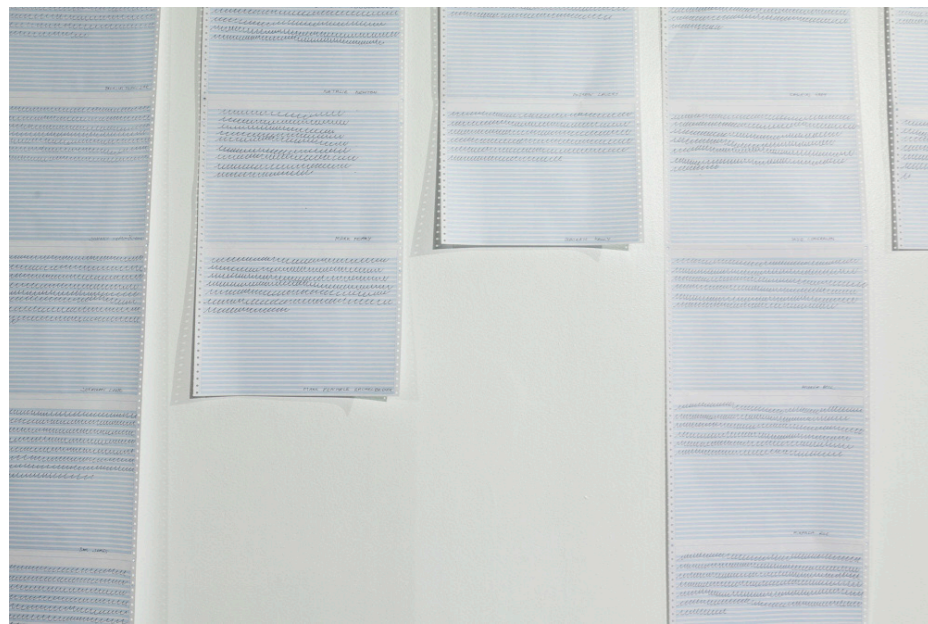
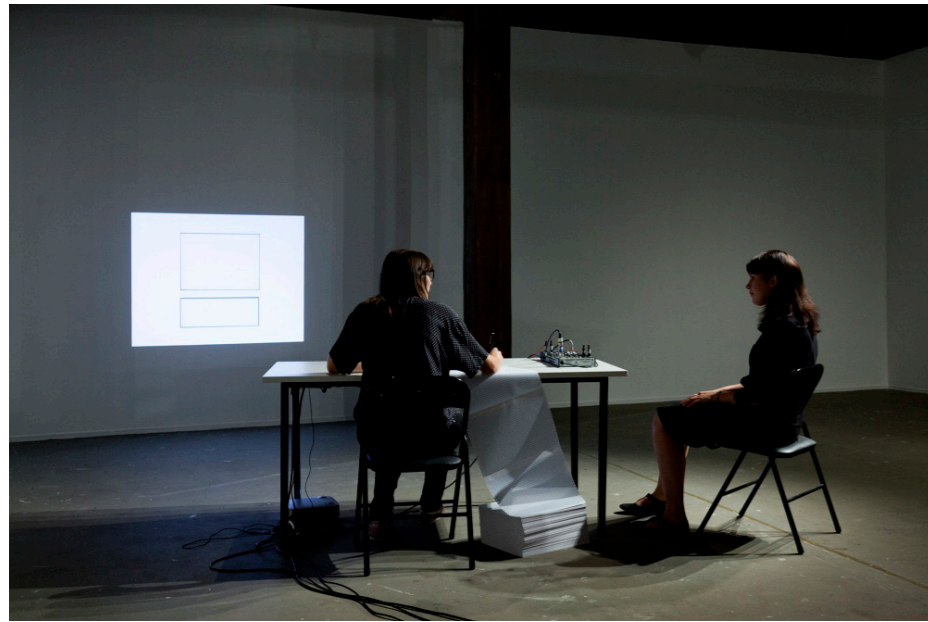


Fig. 92. Alex Martinis Roe, *non-writing histories* (installation view), 2012. Artspace, Sydney. Photograph by Silversalt photography. Courtesy of the artist.

Figs. 93, 94. Alex Martinis Roe, *non-writing histories* (detail)s, 2012. Artspace, Sydney. Photograph by Silversalt photography. Courtesy of the artist.

Many of the works by men were recognisable, but the works by women and feminists that followed each work (as reply and critique) were visually similar to the men's abstractions. There was nothing politically inherent in the aesthetics themselves - they were reliant on the contextual framing of art history for their power and signification.²⁵⁰

In between each slide there was a short interval, time for the visitor to make comments about the works or ask questions if they wanted to. At the end of the slideshow, Martinis Roe asked the participant if she could record their name. Each signed document was then attached to the gallery wall, creating an accumulated archive of the performance and record of the encounters between the artist and participant. Through these almost pedagogical encounters, Martinis Roe is inviting a kind of conversation which was time limited to the automated timing of the slide show. I am reading these works by Martinis Roe in terms of my own interests in an expanded ekphrastic method, an overall sense of verbal discussion. Ekphrasis has a collective output in this sense; as a rhetorical device it evokes an object in the reader's or listener's mind. Martinis Roe's projects promote intersubjectivity, where aesthetics and meanings are created through encounter and relations.²⁵¹ Her traces of non-writing (or non-representation), which are displayed on the gallery walls, are a gesture to make very apparent what is left out of history. Through this gesture, Martinis Roe is commenting on what still remains left out of the discussion. In that sense, the noise of the non-writing, which was amplified through speakers, acts like white noise. We know it is there but we do not take notice of it. This work asserts that what remains unused, and what may never be used, highlights what is left out of the historical record. It is through the act of non-writing, and its supplement²⁵² that makes apparent what is left out of the discourse. Martinis Roe works with various modalities and operations that are seemingly not present but are made present. This enables a connection to ghosts, in the sense that ghosts are a non-presence, yet present, or a pseudonym in a non-persona that is made present. And like ghost writers, mediums or fictional characters, these devices are used in order to reveal something that is not present in a

²⁵⁰ Martinis Roe's own words, from an email exchange, 3-10 July 2022.

²⁵¹ In his book *Conversation Pieces* (2013), Grant Kester discusses "dialogical aesthetics" as a prominent art historical framework for understanding social encounter as aesthetic and framing it as the work.

²⁵² The Derridian concept of the supplement is useful here because, quoting Robert Bernasconi in his chapter titled "Supplement", as "an addition from the outside...it can also be understood as supplying what is missing and in this way is already inscribed within that to which it is added." This quote is on page 19 in *Jacques Derrida: Key Concepts*, ed. Claire Colebrook, (London: Routledge: 2014).

In her recent essay for FloraScales.com titled “Somebody and Somebody and Somebody Else’s Elbow”, Berlin-based Aotearoa artist Ruth Buchanan revisits her 1996 sixth-form art history lessons in Wellington. She writes:

These darkened hours with the clicking of the slide show and the oratory skill of those teachers formed my understanding that history as a thing is also always a palimpsest of forms and interruptions. The slides often jamming in flow, one half of a painting and another half of another painting. While we could read these jams as accidental, to me it felt more invitational. The architecture around the painting was thrown into a sharp light. It was that light between the two works where I thought I might have room to move.¹

I am interested in her practice and her research into New Zealand painter Flora Scales and art historical pedagogy. Inspired by her own early art history education at high school where images of Hoffman’s and Scales paintings were accidentally jammed together, she found potential and meaning. Contacting her art history teacher, Ruth then organised this set of faded slides of New Zealand paintings (syllabus 1840-1940) to be sent to her in Munich where she was living and working on an artists’ residency.

Setting up the slide projector and running through the selection in the gallery-cum-studio space I watched. Over and over again, painting after painting after painting meeting and turning away. Imagining—fabulating—what a conversation between Hofmann and Scales in response to these paintings, their worlds could be. Casting myself from what I had pieced together I developed a script to go with this slide show that was an imaginary studio visit.²

The work she developed in 2007 titled *Older Lovers* etc. was described by art reviewer Anthony Byrt as a video that reclaimed “the legacy of painter Flora Scales and played with the clunky way New Zealand artists learned art history before the digital era.”³ The script she wrote to accompany the slides combined invented and repurposed texts. And like me she imagines and speculates on conversations between American painter Hans Hoffman and Scales. Munich was also an important location for Scales: she had attended Hofmann’s art school in 1931–32. Carrying out archival research at Munich’s city library, Buchanan discovered a photograph from Saint Tropez. In her essay she suggests the unnamed and partially concealed body might be Scales:

As I navigated a section of the city library I found some travel journals that described Hofmann’s class going on a trip to Saint Tropez the same year Scales had made paintings of that location. Wading through pages of German, I found an image. A group of students clustered around an easel, Hofmann leading a discussion, everyone in the image was named except one person partly concealed, their elbow, a perfect triangle protruding from behind another body. Magnification is no help indeed, but in flipping the script, it was the moving through and beyond these standards where Scales was that agent of her own making, not of an (art) history

¹ Ruth Buchanan, “Somebody and Somebody and Somebody Else’s Elbow,” <https://florascales.com/about/essay-by-ruth-buchanan/>

² Ibid.

³ Anthony Byrt, “Prospect: New Zealand Art Now”, a review in *Art Forum*, (May 2012). Accessed 3 August, 2022. <https://www.artforum.com/print/reviews/201205/prospect-new-zealand-art-now-30876>,

applied to her, via me or anyone else. In his image of the elbow the protrusion is a hook and a jam. It is a hook to hold onto and also the jam that interrupts the image, the flow. History-making, art-making, writing, living, and undoing could be that, it could be that elbow of someone else, where the sense of an individual authority and control over a narrative, an epoch, a time, recedes and what remains then is this hook onto and through which the polyphony can be remade and remade, breathed in, again and again and again.⁴

I’m interested in thinking about Florence as an agent of my own making. Like Buchanan, I look for her in enigmatic images. I write her in. History-making, art-making. It’s fluid, unsettled. In Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications* I wrote:

Florence as a subject is rendered and represented through traces, documentation, discourses...her relationship to others, and this makes her construction a gesture of undoing and unfixing, as much as she is a remaking. In this way she is at odds with the “fixed... centred modernist subjects”⁵ that Jones identifies.

Distributing and dispersing her personhood across diverse set of objects, times, purposes and narratives, with a focus on relationships and material on the periphery, I want to deconstruct this notion of a coherent, singular or attributable subject and/or oeuvre. As both an undoing and a remaking, Florence Weir involves my own artistic agency, projections and identification.

I am also working on a text for FloraScales.com, co-written with Thomasin Sleight. I have just sent her this draft piece imagining Flora in Saint Tropez:

A Pension, the house of Madame Coccoz, 76 rue Sibilli, Place des Lices, St Tropez, October, 1931

We stand outside in the warm air, near a small tree. We can hear their voices from the verandah nearby. Some sort of outdoor restaurant at the rear of the house. There is the smell of fish cooked in butter. There is probably a basket of cut bread and red wine on the table. New Zealand painters Maud Burge, Gwen Knight and Flora Scales are sharing a meal together. Frances Hodgkins was invited, but prefers to spend the evenings in her own pension, which is a little further East. We decide, speaking softly and exchanging smiles, that one of the women at the table feels relieved that Frances didn’t come. She would need to be very attentive to the conversation, careful with her opinions of other artists. She can relax now.

Small landscape with figures seated around a table in a courtyard. Hues suggest a dusk setting.

Maud and George rent their own villa, and Flora is often invited there for supper. It feels satisfying for her to have the other women here

⁴ Buchanan, “Somebody and Somebody and Somebody Else’s Elbow.”

⁵ Amelia Jones, “‘Presence’ in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation”, *Art Journal*, (Winter 1997):12.

this evening. As usual they compare notes on where they painted that morning, and where they might arrange themselves next. Flora wants to get up behind the town, a wider, higher view than she had today. Maud is enjoying the tight views to the sea from the streets near the port.

Inky blue next to rusty ochres.

The two-storeyed pension is pink and shuttered. Madame Coccoz rents several rooms for a couple of francs each day, and this includes two meals. Flora tells the others that while the room is basic, it is comfortable and has a view of Place des Lices below. She is also grateful that it includes a writing desk.

Six Elms in a curving line, one is smaller. Lower half of canvas.

This is the evening that Gwen urges Flora to return to Munich for a longer period of tuition at Hans Hoffman's school. We can't make out all of their conversation, but later we wonder how Flora feels about this advice, this position of guidance her friend assumes? Perhaps it is us who feel irritated.

Mounds of earth in the foreground, drawn away.

The conversation stops, and Flora thinks now about the drawings she made earlier today. Stacked shapes, various angles, edges of buildings, overlapping planes. She will take them tomorrow and attach them near the canvas. She will enjoy opening out the skyline, bringing in the hills across the water.

A sloping path, green brush marks.

We start walking away, off to the left where there is lots of undergrowth, but also where a narrow road leads around the bottom of a bank. Hopefully, we can find her position tomorrow morning, glimpse the beginnings of her picture.



Fig. 95. Ann Shelton, *House Work*, performance/installation documentation, offsite project for *Enjoy Feminism's*, Enjoy Public Art Gallery, 2015. Photograph by Becky Nunes.

physical sense. These ideas will be discussed further in Chapter Six: *Temporality and Presence*.

Translations

Sleigh also discusses the use of ekphrasis in a performance work titled *House Work* (2015) by Pōneke artist Ann Shelton. This project consisted of a tour of her home in the Wellington suburb of Wilton, exploring its feminist history. Shelton commissioned a piece of writing by author Pip Adam which was played as an audio recording. Sleigh describes her experience of the performance and how it operated:

The writing described the house in which we sat, and a similar walk to the one we had just taken through the bush. Adam's *ekphrasis* therefore existed right inside of *House Work*, as description, as critique, as history, as fiction, and as documentation; it unpacked and expanded on some of Shelton's thematic concerns (in the way, say, a catalogue essay does) but was also aurally part of *House Work* and the viewers' experience of work.²⁵³

253 Sleigh, "Every Story Tells a Picture."

Sleigh argues that Adam’s story was a “real-time, synchronous ekphrasis”²⁵⁴ and in this way “the words and the art are symbiotic and embedded.”²⁵⁵ These ideas offer potential for *Ever Present Archiving* to use writing as a strategy both for discussing the ways art-historical narrative can operate and for expanding the stories. In *Gallery 91* (2017) the audio transcript of Winnifred Hunt’s detailed account of her visit to the gallery in 1959 acted to introduce a verbal description to expand the visual and object-based elements of the installation. However, it also punctured the contemporary installation with a vivid, if slightly quaint, description of the historical gallery. Likewise, in *The Studio*, the wall texts offered new possibilities and frameworks for the artworks to sit within.

As discussed in Chapter Two: *Power and Limits, Blind Spots and Biases*, Sleigh’s own art-historical novel, *Women in the Field, One and Two*, deals with a made-up artist figure, Irina Durova, and curator, Ruth Bishops. Sleigh uses ekphrasis in her novel to comment on the “limits of language”²⁵⁶ and to show that “every reader will see the paintings in different ways.”²⁵⁷ In one scene, the slide-projector technology stops working and Bishops is forced to describe the Durova paintings to the lecture audience in Wellington:

The translation of art into writing is one of the mini-themes of the book. The scene at the lecture...was a good vehicle for that, because I had to describe the works by writing that scene, and Irina and Ruth also had to describe them to the audience. For the *Women in the Field paintings I had images in my head that were amalgams of the work of several Russian women painters*—kind of a tone or a style, rather than the specific layout of the paintings.²⁵⁸

I interpret these ideas as a wider commentary on art history’s potential and power to remould the visual. As a text based discipline, the visual has to be shaped to the conditions and limits of language. In this process, things can be misplaced, slipped or upset, but that does not have to be cast as a negative result. An ekphratic method is borrowed for *Ever Present Archiving*, one that reflects Sleigh’s notion of imaging a ‘kind of a tone or a style.’ It is evident that Sleigh actively researched and looked at works by Russian women

254 Ibid.

255 Ibid.

256 Walker, “Imagined Art History, an Interview with Thomasin Sleigh” (Thomasin’s own words).

257 Ibid (Thomasin’s own words).

258 Ibid (Thomasin’s own words).

painters of the avant-garde and considered how these vibrant pictures could translate into language. Durova is an amalgam of Natalya Goncharova, Lyubov Popova and others in the Russian art-historical canon. Similarly, for the outputs of Florence Weir, I develop artworks to register and describe her presence by placing her in proximity to others in the art-historical record. She is ‘placed’ by merging, appropriating and approximating the tone and style of others working in her time, evoking the various eras in which she lived. Gouache fabric designs take inspiration from Sonia Delaunay, textile designs from Sophie Tauber-Arps. Again, this sort of sampling gives priority to a collective response, rather than a solo output and applies an ekphratic method to visual aspects of the project that are not strictly text based. The installations convey an overall sense of casual, verbal discussion. They attempt to be visual representations of the types of art-historical testimonies and memories that are not recorded in official bodies of knowledge. As Sleigh ends her article, “to *talanoa* ekphratically (!!)

across both images and words is a powerful way to tell women’s stories, foreground their often-suppressed contributions to society, and allow for a feminist rewriting of the image.”²⁵⁹ While the concept of *talanoa* specifically relates to Pacific modes of discussion, I share an interest in practising a form of extended ekphratic discussion across groups of people and media. For *Ever Present Archiving*, this ekphratic mode expands the idea of text to include conversation, discussion and casual accounts. It involves conversing excitedly with other women in the studio, or to share spoken memories and conversation with relatives of Doris Lusk, for instance. From this, overlooked contributions are registered in a form of retelling and rehabilitating various narratives, encounters and memories. In this extended ekphratic method, the description and accounts can include dialogue, testimonies, the anecdotal and memories. These voices and discussions are not separated out from expert or professional accounts of what happened. Like Adam’s fictional text for Shelton’s work, the mix of voices produce simultaneous description, critique, record, history, and story.

In her history of the Bauhaus, researcher Magdalena Droste writes that “over the years a mixture of fact and interpretation has obscured the history

259 Sleigh, “Every Story Tells a Picture.” Sleigh describes the “concept of talanoa, a Fijian, Tongan, and Sāmoan word for conversation or, more specifically, ‘dialogue that brings people together to share opposing views without any predetermined expectations for agreement,’” citing David Robinson and Kayt Robinson, “Pacific Ways of Talk – Hui and Talanoa,” 2005, 2, <http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/formidable/robinson4.pdf>

of [this] small German art school.”²⁶⁰ My practice is also an approach towards something that is not fully present or available anymore—something perhaps obscured by the telling of history itself. Bauhaus-educated Swiss architect, artist and designer Max Bill once declared that “The Bauhaus has become a legend.”²⁶¹ This idea of ‘legend,’ which is possibly not authenticated, is important to this practice where the *telling* of the story becomes emphasised. The exactness of the replication, for example the translated Brandt teapot discussed in Chapter One, *Constructions and Fabrications*, is less important here than evoking the spirit of the era, the characters and their objects, and their collective lifestyle. The gaps are filled in with rough guesses, approximations, conjecture, assumptions and conclusions based on what we might already know. The installations allow for the invention and surfacing of missing parts, alternative threads, details and relationships. Working with partial records and traces creates room for these potential, tangential or missing narratives to come forward. At the same time this mode of working challenges art history’s’ preoccupation with and priority of the present, material object.

Deconstructing art history

Sleigh’s broken slide projector scene in her art-historical novel can be used as a metaphor for my thoughts on mainstream or ‘academic’ art history. The slide projector (framework) of art history has broken down (is in crisis, has failed). Florence Weir and others are not included in the official or institutional slide cabinet. The archival records of sensations, testimonies and memories are absent; there are many missing slides. In this darkened theatre we now have to approximate the image and the tone, and the discussions that have been missed. As Catherine Grant spells out, the red lines of the editor (or the interviewer) have been detached from the final flow of words, the narrative has been smoothed out. As a consequence, figures and aspects of the story have slipped or dropped out, details have been ironed over. There are no red lines left, no marginal comments or scribbled side thoughts. We have missed the gossip at the salon evening, and the chat over cups of tea in the studio, the feel of a particular fabric, the heavy look someone gave to another at a significant exhibition preview. We have missed so much of the ‘in between’ conversation and detail, the bits that have been left out from the final text. This is the ‘silence’ that Butt writes about in his introduction to *Between You*

²⁶⁰ Magdalene Droste, *The Bauhaus, 1919–1933: Reform and Avant-Garde* (Cologne: Taschen, 2006), 7.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Max Bill (1951) quoted in inside cover.

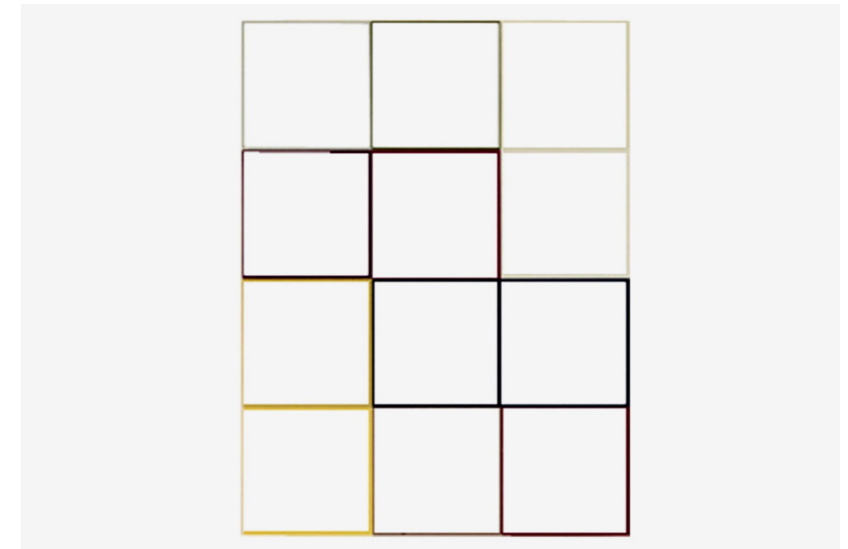


Fig. 96. Alex Martinis Roe, *non-writing histories* (detail of projected image in slideshow) 2012. Image derived from Sherrie Levine, *After Mondrian*, 1989. Courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 97. Alex Martinis Roe, *non-writing histories*, (detail of projected image in slideshow), 2012. Image derived from Judy Chicago, *Rainbow Pickett*, 1965 – 2004. Courtesy of the artist.

and Me: *Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963*. These are what he calls ‘limitations,’ and are what propel him to entertain his fantasies, curiosities and imagination through the fictional passages discussed earlier in this chapter.

Alex Martinis Roe’s *non-writing histories* (2012) also uses a slide projector as an installation element. Participants sat viewing and listening to Martinis Roe reciting the slideshow of artist names, artworks and their dates “that narrate what the artist calls ‘feminist and feminine appropriations of abstractions.’”²⁶² This series included Sherrie Levine’s *After Mondrian* (1989), Piet Mondrian’s *Composition A: Composition with Black, Red, Grey, Yellow and Blue* (1920), Casper David Friedrich’s *Sea of Ice* (1823–24) and Rosemarie

²⁶² Christopher Braddock, “Contagious Redundancy: Alex Martinis Roe,” in *Performing Contagious Bodies: Ritual Participation in Contemporary Art* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 123. Braddock notes in a footnote that the comments by Martinis Roe come from a conversation he had with her in Melbourne in December 2011, and an email to the author dated 8 March 2012.

Trockel's *Iceberg* (1986). After speaking with Martinis Roe about this work, Aotearoa artist and writer Christopher Braddock states:

the artworks chosen include, she recounts, “abstractions by men that have been historicized in a phallogocentric way” as well as the inclusion “of ‘feminine and feminist’ abstractions in their visual similarity to ‘masculine’ abstractions.” Or, put another way, the works by men are selected due to their visual similarity to the works by women.²⁶³

Through Martinis Roe's selection and presentation of these works, the predominant narrative of the historical development of abstraction is questioned. In her slideshow, the canon is subjected to a revision, as Ōtepoti-based writer Andrea Bell argues:

the selected works were subjected to the same form of reductive representation, reproduced as erasures, so that only the local colour remained in what became a series of simplified line drawings; leading to a de-historicising abstraction of abstraction. By co-locating the works, the effect is one that neutralises and deconstructs the major/minor art history binary through abstracting both histories, and running them together.²⁶⁴

Bell's description unpacks the ways in which this feminist art history revises, neutralises and deconstructs. And Martinis Roe herself asserts, this presentation is an attempt to “shift the potential readings of, for example, Mark Rothko's and Jackson's Pollock's works towards other histories of abstraction.”²⁶⁵ For Braddock, Martinis Roe is trying to “draw attention to what she calls ‘a gender political history of non-representation’ and a history in which her own authorship is contingent upon others.”²⁶⁶ I wonder what would it have been like if she had invited the participants to describe or respond to the artworks presented. I am not suggesting that other spectators would be privy to these descriptions and conversations; the participants' words and voices could have been abstracted or distorted through the speaker system to ensure privacy, like the white chalk on white board did in her earlier work, *Free Associations* (2010). However,

263 Ibid.

264 Andrea Bell, “Alex Martinis Roe's non-writing histories,” in *Column 10*, ed. Blair French and Mark Freary (Sydney: Artspace, 2012), 88.

265 Email from Roe to Braddock, included in footnote 36 in Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies*, 195.

266 Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies*, 123.



Fig. 98. Alex Martinis Roe, *Free Associations* (installation view), 2010. Courtesy of the artist.

in the context of my practice, a performance that validated a series of witnesses and a series of discussions about the works themselves would have expanded the work for me as both an intervention in the canon and an exploration of encounter. In an email to Braddock, Martinis Roe says: “The affect of the women's work, and its difference to the dominant discourse on abstraction is something I hope the work highlights.”²⁶⁷ To give other voices a kind of presence in the performance would speak to plurality and an idea of co-authorship for these difference discourses. Her practice is involved in drawing out what is unsaid and what can never be said; in her words “a parasitic, not dominant discourse.”²⁶⁸ And for Bell, Martinis Roe's use of non-representational writing as a response to the representational limits of language also “suggests *écriture féminine*, the textual practice of writing subjectivity.”²⁶⁹ From this, alternative positions and narratives are registered, in a form of retelling and rehabilitating various relations and encounters. For my project, this translates more specifically to a resurfacing of elided narratives and memories.

Écriture féminine: alternatives to objective distance, voices of plurality, fluidity

Turning to feminine discourses and specifically to *écriture féminine* enables

267 Excerpt from footnote 36, Martinis Roe to Braddock in an email, 8 March 2012. Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies*, 195.

268 Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies*, 122.

269 Bell, “Alex Martinis Roe's non-writing histories,” 90.

a discussion on the possibilities for the construction of a distinct female subject position. Hélène Cixous, an Algerian French feminist poet, playwright and theorist, was one of the key proponents of *écriture féminine*, a practice of writing subjectively practised by various French feminists including Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray. In “Disciplines/Strategies,” her introduction to Part Four of *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, Amelia Jones highlights a text by Cixous as a writerly feminist intervention and alternative to ‘objective’ critical art-historical analysis. In Jones’ example, Cixous interprets her engagement with Rembrandt’s painting *Bathsheba Bathing* (1654) in a highly personal and poetic text. Jones argues that this “specifically non-academic style”²⁷⁰ works as a way of “feminizing” the authoritarianism of conventional art historical language.”²⁷¹ Jones goes on to say that “Cixous interprets Rembrandt’s images in a highly charged embodied exchange, refusing the kind of ‘critical distance’ argued to be necessary...in traditional art history.”²⁷² Swedish art historian Dan Karlholm’s alternatives to art-history writing are also part of a decentring of critique. Proposing an art history that is non-hierarchical, his writing offers new ways to compose art histories. I translate these modes through the composing of my exhibitions. In *The Group: homewares* installation, I included a series of made-up quotations in adhesive vinyl that sat on the wall next to the works, and intentionally forwent any referencing convention. This inclusion of these conversational, affective, intersubjective voices between artist friends is one way my project seeks to legitimise a non-academic style and approach to art history. Existing in a present tense, they attempted to tell the story through the voices of the protagonists. Their close proximity to the objects was a way of privileging their presence and embedding them within the installation.

Author Sarah Donovan surmises that Irigaray believed that women have been “traditionally associated with matter and nature to the expense of a female subject position. While women can become subjects if they assimilate to male subjectivity, a separate subject position for women does not exist.”²⁷³ Her book *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974) discusses how ‘le féminin’ has been written out of the discourses of Western philosophy by thinkers such as Aristotle and Kant. This critique aims to reveal the absence of sexual difference in Western culture and thought. So in embracing female difference, Irigaray associates women’s writing and speech with female fluidity rather

270 Amelia Jones, ed., *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2003), 226.

271 Ibid.

272 Ibid.

273 Sarah Donovan, “Luce Irigaray (1930–),” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://iep.utm.edu/irigaray/#H4>

than with male rigidity. She defines *écriture féminine* as the writing style of women that emphasises the fluid, tactile, the plural and the concurrent, a kind of writing that is capable of “jamming the theoretical machinery itself, of suspending its pretension in the production of a truth and of a meaning that are excessively univocal.”²⁷⁴ Cixous suggests that a stream-of-consciousness style of writing is more ‘feminine’ in both its tone and structure than that of more traditional modes of writing. Winnifred Hunt’s anecdotal review of her visit to Gallery 91, which was included in my installation of the same name, has a free-flow quality as she details physical sensations, feelings and the movement of her eye across the objects and textures in the space. Her understanding of the gallery is developed through her physical experience, her senses and her feminine subjectivity. Irigaray aimed to reveal the elision of a female subject position and encouraged women to declare a new subjectivity. She called for a house of language where women can live and speak, and the creation of a female imaginary and novel language to replace a ‘universal’ language that is male and poses as impartial. Employing a plurality of voices rather than fixed, monological speech, this imaginary is “fluid, mobile and indifferent to logic.”²⁷⁵ In her own words, Martinis Roe’s overall project is a “political act that forms a history that is otherwise unsaid” and “creates a language that questions ‘traceable’ discourse.”²⁷⁶ She draws what is unsaid and what can never be said into discourses that oppose dominance, opening up a political struggle to what is beyond comprehension, beyond control. This relates directly to one of my research modes: conversations with family members. As discussed in Chapter Two, *Power and Limits, Blind Spots and Biases, The Studio* presented a series of voices that were used to create a subjective telling of the story from multiple viewpoints. This state that is somehow uncontrollable reflects the way my artistic methodology is led by my creative practice. Like gossip, it is a discourse that cannot be controlled. This is integral to a feminist art history. My practice takes voices, personal insights, memories and ephemeral aspects of the lives of these women subjects. These gestures render the lives of women as untraceable in this sense. They defy the whole art-historical archive and its drive to record. I bring it to audiences in a live, creative practice that I am also implicated in. It is also my voice—a voice indivisible from Florence. In this way it is another form of extended ekphrasis.

274 Luce Irigaray, “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine,” in *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 78.

275 Ibid.

276 Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies*, 122. He notes that these comments by Martinis Roe come from a conversation he had with her in Melbourne in December 2011, and an email to the author dated 8 March 2012.

Other feminist methods: engaging with the research, subjective approaches

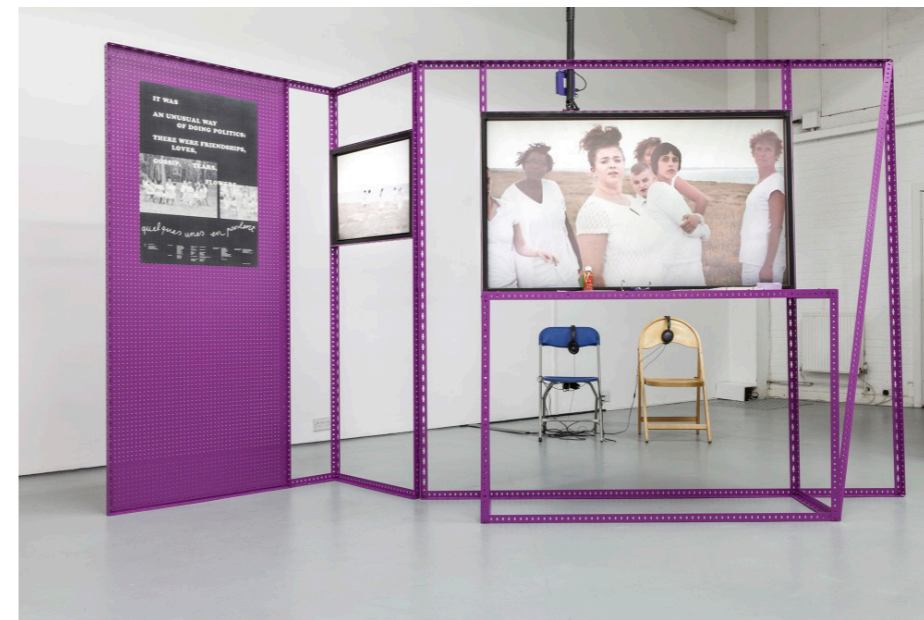
As an alternative to critique, *Ever Present Archiving* draws on a feminist project of refiguring the researcher's relationship to the object(s) of study. This often involves, in broad terms, an active engagement rather than a detachment from the object(s) of study. Various projects by Alex Martinis Roe have researched and engaged with genealogies of feminist collective practices in Europe and Australia. Her practice seeks to "to foster specific and productive relations between different generations as a way of participating in the construction of feminist histories and futures."²⁷⁷ Martinis Roe's *To Become Two* is an extensive theory-practice project consisting of six films, a book, exhibition display system, a poster series, a workshop series, a public salon series and the touring exhibition which has been shown across numerous venues. Generating social histories of specific feminist political practices such as The Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, the project also forms propositions for feminist collective practice. I see her discursive encounters and storytelling methodologies as excellent examples of this participatory feminist *engagement with*, as opposed to *detachment from*, the object of study. She forms productive relations by directly participating in the communities she engages with. Reflexivity and the presence of herself as researcher is content in the work, and these positions inform her methodologies.²⁷⁸ These methods include her narrating voiceovers which are highly subjective accounts by their nature, and some of the films include scripted passages that she gets other people to perform. In her 2014 film titled *It was an unusual way of doing politics: there were friendships, loves, gossip, tears, flowers...* a group of contemporary French interlocutors become performers in a restaging of a 1972 seaside feminist meeting at La Tranche-sur-Mer, Vendée, France. Organised by Psychanalyse et Politique, the meeting gathered together 300 women from all over France and Europe (many of them were from other women's groups). Some of the women went on to found the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective. The film also features a second group of contributors who narrate a script written by Martinis Roe, re-enacting scenes from the week-long meeting. The contributors Martinis Roe worked with were a group of young women involved in various feminist projects in Nantes. Writer Benison Kilby comments that, "By inviting different individuals and

²⁷⁷ <https://findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au/profile/863841-alex-martinis-roe>, accessed 20 August 2022.

²⁷⁸ I wish to note that a discussion about research methodologies is expanded on in Chapter Four: *Queer and Affective Approaches, Feeling Things* of this thesis.



Fig. 99. (Right) Alex Martinis Roe, *It was an unusual way of doing politics: there were friendships, loves, gossip, tears, flowers...* (video still). Super 8 (transferred to digital), 2014. Courtesy of the artist.



Figs. 100, 101. Alex Martinis Roe, *To Become Two* (installation views), 2017. The Showroom, London. Exhibition design: Fotini Lazaridou-Hatzigoga. Photograph by Daniel Brooke. Courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 102. *The Studio*, (installation view), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Photograph by Justin Spiers.

groups to participate in her work and in the production of the work's meaning, she aims to break away from the traditional model of the individual artistic author."²⁷⁹ In this way, Martinis Roe's methodologies extend to a privileging of multiple speaking positions and relational processes.

In an interview with *EuropeNow*, Martinis Roe explains how she used her research into these collectives, gathered by participating directly in the communities and conducting oral histories:

I formed historical narratives with a direct, personal responsibility to those I was writing about. I found that the stories already in the archives were often shaped by standards of record-keeping and publishing, privileging established kinds of information. Writing from my own experience of interpersonal encounter with these histories meant that I was able to find and focus on different, uncategorized fragments, often emerging from the minutiae of relationships.²⁸⁰

A similar feminist engagement can be seen in *The Studio*, in the way I

²⁷⁹ Bennison Kilby, "Review of *It Was an Unusual Way of Doing Politics: There Were Friendship, Loves, Gossip, Tears, Flowers*," *Eyeline* 84 (2016): 92.

²⁸⁰ "Forging Feminist Futures: An Interview with Alex Martinis Roe," *EuropeNow*, January 16, 2020, <https://www.europenowjournal.org/2020/01/15/forging-feminist-futures-an-interview-with-alex-martinis-roe/>

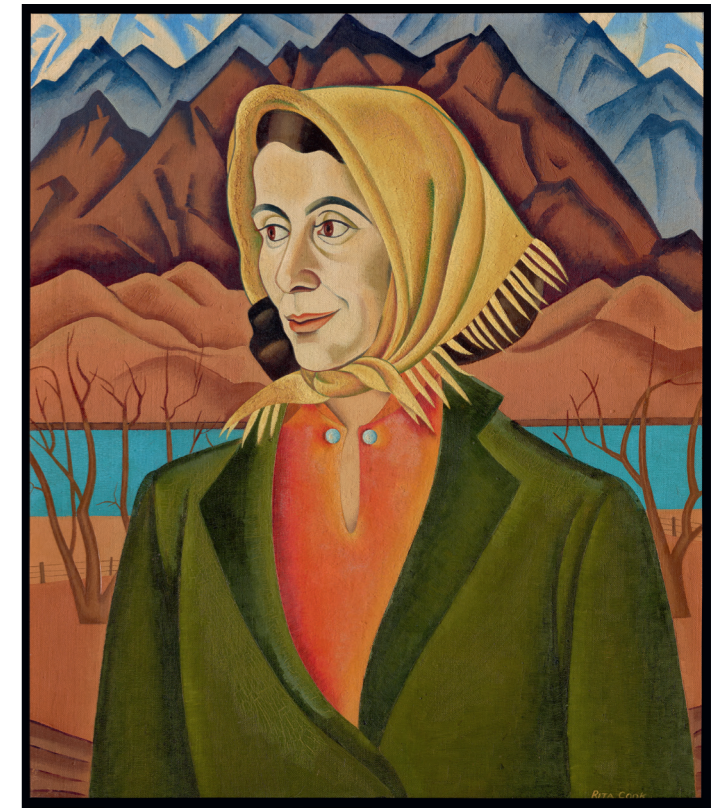


Fig. 103. Rita Angus, *Marjorie Marshall*, 1938-39/1943, oil on canvas adhered to plywood. © Reproduced courtesy of the Estate of Rita Angus. Purchased 2019. Te Papa (2019-0012-1)

researched through the personal relationships I developed. My subjective approach can be seen in how I talked to artist family members, in interpersonal and qualitative encounters where emotion was taken seriously. Devices such as wall texts and artwork labels are a significant methodology used in the practice, particularly for *The Studio*. I include my own responses, associations and thoughts in these texts. Fragments and everyday insights are featured, such as Lusk's daughter's quote about how objects and props were borrowed in a time of stretched resources. I tried to form new narratives that privilege the collective nature of the venue and highlight relationships, rather than a singular focus on the individuals. I extend the function of wall labels as a form of engagement, and a dialogue; and a conversation emerges between the past and present. They become performative in that they are not limited to constating and describing what happened in history. They are like a verb, and work to highlight relationships and connections. The dialogue keeps going, as they enable the potential fictions and imaginings to be introduced. Wall labels are canonical, and for this reason, some galleries avoid them now. I use this traditional, perhaps outmoded, museum format to extend, revise and reinterpret the canon. While the canon has sometimes elided and hidden details of artists' lives, this is a productive device to attempt to counter these absences.

Being invited to write an 'artist's response' for an artwork label for Rita Angus's 1938 painting *Marjorie Marshall* for Museum of New Zealand Te Papa

Tongarewa's *Rita Angus: New Zealand Modernist* exhibition (18 December 2021 – 25 April 2022) offered another opportunity to explore this notion of creating art histories with footnotes. As mentioned previously, I aim for wall texts to be more performative, working to highlight relationships and connections. Concentrating on artist friendships, I imagined a letter between the artist Rita Angus and her friend, the subject of the portrait, Marjorie Marshall. The label read as follows:

I am imagining that Rita wrote to Marjorie after her stay in Wānaka. Her cursive handwriting is difficult to read, but I can make out the following about their time together: an escape to a room in mountain air, a friend to paint and draw with, backpacks of sandwiches, paintbrushes and paper, tussock-hill country, collecting high-country posies, a portrait nearly finished, matching brown for hair and eye colour, flicks of tassels on an orange headscarf, the lake in high-key blue, borrowed clothes, conversations in Marjorie's warm kitchen.²⁸¹

Marshall was a close friend whom Angus had met at art school, and Angus stayed with her in Wānaka after she quit her job as an illustrator for Ballantynes department store. I wanted to imagine the different stories, lives and events that might sit around a single painting. A number of women friends supported Angus when she often lacked a steady income or home. These friendships would have influenced Angus in a number of ways, that mostly remain untold.

Expanding the art historical with emotions, intuitions and subjectivities

Bearing in mind a subjective approach, textual elements in the practice attempt to take seriously the lived experience of women, and that requires a kind of historical empathy. The wall labels in *The Studio* combined information, memories, art-historical comment, quotes, testimonies and conversations from eleven distinct voices. I was careful not to create any hierarchy in the display of these texts and testimonies, as I wanted to tell the story through multiple perspectives and details. In this way, the multiplicity of voices meant that the story was kept open, with a distinctly discursive element. This offered and formed a subjective historical knowledge with fabricated (Florence Weir), art-historical/critical (Linda Tyler, Peter Entwistle) and familial (Jancis

²⁸¹ An artwork label developed for *Rita Angus: New Zealand Modernist*, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 2022.

Meharry,²⁸² Victoria Carr²⁸³) voices evenly spread across the exhibition texts. Florence Weir's voice recalled social aspects; Tyler's and Entwistle's provided more official-sounding comments on their painting practices; and Meharry provided intimate anecdotes such as how her mother would use objects around her, borrowing items from her parents' home, implying that a lack of resources meant that she had to 'make do.' In the wall labels for the Anne Hamblett paintings, I intentionally did not name her well-known painter husband Colin McCahon, unless it was absolutely necessary. This inversion of focus tried to shift the normal emphasis from McCahon to his lesser-known artist partner. I focused on Hamblett's own artistic output, combining quotes from various professionals, her daughter, and my imagined descriptions of her two missing artworks that depicted the studio. I also drew out other biographical fragments, such as her paid job drawing specimens for the Otago School of Medicine, while she was an art student. The use of so much text produces a mode of interpretation and close reading in the viewer. Some readers might have noted that some of the accounts differed; for example, where exactly the studio was physically located and the number of occupants who used it. This deliberately highlights the way the art-historical record can have variants and idiosyncrasies. It is also an approach that links to Grant's observations of Griselda Pollock's collections of images in her *Virtual Feminist Museum* (2007). She argues that a critical or objective distance is displaced by a mixture and interaction of various "interpretations and historical moments."²⁸⁴

This notion of an interplay of interpretations relates to multi-disciplinary feminist artist Andrea Geyer's emphasis on how her *Audrey Munson Project* (2007) produces meaning. In her essay *Woman's Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art*, introduced in Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications*, feminist art historian Giovanna Zapperi sees meaning as a term Geyer employs to oppose "notions of historical truth and objectivity."²⁸⁵ Munson was the model for more than twelve public statues in early-twentieth-century New York. She also performed in four silent films, including *Inspiration* (1915), in which she appeared nude, one of the first American actresses to do so in a non-pornographic film. Through methods of archival

²⁸² Jancis Meharry is the daughter of the late Doris Lusk. I conducted conversational research with her over several months as part of research for *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021.

²⁸³ Victoria Carr is the daughter of the late Anne Hamblett. I had phone conversations with her.

²⁸⁴ Catherine Grant, "A Narrative of What Wishes What it Wishes it to Be": *An Introduction to Creative Writing and Art History*, 235.

²⁸⁵ Zapperi, "Woman's Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art," 43.



Fig. 104. Andrea Geyer, *Intaglio. #11 (The Audrey Munson Project)*, 2008. Digital archival print, engraved glass. Courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 105. Andrea Geyer, spread from: *The Queen of the Artist Studio: The Story of Audrey Munson*. 2007. Artist book, 128 pages, edition of 500. Courtesy of the artist.

reconstructions and ongoing research, Geyer pictures another version of Audrey Munson. In this portrait, she is not just the silent muse and model, but an artist, actress and writer, who communicates with her own voice, now unmuted. Thus, Geyer reinvented Munson's biography. Rather than inserting another truth, Geyer asserts that her project inserts meaning. "Meaning that does not add up to a coherent story, a biography that can be written and shelved, but instead...present fragmentation."²⁸⁶ Avoiding a singular narrative, *The Studio* recalls an art-historical moment through an array of objects, voices, texts and connections, and in doing so presents it as a critical site of kinship and social significance. Combining historical works and documents with fictional elements produces an ambivalence and oscillation between representation and production of the past. I see this also as a fragmentation. It pictures an extended version of a particular history, suggestive of a rich cross-pollination of influence between the three women and other figures. My wall labels try to avoid being fixed or monolithic, instead they reframe and unsettle the telling of history with a personal, direct engagement and alternative details and points of focus. Through these gestures, my research participates in the critique of truth and objectivity as engendered by feminist, queer and post-colonial revisions of knowledge.

Thinking about a feminist critique of knowledge, Zapperi emphasises desire, arguing that while relating to the past, the female historian "must also be willing to be situated within her own emotions, intuitions and subjectivity."²⁸⁷ In a subjective involvement with the archive, Zapperi writes that:

the documents drive us affectively, opening up the artist/historian's emotions and thus helping to situate her within her own specific historical conditions. Desire here is what mediates the relationship between past, present and future, positioning the artist's subjective voice in the process of constructing alternative forms of knowledge.²⁸⁸

Importantly, Grant has observed that:

emphasis on desire, on feeling, on the irrational and intuitive is often put aside as an art-historical text is written. By engaging with the body of the text, whether through formal experiment or the evocation of the

286 Andrea Geyer, *Queen of the Artists' Studios: The Story of Audrey Munson* (New York: Art in General, 2007), 30.

287 Zapperi, "Woman's Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art," 26.

288 Ibid, 26–27.

writer's body in the act of looking and/or writing this emphasis can be recaptured.²⁸⁹

I think this mode can also be applied to *Ever Present Archiving's* installation projects and exhibition making, particularly in the text elements. Butt admits in his Introduction to *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963* how his embodied fictional passages, discussed earlier in this chapter, bring his “own desiring body into the frame of academic writing.”²⁹⁰ Specifically the acknowledgement of his “desires and pleasures” in sexual gossip “introduces an uneasy tension... namely, between gossip's expressly intersubjective and informal mode of address and history's impersonal formality.”²⁹¹ Supporting this, art historian Matthias Danbolt points out there is a “connection between interpretative desire and curiosity inherent in art historical enquiry and gossip.”²⁹² Zapperi also finds this in her examination of the reappearance of Fae Richards, the fictional African American lesbian singer and actress from the 1930s created by artists Zoe Leonard and Cheryl Dunye, which was discussed in Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications*. Zapperi argues it materialises the artists' “desire for a history that could have—should have—happened.”²⁹³ The archive in *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* imitates a private diary and consists of photographs, typewritten captions and descriptive texts, appropriating “a small historical museum display in which an admirer might have assembled a number of documents.”²⁹⁴ In this format, Zapperi states that the work “enacts not just a woman's trajectory, but also an admirer's desire and passion to recollect documents and information—a role performed by Leonard and Dunye themselves.”²⁹⁵ Florence Weir involves my artistic subjectivity, projections and identification: she encompasses my preferences for particular artists, styles and periods. For example, Florence's involvement with the Bauhaus stems from my interest in and desire for an influence of Bauhaus design in our local culture. She also embodies my desire for an active, social network: the strength, support and identification that a group offers. Furthermore, because I am the maker or technician, her outputs reflect my own artistic skills and sensibilities. She also reflects my personal judgement

289 Grant, “A Narrative of What Wishes What it Wishes it to Be: An Introduction to *Creative Writing and Art History*,” 234.

290 Butt, *Between You and Me*, 20.

291 Ibid.

292 Mathias Danbolt, “Dismantling the Serious Machine: An Interview with Gavin Butt,” *Trikster* 3 (2009), trikster.net/3/butt/1.html.

293 Zapperi, “Woman's Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art,” 34.

294 Ibid, 29.

295 Ibid, 30.



Fig. 106. Zoe Leonard, *The Fae Richards Photo Archive*, 1993-96 (installation view), *Collecting Biennials*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, January 16–November 28, 2010). Gelatin silver prints and chromogenic prints with typewritten text on paper. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchased with funds from the Contemporary Painting and Sculpture Committee and the Photography Committee 97.51a-dddd. Artwork © Zoe Leonard. Photograph by Sheldon C. Collins.

on a gap in the scholarship, a tendency for women to be ignored in their own time. She embodies my desire to resurrect these figures in a future now and contribute to new knowledge. At the same time, I admire Florence and her work, and this mood and approval infects the way I present her, and then how she is read by others. I enact the role of the critic working on behalf of the gallery, museum or the artist themselves, articulating a positive evaluation.

Chapter summary

To conclude this chapter, I would like to return to Jaś Elsner and his description of art history as ekphrasis. In examining how art history turns the object into text, he wrote of the object's "glorious resistance to being fully verbalized, its uncanny ability to be verbalized in a myriad of ways, equally valid and sometimes mutually exclusive."²⁹⁶ This is an acknowledgement that art history is not factual, nor neutral, and that acts of writing can reshape and mould the visual and guide how we look at things. This connects to the works of Martinis Roe, deconstructing art history, an acknowledgement that we might only get a glimpse of the story if we limit knowledge to the words of a few. Martinis Roe's projects enable a critical discussion on the nature of the record, the limits of language and the promotion of intersubjectivity, where meaning is created through encounter and relations. Elsner also highlights that descriptions are a lens and can make a reader see "more than they saw before."²⁹⁷ I have also explored potential for interpretative descriptions, translations and impressions to create new meanings. Thinking about *écriture féminine* and the formation of subjective, plural, embodied historical knowledge, I have discussed the ways in which Florence Weir involves my own artistic subjectivity, projections and identification. In my expanded thinking on ekphrasis, I have introduced this idea of casual, verbal discussion as an important underpinning for the project. As discussed, the project installations reflect this mix of the voices, testimonies and memories that are often excluded from 'official' bodies of knowledge. These extended sources of art-historical evidence, such as anecdotal accounts and personal insights, will be further discussed in Chapter Five, *Friendships and Conversation*.

²⁹⁶ Elsner, "Art History as Ekphrasis," 26.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

Chapter Four

Queer and Affective Approaches, Feeling Things

Repositioning the
archive and reflexive,
haptic research processes

Chapter Four: *Queer and Affective Approaches, Feeling Things*

Repositioning the archive and reflexive, haptic research processes

This chapter will discuss how touch, pleasure and affective encounters in the archive can contribute to a new and alternative form of handling the archive. I examine these approaches across various creative practices, and also, how they are applied to *Ever Present Archiving*. For American queer scholars Charles E. Morris and K. J. Rawson, the term ‘queer’ implies “a broad critique of normativity along many different axes of identity, community, and power.”²⁹⁸ They also state that a “queer archive” is not necessarily synonymous with LGBTQ+ materials or records. While the subject of my research is not LGBTQ+ specific, this generous scope creates space for my project to participate in a queer discussion and scholarship, and to explore a queer historiography via queer theorists such as Ann Cvetkovich and Elizabeth Freeman. I will also examine how autoethnographic, reflexive and heuristic processes and methodologies, which share affinities with queer theory, are relevant to the project’s positioning of research as a personal and immediate act. The project seeks to answer the question of how an ‘ever present’ archive can un-fix, reanimate and rehabilitate physical qualities of objects, such as haptic²⁹⁹ or sensory ones, and non-traditional records and traces that are often subdued or excluded from the archive, such as those to do with feelings and relationships.

Archival queering

Revisionist historiography sees a shift from historical subjects to examining the systems of “historical production itself.”³⁰⁰ In their essay *Queer Archives/ Archival Queers*, Morris and Rawson set out how the archive is a key site of that historical production. American queer theorist Faedra Chatard Carpenter’s writing also recognises the performativity of history. She writes of “historicized imaginations and imagined histories”³⁰¹ that reinforce the validity of presenting history as “inclusive of—and beyond—the assemblage of individual interpretations and ideologies.”³⁰² She writes that “history is fashioned and its documentation is inevitably filtered through the lens of its archivist, who unwittingly or consciously impresses himself upon the

298 Charles Morris and K. J. Rawson, “Queer Archives/Archival Queers,” in *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*, ed. Michelle Ballif (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012), 75.

299 Derived from *haptesthai*, the Greek word for touch. At its most basic, ‘haptic’ means anything relating to the sense of touch. The word entered the English language in the late nineteenth century as a medical synonym for ‘tactile.’

300 Morris and Rawson, “Queer Archives/Archival Queers,” 74.

301 Faedra Chatard Carpenter, “Robert O’Hara’s Insurrection: ‘Que(e)rying’ History,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (April 2003): 188.

302 Ibid.

record.”³⁰³ This picks up on Jacques Derrida’s argument that the quest for re-entry into these past experiences, or access to the past is evaded by the ever-present archiving processes and mediating influences, which both shape and limit what might be understood from these fragments and records.³⁰⁴ The archive and the activities surrounding it have often been thought about as a form of memory storage, linking these to functions and structure of the mind and human memory. Using Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis, Derrida also attends to the inherent impossibility in archival practices. He concluded that “the archivization produces as much as it records the event,”³⁰⁵ an interpretation that emphasises history as a construction, the slipperiness of the relationship between the archive and what it archives, and connects to ideas about authorship. This also recalls Hal Foster’s notion of archives as productive and constructive. Using Freud’s mystic writing pad as an analogy, Derrida explores how our desire for archives and records escapes representation, leaving what archival theorist Ann Cvetkovich calls “a trail of traces in place of the always-elusive real.”³⁰⁶ Cvetkovich, who wrote *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (2003), argues this same lesson is also available in many archives where absences are a “very practical reality.”³⁰⁷ Derrida’s writings on the archive have contributed to scholarly recognition of its contingent nature—the way it is determined by social, political, technological and material conditions. If the archive cannot or does not accommodate a particular kind of information or mode of scholarship, then it is effectively excluded from the historical record. *An Archive of Feelings*, for example, makes claim that the field of trauma studies has overlooked the more everyday accounts of trauma experienced by women and queers. Cvetkovich thinks of this as “recovery work,”³⁰⁸ and looks at the differences between grassroots and institutional archives. She examines lived experience through queer artefacts from underground Dyke culture such as literary readings, videos and performance, along with interviews with lesbian activists involved in collectives such as ACT UP New York. Cvetkovich reveals the connections between trauma, and the creation and mobilisation of lesbian public cultures. In an interview with queer artist Tammy Lee Carland, talking about the invention of Fae Richards, Cvetkovich comments:

303 Ibid.

304 Jacques Derrida, “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,” *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 9–63, http://artsites.ucsc.edu/sdaniel/230/derrida_archivefever.pdf

305 Derrida, “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,” 17.

306 Ann Cvetkovich, “Queer Archival Futures: Case Study Los Angeles,” *Sujetos de/al Archivo* 9, no. 1 (2012), <https://hemi.nyu.edu/hemi/es/e-misferica-91/cvetkovich>

307 Ibid.

308 Tammy Rae Carland and Ann Cvetkovich, “Sharing an Archive of Feelings: A Conversation,” *Art Journal* 72, no. 2 (Summer 2013), <http://artjournal.collegeart.org/?p=3960>

I was also interested, and still am, in the epistemological and political challenges of the absent archive. What happens if the histories you want to know have left no records? What about, for example, the history of black lesbians that led Dunye to invent Fae Richards, or the minor queer figures in the shadows of Hollywood cinema or in famous times and places like 1920s Paris? What archives and historical methods are necessary to figure out who those lesbians were and what they were doing in their intimate lives? There are many roads that led me to the archive as a relevant category for feelings.³⁰⁹

As outlined by Morris and Rawson, archival queers might accumulate and exhibit “a diverse...array of found objects, gestures, movement, emotions, talk, and repertoires that reconfigure the what and where of the archive,” and see these efforts as a way of enlarging, unsettling and fragmenting “any notion of the traditional archive.”³¹⁰ As an installation for *Ever Present Archiving, The Studio* (2021) displayed found and fabricated objects, textiles, archival documents, recorded talk and memories, all within one hierarchy or plane. According to Rawson and Morris, becoming an archival queer “involves a willingness, indeed an imperative, to resist the archive as a purely intellectual space and to seek out affective relations with the past.”³¹¹ And indeed, for Freeman and others, an affective-based relation to history encounters the past in the present by registering this encounter through the sensations of the body. French historian Arlette Farge’s book *The Allure of the Archives* (2015) recounts the emotional processes of archival research from a historian’s viewpoint.³¹² While Cvetkovich has written about archives that aim to provide an emotional rather than a limited intellectual experience, specifically looking at how artists open up the space of the archive, Farge’s memoir captures her personal, physical relationship to archives, the immediacy of handling historical documents, and how these encounters are shaped and converted into historical knowledge. *Ever Present Archiving* registers these approaches through a highly personal and idiosyncratic method to history making that foregrounds the physicality and tactility of objects and materials. In *Florence & Florence: other textile histories* (2018), I created a display of Florence Akin’s teaching archive that included a mass of tangled woollen threads (fig. 172), found in a blue folder with no explanation or identification, within her archive files at the Macmillan Brown Library. I included it in the vitrine installation

309 Ibid.

310 Morris and Rawson, “Queer Archives/Archival Queers,” 78.

311 Morris and Rawson, “Queer Archives/Archival Queers,” 80.

312 Farge, Arlette. *The Allure of the Archives*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.



Fig. 107. *The Studio*, (installation view), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Photograph by Justin Spiers.

as an unlabelled, tactile object associated with Florence Akins. I also laid out fabric pieces and cut-outs, which mimicked some of the shapes within the paper documents or photographs (see on the left in fig. 109). This textile making was a form of doodling and handling, paying attention to the materials I was involved with. As Cvetkovich notes in an interview:

Words like “original” and “authentic” are so loaded for us because we were taught to be suspicious of them, but the archive of feelings gives us permission to turn down the volume on the voice of critique and pay attention to the strong feelings that get attached to things.³¹³

Reconfiguring and expanding the archive

In *The Studio* (2021), I focused on the physical and social aspects of the shared studio, informed by my own experiences as an artist and the studios I have worked in. In the installation, the daybed became a central component. Reconstructed from a black-and-white photograph of Doris Lusk in the Dunedin studio (fig. 5), it acted as a gesture and reminder of the social nature of the studio. Through Florence Weir and her words, I am able to employ a

313 Carland and Cvetkovich, “Sharing an Archive of Feelings: A Conversation.”

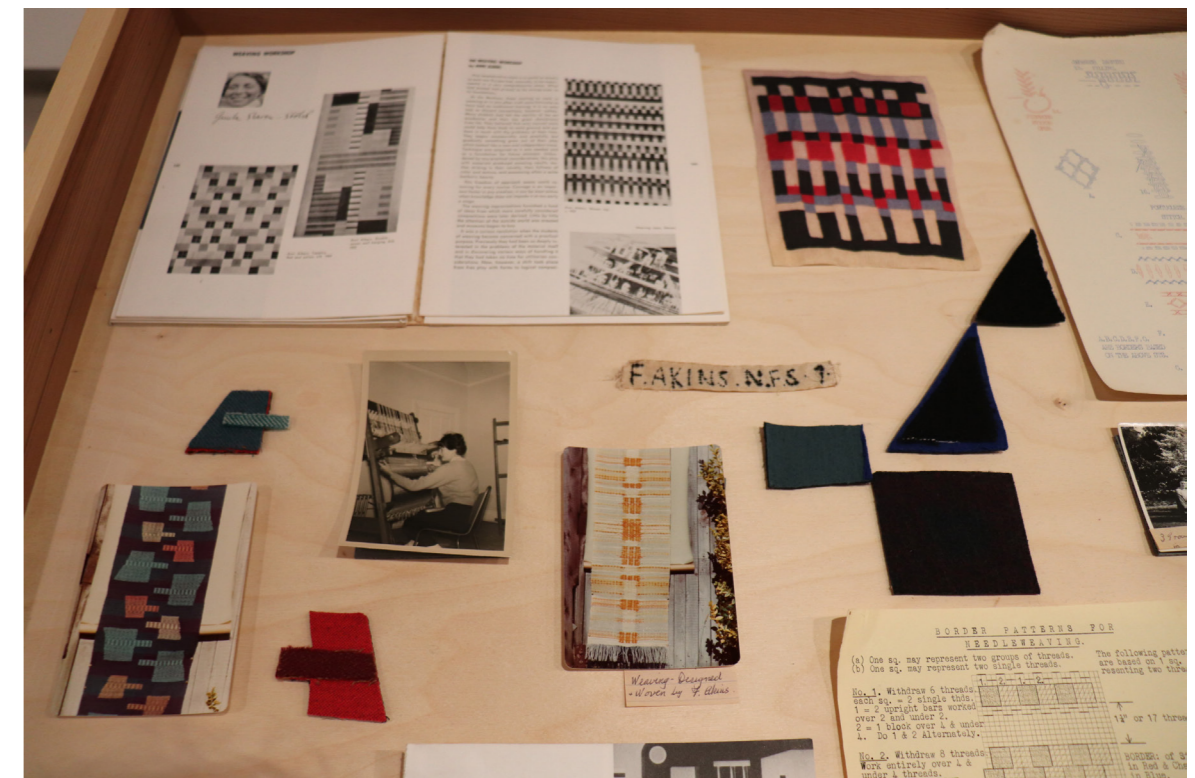


Fig. 108, 109. *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, (installation views), 2018. Iliam Campus Gallery. Fig. 108: photography by Thomas Herman.

subjective approach, inserting my own longings and feelings around the notion of a shared work/studio environment. Cvetkovich writes about artists acting as archivists, and cites as significant “their willingness to use their affective and personal investments to queer the archive and to produce new and unpredictable forms of knowledge.”³¹⁴ An imagined quote by Florence talking to her studio companions attempts to insert a warmth and personal response to an artwork:

It's the sort of arrangement I put on the dresser in my guest bedroom when a friend comes to stay. Speaking of which, Joan is coming to stay next month. She wants to spend a few weeks in the studio. I must clear the wardrobe. Her ensembles always inspire me. Such a colourist!

*Florence Weir*³¹⁵

Just as new information surfaced about Doris Lusk, gleaned from conversations with her daughter, Jancis, these made-up quotes challenge assumptions around the ownership, authority and authenticity of art-historical narratives. This also recalls Chartard's performativity of history. I developed my own associative, questioning descriptions of the artworks:

Flattened green dining-room chair in the background. Or could it actually be a striped wallpaper?...The teacup reminds me of Poole. Pink and grey, but the fine black rim isn't Poole. Jancis, Doris's daughter, has the painting in her bedroom in Christchurch now. Three pink roses in a small, brown pottery vase.

*Julia Holderness*³¹⁶

This is relevant to Cvetkovich's comment that:

with their interest in installations, artists also reconfigure the space of the archive, opening it up to new publics so that is not policed and protected and creating innovative kinds of 'safe space' in the form of intimate sanctuaries where new socialities can be forged.³¹⁷

314 Cvetkovich, "Queer Archival Futures: Case Study Los Angeles."

315 Wall label developed for *Pink Roses* (c. 1935) by Doris Lusk in The Studio, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021.

316 Ibid.

317 Cvetkovich, "Queer Archival Futures: Case Study Los Angeles,"



Fig. 110. Edwards Arthur Phillips, Photograph of the studio shared by Doris Lusk, Mollie Lawn and Anne Hamblett, c. 1940.

In the *Gallery 91* (2017) collaboration with Petrena Fishburn, we were exploring how a set of archival records surrounding the gallery's existence—mostly ephemeral items, accounts from transcribed interviews and other written texts—could be lifted and transformed to create a physical and tactile environment for recalling the gallery. Morris and Rawson cite Freeman, who wrote that “many of the new queer historians have championed eclectic, idiosyncratic, and transient archives including performances, gossip, found objects, and methods (or anti-methods)”³¹⁸ that rely on unexpected collocations of materials, and also queer scholar José Esteban Muñoz's scholarly focus on ephemeral traces. Morris and Rawson argue that the queer archive extends beyond traditional sites and the objects housed in them. For *Ever Present Archiving*, this is highly relevant as I am also interested in the “ephemera as trace, the remains, the things that are left, hanging in the air like a rumour.”³¹⁹

318 Morris and Rawson, “Queer Archives/Archival Queers,” 78.

319 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (Durham, NC, and New York: Duke University Press, 2009), 65.



Fig. 111. *The Studio*, (installation view), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery.



Fig. 112. Doris Lusk, *Pink Roses*, C.1935. Oil on board. Reproduced with kind permission from Jancis Meharry.



Fig. 113. *Teacup with saucer depicted in Pink Roses (Doris Lusk)*, 2021. Stoneware. Exhibited in *The Studio*, 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

In “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression” Derrida begins by visiting the *arkheion* of Greek antiquity to return to the first home or physical space of the archive. He writes that the *arkheion* was “initially a house, a domicile, an address, the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded.”³²⁰ He uses this to argue the close connection between the archive and the political power of those that governed it and made laws. In a key passage, he explains this confinement:

The citizens who...held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or represent the law. On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that place which is their house...that official documents are filed.... It is thus, in this domiciliation, in this house arrest, that archives take place.³²¹

Situated in their households, in their possession, the archive was *placed*, and could be *kept in place*, both physically and politically. For *Ever Present Archiving*, the archives and records that are referenced and explored are translated out of fixed documents into voices, feelings, soft furnishings, furniture and installation space. These are elements that are not so easily managed, possessed, fixed in place, settled, recalling Cvetkovich’s idea of a reconfigured archive that is not “policed and protected.”³²² As Canadian artist Vera Frenkel, who was discussed in Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications*, puts it, entering the archive “means knowingly placing oneself at the heart of a process of unending change.”³²³ For a maker, archives are full of potential, rather than being fixed in place and isolated.

In *Gallery 91*, some of the oral accounts gathered by Fishburn inspired material and intuitive fabrications, making room for my embodied responses to the records. For example, I made a work comprising a series of tactile clay pieces that stood in for a coffee percolator (there were six individual shapes, such as a lid and handle) that lay flat on a low surface. This work attempted to animate John Coley’s memory of being served coffee in the gallery, a physical object that embodied a spoken memory. Artworks known to have been exhibited at the gallery in 1959 were reproduced into furnishings such as seat upholstery and screens (figs. 71 and 74), while a gallery review from the *New*

320 Derrida, “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,” 9.

321 Ibid.

322 Cvetkovich, “Queer Archival Futures: Case Study Los Angeles,”

323 Vera Frenkel, “The Pleasures of Uncertainty,” Fondation Langlois, accessed May 7, 2018, <http://www.fondation-langlois.org/html/e/page.php?NumPage=2238>



Figs. 114, 115. *Gallery 91* (installation views), 2017. SCAPE Public Art. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.

Zealand Potter magazine was recorded as an audio transcript and played in the installation.³²⁴ Ephemeral items such as exhibition invitations and promotions were translated into ceramic tiles with echoes of their original graphic elements (fig. 120), and positioned next to fabricated objects that were made in response to the artworks. These physical responses are examples of how my strategy treats archival materials as starting points for new fabrications and departures, while also highlighting the endless possibilities in them. *Ever Present Archiving* develops social links between objects, places, people and communities. The physical and intimate treatment of the installation allows for informal chat and spoken memories about the studio to be presented. This is a project of unsettling and expanding the traditional archive.

New relations: archive rub, material knowledge, *feeling the historical*

In thinking about how the project deals with expanded notions around the archive, I will now examine approaches and strategies that rehabilitate, fabricate and make room for feelings, intuition and subjective voices. Exploring the intersections between curatorial, archival and artistic practices in a feminist context, *Ever Present Archiving* hinges on writer Kate Eichorn's recognition of a shift from "a linguistic to materialist archival framework,"³²⁵ and a reconceptualisation of the archive from a preservationist site or "destination" to an active site of knowledge and cultural production.³²⁶ Relating to this idea of knowledge being produced, artist Alex Martinis Roe views her practice as "a way of participating in the construction of feminist histories and futures." *A Story from Circolo della Rosa* (2014) is a film centred on the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, and threads together fragments from Martinis Roe's oral-history research with members of the group, and reflects on her own experiences of their collective activities. With a narration that intentionally avoids an authorial voice, she recounts her exploration of their interior spaces, archives and texts from a participant–observer viewpoint. There are close-up shots of her handling photographs and documents as she talks about them. Plus, she visits significant sites the group used for their meetings and discussions. The film's photography reflects her own body's exploring in time and space, such as circling motions, looking upward,

324 Recorded professionally at Liquid Recording Studios, Tāmaki Makaurau, with voice actor Kate Prior, this audio component was played through a hidden speaker system within the gallery space.

325 "Archive Materials: Feminism, Performance and Art History in the UK," School of Art History, University of St Andrews, <https://writingfeministarthistory.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/archive-materials-announcement.pdf>

326 Kate Eichorn, "Introduction," in *The Archival Turn in Feminism, Outrage in Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 3.



Fig. 116. *Gallery 91* (detail), 2016. Test installation, Auckland University of Technology.

Fig. 117. *Gallery 91* (detail in archival cabinet), 2017. SCAPE Public Art. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.



underneath an elaborate chandelier and decorative ceiling. This subjective narrating is part of her storytelling methodology, a mode of disruption and difference. French feminists such as Luce Irigaray, who practised sexual difference, believed the erasure of difference could lead to the disappearance of subjectivity because both culture and language operate under the ‘universal’ subject that is inherently male and incorrectly perceived as neutral. In this context, Wallin critiques Derrida’s narrow conception of the archive, asserting that:

This difference has no place in Derrida’s archive, who argues that the archive must “articulate the unity of an ideal configuration” (Derrida 1996, 3). Martinis Roe accounts for this difference by drawing speculative thought, subjective acts of storytelling, oral histories, and intergenerational relations into the processes of archiving.³²⁷

Wallin’s essay argues that Martinis Roe brings a feminist perspective to archive relations through her “attention to objects, subjectivities, and materialities.”³²⁸ She writes that Martinis Roe’s installation *To Become Two*, which was discussed in Chapter Three, *Fiction with Footnotes, a Creative Art History* “begins to chip away at the binary that places embodied or material knowledge against the static, monumentalising nature of the archive.” In this attending to the materiality of the archive, Wallin states that Martinis Roe’s practice explores “how documents, records, and people can rub up against one another and generate new relations.”³²⁹ *Ever Present Archiving* also avoids this fixed, permanent sort of archive, and attempts this by getting current practitioners to engage with the records and artefacts. It also assembles and conflates disparate archives, generating reconstructions and tellings of the past that produce ‘rub,’ difference and fluidity.

Writing about the maximalist textile art of Allyson Mitchell, which makes use of reclaimed and abandoned craft, Freeman asserts that her work “opens up a tactile relationship to a collective past.... One not simply...citational but physical and even erotic.”³³⁰ She goes on to say that this “method of literally *feeling* the historical” is a queer historiographic method.³³¹ While many of the artefacts I fabricate are quotations and direct references to the available

327 Wallin, “Feminism in the Archives and the Archive in Feminism,” 144.

328 Ibid, 135.

329 Ibid, 145.

330 Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, 93.

331 Ibid.



Figs. 118, 119. Alex Martinis Roe, *A Story from Circolo della Rosa*, (stills), 2014. High definition video including material courtesy of Laura Minguzzi and Mariri Martinengo and the Milan women’s Bookstore Collective Archive. Image courtesy of the artist.

records, some of the making appears to come out of an intangible spirit of the period, recalling Freeman’s *feeling* the historical. In other words, in certain areas of the work, the objects can be read simply as a response to being in that world for some time and making in response to that engagement. *Gallery 91* extended the idea of the archive by setting up a series of resources and elements drawn from research into a specific historical venue (a dealer gallery). This approach aimed to accommodate details and qualities that might have been overlooked, and set up relationships between various objects that might not have been accessible or even possible in a more conventional encounter with the materials, such as in a research library. For example, I fabricated a copy of a ceramic necklace exhibited by June Black that was featured in a poor-quality newspaper photograph of the artist at her exhibition. Most viewers could not make it out in the blurry newspaper image. The necklace was comprised of individual beads in soft browns and

blues, with little patterns I hatched into the clay with a blunt pencil. I pored over the photograph and tried to translate what I could discern, but the creation obviously included some extent of guesswork. This act of retrieval, or tracing, in some ways reflects Derrida's discussion around the desire for the, quoting Cvetkovich, "always-elusive real" that "escapes representation."³³² The necklace as a detail was rehabilitated—and positioned on top of the newspaper photograph and article in the vitrine. Similarly in *The Studio*, a range of tactile objects: a linen-covered daybed, cushions, vases and freestanding screens were made in response to the limited photographic record of the original studio. As outlined, these tangible furnishings are included to evoke bodily presence and contact, and also physical relationships.

Sensory and haptic archives, use of materials

My research aims to rehabilitate haptic and textural qualities of archives, documents and records through ceramics and textiles. The fabrications, copies and installations in part respond to the physical qualities of these records—such as The Group's exhibition catalogues—their colours, motifs and forms. In this instance, these aspects act as a direct embodiment of modernism. Often the materials that I am making fabricated objects from are different to those of the 'originals' being referenced; the new objects are translations and approximations of the original source or object. As such, clay is a material I find appropriate in conducting research for *Ever Present Archiving*. I am literally feeling my way through the work of other practitioners (Leo Bensemann's catalogue cover designs for The Group are one example).³³³ This is relevant to heuristic research methods, which will be discussed later in this chapter. As fragile frames and amateur plaques and supports, the clay objects are both responding to and also literally holding each other; the artefacts and the way they are presented (their supports, etc.) are one and the same. Thus, in my research, materiality is another form of connecting and embedding myself, and it acts to draw the pieces together into a related field. Sometimes the clay items are fired and glazed, but other times not, reminding viewers that it is a propositional project and still in process. The simple but direct use of clay as a material to discuss my perceptions of The Group's artefacts brings a naive feeling to the objects in isolation. However, once placed amongst the

³³² Cvetkovich, "Queer Archival Futures: Case Study Los Angeles."

³³³ *The Group Show* catalogues, Caxton Press, Christchurch, 1929–1977. Digital copies courtesy of the Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū and the Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury. Artist Leo Bensemann designed and printed all of The Group catalogues from 1940 to the final show in 1977. Designed in advance, the cover was the only pictorial element. The lists of titles, mediums and prices were compiled after each show was hung.

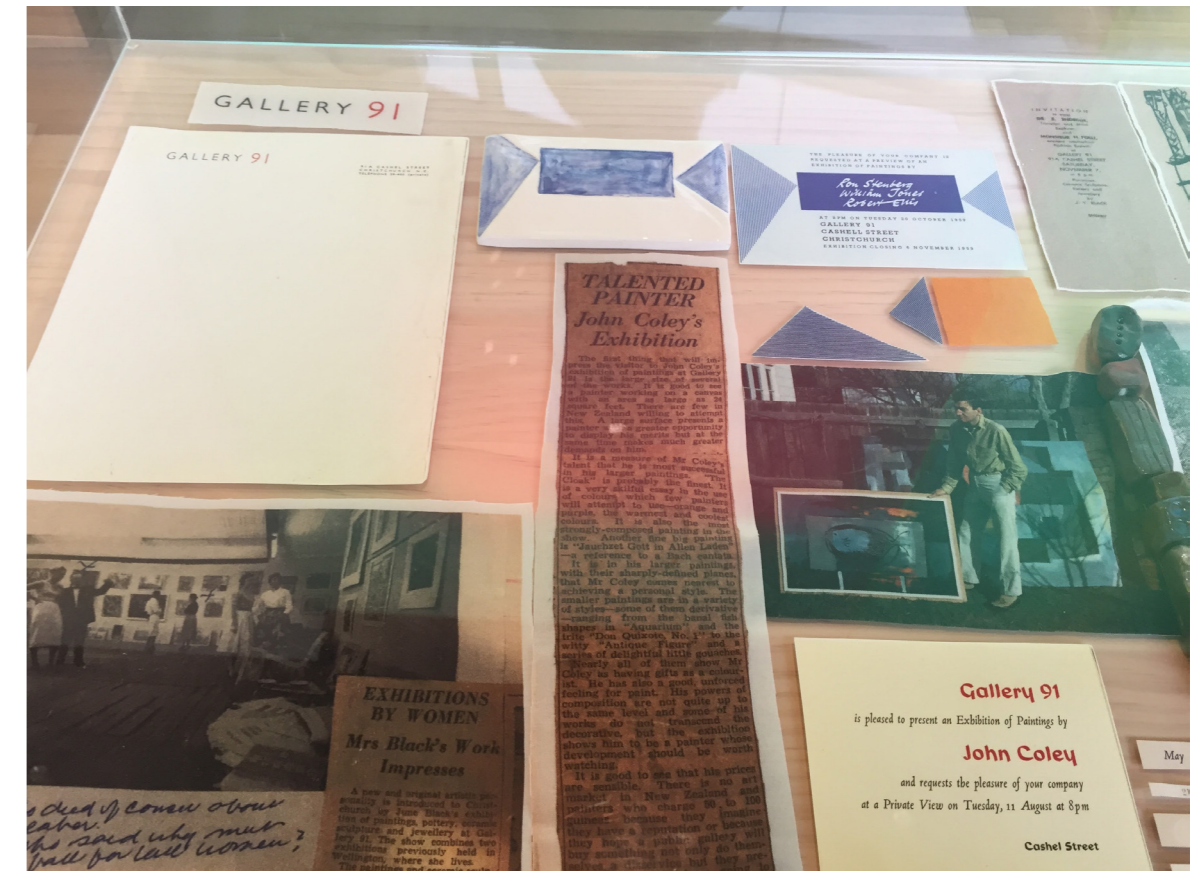


Fig. 120. *Gallery 91* (detail), 2017. SCAPE Public Art. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.

other materials and elements in an installation of archival fragments, these simple, often crude representations in clay, card and textile attempt a much more complex and articulate signification. Throughout this project my use of ceramics or textiles is not necessarily orthodox in the mainstream sense and certainly not functional. In this respect, I do not see myself as a ceramicist, nor as a textile artist. These artefacts are a means to an end in an installation practice that, as said, critiques modernist histories. In the future, the research may well see me moving toward other media such as sound, video, public lectures as performance, all in service of the project at hand.

Some of the reproductions in the work (such as translations of Bauhaus textile works, or catalogue reproductions) are rendered as textiles in various fabrics—both sourced and created. Textiles participate in both art and craft dialogues, and have association with feminist discussions. For example, Linda Tyler writes that Rozsika Parker's book *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* argues that "craft's slow processes create space for reflection and assessment."³³⁴ Parker writes that in "educating women into the feminine ideal...needlework paradoxically provides the means of expression

³³⁴ Tyler, "Through the Eye of Her Needle: Women's Textile Histories in Canterbury," 4.



Fig. 121. *The Group: homewares*, (archival installation), 2016. Auckland University of Technology.

Fig. 122. *The Group* exhibition catalogue. Cover, 1961. Designed and printed by Leo Bensemann. Digital copies courtesy of the Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū and the Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury.



for breaking the restraints of femininity in the so-called traditional sense.”³³⁵ And Canadian writer Constance Classen emphasises the sensory pleasures women artists derived from working with textures in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Speaking of the “qualities of intricacy, intimacy, tactility and communality”³³⁶ that she attributes to these textile crafts, Classen notes that women often chose this medium over others, such as painting. She suggests textile crafts can be less contained than other craft practices, writing that women could create “large scale assemblages and ambitious interior design projects.”³³⁷ Textiles are another appropriate medium for rehabilitating and promoting the sensory and haptic, and can be suggestive of the body. Emma Fitts’ use of textiles reaches far beyond the citational, suggestive of a material and tactile knowledge, as mentioned in Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications. Where did feeling come from?* (2015) was a large textile work

³³⁵ Roszika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 85.

³³⁶ Constance Classen, “Feminine Tactics: Crafting an Alternative Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in *The Book of Touch*, ed. Constance Classen (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005), 237.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*



Fig. 123. Emma Fitts, *Where does Feeling Come From?* (installation view), 2015. Velvet, interfacing, ribbing, vinyl text, *Spinster* novel by Sylvia Ashton-Warner, silk scarf. Photograph: Daegan Wells. Courtesy of the artist.

that included a garment pattern for an artist’s smock described in *Spinster* (1958), a novel by writer and educationalist Sylvia Ashton-Warner. Melanie Oliver writes about this work in the room sheet for *Embodying the Archive*, an exhibition she curated for The Physics Room in 2015:

billowing shapes made of velvet and interfacing, the hanging materialises and accommodates the life of its subject. Fitts subtly invokes the aura that accrues to clothing based on contiguity with its wearer, as well as the muscle memory that derives from daily rituals and sensations. The idea that clothes house (and distinguish) bodies mirrors the classical notion of the archive as a form of architecture for social memory.³³⁸

While cloths, fibres and weaves speak to texture and touch, they also speak to an idea of piecing parts together, which can link to the way memory operates. Citing the *Oxford English Dictionary*, art historians Mark Ledbury and Michael Hatt have noted the first definitions of fiction were to do with “crafting, making: ‘the act of fashioning or imitating’ to be precise.”³³⁹ The derivation from the Latin *fictionem* (nominative *fictio*) “a fashioning or feigning,” a noun of action from the past participle stem of *fingerere* “to shape

³³⁸ Melanie Oliver, roomsheet for *Embodying the Archive*, curated by Anneke Jaspers and Melanie Oliver, The Physics Room, Christchurch, 2015, <https://physicsroom.org.nz/exhibitions/embodying-the-archive>

³³⁹ Mark Ledbury and Michael Hatt, “Introduction: Compelling Fictions,” in *Fictions of Art History*, ed. Mark Ledbury (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), vii.

form, devise, feign,”³⁴⁰ connects this physical handling and a sense of shaping to the origins of the word. This also recalls Chatard Carpenter’s idea that “history is fashioned.” Underscoring how fragmentary and fluid the process of remembering is, historian and cultural critic Eva Hoffman notes that “Memory constructs the past and reconstructs it.”³⁴¹ This is an idea I respond to in a video animation of textile fragments (*Florence and Winnifred*, 2018) in which I attempt to demonstrate that there are multiple ways of piecing together various traces. The visual animations of moving geometric shapes are intercut with excerpts of text, which pose as archival letters between Florence and a friend in which she described her various rug designs: “There are squares of mustard and turquoise, semi-circles in crimson and a grey rectangle, all on a deep blue base colour.”³⁴² The decision to have the designs moving and animated was to reflect the notion of a fluid memory with multiple configurations.

Bauhaus artist Monica Bella Ullmann-Broner’s colour exercises and explorations are an interesting reference for these digital textile studies and animations of shape and colour. Under tuition from Kandinsky in 1931, Ullmann-Broner produced a study of the primary colours that she annotated with “with the primary forms assigned to them” as an “attempt at giving form to the secondary colours”³⁴³ in a rectangle (green), a hexagon (purple) and a parallelogram (orange) (fig. 124). The painted shapes look cut out, as if they are slightly hovering on the cream-coloured paper background. I see their potential to move around each other and overlap, offering up new possibilities for colour and shape arrangements and relationships. Ullmann-Broner’s legacy and presence lives on in these graphic resources that now circulate on Pinterest and design blogs around the world. Akin to the fabrications that I made in response to The Group’s objects, this animation work seeks to sample, mine, image, shape and think about scale, texture and colour from a set of records, fragments or traces similar to this visual exercise from the Bauhaus. These approximations and attempts are made from what resources are available and to hand, and it is obvious that the information is only partial. My remakes are realised in different materials to what the original might have been, and the scale has been gauged from limited documentation. With this type of approach, things can be slipped or missed, and there is a sense of the

³⁴⁰ A definition obtained from the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, accessed January 11, 2022, www.etymonline.com/search?q=fiction

³⁴¹ Eva Hoffman, *Time* (London: Profile Books, 2011), 108.

³⁴² Excerpt from *Florence und Winnifred*, digital animation by Julia Holderness, 2018

³⁴³ “Vassily Kandinsky. Teaching at the Bauhaus,” *Wall Street International Magazine*, June 27, 2014, <https://wsimag.com/art/9979-vassily-kandinsky-teaching-at-the-bauhaus>

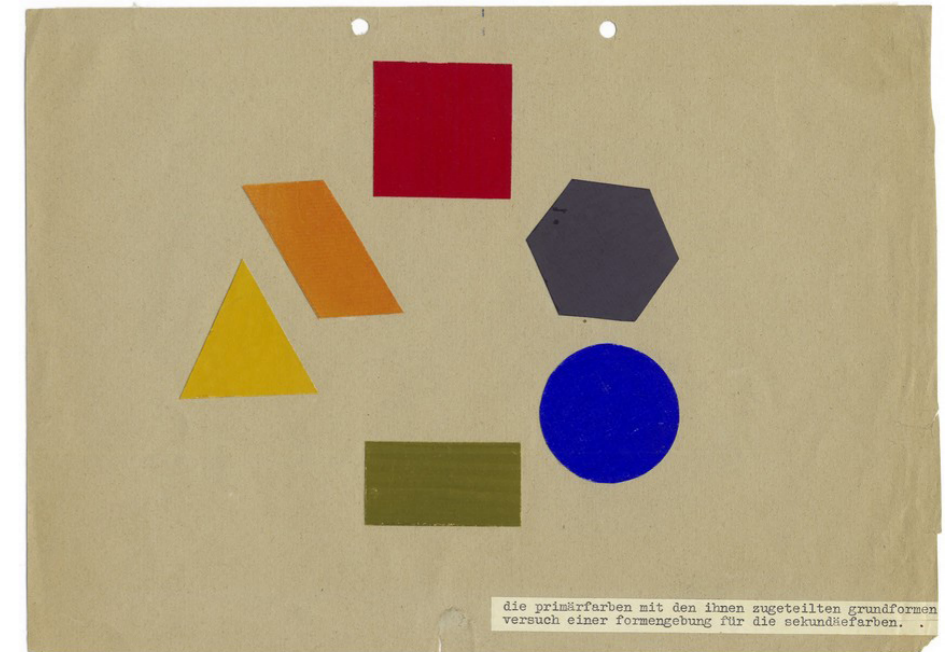


Fig. 124. Monica Ullmann Broner, the primary colours with the primary forms assigned to them, attempt at giving form to the secondary colours, 1931, Bauhaus Archiv Berlin. Photograph: Atelier Schneider.

skewed and the wonky. The notion of the fragment as a trace or marker of what is not included (or now available) is also important within a feminist or queer context, whereby historical representations of particular communities have so often been limited or non-existent. In an interview on his sculptural practice, British artist Ian Kiaer stated: “The fragment inhibits the total view as well as frustrating the possibility for control by ensuring that it can only ever be partial.”³⁴⁴ I think a feminist method has resonance with this promotion of the partial view, as opposed to a supposedly encyclopaedic or panoramic view, or the controlled perspective that might overlook certain elements. Kiaer also observed that “the way a fragment works is to draw attention to what isn’t there”³⁴⁵ or immediately obvious. In an art context, the methods of working with an archive’s fragments are often intuitive, emotional, subjective and partial. This type of practice can make way for other narratives and impulses, ones that are tangential, marginalised or absent.

The practice of Emma Fitts also registers affective relations with the past. Her wide-ranging research spans both traditional research enquiry and also knowledge gleaned from chance encounters such as conversations, reading and looking. Her subjects are not just artistic figures such as Olivia Spencer

³⁴⁴ Ian Kiaer and Caoimhin Mac Giolla Leith, *Ian Kiaer (Endless House Projects)* (Rome: British School at Rome, 2005), unpaginated.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Bower, but New Zealand women who have made impacts in political, scientific and educational spheres such as economist, activist and former politician Marilyn Waring, writer and educator Sylvia Ashton-Warner and astronomer and cosmologist Beatrice Tinsley. The stories and histories she tells are often translated into fabric collages, and large textile hangings and installations. These works are “evidence of gentle gatherings or acts of bringing together diverse materials that then diagram prior or past presences and peoples.”³⁴⁶ A series of garment works pay tribute to these characters and are a way of connecting ideas and materials. In her article on Fitts’ practice titled “An Art of Unbounded Storytelling,” Aotearoa-based curator and writer Bronwyn Lloyd states:

A flight jacket seems wholly appropriate as Fitts’ garment of choice to pay homage to Beatrice Tinsley, a woman notable for her groundbreaking research into galaxy evolution. Fitts is drawn to Tinsley because of her powerful retelling of time and her concept of an unbound universe. “I sought out a relationship between my work and Tinsley’s,” Fitts notes, “and I imagined using her concepts as tools for future ideas.”³⁴⁷

Referencing Irving Penn’s 1972 photographic portrait of abstract expressionist painter Lee Krasner in a jacket with a large hood, Fitts also connects Tinsley with the painter, an example of how her stories are kept open and fluid, and can be tangential. As Lloyd explains:

the elliptical form of the hood in the portrait appealed to Fitts. She notes that one of Beatrice Tinsley’s research papers deals with this elliptical shape within galaxy evolution, so in using the shape she was able to nod to the identities of both women at once.³⁴⁸

In a collaboration with Amelia Bywater under the artist collective Victor & Hester,³⁴⁹ Fitts created a website called WHAT (WAS) IS HAPPENING, to house their shared research into the histories and surrounding contexts of three female figures: Marlow Moss (UK), Rowena Cade (UK) and Marilyn Waring

³⁴⁶ Victoria Wynne-Jones, “Emma Fitts,” Melanie Roger Gallery, accessed November 12, 2021, <https://melanierogergallery.com/stockroom/emma-fitts/>

³⁴⁷ Bronwyn Lloyd, “An Art of Unbounded Storytelling,” *Art News New Zealand*, Autumn 2020, 62.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Victor & Hester was launched in 2010 in Glasgow, Scotland, by Aotearoa artists Amelia Bywater, Kirstin Carlin and Emma Fitts. It has produced more than forty journals and events and worked with over sixty artists.

(NZ). Expanding on existing archives, Victor & Hester redocumented and explored the histories of these women by staging hypothetical conversations and interviews with the three women. Oliver discussed this website project as part of an online video tour of collection works for Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū. She comments:

Questions such as *What did it feel like to be a female artist remaking the work of a male artist?* and asking *How much of yourself do you see in the work?* are impossible questions to answer from the archival data that exists. But the artists estimate the thoughts and potential responses that are not documented or visible and they speculate on these, inventing qualitative as opposed to quantitative data. The website therefore creates a dynamic interpretation of history.³⁵⁰

The three women subjects, who came from different disciplines, times and locations, were “brought together by Victor & Hester for their shared sense of spirit or feeling, their dedication to a cause, their apparent rebellious nature and gender fluidity.”³⁵¹ This archive method is eclectic in nature and creates a new network of what Freeman calls “counterintuitive juxtapositions of events or materials.”³⁵² From this research, Fitts then made garment-pattern works for each of the female subjects. These large fabric hangings are tactile and have a distinct relationship to the body. The fabrics chosen transmit references to the women’s characters and contexts: wool tweed, oilskin, cotton drill. These works privilege an experiential sort of knowledge, a ‘wearing’ notion that various textures and feelings can be associated with people. In my view, Fitts’ work reflects a queer approach to historiography; she offers a physical, affective and embodied experience of history.

Thick and fat, autoethnography as a queer method

These kinds of queer approaches to historiography have a relationship to methods of autoethnography that share queer theory’s commitments to fluid subjectivities, embodied and reflexive research processes, and multiple forms of knowledge. In their essay titled “Autoethnography is a Queer Method,” academics Stacy Holman Jones and Tony E. Adams argue that autoethnography is a queer research method, and one that works “against canonical methodological traditions and disciplining, normalizing, social

³⁵⁰ Melanie Oliver, “Works by Emma Fitts,” Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, accessed October 3, 2021, <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/multimedia/exhibition-tours/works-by-emma-fitts>

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Elizabeth Freeman, “Introduction,” *GLQ* 13, no. 2–3 (2007): 162.

forces.”³⁵³ This is relevant to the project in its questioning of the empirical account and its positioning of research as a personal and immediate act. The practice emphasises the researcher’s subjectivity rather than attempting to limit it, as defined by autoethnographer Carolyn Ellis as a “research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political.”³⁵⁴

In an interview with Italian experimental historian Laura Minguzzi conducted by Alex Martinis Roe, the use of the Italian verb *invenire* is emphasised. In discussing her historical practice and methodology, Minguzzi lists as an essential point, her “invention in the field of historiography in the sense of *invenire* (to put oneself into research and to find).”³⁵⁵ This reflects a personal, active, heuristic approach to research. Holman Jones and Adams argue that queer theory and autoethnography share “conceptual and purposeful affinities,” stating:

Both refuse received notions of orthodox methodologies and focus instead on fluidity, intersubjectivity and responsiveness to particularities.... Both refuse to close down inventiveness, refuse static legitimacy.... Both embrace an opportunistic stance toward existing and normalizing techniques in qualitative inquiry, choosing to ‘borrow,’ ‘refashion,’ and ‘retell’ methods and theory in inventive ways.³⁵⁶

In their overview of autoethnography, Ellis, Tony Adams and Arthur P. Bochner assert that “when researchers write *autoethnographies*, they seek to produce aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience.”³⁵⁷ It was anthropologist Clifford Geertz who developed the concept of ‘thick description’ in 1973, and this approach has become increasingly recognised as a method of “symbolic anthropology, enlisted as a working antidote to overly technocratic, mechanistic means of understanding cultures, organizations, and historical settings.”³⁵⁸ In Geertz’s view, anthropology’s undertaking should be that of “explaining cultures through

353 Stacy Holman Jones and Tony E. Adams, “Autoethnography is a Queer Method,” in *Queer Methods and Methodologies* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2010), 197.

354 Carolyn Ellis, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), xix.

355 Alex Martinis Roe, “Laura Minguzzi and Marià Martinengo in Conversation with Alex Martinis Roe,” in *A Story from Circolo della Rosa*, Documen.Site, March 22, 2018, https://documen.site/download/a-story-from-circolo-della-rosa_pdf

356 Holman Jones and Adams, “Autoethnography is a Queer Method,” 197. The authors cite Plummer, 2005; Ronai, 1995; Slatery, 2001; Spry, 2001; Foucault, 1981; Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005; Hilfrich, 2006, 218–9; Koro Ljungberg, 2004.

357 Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner, “Autoethnography: An Overview,” *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1, art. 10 (2011), 5. <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3095>

358 *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Thick description,” accessed May, 14, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thick_description

thick description which specifies many details, conceptual structures and meanings,”³⁵⁹ and should be opposed to ‘thin description,’ which is a factual, empirical account “without any interpretation.”³⁶⁰ For Geertz, the latter is an insufficient account, as an ethnographer must present a thick description that is “composed not only of facts but also of commentary, interpretation and interpretations of those comments and interpretations.”³⁶¹

A ‘thick’ kind of methodology is also discussed in Elizabeth Freeman’s *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010), a book that outlines an affective-based historiography. In her exploration of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s thinking on forms of minor literature, she cites their interpretation of the work of James Joyce, whereby he is “overloading the dominant language to the point of explosion via neologism, hypotaxis, or semantic over-packing.”³⁶² Freeman calls this “a kind of ‘fat’ aesthetic that rebinds fixed meanings and allows new associative chains to form.”³⁶³ Indeed, in her analysis of artist Allyson Mitchell’s practice, Freeman asserts that textile art is “fat art...refusing an anorexic relationship to meaning, it goes beyond the linguistic and even pictorial, over-packing the language of high art with other sensations.”³⁶⁴ In keeping with the spirit of the period I am researching, there is an intention to offer a generous sense of coverage in the project. In one sense, this is an over-packing of display, as my installations offer a lot for the viewer to scan, read and contemplate; for example, the archival display cabinet in *The Group: homewares* (2016) was densely packed with many objects, textures, follies and layers of materials (fig. 125). The viewing experience is intended to have a sense of anthology, like collected short stories or accounts. These haptic aspects of the installations create a gesture where the items move out of ‘document’ and into something looser, subjective and more plentiful, akin to the practice of oral history. This methodology reflects the ways in which I am gathering and expanding art-historical methods such as conversational research, the elevation of multiple voices, and combining expert and non-expert opinion. This will be discussed closely in Chapter Five: *Friendships and Conversation*.

The generous sense of coverage in my installations (they are never scant

359 “Clifford Geertz’s ‘Thick Description’ Explained (Summary),” Cultural Reader, accessed May, 9, 2018, <http://culturalstudiesnow.blogspot.co.nz/2012/05/clifford-geertz-thick-description.html>

360 Ibid.

361 Ibid.

362 Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, xix.

363 Ibid.

364 Ibid, 93.

or minimal, rather dense and plentiful) reflects Freeman's 'fat' aesthetic and autoethnography's 'thick' type of description. Within my archival vitrine installations, physical layers are presented alongside the conceptual ones. The use of repeated colours and forms and the use of harmonious tones across the objects creates fluidity. The surface of the archival assembly in *The Studio* created a cohesive whole of details, connected by warm, pinky colours and repeated patterns. The eye might glance at first, taking in the array as one image, and then begin taking dips into specific areas, landing on individual objects and other moments. The overarching project aims to allow the viewer relative freedom as to how to engage with it. Elements are set up as an active space that the viewer can participate in, and it is a space that is questioning and unresolved. This approach invites the viewer to negotiate it for themselves; as the maker, I offer the viewer several ways in, while also showing them how I might be thinking about the materials. For example, in archival displays for The Group exhibition catalogues, the flat ceramic frames were placed around certain details to propose accents or relationships, and potential navigational routes through the dense collections of objects. And in *The Studio*, small ceramic cubes acted as weights to gently hold down pages, as well as being like markers, highlights, or an object that linked two documents together.

Autoethnographic, heuristic and reflexive approaches

Of relevance to this project is the notion of research as a more immediate undertaking, where participant observation embeds the researcher in the enactment of the settings being reported.^{365 366} Muñoz highlights the fact that Jill Johnstone, dance and art critic for *The Village Voice* "was not only a commentator on the scene she covered, she was also often, to varying degrees, a participant."³⁶⁷ He wrote that she narrated "her experiences on and off the stage, including her use of drugs and her acting out at parties" through a "wildly associative style."³⁶⁸ From this perspective, *Ever Present Archiving* attempts to employ participatory and active research strategies while drawing on feminist and queer critique of 'objective' research. This reflects American dance critic Deborah Jowitt's observation that Johnstone's "rambling" performative writing had "structural analogies to Yvonne Rainer's

365 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

366 Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview."

367 José Esteban Muñoz, "Utopia's Seating Chart: Ray Johnson, Jill Johnston, and Queer Intermedia as System," in *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance*, ed. Gavin Butt (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 107.

368 *Ibid.*, 107–8.



Fig. 125. *The Group: homewares*, (details of archival installation), 2016. Objectspace.



Fig. 126. *The Studio*, (detail of archival materials), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

ground-breaking choreography that saw long chains of movements,”³⁶⁹ the very performances she was writing about. This enables me to think about how research outputs can reflect the subject of enquiry, modes of making that have ‘analogies’ to the subjects I am researching. For this project, when the setting is ultimately a creative one (histories of artists, their lives and their work), physical fabrication seems an appropriate way to embed oneself in the research. Thus, part of the project’s engagement with autoethnography is my practice-driven approach. And through participation and making, my personal experiences are traced, recalling Derrida’s idea that archiving “produces as much as it records the event.”³⁷⁰

Practice brings with it a reflexive, active and creative mode of operating that opens out and also critiques the very discipline that I am working within. The fact that, as the researcher, I am also the artist and exhibition facilitator is both intrinsic and fundamental to the project. These multiple roles are complex and entangled. I invite other contemporary artists to participate and then negotiate with them on their outputs. I mediate with institutional curators, while conversing with extended family members of the artists I am researching. I borrow historical works, I write wall labels, I design display

369 Ibid.

370 Derrida, “Archive Fever,” 17.

systems. My role as artist in the project is complex in that my identity overlaps with historical figures. I learn and apply new skills (ceramics, textiles) and produce samplers. I teach myself by remaking and approximating various objects. This recalls Minguzzi’s “sense of *invenire*”: I put myself into the research in order to discover.³⁷¹ All of these aspects emerge in a temporality that challenges the historical archive. There is an overlay and merging of roles and outputs: and this is where I challenge the traditional divide between artistic fabrication and scholarly art-historical research. I often give talks in conjunction with exhibitions, from being a guest tutorial speaker to third-year art history students to the keynote speaker at a university-organised symposium.³⁷² These parts of the practice offer further pedagogical emphasis that the practice implicitly embodies. This practice proposes that it is more fertile to produce multiple, collaborative, overlapping, rhizomic versions of knowledge and history.

The collaborative project *Gallery 91* was conceived as a visual appendix, or set of physical footnotes, fleshing out and expanding upon Petrena Fishburn’s written chapter on the history of the gallery. This text and Fishburn’s original research were included in her master’s thesis on Barbara Brooke. Our *Gallery 91* projects, developed as alternatives to the original scholarly text, have had several airings. The first was an installation developed for SCAPE Public Art and shown at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū (2017); a second iteration of the installation toured to the Aigantighe Art Gallery (2017–18) and was presented alongside works by Gallery 91 artists that were in the Aigantighe’s collection.³⁷³ A forthcoming presentation will see our research collaboration presented as a page work in a University of Canterbury publication on archives and memory. The installations used fabrication and citation of specific archives, with the use of strategies such as a voiceover, alongside the presentation of art-historical objects and reproductions. This mode of research (re)presentation both produces and cites. The anecdotal review of Winnifred Hunt’s visit to Gallery 91 was recorded by an actor in an attempt to insert a highly subjective and colloquial firsthand account of entering the gallery and her experience that day in 1959. Distancing itself from a narrative-dominant presentation, *Gallery 91* attempted to

371 Martinis Roe, “Laura Minguzzi and Mariñ Martinengo in Conversation with Alex Martinis Roe.”

372 *Object_Memory_Archive: Art histories, formal knowledge and the power and problem of what we remember*, July 30, 2016, University of Canterbury, in partnership with Objectspace and The National. I presented the keynote.

373 These collection works included pottery vases, plates and a lidded jar by Helen Mason, Juliet Peter and Mirek Smisek, paintings by Louise Henderson (*Water, Rock and Seaweed*, c 1965), Doris Lusk (*Blue Lake, St Bathans*, 1952) and Rudi Gopas (*Figure Study - Immigrant series*, 1952), amongst other artists who had exhibited at Gallery 91.

create a set of art-historical resources, transforming Fishburn’s writing on Gallery 91 into a physical and tactile environment for viewer negotiation. This non-traditional form of study is informed by American psychologist Clark Moustakas’s suggestion that heuristic researchers work with other researchers and seek participants so that a personal topic can be illuminated by a variety of perspectives. As Moustakas puts it, this mode of working “evokes a personal and passionate involvement and active participation in the research process.”³⁷⁴ The page work (*Slip ten*) assembles the voices of Winnifed Hunt, Petrena Fishburn and myself into a dialogue that is part-autoethnographical, part-descriptive account. Fishburn’s text ruminates on her research interviews and the narrative she extrapolated from them, while mine reflects on my engagement with *Gallery 91* via contemporary fabrication and object making. Reflexivity intersects the project as both an orientation to research and in the writing practice that inhabits both the exegesis and texts within the installations. For example, in *Slip eight*, I am exploring my process and response to painter Julia Holden’s development of the Florence Weir portrait for *The Studio*. These reflexive texts are conceived of as an alternative to objective analysis, recalling Hélène Cixous’s writerly feminist interventions as discussed in Chapter Three: *Fiction with Footnotes, a Creative Art History*.

From a feminist perspective, potentiality also involves a willingness to be attentive to intuition and subjectivity. Indeed, my subjective voice, emotions and intuition are highlighted in my position as the researcher and artist. In *The Studio* I developed associative, reflexive and free-form texts for the artwork labels. These provisional wall labels aimed to include subjectivities, questions, afterthoughts, anecdotes and feelings. The label for *Mixed Flowers* by Doris Lusk, a work loaned from the Hocken Pictorial Collections, aimed to feel as flowing as the fluid, swirling painting it accompanied (see *Slip nine*). The text had an unfinished quality: my uncertainties and questions about the work were included, and made my research process transparent. For example, one read: “So we wonder, how did the ‘Flower Study’ title come about; was this an institutional title, decided later on by someone else? Perhaps later Doris thought ‘Flower Study’ was a better title?”³⁷⁵ Through their tone, I tried to reflect my subjective involvement with the archive and the research process. I used the pronoun ‘we’ to provide company, to reflect the conversations I had with various people throughout the process. These conversations include

³⁷⁴ Clark Moustakas, *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1990), 42.

³⁷⁵ Text from artwork label developed for *The Studio*, 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

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Today I found an interesting publication, *Portraits, Masks & Fantasy Figures*, at my local library. Caroline Otto, the daughter of artist Leo Bensemann, has produced a catalogue of her late father’s portrait-based works. As well as locating and photographing nearly all of his portrait works, she has compiled biographical notes, photographs, letters to Caroline from Leo with details about the works, titles, locations, and other documents of interest. Leo and his daughter Caroline spent time together in Germany in the 1970s.

On page 31, there is a striking work which Otto has titled *Untitled (Imaginary portrait on cloth)*. The subject is a woman with a strong, angular face, brown eyes and dark-brown hair with dark-auburn highlights, cut into a short bob with a blunt fringe. It is a delightful bob and a little bit like Katherine Mansfield’s, except the fringe is sharper and slightly shorter. She stares off-frame against a duck-egg blue background. The woman in the portrait has shaped, attractive eyebrows and a suggestion of lip colour. She is wearing a dark-red garment, either a blouse or a dress that has a black trim against her neck. The patterned band in green and mustard around the neckline reminds me of my felted appliqué works.

October 2020

I’ve been looking again at the portrait. Otto has noted that it is unsigned and undated—although it appears alongside other works from the early 1930s (the catalogue attempts a chronological ordering, as outlined in the introduction). The portrait is in a private collection in Germany, and she writes, “the work appears to be an imaginary portrait in Egyptian style.”³⁷⁶ I am not sure what this ‘Egyptian style’ means. I search for Egyptian portraits online and look at a web page on Fayum mummy portraits. Their large, dark eyes stare directly out at me, the faces are painted on slim panels of wood. Further on in the catalogue, on page 103, is another portrait titled *The Egyptian Woman*. Included alongside is an excerpt from a letter from Leo to Caroline from 1972: “Do you remember the Egyptian painting of the girl that we saw in the Residenz at Wurzburg? This is her sister and I exhibited it unfinished in the Group Show recently and gave it the title ‘The Egyptian Girl whose sister lives in Wurzburg’—which pleased me in a funny sort of way.”³⁷⁷ Otto then describes: “The strong colours, the form of the frame around the face and the strength of the face itself with its direct gaze and large dark eyes evoke the funerary paintings of Ancient Egypt. It seems as if she really belonged to an ancient time and her portrait has come down to us through the centuries.”³⁷⁸

³⁷⁶ Caroline Otto, *Leo Bensemann: Portraits, Masks & Fantasy Figures* (Nelson: Nikau Press, 2005), 31.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*



Fig. 127. Page 31 of *Portraits, Masks & Fantasy Figures* by Caroline Otto showing Leo Bensemann's *Untitled (imaginary Portrait on cloth)*, undated. Photograph by Cathy Harrington.

So I did have the right idea, googling the mummy portraits, then. The woman in the imaginary (1930s?) portrait has dark hair and eyes; however, that seems to me to be the only connection to funerary Egyptian faces and the later portrait on page 103 from 1972. Indeed, in the introduction, I learn that his trips to Germany were in 1970 and 1979. Bensemann's *Egyptian Woman* has long, centre-parted, tied-back hair and a more stylised face—very large eyes and a tiny, sad mouth and chin. The 'imaginary' woman is a face with much more structural realism. Actually, I see the eyebrows in the two works are similar—slim dark lines. Yet I find that Rita Angus's brows appear like this too, on page 51. Can I rely on these details about the work?

To me, the woman on page 31 is strikingly modern in appearance! Maybe she isn't imaginary! With her confident gaze, bohemian garment and her fashionable haircut, I feel she *is* someone, she has an identity. Maybe Leo had a sitter, and this is not an imaginary person. I am excited by the work being undated, the word 'imaginary' in the title, and that it resides in Germany. Could this work potentially be a portrait of Florence Weir? It becomes clear to me that this is the hairstyle that Julia Holden should copy for her portrait of Florence.

This musing might end up in one of my poetic wall labels featured in my installation titled *The Studio*:

*The undated 'imaginary' portrait by Leo Bensemann is not imaginary in my mind. I think he had a sitter or a specific face in mind. It actually could be Florence Weir. Several friends talk of her dark bob and blunt fringe, her strong, oval face. Here she is! I am particularly drawn to the dark-brown, auburn bob and the black trim of the garment against her neck. She is assured and fashionable, yet her out-of-frame gaze gives nothing away. The timeframe works. Early 1930s, yes. Bensemann would have known her. **Yes.** She was a person of interest, worth painting. **Most definitely.***

After writing this on Thursday afternoon, I then went out to an opening at the Ilam Campus Gallery for an exhibition of Leo Bensemann's design work produced for The Caxton Press, curated by Peter Vangioni. I had a brief chat with Peter and told him I had been looking at Caroline's book. He said it was a very useful document, he called it a 'catalogue raisonné,' and added that he sometimes used the notes to pull the odd line out for a wall label. I am always interested to hear how curators work, how they might construct their texts and narratives around their exhibitions.

Julia Holden and I met at an opening in early 2019 and we laughed about how often we are mistaken for each other, with our similar names. She suggested at the end of our conversation: “We should collaborate sometime. Just to confuse people even further!”

Julia, Florence, another Julia...this will be confusing. Will Julia Holden paint Florence's portrait? Oh, I hope so.

The invitation:

Kia ora Julia,

Really great to talk the other day about this collaboration / commission idea. Before I rang you, I wanted to ask if you were interested in a commission to paint a studio portrait of Florence Weir—perhaps based on a drawing or photograph I would have provided you. But then, as soon as we started talking, your idea of a painted performance portrait seemed really exciting, but I have been mulling this over since, and still coming back to the idea that I do really desire an object at the end of it, and feel drawn to a painted work. I'm wondering if this is because it builds up the illusion of Florence, in a similar way to her appearances in my installations and projects.

I guess this email is just to let you know that I'm still absolutely keen but thinking about what makes sense for Florence, and would love to hear your ideas too, if you had further thoughts after we talked. Not saying 'no' to the performance portrait idea at all—just still thinking. Hope that's ok.

I put together this mood board, which includes other portraits as potential references, my textile pieces (the felted works) and a few Florence Weir ceramic images (I can see textiles and ceramics in the background of the image maybe) and a photographic portrait I worked on with artist Richard Orjis in 2015.

Looking forward to talking again soon,
Julia

We stay in touch and I keep thinking about her portrait series of mid-century New Zealand artists. In the portrait mood board I send her, I include Bensemann's 'imaginary' portrait and make a point that the hairstyle could be a strong reference. Initially, Julia Holden said she would get her friend on Waiheke Island to sit for her. Later, realising I had a trip to Auckland planned, we decided I would spend the day with her and be the sitter. She told me to bring a costume and a wig, so that I could dictate the look and feel of the hairstyle and dress.

I see her sitting in a studio scene, undeniably historical. I fossick around a costume place and the best pieces I can find don't actually fit me. A vast cream-coloured artist's smock and a petite sea-green wool three-piece suit—bodice, skirt and fitted jacket with appliqued flowers on the bodice. I could pin the bodice on to a singlet and squeeze into the jacket. On the day, Julia was disappointed with the wig I came with, and told me she would instead paint it from a photograph. Even though she wouldn't use it, she instructed me to wear the wig, which would help me perform for the sitting. She ended up painting Florence three times. It was the hair that wasn't quite right in the first two, she said. In the vitrine at Dunedin Public Art Gallery, I decide to include a photocopy of the Leo Bensemann portrait next to an image of one of Julia Holden's earlier Florence portraits. I put them beside each other. Footnotes to the finished portrait.



Fig. 128 *The Studio* (installation view of archival cabinet), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery.



Fig. 129. *The Studio*, (installation view showing two felted textile works), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Fig. 130. Florence Weir, *Mixed Spring Flowers*, c 1936, (studio view), 2021.

those with Lucy Hammonds as curator of the project, my supervisors Monique Redmond³⁷⁹ and Christopher Braddock, and also the participating artists such as Kirstin Carlin.

Relationships, collaborations, invitations

Alex Martinis Roe is a participant researcher. Writing about her research into feminist collective practices, she explains:

I went and spent time with some of the groups, networks, and collectives who had played an important role in creating the theories that I think could, and already do, play an important role in the future of relations between us in all of our differing embodiments. After some time, I realised that what I was doing was a kind of ethnography and that I was using the methodology of “participant observation,” immersing myself in these networks and groups to learn about them.³⁸⁰

The methodologies in her film *A Story from Circolo della Rosa* (2014) are good examples of this approach. Positioned as an intimate conversation with her unnamed colleague, the film begins, “My dear, I have been searching for stories to help explain the way I see our relationship.”³⁸¹ The artist’s narration uses the practice of *affidamento*, which translates as “entrustment”, a reciprocal relationship of sharing knowledge between two women that was employed by the Milan Women’s Bookstore Collective, thus embodying the very practice that she is researching. An autoethnographic approach can also be related to Muñoz’s “self-consciously personal”³⁸² essay on New York artist Ray Johnson’s correspondence art, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. He openly cites coincidence and his own friendships and networks as the ways he encountered and entered Johnson’s art, declaring “I’m not just an archivist or a scholar. I’m also part of a queer relational orbit, a force-field of belonging. Through associations both common and unique I acquired information about Ray Johnson and his work.”³⁸³ From a similar perspective, and informing my role as a PhD candidate, I am not just a researcher. I am an artist, and I belong to national and local art communities. My existing

³⁷⁹ Monique and I enjoyed conversations over Zoom, discussing the flower varieties in the paintings, and sharing Google search images of the flowers (like lilac) to confirm our thoughts.

³⁸⁰ Alex Martinis Roe, *To Become Two: Propositions for Feminist Collective Practice* (Milan and Berlin: Archive Books, 2018), 16.

³⁸¹ Alex Martinis Roe, *A Story from Circolo della Rosa*, 2014, <https://vimeo.com/99831282>

³⁸² Gavin Butt, “The Paradoxes of Criticism,” in *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance*, ed. Gavin Butt (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 13.

³⁸³ Muñoz, “Utopia’s Seating Chart,” 107.



I have been thinking about wall labels and exploring potentials for their tone. What if they retained the convention of important details such as title, date, media and dimensions, but included this information in a more poetic or free-form sort of text, rather than constating? Labels that include subjectivities, afterthoughts, anecdotes, feelings. Provisional wall labels. I am working on a flowing label for this early Doris Lusk work that will be on loan from the Hocken Pictorial Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena for *The Studio*:

Flower Study / Mixed Flowers

Doris Lusk, oil on board, 1940

Given by Charlton Edgar, Dunedin, in memory of his wife Mona Edgar in 1963

Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago, 20,007

Tulips, bluebells, lilac and greenery. "Mixed Flowers." Doris Lusk's (1916–1990) painting of a white ceramic vase with tulips, bluebells, lilac and greenery has two titles—so let's use both. It is known as *Flower Study* in the Hocken Pictorial Collections, yet she exhibited this painting in her first solo exhibition in the all-woman studio as *Mixed Flowers*. It also seems to have two different dates. The description on the Hocken Hākena page says that she exhibited this painting in the Moray Place studio as *Mixed Flowers*, where it was for sale for five guineas. The Otago University website has the picture painted in 1935, when the artist was still a student at the Dunedin School of Art. Art historian Peter Entwistle thinks *Mixed Flowers* 'may' have been in her solo exhibition in the studio (1940), "a note on the back says it was painted in 1935 but she may have improved it."² "The tipped up table top"³ has a paisley fabric in various blues and oranges, and those shapes compete a little with the petal shapes above. The Hocken's text about the painting includes "snaking tulips" and "a study in decorative pattern making."⁴ The texture on the vase⁵ announces the material as ceramic; there is a curved handle and a goldy-red band at the bottom. *Was it Doris, Anne or Mollie who put these flowers in the vase? Which garden were they picked from? Or did they come from a nearby florist in the Octagon? We can probably say it was September, a spring arrangement. So were the tulip stems that flimsy? They don't look quite strong enough to hold up their bright heads (in yellow, red and white), but that's because the dark brown and green lines of the stems have been carefully arranged on the painting surface and these snaky lines are striking and lively.*

(Julia Holderness)

NOTES:

1. So we wonder, how did the "Flower Study" title come about; was this an institutional title, decided later on by someone else? Perhaps later Doris thought "Flower Study" was a better title.
2. Peter Entwistle, *The Birth of Modernism in New Zealand Painting*, 1999, unpublished manuscript, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago, 287.
3. Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago website, accessed August 13, 2020.
4. Ibid.
5. We think it is the same vase as depicted in Anne Hamblett's *Spring Blossom*.

relationships and the people I meet through these communities, such as Grant Banbury, an artist, researcher and close friend of Doris Lusk, are embedded and inflect the projects I work on. Another example is the relationship I developed with artist John Coley, who contacted me after seeing one of my installations that referenced The Group. He was a young member of The Group and wanted to share his knowledge with me. John became a friend, someone I talked to in my research and development for *Gallery 91*. He shared photographs of his first solo exhibition, held at the gallery, and I made a scarf from fabric that reproduced imagery from one of his paintings.³⁸⁴ Like Muñoz, I acquire knowledge through my networks.

According to Adams, Jones and Ellis in *Autoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research* (2015), autoethnography acknowledges and values a researcher's relationships with others, and shows "people in the process of figuring out what to do."³⁸⁵ They write, "Social life is messy, uncertain, and emotional. If our desire is to research social life, then we must embrace a research method that, to the best of its/our ability, acknowledges and accommodates mess and chaos, uncertainty and emotion."³⁸⁶ The way I am embodying autoethnography relates to how I represent my research and involve participants. The project's orientation and the general nature of my practice employs a social mode. It involves the need to organise and liaise with various groups of people such as fabricators, technicians, archivists, librarians, writers and gallery staff. I have to occupy many different roles to produce these projects, and time and resources are also conditions I have to respond to. On a personal level, as a researcher I have to constantly think about letting go of hierarchical control. I take note of where I find this difficult. Opening up the projects to other practitioners results in a series of negotiations. I invite artists with specific outcomes in mind, but there is a point where I have to let go of particular aesthetic visions and control. For instance, I invited Doris Lusk's ceramicist granddaughter Tatyanna Meharry to make a work for *The Studio*, with a concept that we developed together. This type of relationship differs significantly from how I worked with Richard Orjis when we co-created the Florence Weir ceramics. Meharry did not seem keen to engage with me and have meetings throughout the development period in the same way I engaged with artists Kirstin Carlin and Julia Holden, where there were many conversations about the works. Shortly before the exhibition, Meharry

³⁸⁴ I gave this scarf to John as a thank-you gift after the exhibition.

³⁸⁵ Tony Adams, Stacy Holman Jones, and Carolyn Ellis, *Autoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 8.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.



Fig. 132. Scarf for John Coley, 2017. Digital print on linen. Exhibited in Gallery 91.

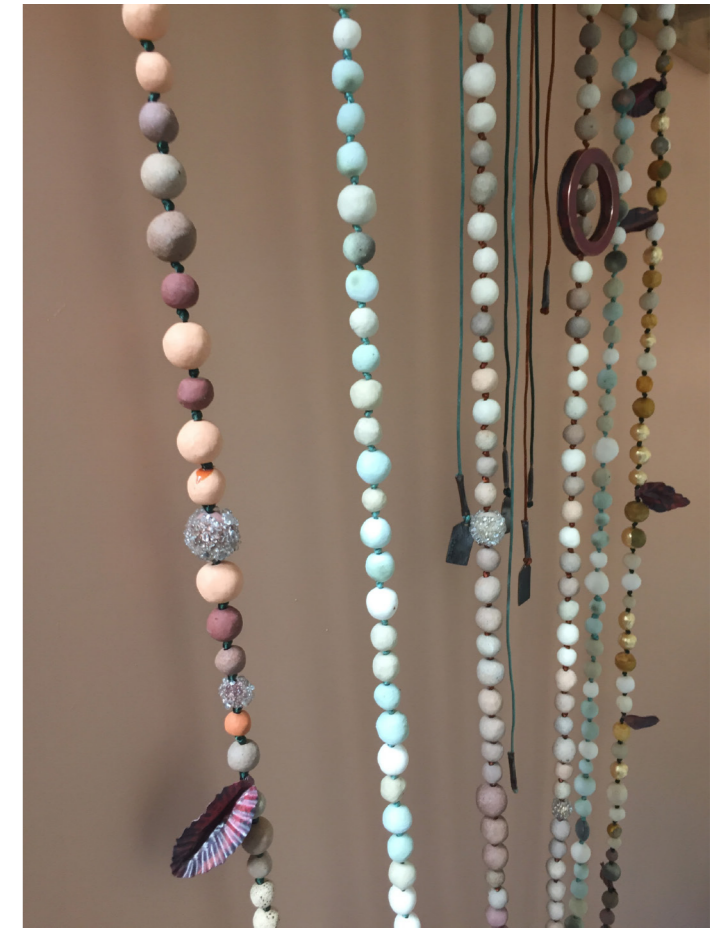


Fig. 133. Tatyanna Meharry, *Still Life Colour Study* (after "Mixed Flowers" by Doris Lusk) (detail), 2021. Ceramic beads.

changed her proposal and produced a large string of ceramic beads recalling memories of the necklaces worn by her grandmother, with a colour palette informed by *Mixed Flowers* (1940). Initially I felt uncomfortable about its inclusion and struggled with its overly literal interpretation. Her writing about it for the accompanying wall label seemed out of context of my conceptualisation of the texts within the exhibition. Practice-led research allows you to learn as you go. In order for myself to follow this path, I have had to learn how to invest in alternative rhizomes, alternative intensities. Inviting other makers to contribute creative-practice responses beyond my control is a way of relinquishing my hold, creating new meanings and unknown outcomes. It also enables the opportunity to reflect upon processes such as commission and collaboration, and the impact of these on the practice. I hope to keep developing the role of invited-artist participation and how that plays out in artworks and installations.

The project's impetus for collaboration unfolds from these modes of practice. I collaborate with art historians, researchers and curators in order to critique and complicate the traditionally held divides between art-historical scholarship and artistic creativity and practice. Inserting fabrication and

GALLERY 91

Winnifred Hunt, "Gallery 91 Christchurch", *New Zealand Potter*, Volume 2, Issue 1, August 1959.

It was raining. In darkness I turned my wheel for home. It became a downpour. I stopped, wheeled my cycle into a doorway for shelter – and saw a small board: 'Gallery 91' near a long flight of stairs. Soon curiosity sent me upwards– another flight, then another, four flights in all. I opened a door and was inside. A spacious interior of delicate grey met the eye, and a host of objects waiting to be examined. Paintings hung on the walls, pottery stood on the shelves, fabric printing lay on tables – and in the centre was a pile of handwoven cushions, stoles, mats and cloths, giving a warmth and softness to the scene.

Writing about Barbara Brook

Petrena Fishburn, 2021

The intention of my research was to find Barbara Brooke, to shine light on what she had done for New Zealand artists. I wanted to make Barbara known, to document what she had done so that she would be acknowledged within the 'master' art historical narrative. I started with a template of set questions.

At one end was a counter which exuded – could it be true? – an aroma of excellent coffee. Yes, some cups stood invitingly for use. Wet and cold, I drifted near them. In the background soft music was audible. A young woman spoke and soon I was sipping the hot coffee, reclining in an easy chair with the soggy raincoat in a heap on the floor.

These questions would lead to a lot of information and memories about Barbara. Her quietness and confidence (or apparent lack of it) when she was first involved in the art scene with Andre. I divided my thesis into four chapters representing what I saw as four different periods of Barbara's working life. The first chapter (which focussed on Gallery 91) was the place that Barbara (Andre suggested she change her name to Barbara from Elsie) began. Chapter 2 focussed on her involvement with the Canterbury Society of Arts (1960–1966). Chapter 3 (1967 until the 1970s): on *Ascent*, the national art magazine published by the Caxton Press that Barbara produced with Leo Bensemann, and then the Mollett Street Craft Market she founded with Judith Gifford, Mary Beavan, and Lavinia Cruickshank. Chapter 4 (1975–1980) covered the Brooke Gifford Gallery she founded with Judith Gifford. Barbara was a significant figure who forged a professional framework to support and promote New Zealand artists.

And now for the centre display. Everything here was handwoven from homespun wool, plant-dyed in colours from lichens, elderberries, dock, bark, coprosma and dahlias. Blue from barberries, green from privet berries, clay yellow from lichen, and some from Canterbury natural fleeces.

91A CASHEL STREET
CHRISTCHURCH N.Z.
TELEPHONE 39-400 (private)



Fig. 134. Gallery 91 interior, *Home and Building* magazine, 1959. Photographer unknown.

Making Gallery 91 for SCAPE Public Art 2017

Julia Holderness

I relied on Winnifred Hunt's descriptions of the space. Furniture in the gallery, a range of art objects and media... pottery, textiles, sculpture. Coffee would have been exotic for a tea drinking New Zealand. It would have felt very European to be hosted like that. I produced 'fabric printing', remaking some of the exhibited artworks into standing screens and upholstery for a comfortable chair. Andre Brooke's inky watercolours were softened further as cushions. I then started fabricating clay objects in response to the archives such as exhibition invitations. I was able to touch artist June Black's chunky beaded clay necklace by making my own version. I then laid it over the blurry press photograph of her exhibition. It could be seen again.

The work displayed was indeed diverse, covering all techniques and mediums: oils watercolours, charcoal, woodcuts, lithography and pastels. Here and there at vantage points were carvings in wood. One especially took my eye – a cat, completely without detail, but poised and ready to advance. There were big stoneware bowls by Mirek Smisek, jugs and beakers and tall pots by Jim Nelson, abstract sculpture in stone by Russell Clark and delightful pots and bowls by Juliet Peter.



Fig. 135. Gallery 91 (detail), 2017. SCAPE Public Art. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.

It was fortunate that I was studying in Christchurch where Barbara had lived and worked. I started to seek out people to interview. I would meet them in cafés or was invited to visit their homes. I would ask questions and then let people speak. I was very aware of not wanting to interrupt the flow of their thoughts and memories. I recorded each interview and would then transcribe (predominantly verbatim). As I transcribed, I would look for themes – similar things that people recalled about Barbara or accounts of the things she did. These themes would help form the questions that I would ask subsequent interviewees.

Along two shelves that met in a corner, I layered imagery of the represented artists works. Textile designs, pottery, paintings, etchings, sculptures, side by side. Reproduced as fabric prints on linen and then folded around little bits of wood. Arranged on a library-like shelf, they looked like resources, reading materials, pedagogical aids. An art history lesson; I was learning through making them. There was no hierarchy when I overlapped the artworks like this. And the scale was off. Tiny painting, large watercolour. New relationships. Jug. Triangles. Terracotta. Fish. Scarf. Lichens. Barberries.

I was reading as widely as I could about the New Zealand art scene during the period of Barbara's life and predominantly her working life. Following up on events and information about the art scene that came up in the interviews. I searched through Barbara's own archives (business books and papers), that her son Peter had donated to the McMillian Brown Library a few years after her death.

In a discreet corner, leaning against the walls, were framed reproductions of paintings for sale. And for those who wished to read, artbooks and magazines were handy.

We asked voice actor Kate Prior to read Winnifred's script and got it recorded in a studio. Her voice is warm and she was able to inflect something middle class, 1950s, British. We changed some of the text so that Barbara was in focus. Instead of 'his wife', she was named. I found Fomison's Gallery 91 membership card, then the letterhead, both designed by Caxton Press. We got a sandwich board made, to direct people into the installation and used the original masthead and gallery address. At the original location of the gallery on Cashel Street, then a dusty post-earthquake construction site, the SCAPE team installed a sign directing people to the gallery installation with a link for downloading Winnifred's description as an audio file.

Categorising information into themes and gathering facts seemed quite a methodical exercise to me, but then it came to the writing. I started laying out 'the facts' into a narrative about Barbara's life and work, and quickly learnt that a narrative like that is dry and impersonable. One of my supervisors encouraged me to 'fill in the gaps' between my facts – to write. It felt weird to be writing the history myself, joining and interpreting the 'dots' (facts) and filling in the gaps to form a readable narrative. At times it felt like I was crossing over into fiction, but I guess it was interpretation. I had to put myself there 'with Barbara' to explain what was happening and what she had accomplished.

At last I looked up, The place had been a gymnasium and when taken over by Mr. and Mrs. Brooke was in a sorry mess. Lofty as a barn, it had plenty of skylights overhead – and plenty of ugliness with rafters and beams. Now all this been hidden by drapings of soft, misty folds of grey nylon from Japan.

creative modes of working into art-history making opens out the research to include exchanges in and with the present. Working alongside other makers and artists extends ideas around authorship and collective production. For *The Studio*, I commissioned Emma Turner, a local potter, to fabricate ceramic vases and still-life props. In such a collaborative enterprise, the roles of designer/artist/maker are interrogated. In this context, significant ‘problems’ relating to individual and artistic identity emerge, raising questions such as: how does collective identity operate and what is the role of the anonymous artist—designer? This recalls the Bloomsbury group offshoot, the Omega Workshops (1913–19) where hierarchies between designer/artist and craftspeople were “melded to become more democratic, more collaborative.”³⁸⁷ Furthermore, operating at an interface between design and visual arts praxis, the project fosters collaborative relationships with local industry and manufacturers, including, for example, the Textile and Design Laboratory (AUT University) and ceramic studios.

An autoethnographic, heuristic art history

This research project engages with autoethnography and heuristic techniques as methods of inquiry that seek to discover, describe, analyse and thus better understand a particular cultural experience. A heuristic technique is defined as “any approach to problem solving or self-discovery that employs a practical method that is not guaranteed to be optimal, perfect, or rational, but is nevertheless sufficient for reaching an immediate, short-term goal or approximation.”³⁸⁸ Returning to Geertz’s concept of thick description for a moment, the method of descriptive ethnography that came to be associated with this concept is credited with “resuscitating field research from an endeavour of ongoing objectification—the focus, of research being *out there*—to a more immediate undertaking.”³⁸⁹ Autoethnographical research is an approach that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality and the researcher’s influence on the research, rather than concealing or ignoring these conditions. Ellis, Adams and Bochner in *Autoethnography: An Overview* write that a researcher uses “tenets of autobiography and ethnography to *do* and *write* autoethnography. Thus, as a method,

³⁸⁷ Janet McKenzie, “Beyond Bloomsbury: Designs of the Omega Workshops, 1913–19,” *Studio International* (blog), 2009, accessed August 3, 2015, <http://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/beyond-bloomsbury-designs-of-the-omega-workshops-1913-ndash-19>

³⁸⁸ *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Heuristic,” accessed February 3, 2022, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heuristic>

³⁸⁹ *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Thick description,” which cites Henry Munson, “Geertz on Religion: The Theory and the Practice,” *Religion* 16 (1986): 19–32.

autoethnography is both process and product.”³⁹⁰ This notion translates into strategies at play in my practice. My ethnographic field of study is modernist art, particularly as it manifested in New Zealand. According to the authors of *Autoethnography: An Overview*:

when researchers do ethnography, they study a culture’s relational practices, common values and beliefs and shared experiences for the purpose of helping insiders (cultural members) and outsiders (cultural strangers) better understand the culture. Ethnographers do this by becoming participant observers in the culture—that is by taking field notes of cultural happenings as well as their part in and others’ engagement with these happenings.... An ethnographer also may interview cultural members...examine member’s ways of speaking and relating, investigate uses of spaces and place, and/or analyse artefacts... and texts.³⁹¹

My way of working translates the practice of taking field notes into physical modes of making, such as the production of textiles and small ceramic follies³⁹² in direct response to original artefacts or catalogue descriptions. Through this fabrication, I have examined The Group’s texts and artefacts, their social practices, their uses of spaces. The production of samplers as an educational exercise is another research method that could be considered heuristic, whereby I employ a practical method, or a shortcut, to produce an approximation. For example, I copied a Gunta Stolz weaving, translating a section of her pattern into a pencil drawing that was then repeated and reproduced on linen. Titled *Rug Sampler*, Stolz’s threads are thereby picked up and drawn into my own fabrication. This way of working also recalls Eichorn’s reconceptualisation of the archive from a “sepulchral repository, to active...site of knowledge production.”³⁹³ As the artist—researcher in this particular field of study, I view these physical fabrications—my making, sampling and working through—as my own form of cultural ethnographic field notes. It is an opportunity to learn and acquire new skills, and produce knowledge. Graphic designer David Bennewith mentions a similar experience when talking with University of Canterbury Honours student Tia

³⁹⁰ Ellis, Adams, Bochner, “Autoethnography: An Overview,” 1.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 3. Citing Geertz, 1973, and Goodall, 2001.

³⁹² I borrow this term ‘folly,’ which is usually applied to a small building. Making use of the Cambridge online dictionary definition, my ceramic objects are “follies” in that they appear to have no practical purpose, or the purpose seems less important than their visual appearance.

³⁹³ “Archive Materials: Feminism, Performance and Art History in the UK,” <https://writingfeministarthistory.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/archive-materials-announcement.pdf>

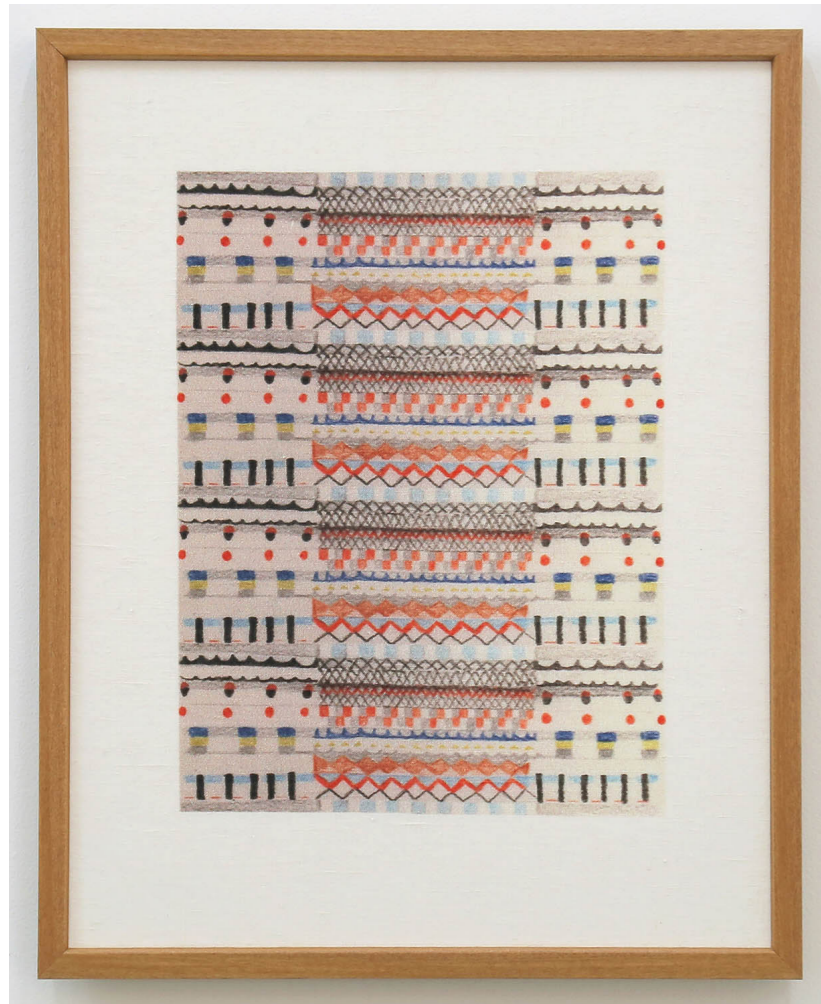


Fig. 136. *Rug Sampler*, 2016. Digital print on linen. Photograph by Vicki Piper.

Fig. 137. *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, (installation view showing needlework samplers by Audrey Pearl Black and Ngarita Johnstone), 2018. Ilam Campus Gallery. Photograph by Thomas Herman.



Ebert about his visual research into typographer Joseph Churchward:

What I did could be seen as stepping into the role of a historian or other kinds of institutional or disciplinary spaces and not doing a good job. I totally get that, but on the other hand, I've never positioned myself as a historian. I do say that I do research into graphic design, but I don't call myself a historian or an archivist, I call myself a graphic designer. And most simply said, the best way for me to understand the material as a designer, as somebody who's interested in making in the material of graphic design was to actually work with the material. You know, just tracing his typefaces, digitising them, remaking things using his work. It was through that idea that I got closer to what I thought Joseph was doing, or closer to how he worked.³⁹⁴

Bennewith's heuristic research project culminated in an extensive monograph publication. Compiling archive material, essays on his practice, correspondence, realised and unrealised design work and alphabet designs by Churchward, it also embodied his own study and learning about Churchward's practice. I see a connection with this mode of practice and the notion of getting 'closer' in my own research. Tyler pays attention to the needlework samplers produced by students of Florence Akins, which were displayed in *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, in her essay that accompanied the exhibition. Describing these "neat lexicons of not just picot, pistil, back trellis and scallop stitches but open work, drawn thread, and broderie anglaise,"³⁹⁵ she asserts that the physical making of them engaged the students in "a heuristic process that would provide them with a vocabulary of stitches with which to enunciate their own ideas in the future."³⁹⁶ She goes on to write: "it is only modern Cartesian epistemology that has separated knowing from doing, and created the premise that knowledge resides in the text (a pattern book) rather than in the practice (sampler-making)."³⁹⁷ By remaking, fabricating and trying out various material processes, I create a register of tangible contact across my research field, which, at the same time, acknowledges that some historical presence may be invisible.

³⁹⁴ David Bennewith in conversation with Tia Ebert, in Ebert, *Some Archives*, a self-published artist's book for Bachelor of Fine Arts (Hons), University of Canterbury, 2021, page 8.

³⁹⁵ Tyler, "Through the Eye of Her Needle: Women's Textile Histories in Canterbury," 2.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

Chapter summary

With Derrida's contingent archive in mind, and borrowing understandings of queer approaches to history making from seminal texts such as *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities*, *Queer Histories* by Freeman, *Ever Present Archiving* is part of a repositioning of the archive. This plays out with a focus on the physical qualities of objects, such as haptic or sensory ones, and an elevation of non-traditional records and traces that are often left out of the archive, such as those to do with feelings and interpersonal relations. The next chapter will expand on the things that are left “hanging in the air,”³⁹⁸ such as spoken memories or gossip, and explore how legitimising oral accounts in art-historical research can expand our historical view. This chapter has looked closely at the impacts of the research methods employed in the project: autoethnographic, heuristic, collaborative approaches to art-history telling. In her article on *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, Tyler concludes: “Like these sewn samplers, Holderness's project seeks to demonstrate that knowing can be put back into doing and that we might be able to feel the historical by rehabilitating the textural qualities of archives and records.”³⁹⁹ These research methods reject the separation of knowing from doing, and attempt to address how a research practice might embody and reflect its particular enquiry.

Chapter Five

Friendships and Conversation:

Expanding concepts and
sources of art-historical
evidence, social enquiries

Chapter Five: Friendships and Conversation

Expanding concepts and sources of art-historical evidence, social enquiries

This project brings together feminist methods and a paradigm of queer theory, and applies a sensory sort of historiography to contribute to the rehabilitation and legitimisation of different kinds of voices in the research process. *Ever Present Archiving* is committed to expanding concepts and sources of art-historical evidence. It makes use of oral histories, conversational-based research, hearsay and anecdotal accounts, and even story that might sound like rumour, gossip and speculation. This chapter examines critiques of how the archive legitimises some forms of information, yet fails to accommodate others, suggesting a concept of interest to this project: ‘unofficial’ testimony. Various methods by theorists Irit Rogoff, Carla Lonzi, Gavin Butt, José Esteban Muñoz and Amelia Jones are discussed, amongst others. Drawing from queer and feminist methodologies, these approaches value the lived, everyday experience of artists and signal new directions for art-historical research, expanding the sources of the evidence it might use. For *Ever Present Archiving*, this analysis opens up possibilities for retelling art histories through relational modes, the social and personal relationships; and through various voices that might have been previously overlooked, marginalised or absent from the archive. I will discuss how the project employs social enquiry to reveal alternative artistic lineages. Feminist theories on friendship, relationships and intimacy will be discussed with reference to Céline Condorelli’s book *The Company She Keeps* and Alex Martinis Roe’s *To Become Two: Propositions for Feminist Collective Practice*. These texts emphasise relational practices and friendship as a support structure and propose ways of working within them. A collective legacy developed through the group or the circle, in opposition to a singular identity, reveals notions of artistic influence, proximity and solidarity.

Looking elsewhere: margins, hearsay, gossip, encounters

Cultural theorist Irit Rogoff’s essay “Gossip as Testimony: A Postmodern Signature” suggests “ways of looking elsewhere” that pay attention to “small-scale actions and receptions taking place at the margins; the pleasure of conversations, the conflicts of domesticity, the agony of rejection and failed love, the spreading of rumours.”⁴⁰⁰ Rogoff describes her research into Munich’s pre-war artistic community, specifically “women’s artistic production at the

⁴⁰⁰ Irit Rogoff, “Gossip as Testimony: A Postmodern Signature,” *Women’s Art Magazine* 67, November/December 1995, 6.

margins of Modernism’s historical avant-garde,” a process in which “hearsay as evidence arose in a startling manner.”⁴⁰¹ Interested in unconventional households, such as the one Paul Klee lived in with his wife and “equally official and acknowledged mistress,”⁴⁰² she writes about a key moment in her research. Rogoff’s research assistant heard that Klee may have had an illegitimate child with the woman who worked as a maid in his household. This information was obtained from a conversation at a local café in Schwabing, the “centre of bohemian life for more than a century.”⁴⁰³ Undeterred by the time lag and ephemeral nature of the evidence, they decided to follow the rumours. Using both imagination and speculation, Rogoff claims these avenues were “as important as the archivally substantiated facts we unearthed.”⁴⁰⁴ She goes on to say that from this process, “we understood something about gendered historical specificity we had not understood before, about the possibility of hearing gossip as a way of alerting us to the specificity of our own subject positionality.”⁴⁰⁵ Artist and curator Jason E. Bowman also sees the implications of Rogoff’s “conceptualisation of this ‘gossip as testimony’ [as] a route towards recognising multi-perspectival complicities and contradictions of fact, sensibility, opinion and concept as productive of exchange.”⁴⁰⁶ Reviewing his curatorial enquiry into *The Theatre of Mistakes*, an artist group that was founded in 1974 by writer, dancer and performer Anthony Howell, Bowman argues that the nature of this group, which makes use of encounter, happenstance and coincidence, requires a particular approach. It “has demanded a heterochronic curatorial methodology that weaves between the engrossment of the people involved, heterogeneously interrogating the records of their art to uncover criss-crossed patterning of processes over the collective’s lifespan.”⁴⁰⁷ Conducting ethnographic research via these sorts of testimonies acknowledges the legitimacy of the marginal—of emotions and activities typically deemed not acceptable as evidence. Connecting to this idea of exchange, communications scholar David Gates makes a case for an “ethnography of the now” in his chapter “History in the Making: The Use of Talk in Interdisciplinary Collaborative Craft Practice” in *Oral History in the Visual Arts* (2013). Inspired by listening to the conversation of a small group of craft practitioners, he discusses the value of “lived-

401 Ibid, 7.

402 Ibid.

403 Ibid.

404 Ibid.

405 Ibid.

406 Jason E. Bowman and Anthony Howell, “Towards a Purposeful Accident: Elements of Performance Art via The Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes,” *Parse Journal* 4 (Autumn 2016): 78–87, <http://parsejournal.com/article/towards-a-purposeful-accident-elements-of-performance-art-via-the-ting-the-theatre-of-mistakes/>

407 Ibid.

experience, the being and doing of making.”⁴⁰⁸ Gates’ research challenges oral-history accounts of past actions in order to reveal the role and significance of talk “in the now.”⁴⁰⁹ He concludes: “In addition to the reflected-upon accounts of a life examined, of tellings to an interviewer, listening to the present use of talk outside of the interview...an ‘ethnography of the now’ has much to contribute to contemporary renderings of our histories.”⁴¹⁰ The value and importance he attaches to this talk-in-interaction within arts practice makes a case to “look beyond the ‘big reveal’ of the final artefact normally associated with arts practice.”⁴¹¹

Exchanges: polyvocal and dialogic methodologies

One of the most relevant feminist references for art writing that challenges and evades conventional art historical methodologies such as a focus on monologic voices is a book titled *Autoritratto* (1969) written by Italian feminist, poet and critic Carla Lonzi. This text opens out questions about the role of the art critic, rather than the curator or art historian. Using an intersubjective and relational approach, Lonzi’s transcribed conversations and tape-recorded interviews with fourteen Italian postwar artists (all male apart from Carla Accardi) that she compiled between 1962 and 1968. She then montaged, rearranged and edited them to form a different sort of narrative, “an imaginary gathering which takes place only on the page.”⁴¹² Lonzi herself thought of it as a ‘convivio’ (‘banquet’), while art historian Francesco Ventrella has written that it can be defined as a collage, “not only for the unexpected effects of the editing on the legibility of the text but also because the flow of the book is interspersed with 105 illustrations seemingly unrelated to what we read on the page.”⁴¹³ In their *Introduction to Feminism and art in postwar Italy: the legacy of Carla Lonzi*, (2020) Francesco Ventrella and Giovanna Zapperi write that:

by replacing art historical judgements with everyday conversations among artists, *Autoritratto* eludes the conventions of art writing of the

408 David Gates, “History in the Making: The Use of Talk in Interdisciplinary Collaborative Craft Practice,” in *Oral History and the Visual Arts*, ed. Linda Sandino and Matthew Partington, 55 (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

409 Ibid, 63.

410 Ibid.

411 David Gates, “The Makers’ Tongue: Small stories of positioning and performance in the situated discourses of contemporary crafts practitioners,” unpublished PhD thesis, King’s College London, 2017, 233.

412 Lucia Farinatti, “Carla Lonzi: Self-portrait”, *Art Monthly* no 456, (2022): 41.

413 Francesco Ventrella, “Magnetic Encounters: Listening to Carla Lonzi’s tape recordings” in *Feminism and art in postwar Italy: the legacy of Carla Lonzi*, ed. Francesco Ventrella and Giovanna Zapperi, (Bloomsbury Visual Arts, London 2020), 46.

time and draws an alternative picture of the Italian art scene, one that is hardly legible via the categories through which it has been promoted internationally, most significantly under the banner of Arte Povera.⁴¹⁴

Citing her convincing examination of oral history in the visual arts, Ventrella writes that Linda Sardino “stresses the importance of the artist’s interview in overcoming the solipsism in critical hermeneutics.”⁴¹⁵ As a form of oral history, *Autoritratto* valued the lived, everyday experience of artists, and was a rejection of dominant narratives.

Prior to this book, Lonzi was already experimenting with non-authoritarian methods and dialogical structures in her art writing, namely a series called ‘Discorsi’ in 1966. These were conversations with artists produced with a tape recorder for *marcatre* magazine. For *Autoritratto* she played with an arbitrary editing process through which, as curator Lucia Farinati writes, Lonzi “constructs a polyvocal, fictional conversation in which the voice of each interlocutor resonates with each other yet exposes the self-referential triviality and overtly paternalist tones of certain arguments...”⁴¹⁶ Lonzi’s voice is also present and includes her own problematising and opinions on writing about art. It becomes apparent that, hence the title, this is her own self-portrait and a working through of her identification as an art critic. *Autoritratto* also acts as Lonzi’s public resignation and withdrawal from the art world, based on her conviction that art criticism is an “inauthentic profession.”⁴¹⁷ For Lonzi, the role of the critic was too entrenched in the hierarchical power dynamics of the art world and its celebration of a male artistic subject. Farinati goes on to say that *Autoritratto*’s “dialogic, polyvocal methodology, developed from attentive listening, leads to the formation of a new subjectivity,”⁴¹⁸ and one that manifested later in Lonzi’s feminist activism and practice and her collective Rivolta Femminile (Female Revolt). In their Introduction Zapperi and Ventrella argue:

In fostering dialogues and encounters, Lonzi sought to generate a process of mutual recognition in which a new subjectivity could

414 Francesco Ventrella and Giovanna Zapperi, “Introduction: Against culture: Feminism and art in postwar Italy” in *Feminism and art in postwar Italy: the legacy of Carla Lonzi*, ed. Francesco Ventrella and Giovanna Zapperi, (Bloomsbury Visual Arts, London 2020), 2.

415 Francesco Ventrella, “Magnetic Encounters: Listening to Carla Lonzi’s tape recordings” in *Feminism and art in postwar Italy: the legacy of Carla Lonzi*, (Francesco Ventrella and Giovanna Zapperi ed), (Bloomsbury Visual Arts, London 2020), 46.

416 Farinatti, “Carla Lonzi: Self-portrait”, 41.

417 Lonzi quoted in Giovanni Zapperi, “Challenging Feminist Art History: Carla Lonzi’s Divergent Path” in *Feminism and Art History Now: Radical Critiques of Theory and Practice*, ed. Victoria Horne and Lara Perry (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 108.

418 Farinatti, “Carla Lonzi: Self-portrait”, 41.

unfold, in opposition to the notion of the subject as an autonomous and universal individual, inherited from the modernist tradition.⁴¹⁹

In a similar way as that discussed in Chapter Three: *Fiction with Footnotes, a Creative Art History*, Gavin Butt’s book *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963* calls for a “richer, more expansive concept of art-historical evidence, one that supplements the verifiable facts of traditional art-historical narrative”⁴²⁰ with the gossipy chatter that happens at art openings and parties. In doing so, he established gossip and ‘trivia’ as acceptable art-historical source materials. Art historian Mathias Danbolt writes that in Butt’s researching of artists Larry Rivers, Andy Warhol and Jasper Johns, he “demonstrates that trivial and fierce gossip on homosexuality shaped these artists’ lives, as well as their work and its reception.”⁴²¹ Danbolt also makes a useful observation that this draws attentions to the connection between interpretative desire and curiosity inherent in art-historical enquiry and gossip. He writes that this reminds us “that gossip doesn’t need to be true to have impact.”⁴²² New York-based art writer and curator Emily Colucci asserts that: “With his suggestion of using gossip as a means to understand art, Butt throws a much-needed wrench into the art historical machinery, one that privileges hard truths over shaky ambiguous grounds (as if art history wasn’t all subjective anyway).”⁴²³ In his Introduction, Butt examines gossip’s unrecorded nature, and this can be applied to other forms of knowledge production in my project. Florence Weir’s biography is fragmentary: created and folded together from spoken memories, speculations and suggestions that are passed between people. This reflects Butt’s discussion on how gossip is a knowledge that transmits and “draws authority from the dynamics of intersubjective exchange rather than any fidelity to the document.”⁴²⁴

Within these discussions on rethinking methodologies and knowledge formation, Butt looks at José Esteban Muñoz’s highly personal response to Ray Johnson’s correspondence art as an example. Butt writes that this essay “paid writerly regard to the ways in which Johnson’s art comes to be known through—and as—the very informal queer networks and associations which

419 Ventrella and Zapperi, “Introduction: Against culture: Feminism and art in postwar Italy”, 3.

420 “*Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963*,” Project Muse, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/69287>

421 Danbolt, *Dismantling the Serious Machine*.

422 Ibid.

423 Emily Colucci, “Born To Be Cheap: Gossip as Queer Art History,” *Filthy Dreams*, November 5, 2013, <https://filthydreams.org/2013/11/05/born-to-be-cheap-gossip-as-queer-art-history/>

424 Butt, *Between You and Me*, 18–19.

it draws one into.”⁴²⁵ He argues that in this way Muñoz’s writing “instances the power of a queer utopianism which dares to imagine the world otherwise, making connections—social, critical—which might be deemed insignificant or inappropriate by more conventional, archivally sanctioned forms of art-historical inquiry.”⁴²⁶ For example, Muñoz reflects upon his research and encounter with Johnson’s practice as a “sensation of stumbling upon,”⁴²⁷ and notes that coincidences and chance meetings through his personal networks were modes of acquiring information about the artist and his work, alongside more “common routes”⁴²⁸ such as a retrospective exhibition at the Whitney.

Writing in words, movements, images, collages, gestures, fidgets, twitches, stumbles. I trace a line from my biographical coordinates to my critical project on Johnson. While the account I render is true, it is, of course, also a fiction. It is a queer imaging that traverses friendship and gossip, strolls through the archive on a Sunday afternoon, and so much more. The archive is a fiction, so let’s write it down.⁴²⁹

Relating to this, performance theorist Amelia Jones acknowledges her serendipitous encounter with unknown 1970s works of performance artist Barbara Smith. In her 2016 essay “Feminist Subjects versus Feminist Effects: The Curating of Feminist Art (or is it the Feminist Curating of Art?),” Jones describes her discovery of Smith’s images of photocopied body parts collected into a scrapbook. Smith only mentioned them in a passing comment during a meeting on a different subject. As already noted, Florence Weir is an invented artist persona for *Ever Present Archiving* and employs this ephemeral “imaging that traverses friendship and gossip.”⁴³⁰ She also reflects the looseness and airiness of Muñoz’s ‘strolling’ through the archive. The details of her life often emerge through relational methods as I talk with others and collaborate on her outputs, and when her work comes into contact with audiences. For example, when playful comments or suggestions about her life come from conversations with colleagues or exhibition viewers, I try to capture this new information and incorporate it in the next project. Thus, she is co-authored to some extent. Tyler reflects:

425 Ibid.
426 Ibid.
427 Muñoz, “Utopia’s Seating Chart,” 107.
428 Ibid.
429 Ibid, 108.
430 Muñoz, “Utopia’s Seating Chart,” 108.

The tale of Florence Weir (1899–1979) is a fragmentary text...details of her life emerge from the tissue each time an audience encounters references to her work. Florence has left her traces in the archive, and we are invited to read in detail.⁴³¹

It was Tyler herself who asked me if Florence might have known Tilli Frankel, a German immigrant residing in Christchurch in the 1930s. As previously discussed in Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications*, Tilli was supposedly Bauhaus educated, and an active host and connector of artists and thinkers. This suggestion led me to name a Florence Weir textile work after her, *Kundenentwurf für Tilli Frankel*⁴³² (2018) (fig. 138), to invent a relationship between the two women. This action also plants the seed for future projects. The project rehabilitates musings, speculations and lateral stories, seeing these as productive of exchange and encounter. The very stories that might have been shared and passed on at one of Tilli’s salon evenings in Beckenham, Christchurch, in the 1930s. In this way, the constructed persona of Florence Weir embodies Zapperi’s “production of the past” discussed in Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications* and, as such, makes room for conversational and variant accounts, and stories that are on the periphery.

In his review of Kisler’s book *Finding Frances Hodgkins*, writer Andrew Paul Wood declares that in “New Zealand most publishers seem to prefer their art history straight.”⁴³³ Describing the book as “a less official, more personal text” to *Frances Hodgkins: European Journeys* (2019), edited by Kisler and Catherine Hammond, the accompanying publication to an exhibition of the same name at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, he goes on to say that in *Finding Frances Hodgkins*, Kisler writes with a light touch and includes herself in the narrative without being intrusive, weaving together “art history, travelogue and psychogeography.”⁴³⁴ He asserts that she “supplies an often missing experiential sense of place to the paintings, teasing out the details that would otherwise get lost in a strictly biographical or art-historical methodology.”⁴³⁵ Retracing Hodgkins’ journeying in Cornwall, Kisler searches for specific, physical vantage points from which she painted. Kisler enacts her own encounters in the places Hodgkins painted, piecing together locations from the artworks and sketches, but also from Hodgkin’s letters to friends;

431 Tyler, *Through the Eye of Her Needle*, 1.
432 This German title translates to ‘Custom design for Tilli Frankel.’
433 Wood, “Albrecht and Hodgkins Publications.”
434 Ibid.
435 Ibid.



Fig. 138. Kundenentwurf für Tilli Frankel (Florence Weir textile), 2018. Felt and wool appliqué.

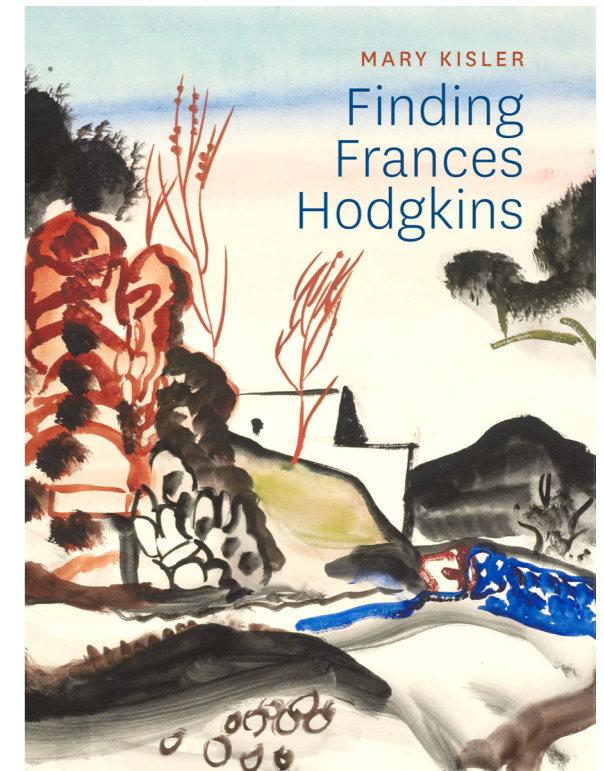


Fig. 139. Mary Kisler, *Finding Frances Hodgkins*, 2019. Massey University Press. Jacket artwork features Frances Hodgkins' *Road to the Hills, Ibiza*, 1933.

and where there are gaps or views that do not match up, she speculates:

The patterned curtain in the sketch has become the side section of a bay window, suggesting that rather than spend her evenings in The Nook, Hodgkins followed her old pattern of retiring to the inn, where she might enjoy a glass of wine, a cigarette and convivial company, or, as her work suggests, sit in the bay window of the lounge and observe the views.⁴³⁶

Through this speculation, Kisler provides valuable observations and insights into the artist's travelling life. My research also seeks to *tease out details*, to explore how taking notice of place, surroundings, details, social connections and anecdotes can benefit and extend historical examinations. Promoting exchange and personal encounters within the research process is key to developing this sort of material and knowledge. Capturing these 'small stories' or 'histories from below' ensures they will not get lost. But more importantly, viewing them as serious and legitimate voices for consideration in turn illuminates and expands our historical view of the lived experiences of women artists.

436 Mary Kisler, *Finding Frances Hodgkins* (Auckland: Massey University Press, 2019), 203.

Supplementing the ‘hard facts’

In literary historian and biographer Irene Gammel’s review of Amelia Jones’ book *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada*, she explores how this particular history is “reinterpreted in relation to the life and works of Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven.”⁴³⁷ Gammel notes that “the Baroness’s life is enmeshed in a web of anecdotes that this larger-than-life figure had generated”⁴³⁸ and goes on to say:

as an art historian, Jones confronts this methodological challenge head on and questions the validity of traditional art history’s claim to objectivity. Indeed, Jones asks: “How do we construct the history of a movement from what essentially amounts to gossip, including chatty and often facetious stories from the art as well as popular press venues of the period?”⁴³⁹

Occupying the same territory and sharing similar research questions, Butt reveals:

By adding in gossip to the category of evidence, by allowing it to supplement the ‘hard facts’ of history, I offer a rethinking of the evidential which deconstructs the bases of authoritative constructs of truth. This I do by allowing the dangerously supplemental nature of gossip to displace so-called verifiable truths from their more positivistic frames of reference and to render them instead like gossip’s narratives, as projections of interpretive desire and curiosity.⁴⁴⁰

This questioning of objectivity relates to Amelia Wallin’s reflections that the activities surrounding artist Barbara Cleveland⁴⁴¹ work to offer a radical rethinking of performance archives, “proposing alternatives to the ‘traces’ of performance typically held within archives.”⁴⁴² She states: “Performance does not disappear or vanish as I had been led to believe in art school: it

⁴³⁷ “*Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada*, by Amelia Jones,” MIT Press, accessed June 12, 2018, <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/irrational-modernism>

⁴³⁸ Irene Gammel, “Taking off Her Chemise in Public: New York Dada, Irrational Modernism, and the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven,” *Oxford Art Journal* 28, no. 1 (2005): 137.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Butt, *Between You and Me*, 7.

⁴⁴¹ As introduced in Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications*, Barbara Cleveland is a ‘mythic’ figure, similar in construction to Florence Weir.

⁴⁴² Amelia Wallin, “Thinking Business: Barbara Cleveland,” accessed September 3, 2021, https://issuu.com/sullivanstrumpf/docs/summer_2020/s/11305959

lives on in memories and bodies, no matter how unreliable.”⁴⁴³ *Ever Present Archiving* foregrounds these unstable and ephemeral art-historical memories, the ones that are hard to store, pin down and prove. A ‘friend’s’ account⁴⁴⁴ of how Florence used cuttings from her garden to generate fabric designs is an example.

In terms of planning future research after this PhD, I am interested in exploring collective authoring in Florence Weir projects. Responding to author and curator Robert Blackson’s conception that “memory, like history, is a creative act,”⁴⁴⁵ I have thought of asking art historians to ‘remember’ particular works or anecdotes for me. These might be short, written made-up fabulations and projections. However, I might suggest that they be influenced by their current research areas to increase Weir’s participation in sanctioned art histories. Starting with the refrain ‘We were told that...’ to reflect a hearsay, conversational nature, these sketches of works or important life events could be recorded as audio or filmed as spoken accounts. This emphasis on the idiosyncratic nature of memory recalls a work titled *The History of Performance* (2015–ongoing) produced by the four members of Barbara Cleveland, formerly known as Brown Council. In this participatory work, discussed in Chapter One, the collective members sit in a circle recalling and recounting personal memories and made-up anecdotes of various performances they have attended.⁴⁴⁶ After they each take a turn, the microphone is then passed around the circle, inviting the audience to generate and contribute to this history based on personal recollections. As the event promotion described, the memories are also “audio recorded and archived to allow these unreliable narratives to take their place in history, thereby highlighting the complexities associated with historicising performance.”⁴⁴⁷ In an artist statement, Barbara Cleveland say this “embodied approach to historical research, foregrounds the importance of oral storytelling and live recitation [for] remembering and recalling past acts and works.”⁴⁴⁸ This work highlights the challenges in recording or writing any history, but particularly those of performance practices. Recalling Mechtild Widrich’s

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Refer to Footnote 40, an anecdotal account developed for an artwork label in *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021.

⁴⁴⁵ Robert Blackson, “Once More... With Feeling: Reenactment in Contemporary Art and Culture,” *Art Journal* 66, no. 1 (2007), 31.

⁴⁴⁶ The memories may well have been made up, by the audience handed the microphone and having to compose something ‘on the spot.’ There was room for fabrication in this performance.

⁴⁴⁷ “The History of Performance,” The Physics Room, accessed November 12, 2021, <https://physicsroom.org.nz/events/the-history-of-performance>

⁴⁴⁸ Vimeo page for *The History of Performance*, 20th Biennale of Sydney, March 19, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/160501497>



Fig. 140. Barbara Cleveland, *The History of Performance*, 2016. Performed as part of *Bodies in Time*, presented at Art Gallery of New South Wales. Photograph by Felicity Jenkins/AGNSW and courtesy of the artists.

discussion of the mythical discourses surrounding performance practices, referred to in Chapter One, *The History of Performance*, underlines how the varied memories and receptions experienced by the spectators will be highly subjective and unreliable. I am also interested in how memories might build on and infect one another, the idea that “history continues to be built through palimpsests of discourse and image”.⁴⁴⁹

In *Gallery 91* I promoted the subjective and the anecdotal by creating a sound work for the installation at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū; a verbatim recording of Winnifred Hunt’s 1959 review of her visit to the original gallery, published in the *New Zealand Potter* journal, volume 2, issue 1. This recording was produced in a professional sound studio with a female voice actor who used a 1950s New Zealand middle-class accent. This colloquial, firsthand account described her entry to the gallery, detailing her chance encounter with the venue: cycling home in the rain, she sheltered in a doorway and then saw the gallery’s sign and climbed the stairs. The experience of entering an unknown gallery, soggy and cold from the rain, is used to reflect on the hospitable nature of the way it was set up with furniture and the warmth of the host (presumably the gallery’s owner Barbara Brooke, although not mentioned by name). Hunt describes her discovery of the gallery

449 Jones, “Introduction: Theories and Histories”, 44.

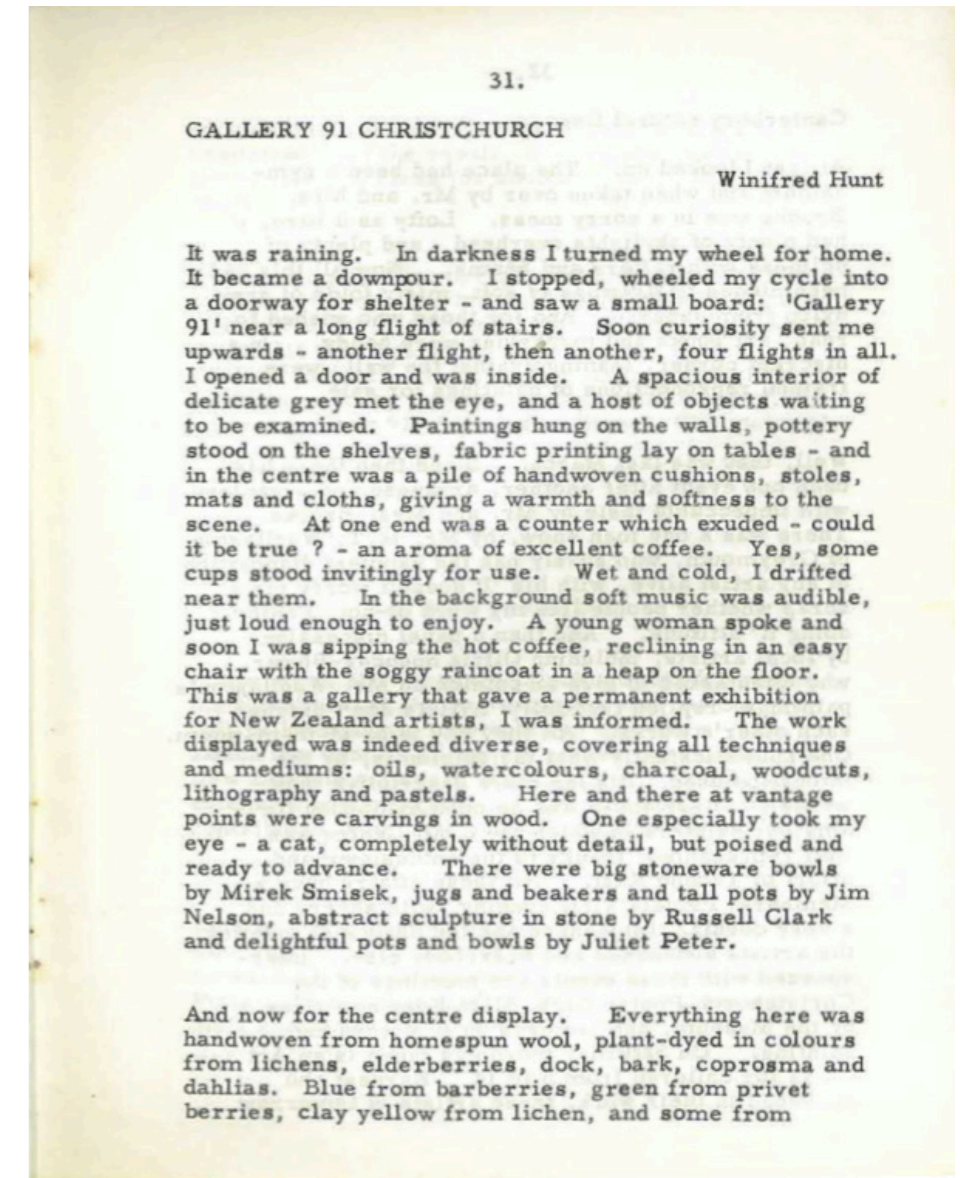


Fig. 141. Scan of Winnifred Hunt’s “Gallery 91, Christchurch”, *New Zealand Potter* 2, no. 1 (1959), 31.

via several senses:

A spacious interior of delicate grey met the eye, and a host of objects waiting to be examined. Paintings hung on the walls, pottery stood on the shelves, fabric printing lay on tables—and in the centre was a pile of handwoven cushions, stoles, mats and cloths, giving a warmth and softness to the scene. At one end was a counter which exuded—could it be true?—an aroma of excellent coffee. Yes, some cups stood invitingly for use. Wet and cold, I drifted near them. In the background soft music was audible, just loud enough to enjoy. A young woman spoke and soon I was sipping the hot coffee, reclining in an easy chair with the soggy raincoat in a heap on the floor.⁴⁵⁰

450 Winnifred Hunt, “Gallery 91, Christchurch” *New Zealand Potter* 2, no. 1 (1959): 31.

The audio work was also geotagged⁴⁵¹ via the SCAPE Public Art app to 91 Cashel Street, the original site of the gallery. In 2017, it was a post-earthquake building site in *Ōtautahi*, and this sound marker acted to uncover the location's prior history for people passing by. Hunt's first-person, somewhat gushing, descriptive account goes some way to combat the cool, sometimes detached tone of art-historical narratives. Apart from Gallery 91 researcher Fishburn's interviews with contemporaries, this article provides the only known record of the welcoming nature of the gallery, the way it was physically experienced. I interpret this approach to presenting the objects in a relaxed setting, and the warm, social nature of the gallery space as Brooke's contributions to the gallery.⁴⁵²

Anecdotes, casual comments, small stories and oral histories

[“We were told that Florence often cut flowers from her garden, snipping petals and leaves into various shapes and slivers, then letting them fall onto coloured paper backgrounds. These might translate later into gouache designs for fabrics.”⁴⁵³](#)

An anecdote is defined as “a short amusing or interesting story about a real incident or person”⁴⁵⁴ and, importantly, it is also associated with the unproven, an “account regarded as unreliable or hearsay.”⁴⁵⁵ Mark Ledbury examines the use of the anecdote in art-history writing and declares that one of the triumphs of New Historicism was “the revival of serious interest in the anecdotal.”⁴⁵⁶ He writes that the anecdote enriched and was a “counter-weight to the authoritative, dominant...narratives of History with a capital H in order to puncture a bland fabric with the prick of the mysterious, fragmentary, joyous, violent, and overlooked.”⁴⁵⁷ Citing the early writings by Pliny the Elder of ancient Roman artists, Ledbury argues that from the very beginnings of art history, histories of artists are saturated with anecdotes. He writes that Pliny was aware “that chronicling these stories, assembling them, is a

451 SCAPE Public Art installed a sign at the location that included information on how to download the sound file to a phone and details of the accompanying exhibition at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.

452 In a Zoom conversation with Petrena Fishburn (3 September 2021) she pointed out to me that at age 26 and at this stage of her career, Barbara was being trained by her considerably older husband and probably most of the decisions for gallery operation were his. However, some of her oral-history interviews captured memory of Barbara's welcoming nature as a host and it is this interpretation I chose to focus on.

453 Excerpt from an artwork label for *Florence Weir, Mixed Spring Flowers, c. 1936, Julia Holderness felted wool textile, 2021*, in *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021.

454 *Oxfordify*, “Anecdote,” <https://www.oxfordify.com/meaning/anecdote>

455 *Ibid.*

456 Mark Ledbury, “Anecdotes and the Life of Art History,” in *Fictions of Art History*, ed. Mark Ledbury (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 173.

457 *Ibid.*

precious act given the vicissitudes and non-survival of many artworks and the inevitable fragmentation of true evidence.”⁴⁵⁸ Ledbury argues that this driver of early art-historical anecdote came about from necessity, in other words, from gaps and absences. Motivated also by a desire for knowledge beyond what was recorded, the anecdote is nonofficial history.⁴⁵⁹ This reveals why discourses of anecdote and gossip are powerful agents for the figuring of Florence Weir. Appearing in these sorts of accounts or fragmentary ‘pricks’ is appropriate because anecdotes are tainted with an air of the untrustworthy and understood as hearsay. Anecdotes are often spoken accounts, passed on between people. Recalling Butt's conceptualisation of gossip as a knowledge that transmits, anecdotes also draw “authority from the dynamics of intersubjective exchange.”⁴⁶⁰ Ledbury asks: “What motivates the profound tendency to the anecdotal in art-historical discourse?”⁴⁶¹ He attempts to answer this, including a quote by author Joel Fineman, who argues that the anecdote “produces the effect of the real, the occurrence of contingency, by establishing an event as an event with and yet through the framing context of historical successivity.”⁴⁶² Ledbury writes that anecdotes are “fleeting, precise, desiring, enlivening stories of kith and kin” and at the very least offer “the tantalizing fantasy of a privileged and brilliant insight into the conscious of artistic creation.”⁴⁶³ These characteristics—‘fleeting,’ ‘desiring’ and producing an ‘effect of the real,’ are befitting for an overlooked figure from the past, a creative life that is fragmented and missing.

The anecdotal, relaxed and colloquial account also relates to the type of research I have conducted with the families and friends of various artists (Jancis Meharry, Victoria Carr, John Coley, Grant Banbury). Through a type of informal, convivial, conversation-based research, I have had access to off-the-record stories and gleaned unofficial information. I use so called ‘soft’ skills such as empathy, noticing and listening to build my knowledge. In her essay “A Feminist Frame for the Oral History Interview”, Kristina Minister argues that women communicate differently to men and have a distinct sociocommunication subculture. She writes that a feminist oral history practice is intersubjective, nurturing and uses “verbal intersupport work.”⁴⁶⁴

458 *Ibid.*, 174.

459 *Ibid.*

460 Butt, *Between You and Me*, 18–19.

461 Ledbury, “Anecdotes and the Life of Art History,” 182

462 Joel Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote,” in Harold Aram Veesser, *The New Historicism* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 49–76.

463 Ledbury, “Anecdotes and the Life of Art History,” 183.

464 Kristina Minister, “A Feminist Frame for the Oral History Interview” in *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history*, ed. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (London: Routledge 1991), 37.

In particular she discusses North American women's sociocommunication culture which has an "intense intersubjective nature",⁴⁶⁵ where members "do not compose nor do they value explicit, 'well-formed' verbal comments and monologic, chronologically developed stories..."⁴⁶⁶ And because of this, she writes, feminist interviewers "will not expect or try to elicit a repertoire of attention-getting monologic narratives...well-polished from repeated rehearsals"⁴⁶⁷ which she relates to androcentric oral history practice. Instead, they "expect that narrator's stories and descriptions will exhibit an unfinished or incomplete quality and will not conform to the plot and action structures of publicly performed pieces."⁴⁶⁸ This sort of expectation is relevant for the conversational-based enquiry I performed: I approached conversation-based research informally, open to and looking for stories on the periphery of established narratives. For the project, this type of research method is a way of working around and against 'well-formed' artistic narratives, seeking out the opposite through a feminist intersubjective oral history approach.

Minister also argues that "taking time to know another" with initial contact and meetings before the interviews is very important and "an opportunity to promote collegiality and to engage in mutual self-disclosure."⁴⁶⁹ For several months I made visits to Jancis Meharry, the daughter of Doris Lusk, as part of my project development for *The Studio*. I engaged with her firstly by talking about my practice and the textiles I make, and later introducing my project and its approach and placing myself subjectively within the project, which is another aspect of the feminist oral history frame that Minister identifies. Reinforcing the importance of developing a relationship and the kind of trust I had with the relatives of historical subjects, art historian Grant Kester has written: "Discourse, and the trust necessary for discursive interaction and identification, grow out of a sustained relationship in time and space, the co-participation in specific material conditions of existence".⁴⁷⁰ I was mindful of Kester's approach, which is rooted in an attention to dialogue and interpersonal relations. On the emphasis on dialogue in dialogic aesthetics he writes:

The audience's engagement is no longer defined primarily through

465 Ibid, 34

466 Ibid.

467 Ibid, 37.

468 Ibid.

469 Ibid, 36,

470 Grant Kester, "Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework for Littoral Art" in *Variants*, (Winter 1999/2000).

distanced visual contemplation, actualized by reading or de-coding an image or object, but through haptic experience actualized by immersion and participation in the process.⁴⁷¹

My relationship with Jancis was built over time and the trust I developed with her enabled me to gain her permission to include her memories in my wall labels. I was also able to directly ask her for the loan of artworks and objects for the exhibition from her personal collection, such as a side table that appeared in one of her mother's paintings. I believe that in this convivial context I presented myself more informally than a museum curator might. I intentionally did not take notes or use a recording device. Instead, I took biscuits, and we talked over tea, without running to time constraints.

Out of these conversations and listening came an anecdote, one that is not mentioned in other texts on Lusk. Jancis recounted to me that she recalls Doris saying she had once designed fabric; she emphasised that it was a casual comment and that she had no further details. I phoned Jancis back a few weeks later and asked her to talk about it further. I did not interrupt or ask questions. After the phone call, I transcribed the conversation from memory and used it in a wall label developed for *The Studio* with Meharry's permission. Her fluid and incomplete account highlights her uncertainty of the reliability of the information, formed through a feminist oral history frame. It also captures the impermanence of recalling and retelling a conversation between a mother and her daughter:

I love fabric, that's probably why it stuck with me. There is nothing to verify it at all. Nothing to cement it or fix it to any other conversation. Maybe I said *I love that dress....* It just floated around...that she designed fabric. Like you might say...walking around a garden with a friend: *I had that flower once, but I haven't got it anymore. Like naming a plant in a garden. A casual, conversational titbit, I guess.*⁴⁷²

The object label for a side table exhibited in *The Studio* and depicted in Doris Lusk's *Table with Flowers* consisted of a comment from Jancis that I had transcribed from memory after one of my visits to her. In it she speculates on how the table ended up in the women's studio, further providing insight into her mother's practice:

471 Grant Kester, *Groundworks: Environmental Collaboration in Contemporary Art*. (Pittsburgh: the Regina Gouger Miller Gallery, Carnegie Mellon University, 2005), 20.

472 Excerpt from my transcript of a conversation with Jancis Meharry in March 2021.

Oh, that table was her mother's. Maybe she borrowed it, took it up to the studio for a bit. That's very Doris, just grab things to paint, an Agee jar...you know—making do. She didn't own much. They didn't have any money back then.⁴⁷³

In this way, oral histories or 'histories from below'⁴⁷⁴ retain a unique function as they capture the subjective perspectives, casual comments and anecdotes that occur in natural conversations. In her book *Oral History Theory* (2016), historian Lynn Abrams writes that the practice of oral history is a "creative, interactive methodology that forces us to get to grips with many layers of meaning and interpretation contained within people's memory."⁴⁷⁵ She goes on to write:

where oral history really departs from other memory sources – the memoir or autobiography for example – is the recognition that memory is an active process. The oral history interview is an event whereby, through the relationship between the interviewer and the respondent, a memory narrative is actively created in the moment, in response to a whole series of external references that are brought to bear... the interviewer's questions... personal prompts and cues such as photographs and family memorabilia.⁴⁷⁶

This also relates to Muñoz's and Jones' reflections, discussed earlier, on the acquiring of information through unique exchanges, outside of the archive. These are other examples of the unreliable memories that Wallin refers to, those that are unofficial and difficult to prove. These are what underpin the project. Oral history methods are appropriate for this sort of research of intervention and recovery: intersubjective and active, they hold potential for new narratives to be created in the moment and through the research process. As Abrams writes, it is the "the doing"⁴⁷⁷ of it that sets oral history apart from other historical research, and offers possibilities for new meanings to emerge.

⁴⁷³ Object label developed for *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, a comment attributed to Jancis Meharry from a conversation I had with her in March 2021.

⁴⁷⁴ Wikipedia, s.v. "People's history," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_history, "a type of historical narrative which attempts to account for historical events from the perspective of common people rather than leaders," which cites E. P. Thompson, "History from Below," *Times Literary Supplement*, April 7, 1966, 279–80.

⁴⁷⁵ Lynn Abrams, *Oral history theory*, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 18.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.



Fig. 142. *The Studio*, (installation view), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Fig. 143. Doris Lusk, *Table with Flowers*, 1942. Oil on board. Reproduced with kind permission from Jancis Meharry.



A 'social' art history: ecologies, rhizomes, 'radiant networks'

The *Bowdown* podcast hosted by art critic and writer Jennifer Higgle,⁴⁷⁸ is a series of nominations of historical women artists, writers, poets and performers who "deserve our attention."⁴⁷⁹ Higgle also compiles an Instagram account (@jennifer_higgle) with images and write-ups of noteworthy, yet often lesser-known women artists. Higgle pays 'social' attention to these

⁴⁷⁸ Jennifer Higgle is an Australian novelist, screenwriter, art critic and former editor of the London-based contemporary arts magazine *Frieze*.

⁴⁷⁹ <https://www.frieze.com/article/bow-down-podcast-women-art-history>, accessed November 17, 2021.

Jancis is Doris Lusk's elder daughter, and lives near me in Sydenham, Christchurch. When I first met her in February I decided not to make notes, or take a notebook along. I just wanted to meet her. Her daughter Tatyanna introduced me. She had joked earlier that if I wanted to borrow any of her paintings for the exhibition, she would have to 'like' me. I felt apprehensive. Her comment made me think she might not be initially very friendly.

I took biscuits and Jancis made some tea. Her flat was full of her mother's paintings, and others, too, by Woollaston and Spencer Bower. It turns out it wasn't hard to get on with Jancis. I found her very warm, and she launched quickly into stories and memories about her mother. She mentioned that Doris designed fabric once, and then started talking about her working for Butterfields, a ladies' dress shop on the high street, where she "did the window dressing and painted signage, like posters and so on." I let her talk, and the memories follow on from each other. I didn't want to interrupt or ask many questions. Today I was thinking about her comment about Doris designing fabric, so I picked up the phone to call her and she answered. I told her that I was curious as to what she remembered about Doris's fabric design. This is a rough transcript of the phone conversation. Below that I include the text that was included in an artwork label for a Florence Weir design.

Jancis Meharry, 27 April 2021:

Oh, she just said causally "I once did that, I designed fabric." But goodness knows whatever happened to them. I don't even know how old she was. It was just a casual comment. We must have been looking at a book or something. We could have been talking about dresses. Maybe I was saying something about her dress. She had a really beautiful one, and I remember the fabric. It had silver leaves with a tiny bit of gold in it. And then she just said that, in passing. Just casually. She sounded quite pleased with herself, but there's nothing to back it up. It just stuck with me that she said that. Must have been in the 40s. Her friend Juliet Peter designed fabric and that's how I imagine they might have looked like. She (Doris) said that her designs went to Japan. I'm not sure if it was the fabric or the designs that went to Japan. Probably the designs. How would you find out about that? It wouldn't have been in the war years, would it? Maybe it was in the 50s? I love fabric, that's probably why it stuck with me. But then again it might not have been anything at all. It could be all fibs! No one knows who

put her on to it. Or where they went. I don't even think Grant knows about it. There is nothing to verify it at all. Nothing to cement it or fix it to any other conversation. Maybe I said "I love that dress...." It just floated around...that she designed fabric. Like you might say...walking around a garden with a friend: "I had that flower once, but I haven't got it anymore." Like naming a plant in a garden. A casual, conversational tidbit, I guess. Goodness knows. She definitely worked for Butterfields, and she did casual work in costumes and backdrops for the Repertory Theatre. She also made potato-stamp dresses for Rachel and me.

Florence Weir, Autumn Study, c. 1938

Julia Holderness, felted wool textile, 2021

Jancis and Rachel told me that Doris once casually mentioned that she designed fabric. I wanted more detail.

(Julia Holderness)

"Oh, she just said casually 'I once did that, I designed fabric.' But goodness knows whatever happened to them. I don't even know how old she was. It was just a casual comment. We must have been looking at a book or something. We could have been talking about dresses. Maybe I was saying something about her dress. She had a really beautiful one, and I remember the fabric. It had silver leaves with a tiny bit of gold in it. And then she just said that, in passing. Just casually. She sounded quite pleased with herself, but there's nothing to back it up. It just stuck with me that she said that. I love fabric, that's probably why it stuck with me. There is nothing to verify it at all. Nothing to cement it or fix it to any other conversation. Maybe I said "I love that dress...." It just floated around...that she designed fabric. Like you might say...walking around a garden with a friend: "I had that flower once, but I haven't got it anymore." Like naming a plant in a garden. A casual, conversational tidbit, I guess. Goodness knows."⁴⁸⁰

Jancis Meharry

⁴⁸⁰ Reproduced here with kind permission from Jancis Meharry.

women artists, situating them within their social and historical contexts, for example, on Natalie Goncharova (1881–1962):

*Born in 1881 in Nagaevo to impoverished aristocrats, Goncharova was a powerhouse: in 1913, at the age of 32 she established herself as the leader of the avant-garde with a major retrospective of 800 paintings at the Mikhailova Art Salon in Moscow; it was the most ambitious exhibition by any Russian avant-garde artist to date.*⁴⁸¹

The anecdote is deployed too, with a compelling image: “In order to advertise the show; Goncharova, along with fellow artists, paraded the streets of the Russian capital displaying futurist body art.”⁴⁸² Higgle also includes direct quotes when she can. These give presence to the artists and enliven the information:

*In a letter, she [Goncharova] wrote how thrilled she was by its reception: “Bundles of newspapers featuring articles one contradicting another.... There were public scandals and receptions in restaurants, three editions of the catalogue, commissions for portraits, for a carpet, for stage decors; and three works were purchased for the @tretyakov_gallery.”*⁴⁸³

In this format, followers can also click on the Instagram handle of the gallery that purchased her work back in 1913, still operating at the time the post was published. Higgle’s vivid, descriptive biographies go some way to redress the many overlooked and misplaced female artists from the dominant historical record, and proffer an alternative list of names.

I remain a social art historian, believing that art is inevitably linked to the society and locale in which it was created.⁴⁸⁴

Higgle’s work is grounded in social art history, reflecting Kisler’s sentiment expressed above. Her anecdotal sketches, with a focus on the life and times of the artist, inform and enrich the artworks she presents. Yet as biographical interpretations of art, they fall short of a full understanding of where the artist sits in a wider ecology. However, this is not Higgle’s intention. Pulling

481 @jennifer_higgle, Instagram account, https://instagram.com/jennifer_higgle/

482 Ibid.

483 Ibid.

484 Kisler, *Finding Frances Hodgkins*, 9.



Figs. 144 - 145. @jennifer_higgle Instagram posts featuring Dr Samella Sanders Lewis (posted February 27, 2022) and Natalia Goncharova in 1913 (posted December 4, 2019).

back from this, we can look to the basis of a social history of art, which is a Marxist approach. For Marx, a person is conditioned by the society and historical context in which she, he or they live, and this idea extends to artists and their products. This is why Marxists argue that one can only begin to fully appreciate and understand a work of art by examining it in relation to the conditions of its creation. Art historian T. J. Clark developed this notion further, and believed works of art should not be seen as simply reflecting a



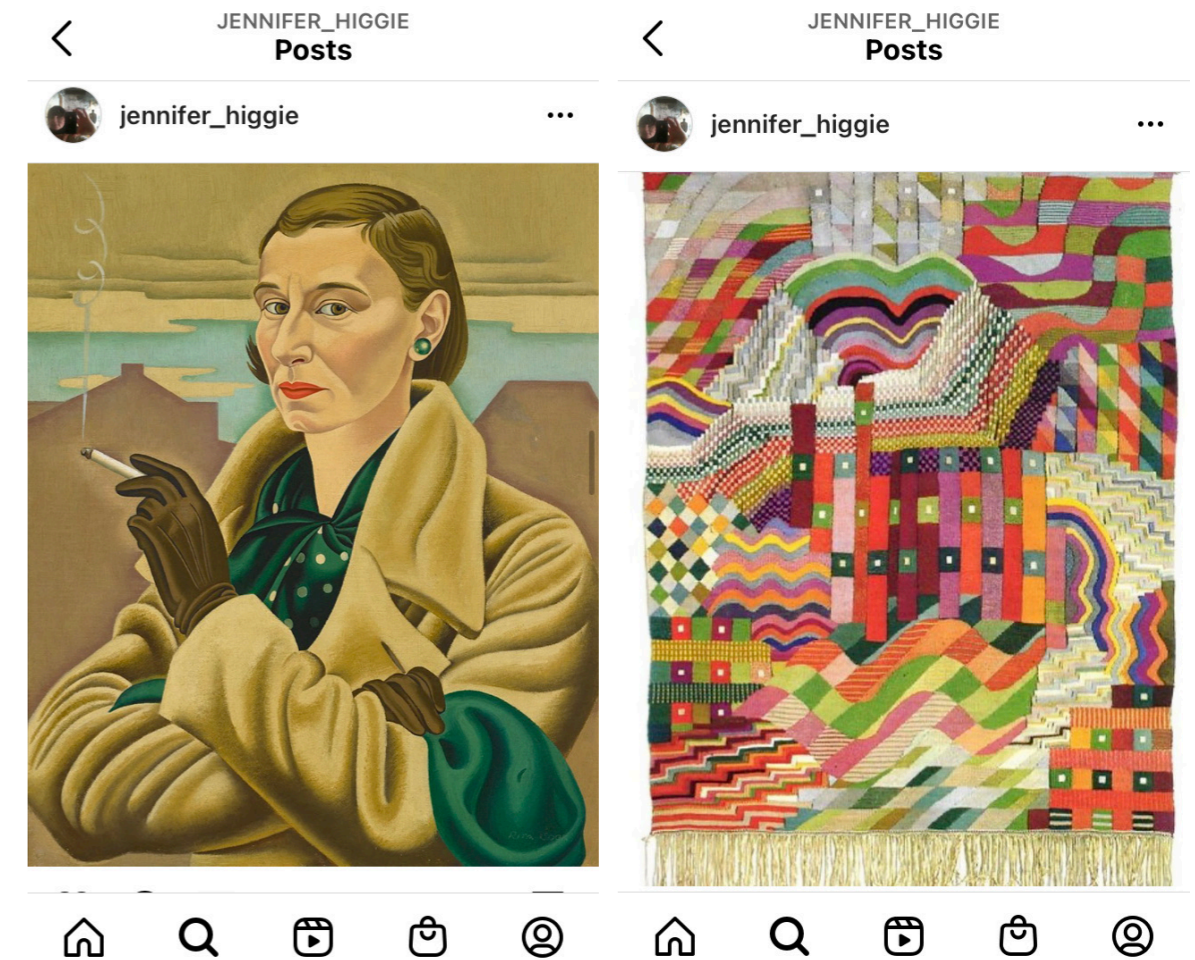
Figs. 146 - 148.
 @jennifer_higgie Instagram posts featuring from left:
 Sophie Taeuber with a dada head in 1920
 (posted January 19, 2020),
 Rita Angus, *Self-portrait*, 1937 (posted March 13, 2020)
 and Bauhaus weaver Gunta Stölzl's 1927/8 'slit tapestry red /
 green' wall hanging (posted March 5, 2020).

historical moment. While historical specificity is nevertheless critical to a full understanding of the production and reception for an artwork, it is the 'specific constellation' of historical factors relevant to the artwork that is crucial. Josh Mcloughlin, editor of *New Critique* journal writes that, for Clark, this is to say:

social art history is not merely knowledge of the 'social factors' but an understanding of the nature of the relationship between these factors and between these factors and the artworks...[it] is the examinations of the 'coalescence' or 'constellation' of historical forces, not simply the bald fact of their existence.⁴⁸⁵

This recalls Muñoz's conception of biographical co-ordinates, and the project's desire to locate relationships and friendships. Art historian Peter Simpson's book *Bloomsbury South: The Arts in Christchurch 1933 – 1953: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Cultural History* frames a significant period in

⁴⁸⁵ Josh Mcloughlin, "Art and Ideology: Clark, Courbet and Althusser," *New Critique*, <https://newcritique.co.uk/2014/03/26/essay-art-and-ideology-clark-courbet-and-althusser-josh-mcloughlin/>



New Zealand's cultural development, when a number of different artists and artforms flourished and were deeply connected. At a keynote address at the Michael King Writers' Centre (Tāmaki Makaurau) in 2013, he talked about the challenges of deciding on the best approach to writing this narrative.

How do you go about writing a multi-disciplinary study of the arts such as this? What particular problems does it present? I am wrestling with these questions right now. How do I tell the story? At the heart of my book is the notion of a collective identity, a kind of radiant network, which cuts across the normal divisions between one art form and another. Therefore an approach which is strictly generic—a chapter on literature...a chapter on theatre, a chapter on the visual arts and so on—is not...appropriate. A second possible approach to a subject of cultural history is chronological—one damn thing after another.... A third...would be thematic...you could take topics such as 'nationalism,' or 'landscape'...and see how practitioners in different disciplines handled them.... A fourth approach would be to focus on the key individuals: a chapter each on...Glover, Curnow, Angus, Bensemann...

Lilburn, McCahon.... The problem with that is that I want to stress the importance of relationships, networks, connections and collaborations. In the end I have chosen to adopt a kind of hybrid approach, one which adopts elements of all of the four approaches mentioned just now: generic, chronological, thematic, biographical.⁴⁸⁶

Simpson's musings stress his belief that chronological and thematic representations would be limiting, and not even appropriate, when revisiting this art collective and its particular ecology. Arriving at a 'hybrid' approach, he felt he was able to tell the story of the unique interconnectedness of their network. For *Ever Present Archiving*, social art history provides a research method and conveys a commitment to thinking in constellations, leading us to new understandings while also challenging assumptions of linearity, coherence and progression. This is an art history that is fascinated in the small stories, the influence of friendships, the shared resources and intersecting details. Lifting the art history out of purely written treatments enables further connections between various elements such as shared studio objects and furniture.

Aotearoa artist Joanna Margaret Paul's *Rooms & Episodes* (undated) is an unpublished memoir that the artist wrote when she was aged in her mid-forties. The autobiographical manuscript is looked after by the artist's estate, and acted as an important research tool for the curators in the major survey show on her work, *Imagined in the Context of a Room*, at Dunedin Public Art Gallery (2021). Curators Lucy Hammonds, Greg Donson and Lauren Gutsell acknowledge that "the words of Joanna herself...have accompanied us as we have navigated our journey through her career."⁴⁸⁷ Thinking back to the interiors of her youth, Paul writes in a direct way:

My mother's house was beautiful, it strikes me—orderly, tended peaceful with all objects carefully chosen for their form & colour. Alienated by ugliness & dullness at school I escaped into the Frances Hodgkins watercolour hanging in the hall sitting-room.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁶ Peter Simpson, quoted from http://www.writerscentre.org.nz/Downloads/Simpson_BloomsburySouth.pdf, a keynote address at the Michael King Writers' Centre Residential Seminar, Long Bay, Labour Weekend 2013, accessed June 6, 2015.

⁴⁸⁷ Greg Donson, Lauren Gutsell, and Lucy Hammonds, "Introduction," in *Joanna Margaret Paul: Imagined in the Context of a Room*, ed. Greg Donson, Lauren Gutsell, and Lucy Hammonds (Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021), 8.

⁴⁸⁸ Joanna Margaret Paul, *Rooms & Episodes*, undated, unpublished memoir, unpaginated. Courtesy of the artist's estate.

In her essay in the accompanying publication of the same name, Hammonds states, "her reflections on important formative friendships and relationships gradually build into a view of her artistic context."⁴⁸⁹ Again, here are social relations presented at the fore and being used to illuminate the art practice. "Stories of music, meals, homes, friends, loves and losses are intersected by Paul's poetry and photography," and Hammonds concludes that "this is art history as a personal, intimate enquiry—an act that, by nature, subverts the dominant narrative and creates room in the margins to which new meaning can be ascribed."⁴⁹⁰ *Ever Present Archiving* is interested in the subjective account in art writing.⁴⁹¹

Genealogies, artistic associations, relationships, friendships

Ever Present Archiving aims to reflect the social nature of artistic societies and networks. It mobilises French philosopher Michel Foucault's concept of genealogies to disturb "what was previously thought immobile."⁴⁹² Extrapolating on the familiar trope of the "artist's circle", this chapter places Weir into a community of artistic peers whose friendships and networks of solidarity built a social and productive space of artistic creation. As Foucault argues, the concept of genealogies is opposed to origins: it does not "pretend to go back in time", instead it is interested in the "accidents", "the deviations" and "the faulty calculations" that give rise to our current values and contribute to a "history of the present."⁴⁹³ Similarly, I employ the social space of the artists' circle not as an origin story, but to generate a productive and speculative space of community and artistic creation which Weir inhabits. As summarised by David Garland, the purpose of genealogies is "to trace the erratic and discontinuous process whereby the past became the present."⁴⁹⁴ Traditional art-historical enquiry has often focused on the artist's Circle, the artist's Colony and the artist's Group. For example, in the scholarship on Frances Hodgkins, there is a vast collection of texts exploring her friendships and female company. *Frances Hodgkins and Her Circle*, an exhibition held at

⁴⁸⁹ Lucy Hammonds, "Joanna Margaret Paul: The All-purpose Room," in *Joanna Margaret Paul: Imagined in the Context of a Room*, 111.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Academic Gretchen Coombs from RMIT University, Melbourne, supports this angle by asking these questions: "Is art writing a form of memoir? And should it be?" in her call for panel submissions for the 2021 AAANZ conference. I perceive this as a provocation and invitation for contributors to consider art writing as a collection of memories, written from personal knowledge.

⁴⁹² Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D.F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 147.

⁴⁹³ Ibid, 146.

⁴⁹⁴ Garland, David, "What Is a "History of the Present"? On Foucault's Genealogies and Their Critical Preconditions" in *Punishment and Society*, Vol. 16, Issue 4 (October 2014): 372.

dealer gallery Jonathan Grant Galleries, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, in 2020 displayed Hodgkins' works alongside those of her supporters, friends and students, in "an exhibition that explores and celebrates the importance of community."⁴⁹⁵ In a talk titled "Ngaio Marsh" for the Friends of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, curators Felicity Milburn and Peter Vangioni chose to discuss Ngaio Marsh through her friends and peers. Noting the freedom and companionship that painting 'plein air' offered, Milburn focused on Marsh's artist companion Olivia Spencer Bower and her watercolour landscapes, introduced by a watercolour depicting Marsh painting in the landscape. Marsh, in this context, acted as an anchor; however, her work was not discussed.

The construction of Florence utilises this trope. She is born out of kinship, both existing⁴⁹⁶ and imagined networks, and her outings and exhibitions are often with or through her circle of friends and community.⁴⁹⁷ It is her proximity to others that is important, and it is associations with other artists who bring her into focus. From the beginning it was her insertion into The Group that informed other details. In *Florence & Friends*, Richard Orjis and I titled the ceramic works with the first names of the women (and two gay men) who exhibited with The Group: *Doris, Helen, Ida, Leo, Louise, Ngaio, Olivia, Rata, Rita, Rona, Theo, Olive, Evelyn, Frances* and *Juliet*. I thought of Florence when I read about Ngaio Marsh's home-decorating shop in Knightsbridge, London, which was called *Touch and Go*.⁴⁹⁸ The shop was established not long after Marsh arrived in London in 1928 or 1929. As Marsh also exhibited with The Group in Christchurch, there is reason to believe that Weir and Marsh's friendship continued in London. Marsh, in fact, owned this enterprise with her friend Nelly Rhodes, a friend from New Zealand. Marsh stayed with her and husband Arthur Tahu Rhodes on and off in London. In some way, this venture reflects for me Marsh's diverse talents: writer, artist, actor, director, producer... interior designer. Similarly, Richard and I conceived of Florence with multi-disciplinary outputs: interior architect, artist, designer. A series of exhibition posters I made in 2015 intentionally had a vague sense of place and venue. I did not include year dates, but sometimes a month. Fabricating these documents

495 Jonathan Gooderham and Grace Alty, *Frances Hodgkins and Her Circle* (Auckland: Jonathan Grant Gallery, 2020).

496 An imagined conversation with my friend, artist Emma Fitts: "I met Florence through my research into Ngaio Marsh and the *The Group Show* catalogues." Included in my 2015 AUT Honours exegesis "Art and fiction."

497 "The exhibition *Florence & Friends* positioned an array of current artists' work alongside Florence Weir ceramics in the setting of an upstairs space which was orientated as a front room. These accompanying contemporary works were selected to facilitate a dialogue about the 1920s and 1930s and Bauhaus influence in the applied arts exhibition setting. This constructed context offered references for the ceramic range and a sense of a shared milieu, whilst also scrambling timeframes." Holderness, "Art and Fiction," 37.

498 This shop *Touch and Go* inspired a project idea in 2015. See Appendix Five.



Figs. 149, 151, 153. 'Helen', 'Olivia' and 'Evelyn' vases and platters, Florence Weir ceramicware, 2015. Exhibited at Flotsam & Jetsam in *Florence & Friends*.

Fig. 150, 152. Fabricated posters, 2015. Digital print on archival card, A3 and A2 formats.

allowed me to construct the contact that Florence had with The Group, and to create potential exhibitions or events that they held together, such as *The Group: homewares* (late 2015) introduced in the Preface. In *The Studio* (2021), Florence is positioned in the close company of other artists (historical and contemporary). Her felted textile works are inspired by paintings of Anne Hamblett and Doris Lusk from this studio period (1930s–1940s). For example, *Florence Weir, Fabric design from Doris Lusk’s “Flower Study/Mixed Flowers,”* c. 1937 takes petal shapes from the cited work by Lusk. The project prioritises a collective legacy. This is an artistic lineage that is produced through shared tuition, resources and experiences: they attended art school together, had the same teachers and rented group studios. Hocken Collections assistant Nick Austin’s comment that he “kept getting mixed up with who did what, which underlined for me the communal spirit of the scene”⁴⁹⁹ confirms this approach is experienced by a viewer. These pseudo-histories that I am producing seek to reveal the day-to-day, lived experiences, surrounding social relationships and social structures, parts of the story that might be left out.

Discussing her thirteen-day-long event series titled *Now You Can Go* (2015), curator Helena Rickett reflects that the “act of staging convivial, discursive events has a strong female-orientated history, ranging from the salons organised largely by women....in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, to the consciousness-raising groups that formed a cornerstone of second-wave feminist culture.”⁵⁰⁰ Citing Elke Krasne, she argues that creating “ephemeral conversational gatherings as curatorial efforts can offer an alternative, feminized historiography.”⁵⁰¹ Related to these research enquiries and collective formats, Alex Martinis Roe’s book *To Become Two: Propositions for Feminist Collective Practice* has a particular focus on relational processes and social structures within feminist culture. The book both researches and generates a social history, and also proposes ways of working, putting theory into lived practice. In Chapter Two, *A story from Circolo della rosa*, she discusses her work with the Milan Women’s Bookstore Collective which, as a political organisation, she writes:

takes as its primary concern the relations between those who participate in it. This involves a very attentive approach to interpersonal

499 Email correspondence about *The Studio* from Hocken Collections assistant Nick Austin, February 17, 2022.

500 Helena Rickett, “Generating Feminisms: Italian Feminisms and the “Now You Can Go” Program”, *Art Journal*, (Fall/Winter, 2017): 111.

501 Ibid.



Fig. 153. Florence Weir, *Fabric design from Doris Lusk’s “Flower Study / Mixed Flowers,”* c.1937, felted wool textile, 2021. Exhibited in *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

relationships, where a love, care, and respect for the difference and singularity of the one you have a relationship with...⁵⁰²

This emphasis on relationships has relevance for not only my conversational research methodologies, but for future projects where I might work in collaboration with other artists, curators and art historians. The structure of these relationships might inform the objects made and accompanying exhibition supports such as conversational-based wall labels or audio recordings. Martinis Roe goes on to discuss *affidamento* (entrustment) as the most important kind of relationship in the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective. This reciprocal relationship that "exceeds the kinds of relationships found in the existing institutions of family, friendship and work...together they establish a different and female-determined structure of validation."⁵⁰³ Martinis Roe asserts it is an "ethical practice of love, where both women open themselves to each other, and in that act of entrustment, they invent themselves through the relation—the commitment is not just to the other, but also to oneself".⁵⁰⁴ And with Kester's dialogic framework in mind, Martinis Roe *immersed* and *participated* in this very kind of relationship practice which then structured the way she produced her work on *affidamento*.⁵⁰⁵

Also within a feminist context, in her book *The Company She Keeps* (2014), artist Céline Condorelli discusses friendship as a practice, a support structure and form of solidarity. Being attentive to and thinking about the political questions involved in "the company" and contributors I bring into the practice is critical. This awareness also opens out potentials for production, co-authorship, and setting up friendship as a condition and structure for working within the practice. Thinking about Jones serendipitous discovery, mentioned earlier in this chapter, of unknown 1970s works by performance artist Barbara Smith, she writes, "If it weren't for such intimacies—moments of fortuitous scholarly curiosity become friendship—such works would remain unknown

502 Alex Martinis Roe, *To Become Two: Propositions for Feminist Collective Practice*, (Milan and Berlin: Archive Books, 2018), 53.

503 Ibid, 56.

504 Ibid, 58.

505 Alex Martinis Roe produced a film called *A story from circolo della rosa in 2014*. "The film is narrated by the artist's voice and is addressed to a close colleague in the form of a letter, telling a story about two women. The film weaves together fragments from her recent oral history research with members of the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective (www.libriadielledonne.it) and her experiences of their collective activities, as well as her exploration of related spaces, archives and texts." Text quoted from <https://www.archivesites.org/2014/02/22/alex-martinis-roe-a-story-from-circolo-della-rosa/>

forever."⁵⁰⁶ Wallin would "also argue for the reverse, that friendship can be the basis of scholarly research and feminist history making...[a] reminder that history is constructed by those privileged enough to be in the room".⁵⁰⁷ In other words: histories are built through social proximity. Condorelli's text unfolds as conversations with her friends, such as sociologist Avery F. Gordon. Together they research and explore the way certain groups (namely women, slaves and castaways) have been excluded or restricted from existing discourses on friendship and sociality, yet they conclude that these groups provide good models of "working together".⁵⁰⁸ Gordon writes:

Nineteenth-century women's friendships were an important research topic for early second-wave women's historians in part because the intimate and elaborated world of women's friendships was a bit of a public secret: people knew but didn't know that friendships kept nonworking women from going mad in their restricted private lives,⁵⁰⁹ and kept working class women from disaster and drowning in work, and also provided a respectable cover for lesbian women to love and live together. Women's friendships were also important to the second wave because they were seen as anti-patriarchal, a way of shifting one's investments and attentions away from a male-centred existence and way of life.⁵¹⁰

Whilst the 1939 group studio located near the Octagon in central Dunedin, and subject of my solo exhibition at Dunedin Public Art Gallery was established informally, it is an example of "altering the order of things, often through intimate associations and small-scale closeness."⁵¹¹ This all-women's studio was female-determined and constructed through cooperation, support of each other, validation and friendship.

Looking at Hamblett's still-life paintings, art historian Peter Entwistle wrote that they are: "evocations of an interior life. They succeed in conveying a sense not only of a domestic setting, but of a way of living in it, a frame of

506 Amelia Jones, "Feminist Subjects versus Feminist Effects: The Curating of Feminist Art (or is it the Feminist Curating of Art?)" On Curating 29 (May 2016), *Curating in Feminist Thought*, ed. Dorothee Richter, Elke Krasny and Lara Perry. <https://www.on-curating.org/issue-29.html#YhCJOC8RrT8>

507 Wallin, "The Labour of Friendship: Barbara Cleveland's Thinking Business."

508 Céline Condorelli, *The Company She Keeps*, (London: Book Works, 2014), 42.

509 As noted in my Introduction, for artist Evelyn Page, her involvement with The Group provided a form of escape from domesticity.

510 Condorelli, *The Company She Keeps*, 37. Avery Gordon's words.

511 Ibid, 58.

mind.”⁵¹² Including this quote in a wall label for her painting titled *Poppies*, I added a footnote that expanded the concept of *The Studio*: “We also read this as an analogy for their shared studio. A setting and arrangement for both work and social connection. The Studio as an extension of living space.”⁵¹³ I did this to highlight my interpretation as the artist researcher (positioned as a collective opinion with the use of the pronoun ‘we’) that the studio was invested in and established as a form of solidarity for Hamblett, Lusk and Lawn. They wanted to work in proximity, come together and share a space, a continuation of the larger group studio they had shared with McCahon and the network of graduates from the Otago School of Art.⁵¹⁴ They wanted to have furniture, flowers and objects to paint; a place they could work in, exhibit, talk, and have cups of tea. While this is not a nuclear family in the conventional sense, it is an extension of familial identities. Thus, I also see the studio itself as a queer methodology that relates to Muñoz’s “queer logic of kinship and becoming.”⁵¹⁵ The made-up quote by Florence, which acted as an introduction to *The Studio*, captures this yearning and desire for a shared space of belonging. It intentionally describes the very space that Lawn, Lusk and Hamblett set up. It read as follows:

I have always longed for a shared studio space. I imagine that at times it would be used as an exhibition space &⁵¹⁶ a place for coming together. I can see long tables that can be reconfigured depending on the activity, with various arrangements of objects set in the middle...bowls of fruit, vases with fresh flowers, interesting fabrics. Comfortable nooks for tea-drinking & conversation. Shared bookshelves & abundant supplies set up in attractive storage. A range of plinths for still-life set-ups, sculptures or the life-drawing model. Space dividers, framing materials, easels.... In all reality, I am probably best suited to working on my own now. Though it's good fun to imagine this other studio.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹² Peter Entwistle, *The Birth of Modernism in New Zealand Painting*, 1999, unpublished manuscript, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago, 277.

⁵¹³ Julia Holderness, footnote in a wall label in *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021.

⁵¹⁴ This larger studio ended in 1938, which prompted Lusk, Lawn and Hamblett to rent another studio.

⁵¹⁵ Muñoz, “Utopia’s Seating Chart,” 114.

⁵¹⁶ I decided to use the ampersand in this conversational text after seeing it in Frances Hodgkins’ correspondence to her friends. Used as a shorthand in informal writing, it conveys familiarity and ease. And according to Wikipedia, in film credits for screenplays, an ampersand can indicate a closer collaboration than *and*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Screenplay>

⁵¹⁷ A quote from Florence Weir, developed for the introductory wall quotes in *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021

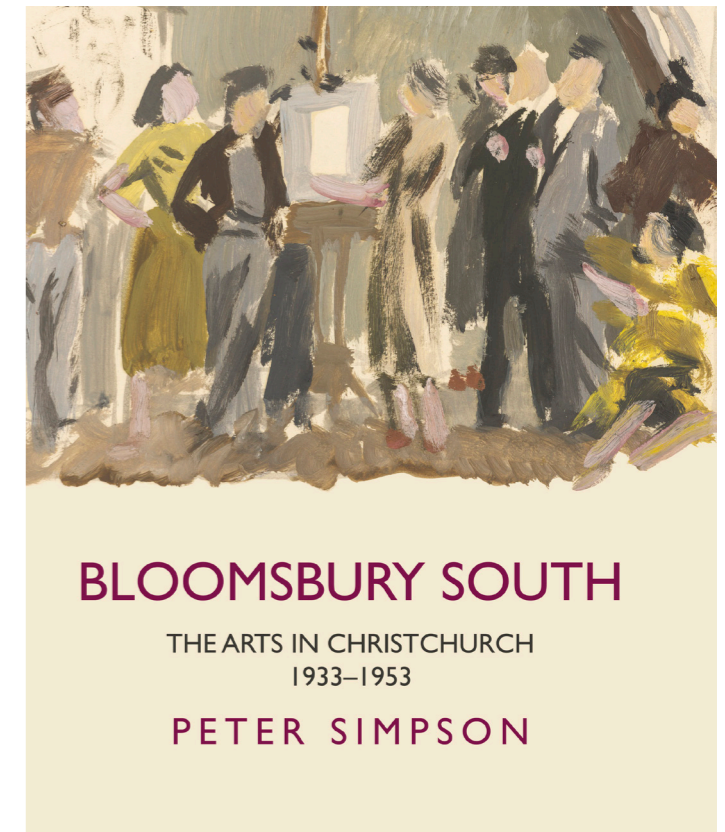


Fig. 152. Peter Simpson, *Bloomsbury South: The Arts in Christchurch 1933–1953*, 2016. Auckland University Press.

Describing the social practice of English artists The Grantchester Pottery (Giles Round and Phil Root), introduced in Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications*, writer and curator Elinor Morgan writes that its name “evokes a sunny place in the early Twentieth Century where friends discuss ideas, eat, drink and swim.”⁵¹⁸ Morgan also argues that this “fictional proposition” is a “familiar structure,”⁵¹⁹ recalling biographer David Gadd’s descriptive 1974 book about The Bloomsbury Group. This book was titled *The Loving Friends*, and in it Gadd argues that the group’s “core is formed of shared activity and friendship.”⁵²⁰ In his Introduction to *Bloomsbury South*, Peter Simpson outlines his analogy between the arts scene in Christchurch (the subject of the book) and the famous group of writers, artists and intellectuals of London’s Bloomsbury Group. He writes the latter group “was notable for the intricacy of its interpersonal relationships” and that they regarded their personal relationships as “more important than public achievement.”⁵²¹ Calling the period in Christchurch the ‘Bloomsbury South,’ he draws various parallels in his introduction between the two groups, asserting that both “scenes were marked by the presence of a group of talented individuals...all closely linked by

⁵¹⁸ Elinor Morgan, “Painting the Stage,” Jerwood Arts, accessed April 8, 2021, jerwoodarts.org/exhibitionsandevents/writing-and-media/painting-the-stage/

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Simpson, *Bloomsbury South*, 1.

friendships and similarities of aesthetic and intellectual outlook.”⁵²²

Also emphasising friendship in her anecdotal and candid notes that accompany her friend Imogen Taylor’s exhibition of paintings called *Sapphic Fragments* at Hocken Collections (1 February – 13 June 2020), writer Millie Mitchell-Anyon states:

Friends are important. Friends is also code for ‘lesbians.’ Jane Saunders and Hannah Ritchie from Hodgkins’ *Friends, Double Portrait* were the latter. In the LGBTQIA+ community, we surround ourselves with friends that are queer. As Hodgkins moved around the world through the provinces, she surrounded herself with queer friends.

And in her essay titled “Frances Hodgkins: A Portrait of Queer Love,” art historian and biographer Joanne Drayton argues that while there is no ‘proof’ of Hodgkin’s sexuality,

there is in her life...evidence of an unconventional existence, supported, populated, and propelled by a roll call of LGBTQI+ people, including: Jane Saunders, Hannah Ritchie...Cedric Morris, Norman Notley... Christopher Wood, Philip and Lady Ottoline Morrell, Duncan Grant...and many more.⁵²³

Drayton says this “signals an openness to a queer world—its people and their relationships.”⁵²⁴ Florence’s life mirrors this unconventionality: her close relations are not familial in the traditional sense. It is her friendships that create, support and sustain her identity. It is other artists who bring Florence into focus, to view, even if she concedes that later in her career she was “probably best suited”⁵²⁵ to working on her own. Florence’s world of friendships reflects Julia Waite’s current research into a number of expatriate artists of the 1930s and 1940s who “moved in a homosocial network.”⁵²⁶ In *The Studio*, a label for a painting combines my own fluid associative description of the work with Florence’s dialogue about it. She says:

“It’s the sort of arrangement I put on the dresser in my guest bedroom when a friend comes to stay. Speaking of which, Joan is coming to stay next month. She wants to spend a few weeks in the studio.”⁵²⁷

Reflecting on co-creator Richard Orjis’s visioning of Florence as queer,⁵²⁸ I realise I could have gone further and made more of Florence’s close friendships, such as ‘Joan.’ I could have extended this piece of dialogue to suggest same-sex companionship, and potential intimacy. I am researching playwright Ngaio Marsh and the question around her sexuality has come up in various texts. She travelled with women and had close relationships with lesbian couples. Like Marsh and Hodgkins, the sexuality of Weir remains unknown. However, as Joanne Drayton has usefully pointed out, “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.”⁵²⁹ Florence came into being through present-day networks (mine and Richard’s), and appears in these sorts of relational, rhizomic associations. In this sense she has to remain open to interpretation and change, and in some ways be unknowable.

522 Ibid, 3.

523 Drayton, “Frances Hodgkins: A Portrait of Queer Love.”

524 Ibid.

525 Quote from Florence Weir, *The Studio*, introductory text panel, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021.

526 Waite, lecture notes “Exiles and Expatriates.”

527 Ibid.

528 In a conversation with Richard Orjis in November 2021, I recall he said, “I’ve always viewed Florence as queer. She is a drag persona, she messes with time.... She is similar to other artists who had female companions at that time.”

529 Drayton, “Frances Hodgkins: A Portrait of Queer Love.”

Chapter summary

Examining calls for a more expansive concept of art-historical evidence offered by various theorists and art historians, this chapter has discussed how the project extends sources of art-historical testimony. These include gossip, rumour, chatty stories from the margins, hearsay; sources that often have an intersubjective nature. Joanne Drayton's comments on Frances Hodgkins highlights that a lack of 'proof' in the traditional sense should not exclude various testimonies. Making use of the memoir, anecdotes and accounts gleaned from conversational-based research with family members leads to a retelling that emphasises relationships and networks. These are the sorts of connections that might not be so visible in conventional art-historical narratives. Elevating these voices as serious and legitimate voices for consideration in turn illuminates and expands our historical view of the lived experiences of women artists. Using the Foucauldian concept of genealogies, I draw from these narratives not to "think historically about the past but rather to use historical materials to rethink the present."⁵³⁰ For *Ever Present Archiving*, social art history provides a research method and conveys a commitment to thinking in constellations. This approach leads us to new understandings of collective identity, whilst also challenging assumptions of linearity, coherence and progression. Constructing and revealing Florence through her friendships and associations, as well as mine as the researcher/artist, highlights the importance of artistic associations and relationships. This approach cuts across traditional art-historical organising logics and divisions such as between mediums and styles. The histories I retell and produce seek to reveal the surrounding social relationships and values, parts of the story that are often obscured by conventional narratives.

Chapter Six

Temporality and Presence

Notions of historical time,
hauntings and ghosts

⁵³⁰ Garland, "What Is a "History of the Present"? On Foucault's Genealogies and Their Critical Preconditions", 373.

Chapter 6: Temporality and Presence

Notions of historical time, hauntings and ghosts

When we are “doing” history, not only are we writing the event, we are positively reinscribing it, producing it a new, writing it as an opening up to a life that is not exhausted in its pastness.⁵³¹ Elizabeth Grosz

This chapter, *Temporality and Presence*, will focus on time and historiography in art history, and how expanded notions of temporality form significant contexts for the project, especially relations of present and past. By examining critiques of linear, fixed and continuous temporalities by writers and art historians Giovanna Zapperi, Julia Kristeva, Elizabeth Grosz, Griselda Pollock and Dan Karlholm, amongst others, various alternatives to the constructs of time will be discussed. These examples offer porous, feminist, liminal and polytemporal treatments of time for projects and art practices that deal with the past, avoiding a segmented, ‘joined-up’ or fixed sense of historiography. The project seeks to question how a practice-led feminist temporality might critique the historiography of art-historical modernism. How does this sort of temporality extend notions of historical time, revealing the constructedness of historical narratives? Examining the ways in which presence and voice are given to figures from the past, Florence Weir’s presence is explored as a kind of haunting. Ideas around ghosts acting as metaphors for voices of neglected historical figures are discussed with reference to Jacques Derrida, Jan Verwoert and Abigail Solomon-Godeau. And within this territory, across other artists and practices, Melanie Oliver, Thomasin Sleigh and Robyn Maree Pickens examine ideas of historical remnants, and notions of haunting as a kind of influence and ‘inhabiting.’ I will also discuss how working with contemporary practitioners in *The Studio* (2021) extends a historical moment for consideration by artist perspectives in the recent past.

My use of the word ‘presence’ is often used to describe Florence Weir’s reappearance, representation or figuring within the practice. Given that the project is grounded in researching absence of female artists in art history, it builds on Derrida’s deconstruction of assumed hierarchies in the binary terms ‘presence’ and ‘absence’, and a notion that representational absence can become a form of presence. Florence’s presence and signification is constructed through representation, archival trace and images (what Derrida

⁵³¹ Elizabeth Grosz, “Histories of Present and Future: Feminism, power, bodies” in Jeffery Jerome Cohen and Gail Weiss (ed), *Thinking the Limits of the Body*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2003, 17.

would call absence). Through the work and revaluations of philosophers like Derrida and others, it is possible to think beyond the static binary distinction and hierarchy that privileges presence, what Derrida refers to as the “authority of presence”,⁵³² as centre or origin over *absence* as ‘imitation’ or ‘copy’. These binaries also set up and prioritise presence as ‘truth’ and relegates absence as ‘fallacy’. In this respect, Florence’s figuring troubles a priority of presence, occupying a more liminal ground between representation and suggestion, “neither present, nor absent.”⁵³³

The historiographic turn: content and methods

Many contemporary artists look to the past as inspiration and the subject of their inquiry. In his essay titled “The Way of the Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art,” curator Dieter Roelstraete classified this movement and interest as the “historiographic turn.” He observes that this “methodological complex” includes the “historical account, the archive, the document, the act of excavating and unearthing, the memorial, the art of reconstruction and re-enactment, the testimony.”⁵³⁴ *Ever Present Archiving* sits in this territory, actively using memoir, testimony, remembering, forgetfulness, retrospection, re-enactment and reconstruction in the practice. These elements and modes act as both methods and content in the practice, and coalescing together they enact a nuanced approach to view and retell suppressed stories. In using this content and form in the present moment, Roelstraete writes that a number of artists “seek to define art first and foremost in the thickness of its relationship to *history*. More and more frequently, art finds itself *looking back...* at its own past.”⁵³⁵ This historiographic turn in art was influenced by now well-established challenges to traditional historiography, from philosophers such as Michel Foucault who focused attention on some of the assumptions about how history is written, such as objectivity and the authority of expert knowledge. Australian cultural academic Kate Warren writes that artists dealing with historiographic modes are also “guided by a desire to challenge traditional understandings of ‘objective’ historical distance.... Yet many are still highly invested in the notion of truth.”⁵³⁶ She underlines Roelstraete’s title, “The Way of the Shovel,” noting his emphasis on the archaeological nature of these practices, and Warren notes that Roelstraete argues that these

532 Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), 10

533 Jan Verwoert, “Living with Ghosts: From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art,” *Art & Research* 1, no. 2, 7. (2007): 7.

534 Roelstraete, “The Way of the Shovel,” 1.

535 Ibid.

536 Warren, “Double Trouble,” 59.

artists are driven to excavate the past, “removing and categorising the strata of history that they encounter.”⁵³⁷ She then points out that contemporary art and entertainment culture, such as films, have demonstrated that the past need not be told “within strict frameworks of ‘historical inquiry’ in order to gain meaning and significance.”⁵³⁸ Expanded and overlapping temporalities can construct alternative and speculative histories that complicate *narratives of and relationships to* the past and present. These approaches also explore how the *now* and *then* negotiate each other in meaningful ways.

Ahead of time, competing, multiple and expanded temporalities

Swedish art historian Dan Karlholm’s critique of “linear and teleological narratives of history” and the use of what he calls an “unidirectionality as the norm”⁵³⁹ reflects wider critique of dominant art-historical structures such as evolutionary narratives. Revisiting the work of the late artist Joanna Margaret Paul (1945–2003) in 2015, Vancouver-based Aotearoa curator Paula Booker brought together Paul’s practice with contemporary artist Ziggy Lever, who lives and makes work in Tāmaki Mākaaurau, in an exhibition titled *Thinking Feeling*.⁵⁴⁰ This is a good example of a curatorial practice that embodies the counter strategy that Karlholm goes on to advise. He suggests one should “embrace anachrony or a heterochronic mindset, where each work is “polytemporal,”⁵⁴¹ belonging to several times, trajectories, patterns and networks, and where old works can be as good as new, if actualized/realized anew.”⁵⁴ *Thinking Feeling* explored co-ordinates and points of connections in Lever’s and Paul’s interdisciplinary practices, such as a focus on the domestic everyday as subject matter, and notions of temporality, duration and trace. Booker’s project is one of several attempts to engage with Paul’s practice anew, a body of work by a woman artist that has often been overlooked. As writer Ian Wedde observed in 1989, with regards to the repetitive and serial nature of her materially diverse practice, Paul’s work was “anachronistic not in the sense of being out-of-date, but in being ahead of its time.”⁵⁴² *Ahead of its time* usually means radical or innovative by the standards of the time, but

537 Ibid.

538 Ibid.

539 Karlholm, “Postcritical or Acritical?” 160. He footnotes “time layers,” citing Reinhart Koselleck, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003).

540 *Thinking Feeling: Ziggy Lever & Joanna Margaret Paul*, curated by Paula Booker, was exhibited at RAMP Gallery and The Physics Room in 2015.

541 Karlholm, “Postcritical or Acritical?” 160.

542 Ian Wedde, *Resisting Foreclosure* (Whanganui: The Sarjeant Gallery, 1989), quoted in Eleanor Woodhouse, “The Transcendent and Domestic in Joanna Margaret Paul’s Films,” *Contemporary HUM*, April 19, 2018, <https://contemporaryhum.com/writing/the-transcendent-and-domestic-in-joanna-margaret-pauls-films/>

it can also mean *disruptive, further on than, towards the front*. Thus Wedde is suggesting that considering her work in a historical lineage is not doing it justice. A feminist history goes beyond this colloquial saying (*ahead of its time*) and pulls things *literally* ahead of their time. Curatorially, Booker was literally pulling Paul's work into the present, bringing it forward, to afford reconsideration of the practice alongside contemporary artist Lever. Examining Wedde's comment in this way highlights feminist appropriation and temporality as a different historical canon.

Concepts of expanding chronological time and the historical canon also relate to writer Eleanor Woodhouse's examination of Paul's practice and reception. In an essay about Paul's films, Woodhouse examines both access issues and, specifically, the late recognition of her practice. She argues that "it is because of this expanded context (in terms of both time and place) that Paul's films are beginning to make sense—or rather, they are making new sense."⁵⁴³ She goes on to write that the "established western art historical method generally uses geography and periods of historical time as its organising logic."⁵⁴⁴ Woodhouse asserts that in these "patriarchal frameworks, existing approaches to film and art history have proven inadequate as a method for understanding women's experimental film at large."⁵⁴⁵ Recast in an expanded context, Paul's practice has a different reception when presented in a different time and amongst different company (such as with contemporary artist Ziggy Lever). Existing art-historical frameworks, priorities and approaches can obscure other views. Karlholm argues that conventional temporal structures blinds us to "time layers' and other temporal spaces."⁵⁴⁶ An example of this is the way Paul's films share concerns with avant-garde film discourse in the mid-1970s, yet were made in relative artistic isolation from this movement.

In his 2007 essay "Living with Ghosts: From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art," art theorist Jan Verwoert explores notions of historical time. He commented on the difference between appropriation in the 1980s and the use of history in contemporary practice. He understood this difference to be based on a significant shift in terms of the object of appropriation "from the re-use of a dead commodity fetish to the invocation of something that

543 Woodhouse, "The Transcendent and Domestic in Joanna Margaret Paul's Films."

544 Ibid.

545 Ibid.

546 Karlholm, "Postcritical or Acritical?" 160. He footnotes "time layers," citing Koselleck, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik*.



Fig. 153. Emma Fitts, *Fit-Out for Olivia Spencer Bower*, (installation view), 2015. Ilam Campus Gallery. Photograph by Daegan Wells. Courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 154. Nicholas Mangan, *Some Kinds of Duration*, (installation view), 2011. Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne Australia, 2012. HD video colour, silent, concrete, fluorescent light, steel, carbon. Courtesy of the artist.

lives through time."⁵⁴⁷ Curator Melanie Oliver explores this notion in her essay for Emma Fitts' installation *Fit-Out for Olivia Spencer Bower* at Ilam Campus Gallery (2015), which saw silk neck scarves transformed into large-scale wall hangings and space dividers. Oliver asserts that Fitts' use of:

remnants of fabric and history are ghosts that survive through the work, fragments that tell of a specific event or detail but are no more or less consequential than others. Instead they provide multiple voices and parallel versions of events.⁵⁴⁸

This connects to my creation of multiple versions of historical content via fabrications, and a series of voices dispersed through texts that include murmurings, anecdotes and hearsay. In a similar vein, Australian artist Nick Mangan deals with copied archival materials in *Some Kinds of Duration* (2011),

547 Jan Verwoert, "Living with Ghosts: From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art," *Art & Research* 1, no. 2(2007): 3.

548 Oliver, "Silk, Linen, Leather, Denim, Grass, Cotton, Felt," 10.

an installation that assembles the formal connections and physical qualities between a set of disparate functional objects, timelines and histories. These elements include an obsolete Canon photocopier cast in disintegrating concrete that manifests elements of Mayan ruins, and a decommissioned Sydney waste incinerator that was demolished in 1992. Alongside, a screen projection shows photocopied images of the Mayan Palace in Mexico; the Pymont incinerator being built and demolished; and the users' handbook guide for the Canon NP6030, itself a ubiquitous commercial product. Linked by carbon as a material, the work presents narratives surrounding the cyclical nature of reproduction and destruction, obsolescence and decay to revival. Like Fitts' use of fabric remnants, Mangan's installation of elements embodies Verwoert's notion of "things that live throughout time" representing a shift in the experiencing of history, "a shift from not enough to too much history or rather too many histories."⁵⁴⁹

It seems that our current representation of the experience of history is becoming increasingly complex. Its liberation from a fixed trajectory provides vitality and has the potential to uncover new ecologies and pluralities, acknowledging what Amelia Groom has called its "multiple, interwoven temporalities."⁵⁵⁰ Groom summarises that artists' "new engagements with the remnants of previous times mark a thickening of the present" rather than "a winking postmodern pastiche of appropriated styles, or an earnest, nostalgic immersion in a fixed, absent past."⁵⁵¹ In this context, thinking about *The Studio*, if I was to translate this way of framing the past it might have led me to engage in a more direct translation of the 1939 women artists' studio. While the intention and interest were not to reconstruct or replicate in detail aspects of the studio, creating objects that were reminiscent of it was still important. Details from the archival photographs that documented the space became referents. The cushions on the daybed in *The Studio* were not arranged to be displayed; they were arranged as if they could be used. A photograph of Frances Hodgkins in her studio (undated) also inspired several elements: round surfaces covered in fabrics for still-life objects and freestanding canvas screens.⁵⁵² The screens were used to structure the space and for display (see figs. 156 & 157).. These loose imitations and approximations situate the objects in a use space, rather than display use. The nods and connections to

549 Verwoert, "Living with Ghosts," 3–4.

550 Amelia Groom, "Introduction: We're Five Hundred Years Before the Man We Just Robbed Was Born," in *Time, Documents of Contemporary Art* (London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2013), 16.

551 Ibid.

552 Refer to *Slip twelve* for more detail.



Fig. 155. Edwards Arthur Phillips, photograph of Doris Lusk in the studio, c. 1940.

the archival traces of the past within my practice are sometimes nuanced to the point of being nearly invisible. These fabrications evoke and respond to a spirit of the time (as perceived by me). This is one of the ways invocations are occurring in the project. It is an embodied response and way of engaging with history, different from the more detached 1980s postmodern appropriation of history as identified by Groom and Verwoert.

Shifting through time: overlapping, interwoven temporalities

Verwoert compares our new experience of history by talking about the 1970s as "history at the height of the Cold War,"⁵⁵³ and time as constructed by modernity as a "linear and unified timeline of steady progress."⁵⁵⁴ He asserts that, today,

the standstill of the temporal axis has sprung up again...not one of them, but a whole series of temporal axes that cross the axis of global space at irregular intervals. Historical time is again of the essence...a multitude of competing and overlapping temporalities.⁵⁵⁵

553 Verwoert, "Living with Ghosts," 2.

554 Ibid.

555 Ibid.



Figs. 156, 157. *The Studio*, (installation views), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Photographs by Justin Spiers.

A photograph jumps out of an email I receive from Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi advertising an event titled “Re-writing Frances Hodgkins.” My supervisor Chris also sends it to me, and we have the following exchange:

Chris: I was taken by the fabric over the round table to the right, dropping to the floor, I think in the shadows. It looks quite ‘contemporary’ with its diagonal linear design. There’s also the pot plant and perhaps a ceramic plate leaning against the wall. I guess behind her is some kind of ad hoc screen, perhaps stretched with fabric; the edges seem to indicate that. The plaster cast is interesting too. What do you think is in the background to the left? Some kind of dark grey/black hanging in the space? What about large textile dividers that could be stretched across the space...?⁵⁵⁶

Julia: Thank you for sending this. I spied the same things as you, and got similar ideas. I’m thinking round tables with my own textiles (printed on linen in the Textile Design Lab) draped over, would be interesting for the still-life set-ups, ceramic objects on top. I like your idea of the ad hoc screens stretched with fabric and possible textile dividers.⁵⁵⁷



Photograph of Frances Hodgkins, c. 1905, Alexander Turnbull Library.

I am also interested in the description of the event, “Rewriting Frances Hodgkins.” Sounds like they held workshops with emerging writers, “revisiting the literature on Frances Hodgkins to explore and unpack different approaches to the artist and her work.” I wonder about these pieces. It says they wanted to “provide emerging art writers with tools to develop responses to the artist and her work, and to use this reflexively to understand their own practices.”⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁶ Email exchange with my supervisor Christopher Braddock, November 2021.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Email, “Re-writing Frances Hodgkins: A Forum at the Adam Art Gallery,” Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi, 18 November 2020.

My research considers this fragmentation and temporal overlap. The interplay between my work and that of the artists or artworks I am exploring seems to personify the workings of a porous archeology and a transmission of affect. In a vitrine installation in 2015 that dealt with *The Group Show* catalogues, I physically layered my reproduced, fabricated objects (ceramic tiles, follies and small objects) over the printed-matter sources and traces that they referred to and had connections with. The architecture of the vitrine enabled this arrangement, as it housed two glass shelves. Through this process of arrangement, I explored the design, layout, typography and hierarchies of these catalogues. The fabricated objects created new relationships and nuances, and fragmented the hierarchies between the applied art and other categories. In this transparent layering system, the spectator could view how the fragments intersected and interacted: conflating a present and contemporary appreciation of a historical movement in design and thinking in the plastic arts with historical archives. This approach addresses questions about the consistency and experience of time, such as its feeling of elasticity over linearity. Are we able to perceive temporal layers simultaneously? Writer and artist A. D. Schierning observed in writing about *The Group: homewares* (2016) that “when delving into the catalogues of The Group exhibitions some forty years later the lens by which the archive is being looked at has shifted through time.”⁵⁵⁹ This presentation proposed an alternative reading and remembering from a standpoint in the present. Schierning argues this view created a new reality: “one that hints at a proposed applied/fine art utopia”⁵⁶⁰ where the source inspirations (the documents, design, typography and the art objects they recorded) all sit on an equal playing field for consideration. The reworkings of fragments and visual records from the various art histories occupy an in-between space. In this liminal realm, a chronological sense of the present is suspended and replaced with a temporality that is other than chronological time. The position of the research objects is not as ‘originals,’ just as none of the fabricated and reproduced objects can be deemed ‘new’ objects or be read as any kind of primary documentation. I understand in this moment that I am bringing forth qualitative aspects of other sources’ times into the now. Fragments and traces of lives are drawn and inhabited again, and this time around it is me, a ‘future’ artist, doing the shaping.

⁵⁵⁹ A. D. Schierning, “To Be of Use,” essay produced for take-away poster publication for *The Group: homewares*, Objectspace, Auckland, January 30 – February 27, 2016.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.



Fig. 159. *The Group catalogues*, (detail), 2015. Test installation, Auckland University of Technology.

Feminist scholar Julia Kristeva also considered non-linear temporalities in her influential essay *Women's Time*, which was written in 1979. She wrote of three temporal modes: cyclical, monumental and linear. The first two, she argues, are gendered feminine, while linear time is gendered masculine, constructed as an unfolding time of progress, development, improvement. Discussing Kristeva's theories, feminist art historian Griselda Pollock writes that “women's time operates *beside* and *beneath* the linear, narrative time of nations, politics and history into which women have struggled...to intervene in.”⁵⁶¹ For Claire Colebrook, writing in 2009, Kristeva's “women's time” is significant for feminist work of retrieval,⁵⁶² because it “functions as a potentiality for a break with sequence, series and the progress of a self-developing subject in favour of a creative event that is nevertheless inflected by the past.”⁵⁶³ Feminist art historian Giovanna Zapperi explores the notion of a feminist historian, and how ‘they’ might operate. This idea offers a strategy for investigating cultural histories that might have been marginalised, and

⁵⁶¹ Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum*, 145.

⁵⁶² In “Stratigraphic Time, Women's Time” (reference below) Claire Colebrook writes: “A great deal of feminist work of retrieval, which looks to a past of artists and philosophers not realised (or what Virginia Woolf referred to as ‘Shakespeare's sister’), has suggested that one line of progressive and unfolding time precludes recognition of those who have offered other models of selfhood than that of rationally self-constituting man.” Colebrook goes on to suggest: “Perhaps there are more accommodating and other-directed forms of reason or ideals of the self that emphasise the passions and relations to others. To adopt such a project of revision, which looks back to the past in order to redefine who we are, would neither be a denial of historicism nor a fall into historical relativism.”

⁵⁶³ Claire Colebrook, “Stratigraphic Time, Women's Time,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 24, no. 59 (2009): 15.

is highly relevant to my research. Extending the theory of classical historian Nicole Loraux, Zapperi constructs a practice that embodies an anachronical feminist temporality. This is one that makes

productive the clash between the present, which always orients the gaze of the historian, and the past, which can open new perspectives on the present. Both the present and the past are thus held in suspension. Fractures and discontinuities (often erased by historiography, but constitutive of historical temporality) come to the fore, and new meanings become visible.⁵⁶⁴

In addition to *beside* and *beneath*, women's time can also operate *ahead*. As Elizabeth Grosz argues in her essay "Histories of a Feminist Future", the task of the feminist historian involves the "linking of the past and present to a possible future."⁵⁶⁵ As such, feminist histories play around with chronological time, interweaving the past, present and future and creating counter-canon. As I unearth archives and histories about women practitioners, this project avoids chronological historical timelines in favour of these feminist-imagined temporalities. Florence Weir is presented alongside a range of historical women: Florence Akins, Ngaio Marsh and the women painters of the 1939 Dunedin studio: Doris Lusk, Mollie Lawn and Anne Hamblett. Grosz writes that the past of a feminist historian is a "past no longer understood as inert or given" and this position "may help engender a productive future, a future beyond patriarchy."⁵⁶⁶ My imagined history shifts time, *beside*, *beneath*, *ahead*, to enliven the canonical. Florence Weir and her associated histories are presented both in the *now* and *then*. As Grosz continues, "the past always and essentially gives rise to multiple histories, histories undertaken from different perspectives of the present."⁵⁶⁷ In this way, my project is exploring many times at once. Approaching my installations with Giovanna Zapperi's 'liminal space' and feminist temporalities (Grosz, Zapperi, Kristeva, Pollock) in mind, I seek to suspend objects, documents and artefacts. This suspension of time relates to how this project and the installations employ a temporality that is other than chronological time. Imagined history shifts time in order to expand possibilities and outcomes. *The Studio* installation overlapped and scrambled timelines and attempted to create temporal cohabitation.

⁵⁶⁴ Zapperi, "Woman's Reappearance," 26.

⁵⁶⁵ Elizabeth Grosz, "Histories of a Feminist Future", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* vol. 25, no. 4, (The University of Chicago, 2000): 1018.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid, 1020.

As a portal into a microcosm of national art history, the shared art studio was home to Lusk, Hamblett and Lawn, supporting their work, hosting their contemporaries from a thriving art community, and providing exhibition and working space. I used *The Studio* to consider the 'group studio' as a site of practice, social connection and support, extending the project context by imagining Florence Weir's possible interactions in this environment. Within the exhibition framework, I negotiated a position for Weir, her imagined work and words inserted alongside those of Lusk, Hamblett and Lawn. To further collapse the margin between past and present, I drew in works by contemporary artists to explore the possible impacts and influences of a collective environment. In her 1992 essay, "Painting, Feminism, History," Pollock suggests that modernism privileged "the studio as *the* discrete space where art is made,"⁵⁶⁸ i.e., seeing it as the primary space of creation and creativity. This position relegates the "gallery or exhibition, journal or art lecture to a subsidiary role of circulation and consumption, an act of interpretation or use coming after the singular creative event."⁵⁶⁹ Pollock argues that, in direct opposition to this, materialist feminism suggests that the studio, the gallery, the exhibition catalogue, and so on, are not separate or discrete. This perspective rehabilitates them all as "interdependent moments in the cultural circuit of capitalist production and consumption."⁵⁷⁰ Pollock argues that the

historical and materialist thesis challenged affirmative and expressive theories of art by insisting that the materials for art are social, part of socially and historically determined signifying systems. Art is not the privatised space of self-generated significance; it is a form of textual politics. Textual practice is, furthermore, institutionally constituted.⁵⁷¹

The Studio installation considered this shift in representation of the artist's studio, by extending its meaning and significance as a site for connection and peer support. Alongside this focus, the installation paid attention to the social lives of artists, both present and past, and of relationships within my own practice. The past studio was reimaged in the present through lived experience, and the loaned, historical works were realised anew next to contemporary counterparts. This is relevant to Victoria Horne's idea of

⁵⁶⁸ Griselda Pollock, "Painting, Feminism, History," in *Destabilising Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, ed. Michèle Barrett and Anne Phillips (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1992), 146.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

“a feminist re-visioning strategy that establishes a body of visual research that treats the art historical canon as a material to be renewed within, and in relation to, the present.”⁵⁷² As a feminist art-historical intervention, the ‘Studio’ from the past became present ‘Exhibition/Gallery.’ Overlapped and conflated like this, aspects of the historical venue and the exhibition shared space and informed each other.

The shared space of the studio

Intermingling with and alongside remade Florence Weir textile designs and my selection of historical artworks by Anne Hamblett, Mollie Lawn, Doris Lusk and Max Walker, were works by five contemporary Aotearoa practitioners. Four works were produced under invitation or through a commission, and a series of ceramic fruit objects by Erica van Zon was selected from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery collection. These objects acted as still-life props, in conversation with Mollie Lawn’s still-life painting of fruit and vessels. I sent images of the historical paintings to Aotearoa painter Kirstin Carlin and invited her to consider the way the women painted from vessels, bowls, vases, cut flowers and fruit brought into their shared space. Carlin made a new work for the exhibition that referenced both the historical and contemporary artists involved. Writing about her work for the wall label, she said:

Rather than set up a still life myself, I decided to create a ‘new bouquet’ by taking the flowers from different paintings in the exhibition. I was drawn to Doris’s tulips and pink roses and Anne’s poppies. There is a hint of Doris’s lavender and the leaves from Anne’s blossoms (would these flowers actually bloom at the same time?). Continuing the conversation with other works in the exhibition, I have included a pear and flatto peaches in reference to Erica’s small sculptures and the fruit in Mollie’s watercolour, with the lines on the vase taken from Richard’s op-shop vase.⁵⁷³

In this way, Carlin’s painting combine various times, and perhaps, as she points out, even various seasons. Photographer Richard Orjis closely examined the floral arrangements, and created a loose still-life picked from his own studio garden, an environment he uses for social, leisure and reflection

⁵⁷² Victoria Horne, “Kate Davis: Re-visioning Art History After Modernism and Postmodernism,” *Feminist Review* 110 (2015): 52.

⁵⁷³ Wall label developed for Kirstin Carlin’s *New Bouquet*, 2021, exhibited in *The Studio*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2021



Fig. 160. *The Studio*, (installation view), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Photography by Justin Spiers.

Fig. 161. Richard Orjis, *Still Life (from the studio garden)*, 2021. Ink on canvas. Courtesy of the artist. Exhibited in *The Studio*.



Fig. 162. Kirstin Carlin, *New Bouquet (after Anne and Doris)*, 2021. Oil on aluminium panel. Courtesy of the artist and Melanie Roger Gallery. Exhibited in *The Studio*.



Fig. 163. Julia Holden, *Portrait of Florence Weir in her Studio*, 2021. Acrylic on board. Courtesy of the artist. Exhibited in *The Studio*.

time, which are all part of his daily practice. He learned that Anne Hamblett had arranged flowers for her church, and like Richard did for this work, she translated these skills with flora into her art practice, creating home-picked arrangements for works such as the painting titled *Spring Blossom* (1939). These gestures open out the archive into a space and time continuum. In “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,” Derrida asserts that the archive is neither static nor closed, and calls for a response in the future. He writes that the question of the archive is a “question of the future, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow,”⁵⁷⁴ which affirms this approach of drawing contemporary artists in to the projects. Weir is located between historical and contemporary art models and is in dialogue with both.

The large portrait of Florence Weir by Aotearoa painter Julia Holden was part-commission, part-invitation and part-collaboration. It was devised primarily through conversations over the phone and sharing images of historical

574 Derrida, “Archive Fever,” 27



Fig. 164. Julia Holden, *Portrait of Betty Curnow (Sue Upritchard after Louise Henderson)*, 2015. Archival pigment print. Courtesy of the artist.

portraits,⁵⁷⁵ possible costumes and hairstyles. It is an imagined portrait of a woman artist seated in her studio, with Arts & Crafts props and details. Behind Florence are watercolours and props I have made for other projects. She is also holding a woven textile produced by a student of Florence Akins in the 1970s, the subject of my earlier exhibition, *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, at Ilam Campus Gallery. As such, the portrait connects various times, and also movements and histories, within my own practice. *Portrait of Florence Weir in Her Studio* (2021) also connected to Holden’s *I’m Your Fan* (2016), a series within Julia Holden’s practice. For this series of performance portraits, she worked with local Ōtautahi-based artists, and painted and photographed them referencing existing portraits and artists. For example, Holden painted directly onto the skin and clothing of artist Sue Upritchard to recreate Louise Henderson’s *Portrait of Betty Curnow*. For Holden, the *I’m Your Fan* series considered the artist self in relation to an artist’s primary influence or artistic hero. She writes of the project:

575 During the portrait development, I sent Holden a mood-board document including, amongst others, the following portraits: *Untitled (Imaginary portrait on cloth)* by Leo Bensemann (undated), *Mollie Lawn* by Max Walker (c. 1940) and *Portrait of Anna McLeod* by Doris Lusk (1940).

The photographic works serve to highlight connections between artists and their mentors past and present, complimenting and paying homage to the ways in which we, as artists, connect across time, engaged in dynamic and ongoing visual conversations.⁵⁷⁶

In this way, her portrait of Florence Weir was another ‘fan’ work, my own artistic hero, albeit a fictional one, imaged between Julia Holden and myself.

The inclusion of Tatyanna Meharry, Doris Lusk’s granddaughter, was another way of exploring genealogies and influence across time, as connected to memory. As previously discussed, Meharry is a ceramicist, and her beaded work took colour cues from Lusk’s *Mixed Flowers*. The object also embodied memories of her grandmother’s collection of long strings of beads and the ceramic fragments she remembered from childhood visits to Lusk’s studio—traces of her practice that littered every surface. It could be argued that the exhibition becomes an important process and place for encounter and exchange between artists, particularly for those who work in solo studios. This reiterates Pollock’s ideas that the social and material conditions of art extend beyond a concept of the studio as the primary and private space of creativity. As a trans-generational exhibition, *The Studio* fostered relationships between various people and periods, and proposed a way in which an art-historical moment might be considered from artist perspectives in the present.

Recirculated and reassembled in the present

In an orange my mother was eating, Aotearoa artist Louise Menzies’ Frances Hodgkins residency exhibition installed at Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena in February 2019, referenced and engaged with undervalued or overlooked projects and works by three women artists. Menzies worked with archival matter relating to Joanna Margaret Paul, M. C. Richards and Frances Hodgkins. These included extended correspondence about the distribution of a children’s book by Paul, an original textile design in gouache from 1925 by Hodgkins, and a handwritten poster advertising an exhibition in 1958 by Richards. The exhibition made use of this historical material in nuanced ways. Menzies created Risograph print sets comprising 24 sheets of her hand-made paper. The prints used pages from Paul’s children’s book, *The Lone Goose*, interspersed with a cache of pointed letters and correspondence between the book’s publisher and distributor, illuminating a familiar

576 “I’m Your Fan,” Julia Holden, accessed November 30, 2020, <https://www.juliaholden.com/im-your-fan>



Fig. 165. Louise Menzies, *The Lone Goose*, (detail), 2019. Inkjet and risograph prints set in handmade paper. Photograph by Iain Frengley.

narrative of an artwork’s failure to succeed in the marketplace. As Ōtepoti-based Robyn Maree Pickens wrote for *The Pantograph Punch*: “Menzies’ interpolation of [this] correspondence with recreated pages from the book itself brings to light the difficulties attending a genre considered to be marginal.”⁵⁷⁷ Also in the exhibition were two chairs and a stool that Menzies reupholstered with a digitally adapted version of *Untitled (textile design no. 11)* (1925), an original textile design by Hodgkins in gouache. These objects were the property of the present-day Frances Hodgkins studio apartment residency that was established in her name, and which Menzies was working in at the time. The design, which Hodgkins would have originally made at the Calico Printers’ Association in 1925, comprises geometric shapes on a bright pink–red background. In this collaboration, Menzies applies Hodgkins’ design to three workaday chairs. For Pickens, this reflects that Menzies “is interested not so much in the historicity of Paul, Richards and Hodgkins, but in the ways in which their work lives on, and how it can be recirculated and reassembled in the present.”⁵⁷⁸ Pickens writes that these

retrievals and reinterpretations of Hodgkins’ textile design and Paul’s children’s book can be seen as both a (necessarily delimited) form of collaboration, and an attempt to compassionately and inventively recirculate the marginalised aspects of these two artists’ lesser known works.⁵⁷⁹

577 Pickens, “We are Recirculated Assemblages.”

578 Robyn Maree Pickens, “The Travelling Object,” *Art News New Zealand*, Winter 2019, 90.

579 Pickens, “We are Recirculated Assemblages.”



Fig. 166. Louise Menzies, *Untitled (textile design no. II)*, 1925, (installation view), 2018. Digital print on textile, Photograph by Iain Frengley.

Fig. 167. Frances Hodgkins, *Untitled (textile design no. II)*, c. 1925. Gouache on paper. 1998-0006-6. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Purchased 1998 with New Zealand Lottery Grants Board funds.

Fig. 168. Louise Menzies, *Untitled (textile design no. II)*, 1925, (detail), 2018. Digital print on textile, Photo by Iain Frengley.



I also see that these works emerge from an expanded temporal relationship; through the archival elements she deals with, Menzies gestures at and constructs alternative historical views and new meanings in the present, with questions for the future. In doing this, Menzies' makes claim for the value and importance of these overlooked histories, bringing them into the future through the revival of the archive and introductions to new contexts and audiences. For Grosz, this is why "feminist history is so crucial: not simply because it informs our present but more so because it enables other virtual futures to be conceived, other perspectives to be developed, than those that currently prevail."⁵⁸⁰

580 Grosz, "Histories of a Feminist Future", 1019.



Fig. 169. *The Studio*, (installation view), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Photograph by Justin Spiers.

Locating meaning, new engagements

Menzies' retrievals and the gestures she enacts through them relate to how I locate meaning in the present with materials from the past. In *The Studio*, I translated imagery from various still-life paintings by Hamblett and Lusk, and realised them anew in soft furnishings for the daybed. This object, titled *Impromptu-cushion-sofa*, was created in reference to black-and-white photographs of Doris Lusk seated on it, and a description of the sofa by art historian Peter Entwistle. By creating fabrics for the cushions from translations of their paintings, the women from the past and their experiences in the studio (chats over tea, sitting on the daybed) became embedded in a tactile present. The installation created potential for the imagery to have other applications and for the women's work to reach beyond this past time. These fabrics were accompanied by other cushions that used fabrics developed from Florence Weir designs. In the same way, Australian artist Diana Baker Smith's work *The Drama of Hands* (2021),⁵⁸¹ which was named after one of performance artist Philippa Cullen's

581 Baker Smith made this work with artist Samuel Hodge.



Fig. 170. Diana Baker Smith with Samuel Hodge, *The Drama of Hands*, 2021. Pigment print on cotton rag paper. Courtesy of the artists.

handwritten notes, enacts a new engagement through the retrieval of an archival object. During her research into Cullen at the National Library of Australia, Canberra, Baker Smith found an out-of-focus photograph of Cullen's *24 Hour Concert* (1974). Curator Bree Richards describes the photograph: "The photograph shows Cullen—or her faded, fuzzy approximation—as she glides out of frame at the Art Gallery of NSW, towards the end of the event. Cullen's presence is elusive, her dancerly posture almost spectral."⁵⁸² Baker Smith's work is an image of herself holding another picture of her own hands clasping the archival photograph that documents the performance. This duplication acts to reproduce and reiterate this specific moment in Baker Smith's research. As Richards writes:

The doubling effect of hands holding a picture of hands holding a photograph, might, in a way, be considered an enactment of Cullen's score *The Drama of Hands*. It is also a way to 'touch' history, drawing lines of connection between then and now. The lived and the archived interact here through many forms of again-ness: what the photograph of a single moment from *24 Hour Concert* might have meant in relation to its specific context in 1974, and what it might mean for us, in the present.⁵⁸³

These retrievals of imagery and their reassembly in the present are

582 Richards, "Turning and Returning: Diana Baker Smith and Philippa Cullen's 24 Hour Concert."

583 Ibid.

examples of what Karlholm terms "time layers" and what Groom calls "new engagements with the remnants of previous times."⁵⁸⁴ These various engagements (mine in *The Studio*, Menzies' and Baker Smith's) employ women's time, time that runs *beside* the normative, linear time that Kristeva wanted to reject through a recuperation of alternative temporal approaches. This type of time is immeasurable, fluid and interwoven, it operates beside, with company, next to, and in dialogue with other times.

History Ghosts: returns from the past, a porous present, neither here nor there

Reinforcing the lost or limited art-historical recognition that was discussed in Chapters One and Two, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki curator Julia Waite's current research for a major exhibition scheduled for 2023 focuses on New Zealand women artists abroad in the 1930s and 1940s. Artists who she says have not been accounted for in what she characterises as narrow art histories. She argues that many of these artists are *ghosts* in New Zealand cultural history. In her 2019 Julie King Memorial lecture, Waite went on to say: "They were not only physically exiled through years of living abroad, but historically exiled from nationalist art histories."⁵⁸⁵ Here, her use of the term 'ghost' conveys diminished presence, as in a shadow or semblance, a trace, or a remote possibility. The figure of Florence Weir could be understood in the same context and thought of as a metaphorical ghost. Ghosts not only provide a metaphor to understand our relationship with suppressed or overlooked histories, but they also suggest methods for practices of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Missing from art-historical records, Florence's shadow and trace still flickers. I am searching for her possibility in untold histories. In Ken McMullen's 1983 film *Ghost Dance*, French linguistic philosopher Jacques Derrida plays himself in several improvised sequences. The film is a complex examination of our conceptions of ghosts, the past and memory, following the wanderings and thoughts of two women through Paris and London. In one sequence, Derrida narrates over images of a city skyline:

To be haunted by a ghost...is to remember something you've never lived through. For memory is the past that has never taken the form of the present.⁵⁸⁶

584 Groom, "Introduction: We're Five Hundred Years Before the Man We Just Robbed Was Born," 16.

585 Waite, lecture notes, "Exiles and Expatriates."

586 Dialogue extract from Ken McMullen's 1983 film *Ghost Dance*.

My practice is a remembering of Florence, a life from the past that never took form in the present. Derrida later coined the term ‘hauntology’ (a portmanteau of haunting and ontology) in his 1993 book *Specters of Marx*, a text often recognised as beginning the late-twentieth-century spectral turn and a source for speculations about queer spectrality, ghosts and hauntings. This concept of hauntology refers to a situation in which the return or persistence of elements from the past, as in the manner of a ghost, has effects in the present. English academic Colin Davis argues that Derrida’s rehabilitation of ghosts has proved to be highly productive, “replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive.”⁵⁸⁷ Extending this connection of the ghost to the temporal, American literary critic Fredric Jameson, writing on spectrality, emphasises that it is not about believing in ghosts, but the acknowledgment that “the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances betray us.”⁵⁸⁸ For Carla Freccero in *Queer/Early/Modern*, “queer spectrality” is a relationship to the past that accounts for “the affective force of the past in the present, of a desire issuing from another time and placing a demand on the present.”⁵⁸⁹ This view takes on a reciprocal component: we in the present have an obligation to the past. This is why we might be *haunted* by others who are located in different times. This relates also to the way in which Eva Hoffman conceives of memory, writing that it “may also be said that the reach of subjectivity—as of cognition—sometimes extends itself beyond the boundaries of our own lifetime, through the kind of ‘remembering’ that happens across generations and individual psyches.”⁵⁹⁰

Verwoert’s use of Derridian spectral notions in his 2007 essay, mentioned previously, has attached importance to “living with ghosts” as a strategy in contemporary visual arts. As Verwoert, citing Derrida, writes “the task is to learn to live with ghosts”⁵⁹¹ and this means to learn “how to let them speak or how to give them back speech”⁵⁹² by approaching them in a determined way that still remains undetermined enough to allow them to present themselves. In this examination of appropriation in the visual arts since the 1980s,

587 Colin Davis, “Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms,” *French Studies* 59, no. 3 (2005): 373.

588 Fredric Jameson, “Marx’s Purloined Letter”, in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida’s ‘Spectres de Marx’*, ed. by Michael Sprinker. London, New York: Verso, 1999) 39, quoted in Davis, “Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms,” 373.

589 Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 163–64.

590 Hoffman, *Time*, 108.

591 Verwoert, “Living with Ghosts,” 7.

592 Ibid.

I’m really interested in these thoughts by Victoria Horne:

Unlike the cool, scientific analyses of positivist art history, or the heightened romance associated with *mal d’archive*, Steedman introduces her readers to the exquisitely mundane realities of archival research. These might encompass the itchy, uncomfortable beds of cheap summer accommodation, the overly air-conditioned library atmosphere, and the gnawing anxiety of leaving something important unread. Such intimate moments are rarely acknowledged, let alone celebrated, in sentimentalised accounts of research and a comparable sense of the overlooked.⁵⁹³

She’s referring to *Dust*, a book by social historian Carolyn Steedman. Where does my research sit on this sliding scale: cool and scientific (definitely not), feverish romance (sometimes) or mundane realities (yes)?

It makes me think of my time in the Macmillan Brown Library going through the Florence Akins files. It was very quiet. I was in a narrow side room, with glass windows that looked out to the reading areas. A couple of researchers sat, and from time to time they watched me, my movements across the room catching their eyes. The materials were waiting for me when I arrived. Stacked in various large cardboard boxes, envelopes and sleeves in grey, or green. I wondered who made them. Some bright blue art-handling gloves were left for me. I spent most of a morning looking through them, taking pictures on my phone. I had three hours set aside and I did feel anxiety that I might miss something. Unlike writers or novelists going through diaries or letters to find a ‘voice’, that morning I was going through design notes, instructions and teaching papers:

Embroidery note, FD1994: Lines Drawn Corner to Corner.

I start slowly at 9am. There are pages and pages. Turning them over and over, I make a pile in reverse. I do not spend much time with each one. I am worried that I might miss something, working at this pace. But I trust my eye will notice the interesting bits.

VANDYKE or PYRAMID Border: is satin stitch taken over two, three or four threads and worked in groups of five stitches, first widthways, then lengthways.

These notes are hardly exciting, but I’m enjoying the visual diagrams and shapes. It’s 11.20pm now, I have to work faster. Then I find a workbook full of weaving samples, threads, things to touch. Here is a little bit of heart flutter. A matted pile of threads falls out of one folder and I can’t see where it came from. I had better tell someone.

UC-MBL-1350, UC Art Collection. Audrey Pearl Black, Sampler, c 1940, silk and cotton embroidery on linen.

It is an impressive display of stitched patterns and shapes. She was a student of Akins. Parts of it remind me of my own Bauhaus inspired samples. Maybe I could hang these together on the wall? I’ll have to leave at 12.15pm, or else I’ll be late for picking up Felix from preschool. It’s now 12.05. There is another box waiting and I haven’t finished with this one.

Akins’ Colour Wheel (ink and wool fabric on folded card UC-MBL-1808), a teaching resource, the most vivid moment. 12.08pm. On the left, is a colour wheel of hand-dyed wools with a horizontal strip of the same colours repeated below. Rich colours slid out of its grey envelope. And on the right, the colours are handwritten around another ‘wheel’ marked with red lines: Cyan Blue, Violet, Crimson, Ultramarine, Yellow Green. Akins had a lovely hand.

I quickly photograph it, and move on to the last box.

593 Victoria Horne, “The Weight of History,” Footnoting the Archive 37, *Map Magazine* (July 2016), <https://mapmagazine.co.uk/weight-history>

Verwoert extends this ethic for contemporary artists evoking ‘ghosts.’ Rather than being possessive, he claims evocation calls for “performing the unresolved by staging objects, images or allegories that invoke the ghosts of unclosed histories in a way that allows them to appear as ghosts and reveal the nature of the ambiguous presence.”⁵⁹⁴ For Verwoert, how the “practicalities of the performance of evocations”⁵⁹⁵ are then actually realised is a question of practice.

The assembling of Florence Weir from archival fragments gives over to this ambiguity Verwoert writes about. Her figure eschews a priority of presence, inhabiting a liminal space that reflects Jameson’s porous, unstable idea of the present. Her presence is constructed as neither here nor there (“neither present, nor absent, neither dead nor alive”⁵⁹⁶), as she crosses temporalities and destabilises historical constructs. For me, she exists in an atemporality in which both her presence/trace and previous experiences are displaced and deferred by the various overlapping experiences and multiple temporalities inherent in her construction. As mentioned in Chapter Two: *Power and Limits, Blind Spots and Biases*, Florence Weir’s practice timeline is deliberately inconsistent. There is a period when she seems to be involved in artistic communities both in London and the mainland of New Zealand. As a traveller through time, she can easily be in two places at once. This reflects *Ever Present Archiving’s* project of revising and extending the canon in a liberated zone where the timeline of art history is suspended or has even gone missing.⁵⁹⁷

These temporal approaches negotiate and draw attention to the gaps and potentially misleading qualities of archives. In her essay “Haunting and Taunting: Critical Tactics in a Minor Mode,” American art critic Abigail Solomon-Godeau addresses two different, yet equally effective, creative tactics employed by feminist artists tackling gender and representation in history. She writes that taunting is one that “operates on the level of public discourse, the already-known”⁵⁹⁸ in order to bring to light or present a political issue “usually in a satirical and more biting sense,”⁵⁹⁹ citing the art-activist collective the Guerrilla Girls as an example. She claims that “the more elusive

594 Ibid.

595 Ibid.

596 Ibid.

597 Verwoert writes in “Living with Ghosts: From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art,” that artist Cindy Sherman’s appropriations of imagery from Hollywood cinema “halt and arrest the motion of the moving pictures in isolated still images of female figures locked in a spatial *mise-en-scène* with the timeline gone missing,” 2.

598 Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Haunting and Taunting: Critical Tactics in a Minor Mode,” in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, ed. Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), Page?

599 Ibid.

concept of haunting turns on what is hidden, unsaid; it involves the presence in the present of the unredeemed past.”⁶⁰⁰ The projects surrounding Florence Weir are a type of haunting, reflecting what is not being said, what is not being shown, and in doing so, creates a sense of something missing or hidden. As an example of haunting as a creative tactic, Solomon-Godeau looks at American artist Zoe Leonard’s *The Fae Richards Archive*, discussed in Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications*, “which inherently refers to something that is no longer there but is still haunting the present, like a ghost that refuses to go away.”⁶⁰¹ This collaboration between photographer Zoe Leonard and filmmaker Cheryl Dunye created a photographic archive of a fictional African American woman for the film *The Watermelon Woman* (1996). In the work, the missing and the unsaid, as introduced by Solomon-Godeau, are presented as a political issue. In this instance, for queer writer Ann Cvetkovich,

the need to invent the archive when one doesn’t exist acknowledges that the archive is missing...and what survives in its place is not representation as positive image but representation as a complex history of stereotypes and partial and contaminated documents and traces.⁶⁰²

Florence Weir might relate to Waite’s idea of exile from the narrative and Solomon-Godeau’s notion of a “past that refuses to be done with, shriven, surmounted.”⁶⁰³ Zapperi writes that haunting is an experience in which “memory, subjectivity and social life are deeply entwined.”⁶⁰⁴ Sociology scholar Avery Gordon has also noted this sociality, arguing that haunting has a relationship with knowledge:

The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition.⁶⁰⁵

600 Ibid.

601 Zapperi, “Woman’s Reappearance,” 33.

602 Cvetkovich, “Queer Archival Futures.”

603 Solomon-Godeau, “Haunting and taunting,” Page?

604 Zapperi, “Woman’s Reappearance,” 33.

605 Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.

Here, Gordon is thinking about haunting as a sort of affective-based knowledge producer. Recalling both Hoffman’s and Freccero’s notions of memory and queer spectrality, Florence Weir’s subjectivity reaches beyond her personhood, her own lifetime, via me in my ‘remembering’ of her. She is also a social figure, and these implications have been discussed in Chapter Five: *Friendships and Conversation*. In Sleigh’s recent article “Te Hikōi Toi: Hauntings Revealing Female Agency,” she visits the exhibition by Swedish artist and mystic Hilma af Klint (1862–1944) showing at City Gallery Wellington (4 December 2021 – 27 March 2022). Klint met with female friends in a spiritualist group called The Five, and together they held meditation sessions and conducted séances. In 1906, af Klint accepted a commission from a female spirit guide named Amaliel, a direction to create *Paintings for the Temple*, a huge body of work depicting the spiritual realm. Reflecting on the suppression and relegation to the margins of female creativity in Western culture, Sleigh thinks about this kind of haunting as a particular kind of influence:

Anyone who has researched women in written records will know how tissue-thin the information is, how fleeting, how buried under the activities and voices of men. Art historians write about “influence”—such-and-such artist is influenced by another. But haunting is influence of another order. To be haunted by something means it guides you, pushes you, but it is partial and ephemeral, on the edge of your vision.⁶⁰⁶

This vast spiritual commission saw af Klint produce 193 works over nine years, transmitting and interpreting messages and images for humanity that Amaliel communicated to her. Af Klint later insisted that her work—“unheralded and virtually unseen in its own time—was to be hidden away for twenty years after her death.”⁶⁰⁷ She wanted it viewed by a more receptive future audience. The paintings known as *The Ten Largest* are of a monumental scale (fig. 175) which beg questions about how they were made, stored away, and even “how any of this was possible in a cultural context that severely restricted the creative possibilities for women artists.”⁶⁰⁸ Their very existence also seems to challenge firmly rooted assumptions about the paintings of Jackson Pollock, his “supposedly revolutionary act of taking his painting off the easel and

606 Thomasin Sleigh, “Te Hikōi Toi: Hauntings Revealing Female Agency,” *The Dominion Post*, December 4, 2021.

607 Aaron Lister, “Ummu: Hilma af Klint Here and Now,” *Art News New Zealand*, Winter 2021, <https://www.artnews.co.nz/feature-winter-2021/>

608 Ibid.



Fig. 171. Hilma af Klint, *Altarpiece, No. 1*, 1915. Oil on gold on canvas. Image courtesy of The Hilma af Klint Foundation.

Fig. 172. Hilma af Klint, pictured in her studio, circa 1885. Image courtesy of The Hilma af Klint Foundation.

Fig. 173. Hilma af Klint: *The Secret Paintings*, City Gallery Wellington, 2021. Image courtesy of City Gallery Wellington and The Hilma af Klint Foundation.

working in and on it on the floor—almost fifty years later.”⁶⁰⁹ In this way, and because of their delayed reception, af Klint challenges traditional art-historical agendas and structures that strive to place and position her in a linear narrative. Sleight writes:

There is a danger, I think, in reducing her to the tagline of the “first abstract painter”—that this will reinscribe the plodding Western modernist agenda of being the first, the “major innovator.” How boring. What af Klint’s spiralling, striving, and questioning paintings propose is that there are multiple and overlapping versions of abstraction, of knowledge, and ways to lead a collaborative creative life.

This speaks to the feminist counter-cans discussed earlier in this chapter and also reiterates Karlholm’s belief that the dominant evolutionary narratives in art history are limiting. Within this context, it is also interesting to remember the slideshow presentation of abstract artworks in Martinis Roe’s *non-writing histories* (2012), which questioned the dominant discourse around the development of abstraction. In her own words, Martinis Roe said she aimed to “shift the potential readings of, for example, Mark Rothko’s and Jackson Pollock’s works towards other histories of abstraction.”⁶¹⁰ This is relevant to the discussion around af Klint’s position in the history of early abstraction. As Sleight writes:

af Klint was haunted. And she, in turn, haunts. In doing so she messes with the art historical convention that maps chronological lines of influence, as well as many other aspects of our understanding of Western painting. And so much the better.⁶¹¹

Florence Weir also ‘messes’ with these limiting chronological lines. As already outlined, her timeline is inconsistent and her outputs reflect various overlapping influences and multiple temporalities. And like Amaliel, af Klint’s artistic guide from a different realm, I enable Florence to present herself within my current practice. Also relevant here is the discussion about Menzies’ approach to collaboration with artists who are no longer alive. As already cited in Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications*, Pickens says about Menzies’ approach: “She herself is travelling with her subjects, in a mode of

609 Ibid.

610 Email from Roe to Braddock, included in footnote 36 in Braddock’s “Contagious Redundancy,” 195.

611 Thomasin Sleight, “Te Hikōi Toi.”

inhabiting and being inhabited.”⁶¹² Just as Amaliel inhabited Hilma af Klint, Menzies’ travelling with past artists is a *mode of inhabiting*. It is interesting to note here that artist Emma Fitts views her garment tributes to her heroines from history (Spencer Bower, Tinsley, Krasner, Moss, Cade, Waring) as a kind of “flexible armour.”⁶¹³ These outer layers evoke the ‘spirit’ of the wearer who cannot be physically present. For example, oilskin is chosen as the fabric to evoke the robust, free-spirited character and outdoor life of Rowena Cade in Fitts’ 2014 work titled *Anorak for Rowena Cade*. This is another mode of inhabiting, transmitting or fabricating ‘past presences.’ Thinking about how the séance and the spirit world influenced af Klint is reminiscent of Derrida’s notion of hauntology, a situation in which the return of elements from the past has effects in the present. Af Klint’s spiritualist group is an example of female friends learning to live with the ghosts and spirits of unclosed histories, reflecting Verwoert’s discussion on how we might speak with them. This question of how to give back speech to female voices from the past is central to this project. Allowing these presences and voices to present themselves is a platform for agency with the past.

In this way, the ongoing fabrication of Florence Weir positioned within my subjective research methods creates a ghost-artist and artistic guide who reappears and visits the present. Part of what I am doing in this project is giving voice; an act of retelling.⁶¹⁴ My artist relationship to Florence Weir is different from the concept of a ghost-writer, an uncredited biographer who produces an autobiography for someone else. Instead, I am the ghost-maker, sitting down to do the work, attempting to embody and register the creative voice and output of Florence Weir, and to tell her story without possessing it. I am not concealed, unlike the autobiographical ghost-writers whose identities are kept secret. This is more than autobiography and she is not a pseudonym. I am mentioned in material lines in artwork labels (see Appendix Eight), and my role as the exhibition facilitator is often visible. Florence Weir’s existence as a possibility haunts me and the histories I research. The histories I choose to investigate are often partial and incomplete, where there is room for her to hover, intersect and comingle. And because I often research groups of artists, or movements, I think there is space for another member or figure.

612 Pickens, “The Travelling Object,” 90.

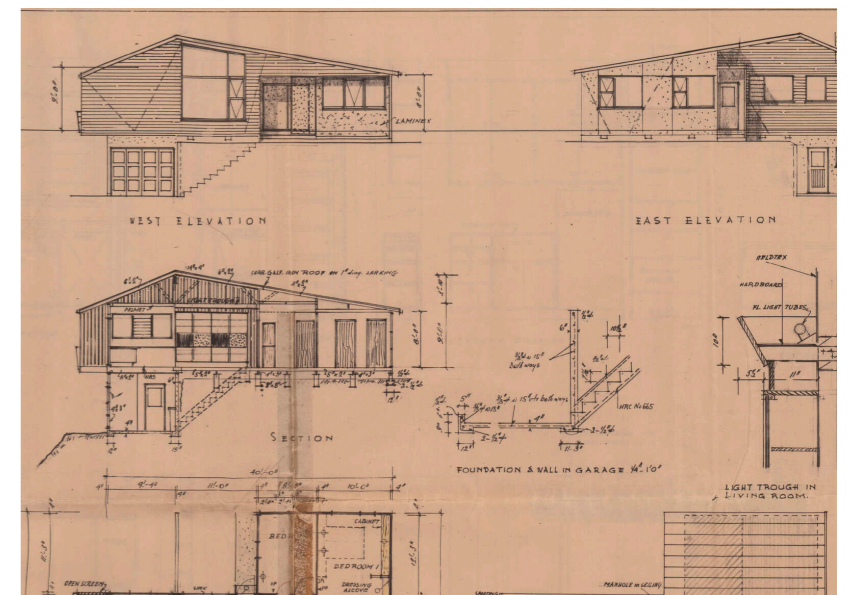
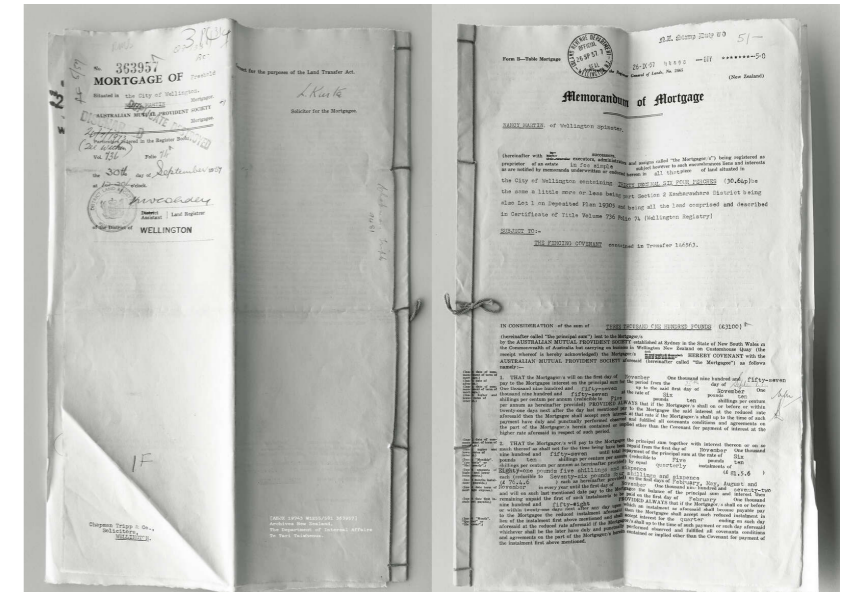
613 Emma Fitts quoted in Lloyd, “An Art of Unbounded Storytelling,” 62.

614 Book reviewer Bert Wright wrote that *A Ghost in the Throat*, a book by essayist and poet Doireann Ní Ghríofa, “is an extraordinary feat of ventriloquism”. Ní Ghríofa explores the ways in which a life can be changed in response to the discovery of another, in this case eighteenth-century Irish poet Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/25/books/review-ghost-in-throat-doireann-ni-ghriofa.html>



Pōneke artist Ann Shelton commissioned a piece of writing by Pip Adam for her project *House Work* (2015), discussed in Chapter Three: *Fiction with Footnotes, a Creative Art History* with regards to a “real time, synchronous ekphrasis,”⁶¹⁵ where a physical site is explored across various times. Nancy Martin was the first single woman in Wellington to receive a mortgage to build her own home, which was completed in 1957. Shelton invited her audience on a tour of the home, which was emptied of Shelton’s possessions and furniture, apart from her collection of art. The audience was played an audio recording of a story being read out loud. *Making Herself at Home*, written by Adam, told the story of another woman, Abigail, who had recently separated from her husband. Feeling lost and depressed, she wanders through the bush and finds an empty modernist house. She enters, looks around and reads about Martin on a laptop she finds there. The story follows a contemporary character called Abigail, but it works to draw the “unclosed”⁶¹⁶ history of Nancy, the original owner of the house, into the present, and exposes gender issues that still exist today. Through these figures and this evocation, various times are put in play and the house becomes what Verwoert terms a “temporally layered”⁶¹⁷ object. Sleight, who experienced the work, talks about the complex circularity at play: “Adam’s fictional character, Abigail, reads about real-life Nancy Martin, as part of a story which was read out loud literally inside

615 Sleight, “Every Story Tells a Picture.”
 616 Verwoert, “Living with Ghosts,” 3.
 617 Sleight, “Every Story Tells a Picture.”



Figs. 174 - 177. Ann Shelton, *A spoonful of sugar*, 2021. Artist book, perfect bound reprint. Rim Books Publishing. Text by Pip Adam. Design by Duncan Munro. Courtesy of the artist.

Shelton's artwork, her house, which was also Shelton's real home."⁶¹⁸ In creating *House Work*, Shelton decided that writing was a way to connect Martin's story and the history of her house. As she describes:

I settled on the idea of enlisting a ghost writer, not in the sense that her identity would be obscured but in the sense that I needed someone with the skill to weave together a life that is ghosted through my home and a piece of writing made sense on this level.⁶¹⁹

Operating in a similar way, the figure of Florence Weir and her various made-up relationships to historical artists, places and artworks produces a social life for these people (her peers and friends), narratives and objects. This manifestation recalls Gordon's and Zapperi's notions around haunting as a site of historical subjectivity. The production and fabrication of invented artistic personae and associated objects aims to develop alternative historiographies and stories that challenge dominant historical structures and fixations.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ Ann Shelton, "Artist's Note," in *A Spoonful of Sugar* (Auckland: Rim Books, 2015), unpaginated.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, *Temporality and Presence*, I have discussed the way expanding conceptions of time as fluid, porous and recurrent has the potential for reconfiguring the canon, and telling histories in novel ways. A feminist temporality critiques the dominant joined-up, linear historiography of art-historical modernism that has failed some artists and their work. A feminist art history, which avoids a linear and narrative-centric emphasis, can create counter-canon, new contexts and questions for the future. I have discussed how a photograph by Diana Baker Smith enacts a new engagement with the work of Phillipa Cullen through the retrieval of an archival object. Including contemporary practitioners in my installations opens up current perspectives and fosters new relationships between various people and periods, past and present. Through these kinds of gestures, I hope to reveal connections and overlapping influences that are not always visible in linear constructions of time. Extended notions of historical time also reveal how narratives are arranged and constructed. This chapter has discussed how artists and artworks might give back presence and voice to figures from the past. Using the concepts of beside, beneath and ahead, my art historical presentations break up linear sequencing and the notion of a solo "self-developing subject"⁶²⁰ to focus on histories of constellations, associations and relationships that have meaning in the present and possibilities for the future. Accordingly, I have looked at how my fabrications evoke and respond to a spirit of the time. Looking at Emma Fitts' fabric remnants, Louise Menzies' collaborations with artists from the past and the paintings of Hilma af Klint, the relationship of evocation and haunting to knowledge and influence is examined. Florence Weir's presence and spirit, as felt, inflected and developed alongside other artists and movements (both recorded and imagined), can be seen as a type of haunting or transmission of affect, one which produces a historical subjectivity.

⁶²⁰ Colebrook, "Stratigraphic Time, Women's Time," 15.



Conclusion

Figs. 178, 179. *The Studio*, (installation views), 2021.
Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Photograph by Justin Spiers.



Fig. 180. *The Studio*, (installation view showing ceramic fruit by Erica van Zon), 2021. Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Photography by Justin Spiers.

Conclusion

As outlined in the Introduction, the key research questions have focused on how an inventive, storytelling, creative art practice can serve to critique, trouble, reframe and extend art-historical enquiry. The research questions each encompass and emphasise the ways in which the telling of histories can be extended through invented figures and narrative frames that question, complicate, or provide alternatives to those officially sanctioned as art history. The project has developed methodologies that challenge art-historical assumptions, practices and organising logics, such as those to do with temporality, while also extending sources of art-historical enquiry to include unofficial testimony, collaboration and social encounter. Practices of fabrication, approximation and invention interrogate archival organisation and hierarchies, and their construction of art-historical narratives. Through the use of invented personae, artworks and exhibitions, *Ever Present Archiving* has probed precarious and overlooked histories. Tracing alternative narratives, and producing different knowledge of modernist histories in Aotearoa, provides ways to explore questions of truth and representation in historiography. Thus, the invention of Florence Weir reveals and renegotiates the inherent construction of narratives around art, artists and their histories.

Florence Weir ushers in artistic fictions, invented historical frames and narratives, intersecting real histories, groups or movements such as the Bauhaus and The Group. Operating between fact and fiction, *representation* and *production*, the thesis has reflected on how the creation of Florence Weir, as a storytelling method, makes new connections. This has been examined in detail in Chapter One: *Constructions and Fabrications*, however insights around her invention have surfaced in each chapter theme. Her figuring also relies on existing knowledge and contexts, both from me and the viewer. This binds her to reality and gives her plausibility. Florence Weir involves my own artistic subjectivity, projections and identification. Allowing Florence Weir's fabrication to be co-authored is a way of challenging art history's preoccupations with attribution, narrative coherence and the phallogentric notion of a developing solo subject. Florence's subjectivity is heterogenous and relational, she is figured and represented through archival traces, discourses and her relationship to others. Her work is multiple, fragmented and diverse. In this way, she denies what Amelia Jones calls "the fantasy of the fixed, normative, centred modernist subjects..."⁶²¹ Accordingly, Alfred Gell's

⁶²¹ Ibid, 12.

notion of a personhood laid out across the social milieu rather than confined to the limits of one person or body makes a compelling argument for the legitimacy of Florence Weir's existence. She stands in for an artistic period, a whole series of overlooked figures and practices. She quite literally embodies a *spirit of the times*. This has revealed to me that future work on Florence Weir needs to make use of, and relate to, multiple practitioners and multiple voices.

Ever Present Archiving has explored the ways in which feminist historical methods can trouble the processes of canon formation, contribute to a reframing and an alternative form of archive and canon construction. This is a focus in Chapter Two: *Power and Limits, Blind Spots and Biases*. Processes of rehabilitation, extension and historical solidarity create new modes of inquiry and scholarship by offering alternatives to assumed historical conditioning, objective distance and other art-historical practices. From these perspectives, the project has sought to revitalise understandings of what an art-historical archive might be, proposing other possibilities for how these records can be presented and expanded as forms of subjective historical knowledge. Through an interplay of subjectivities, diverse viewpoints and voices, genre reordering and the remediation of objects, I have produced a focus on constellations and connections. This sort of practice and approach supports opportunities for different narratives, meanings, relations and emphases to emerge. It also leads us to new understandings of artistic influence, challenging art-historical assumptions of linearity and coherence and the canon's focus on fixed, solo subjects. These different subjectivities are significant: they offer multiplicity and relationality, bringing new understandings of artistic influence, conditions and production. Hierarchies are disrupted through the convergence of practices and materials. Whilst this project cannot radically transform the structures of the canon, it is a partial and exploratory movement along the way, a contribution toward doing things differently by proposing a project of expansion, disruption and inversion. The project employs a variety of creative and productive responses that actively extend, expand and revise entrenched art historical narratives and methods. This is an exploratory art history of difference, extended meanings and contexts. The project participates in this revision by embracing the imagined, the partial, the fragment, the multiple, working under collaborations with a focus on group activity/support and relationality.

My research has shown that text practices are fundamental to developing the role of fiction and thinking about invention within art history. Jaś Elsner

and his description of art history as ekphrasis is an acknowledgement that art history is not factual, nor neutral. Chapter Three: *Fiction with Footnotes, a Creative Art History* has explored how conjecture, legend and erasures take place in the construction of histories of cultural movements, artists and their art. Acts of writing can reshape and mould the visual and guide the way we look at things. This also makes us aware of the limits of language. If we restrict the view to only a few, there will be gaps in the story, and gaps in the knowledge. In my expanded thinking on ekphrasis I have developed an idea of casual, verbal discussion through intersubjectivity and its potential as an art-historical method. I have also explored interpretative descriptions, translations and impressions, and how they might form a subjective, plural, embodied historical knowledge.

Chapter Four: *Queer and Affective Approaches, Feeling Things* has revealed that feminist and queer theoretical perspectives share methodological affinities with the practice and serve as critical frameworks for this project. Relevant to the project's positioning of research as a personal and immediate act, embodied, autoethnographic, reflexive and heuristic processes have been developed through various practice modalities. An 'ever present' approach to archiving can unfix, reanimate and rehabilitate physical qualities of objects, such as haptic or sensory ones, contributing to a new and alternative form of handling the archive. Elizabeth Freeman's "feeling the historical" conceives of an approach to historiography that elevates the affective and subjective, creating productive encounters with non-traditional records from the past. These are often traces that have been subdued or excluded from 'official' bodies of knowledge.

This research project has also examined how extending the traces and sources for art-historical evidence, including such material as chatty stories from the margins, allows for new knowledge and meaning to be generated. In Chapter Five: *Friendships and Conversation* I have explored how making use of personal insights and anecdotal accounts gleaned from casual, conversational-based research with family members leads to a retelling that emphasises relationships and networks. These sources often have an intersubjective nature and this social art-history practice has provided a research method that conveys a commitment to thinking in constellations. It has revealed the importance and impact of social aspects of artistic life, for women in particular: networks, friendships, communities, the sharing of resources and other support structures. This is knowledge that might not

be so visible in conventional art-historical narratives. The project has also revealed that a lack of ‘proof’ in the traditional sense should not mean various testimony be excluded.

In the context of a porous feminist temporality, we can reframe and extend notions of historical time. *Ever Present Archiving* employs remembering, retrospection and reconstruction as elements that act as both methods and content in the practice. These are more partial and contingent processes, troubling the embedded linearity of canonical narratives and time as an organising logic. Chapter Six: *Temporality and Presence* has looked at how these modes of practice coalesce together and, combined with engagements with current practitioners in the present, enact a nuanced approach to re-view, restore and retell overlooked stories. A feminist temporality critiques a linear historiography of art-historical modernism and favours a queer logic that promotes networks, relations and influence. I hope to reveal connections and overlapping influences that are not always visible in linear constructions of time. The project has questioned how we can give back presence and voice to figures from the past. I have looked at how my fabrications evoke and respond to a spirit of the time, and the relationship of haunting to knowledge and subjectivity. Florence Weir’s presence and spirit, as felt and developed alongside other artists and movements (both recorded and imagined), is an affective force from another time as well as from my own time. She is in part my remembering of a person before and beyond my own lifetime. She is beyond a normative temporality. However, she is also a social figure born out of kinship and artistic associations, and this is why encouraging others to work with her is important.

The complexities of collaboration and social practice shape and contribute to a feminist art-historical enquiry. This way of working teaches me a great deal about authorship and negotiation. These challenges probe the complexities of the project. Inviting other makers to contribute creative-practice responses beyond my control is a way of increasing and investing in alternative rhizomes and intensities, and creating new meanings. My relationship to and with Florence Weir is also fundamental, and this research has reinforced that my collaboration with her takes the form of influence, subjectivity, projection and haunting. *Ever Present Archiving* has acted as a documentation of and elaboration for Florence Weir. The exegesis documents the genealogy of the project, and bestows a discursive continuation of her figure. Through this PhD project Florence Weir has been given more of a life,

one that is fragmented across time. The practice-led nature of the project has allowed Florence to lead and influence me. I have learnt a great deal along the way. I know about art histories, and have been led to historical figures such as Mary Chamot, Florence Akins, June Black and Mollie Lawn. The thesis is also in part an afterlife, developed since Florence’s conception in 2015. In the early stages, her figure was somewhat contained and constrained by discrete projects. Now she has a greater presence, and this is what the PhD has given to me and to Florence.

Writing this exegesis has revealed that there are multiple kinds of project collaborators. Not only is there my collaboration with made-up figures from the past, and with artists, makers and researchers with their own perceptions, memories and imaginings, but there is also collaboration and communing with objects, texts, sites and materials. That is, between things and our responses to them—responses that may also take the form of written and printed quotes, borrowings, appropriations, duplications, representations, re-presentations and object making. Therefore there is also collaboration with the spectator; they too are drawn into a conversation with the material and its precursors. This makes the core mode of the practice a question of encounter and response. I aim for the viewer/reader to also become complicit in the reflective and critical conversations that are ongoing between myself and various people: colleagues, artist friends, artists’ family members, curators and supervisors. This layering of extended conversations, as the work of art, involves processes of testing and exchanging, and evolving personal perspectives, and reflects how we experience, assimilate and encounter the world.

This project is significant because it disturbs and rubs up against conventional art history. It critiques and complicates traditionally held divides between art-historical scholarship and artistic creativity and practice. Commenting on the curating of museums and art-history making, this is a practice that, by its nature, can be more beguiling and more duplicitous. It presents artefacts and narratives that require a questioning sort of spectatorship. Inserting fabrication and creative modes of working into art-history making opens out the research to involve exchanges in and with the present. It extends and develops the idea of archive to include unofficial sources and non-traditional records, elevating the ephemeral and tangential and qualities to do with feelings and intuition. The project increases reflexive and subjective methods in historical research.

At the time of writing this conclusion, plans for the final PhD installation are in development. It is likely to include some visual and wall-text elements, archival display cases and fabricated textiles, as well as overarching fictional and narrative engagements. I am exploring a sound component that could act as an audio guide to an exhibition that might not be physically present, or only present in part. Guiding a viewer through a virtual space, or a series of rooms, it might suggest a house/studio museum. I am inspired by and interested in a particular audio guide that was part of the Hilma af Klint exhibition at City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi where viewers were directed through the gallery architecture to particular works with phrases such as, “Now make your way into the adjoining room. As you explore this room, you will discover...”⁶²²

The woman’s voice was immediately compelling and authoritative and an ambient soundtrack was overlaid, creating atmosphere and mood. I am also interested in how this audio physically guided viewers to specific artefacts and works: “Find the display case which holds two of af Klint’s notebooks made between 1922 and 1934. Look closely at these pages with their dense texts, diagrams and drawings.”⁶²³ And also: “This photograph of Hilma af Klint was taken in her studio in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1895. The image captures...”⁶²⁴ At other times, af Klint’s voice was evoked through a reading of direct quotes. It made me think about my earlier research into ekphrastic description of works and the notion that language can shape and mould a viewing experience, yet also have limits. These are the kinds of things, I want to explore in the final exhibition for *Ever Present Archiving*.

Employing this sort of audio and instruction offers rich potential for a number of creative possibilities for storytelling, exhibition frameworks and for highlighting gaps and missing records. I can imagine developing a script that vividly describes a space, taking the viewer on a virtual journey through Florence’s home, studio or showroom. There might be descriptions of ephemeral objects, archival vitrines and fragments from Florence’s *Mediterranean* textile series. This voice would direct the viewer, drawing on my earlier research into ekphrastic description of works. The notion that language can shape and mould a viewing experience, yet also have limits, could be explored. This audio component might also include imagined conversations between Florence and other artists, and dialogue such as friends recalling memories and amusing anecdotes. I imagine that the few

⁶²² Audio guide, *Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings*, City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi, accessed January 13, 2022, <https://citygallery.org.nz/events/hilma-af-klint-the-secret-paintings-audio-guide/>

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ Ibid.



Fig. 181. Website tile, Audio Guide, *Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings*, City Gallery Wellington.

objects which are presented in the gallery space might not align with the audio tour. Other objects referred to in the audio script might be missing altogether. For example, viewers might be directed to a large, lilac-coloured object label on the wall that has no accompanying object or image. Or viewers may be instructed to look at a series of watercolours by Florence, but instead find themselves standing in front of works attributed to me. This audio guide presents possibilities for exploring ideas around translations, approximations, and perhaps strange disjointed moments where things do not add up, are mislaid and misleading.

The thesis generates forms of visibility and knowledge, and thereby produces agency for figures and moments that conventional historical narratives might have overlaid, overlooked and rendered invisible. In this context, creative art practice becomes a means to liberate past art practices (especially those of women, or those who have been deemed ‘minor’ or ‘decorative’) from their diminishment by conventional art-historical narrative. In future, I hope that I might be approached to engage with specific collections, archives and histories within institutions. I wish to establish and further develop my artistic role as a research facilitator, offering a unique approach to history telling. There are also plans afoot to further research the enigmatic Tilli Frankel, her wheat-scientist husband Otto Frankel and his second wife, Margaret (née Anderson), also an artist. Tilli and Margaret were friends and continued their friendship after Otto married Margaret. There is a photograph of the two women, posing nude in the Port Hills, which confirms this. I am interested in developing an exhibition that draws together Tilli’s salon evenings with Canterbury artists and writers, her collection of Bauhaus jewellery in MTG Hawke’s Bay, possible connections to Florence,

and her relationship with Margaret, who painted fauvist-inspired landscapes as a member of The Group. I have also thought of inviting art historians to create verbal sketches on the life and outputs of Florence Weir, to be used as material for further fabrications, perhaps in sound and/or video. In these ways, Florence will continue to be co-authored and her outputs produced as multivocal collaborations. I have also learnt that, to some extent, Florence needs to remain unknowable.



Fig. 182. Making *Florence and Winnifred*, digital animation, 2017.



Fig. 183. *Set projection: tabs (Act 3)*, 2018. Felted wool appliqué. Exhibited in *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, Ilam Campus Gallery.



Fig. 184. Florence Akins, *Colour Wheel*, c. 1936 - 1969. Ink and wool fabric on folded card, UC-MBL-1808, UC Art Collection, Macmillan Brown Library - Te Puna Rakahau o Macmillan Brown.

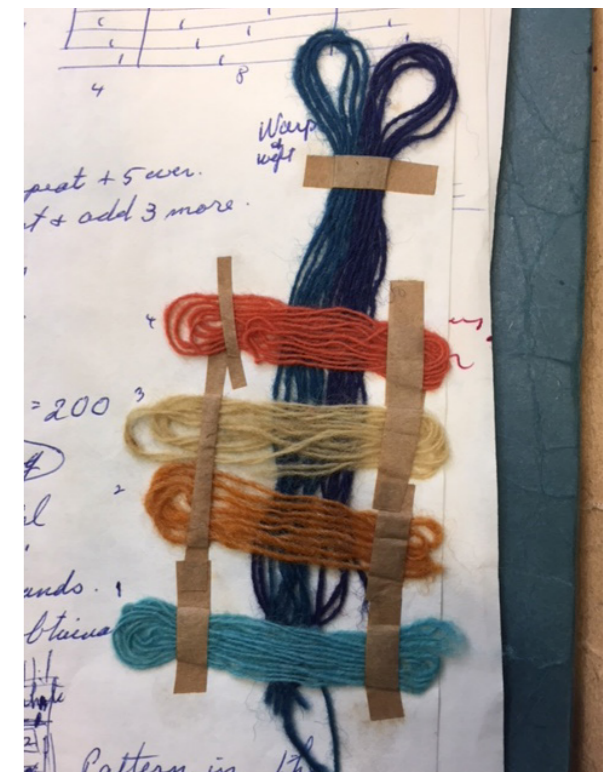
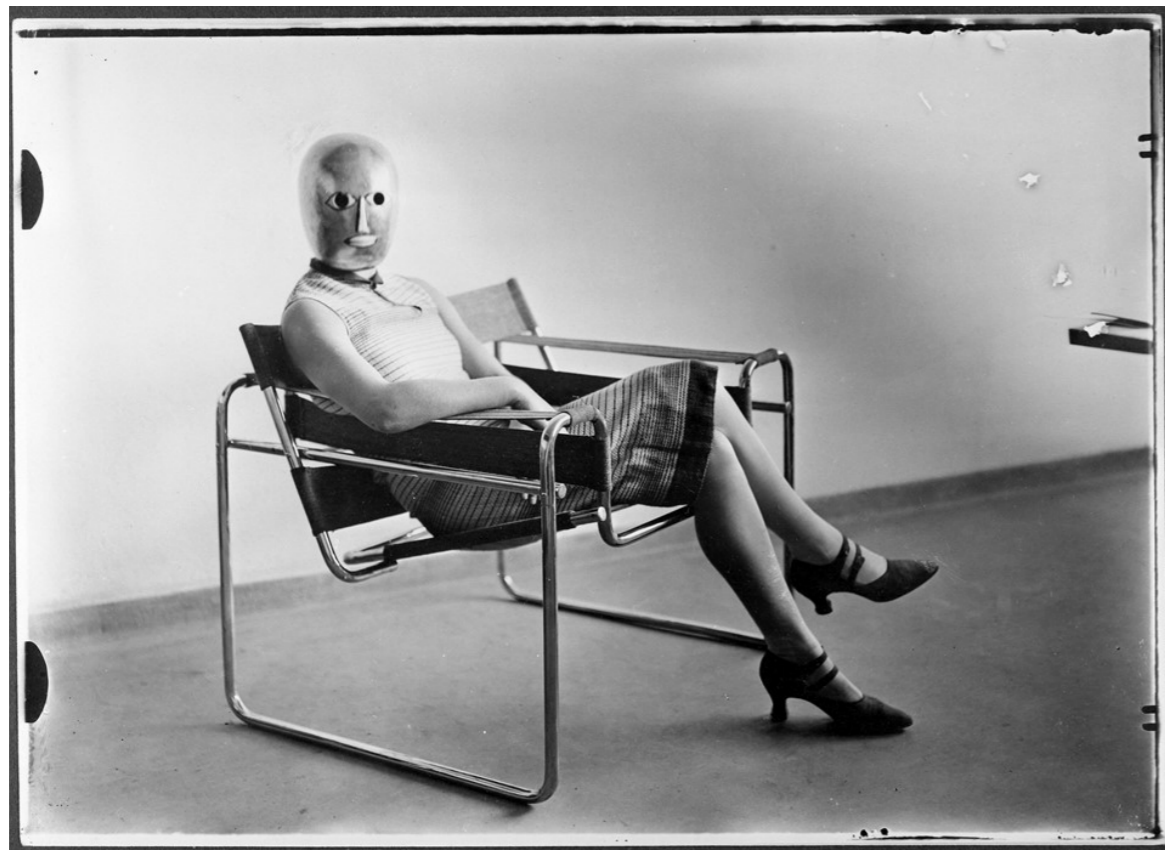


Figure 185. Tangled threads, Florence Akins Papers, FD1994, UC Archives, Macmillan Brown Library - Te Puna Rakahau o Macmillan Brown.



Fig. 186. *Woman in mask* after Erich Consemüller's 1926 photograph, 'Woman wearing a theatrical mask by Oskar Schlemmer and seated on Marcel Breuer's B3 chair', 2015. Photograph by Richard Orjjs.

Fig 187. Erich Consemüller, 'Woman wearing a theatrical mask by Oskar Schlemmer and seated on Marcel Breuer's B3 chair', 1926. Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin.



PhD Exhibition

Florence Weir: a poster archive & Schemes for Vibrant Living



Figs. 188, 189. *Florence Weir: a poster archive & Schemes for Vibrant Living*, (installation views), 2022. Gallery 11, ST Paul St Gallery, AUT University. Photographs by Sait Akkirman.

Florence Weir: a poster archive & Schemes for Vibrant Living
PhD Exhibition, May 2022
Gallery II, ST Paul St Gallery, AUT University

The PhD exhibition comprised two parts: a poster display from Florence Weir's archive and exhibition history and a group of objects from Florence's *Schemes for Vibrant Living* series. The eight fabricated posters, designed in collaboration with various graphic designers, included two posters advertising *Touch & Go* (a screen print), Ngaio Marsh's interiors shop in London; three posters used for promoting key exhibitions within the project, such as *The Studio*; a poster for a fictional exhibition Florence held with The Group; and two from Florence's "Mediterranean series". The 'Mediterranean' posters used vibrant watercolour imagery from recent landscape pictures I had made that referenced European landscape pictures by Hodgkins, Matisse and Klee (a Tunisian series). These two layouts included the phrase *Schemes for Vibrant Living* – pointing to the idea of a series title, project concept and exhibition. These two posters then led into objects from this same "Mediterranean series" – a set of hand-painted ceramic tiles, six watercolour paintings (including the two used in the posters) and textiles developed from these images, which were upholstered into low-slung wooden outdoor chairs and a folding screen, a necklace, and a display of fabric samples.

A sound work, as a third component or framework, referred to the various posters and Florence's time in the Mediterranean. This audio guide played on loop continuously from concealed speakers high above the viewers. The 9-minute script was performed by professional voice artist Susannah Kenton. Her voice was chosen because her accent was neutral, not easily identifiable.⁶²⁵ Guiding a viewer through a virtual space, or a series of rooms, the audio explored anecdotal and collective memories drawn from Florence's life, and information associated with the objects and posters on display. This 'text' attempted to perform a narrative or storied presentation and referenced the types of audio tours often available in large museums and galleries. There were sensory descriptions, memories, contextual information (for example, about *Touch & Go*), a focus on friendships and social history and narrative about the "Mediterranean series" such as the *Rhona Hazard* outdoor chairs. The narrator / guiding voice was deliberately not introduced as she was not the

⁶²⁵ However, for some viewers her tone and delivery did suggest a UK middle class accent.

subject of the audio piece, and not a collaborator as in other instances within the project. Inspired by the audio sound-track in the Hilma af Klint exhibition at City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi that I saw in December 2021, and mentioned in the Conclusion, this voice directed the viewer around the exhibition and talked about related details from Florence's life and particular works. However, at times the objects presented in the gallery space did not fully align with the details and content of the audio tour, indicating the audio was a separate text within the exhibition. At one point, the voice spoke of a lemon-coloured 'bureau', however in the gallery space, it was a lemon-coloured plinth that viewers saw. The script directed the viewer through various rooms, while the exhibition occupied only one. In this way, the voice described a fictional exhibition somewhat separate to the viewer's immediate experience, creating a disjunction between the virtual and actual spaces, the past and present.

A painted colour scheme was used in the exhibition installation: a bright sea blue feature wall at the end of the gallery that viewers saw directly on entering the gallery space suggested a demarcation for the objects in the "Mediterranean series". This colour also 'set the scene' somewhat, enacting an exterior, outdoor space and atmosphere. Three other colours: lime yellow, a leaf green and a dusky pink were painted as rectangular shapes like a shadow form behind some of the posters. Four display plinths were painted in each of these colours, supporting ceramic tiles and other objects. There was also a hessian covered plinth (square and low to the ground), a reference to the display systems I had noted in photographs of exhibitions by The Group and used in my earlier exhibitions. A display of Florence Weir-labelled fabric samples sat on top of it next to a colour wheel image and another set of hand-painted tiles.

Parts of the exhibition were re-presented at Sanderson Contemporary (7 June - 3 July 2022) under the title *Schemes for Vibrant Living with Florence Weir*.



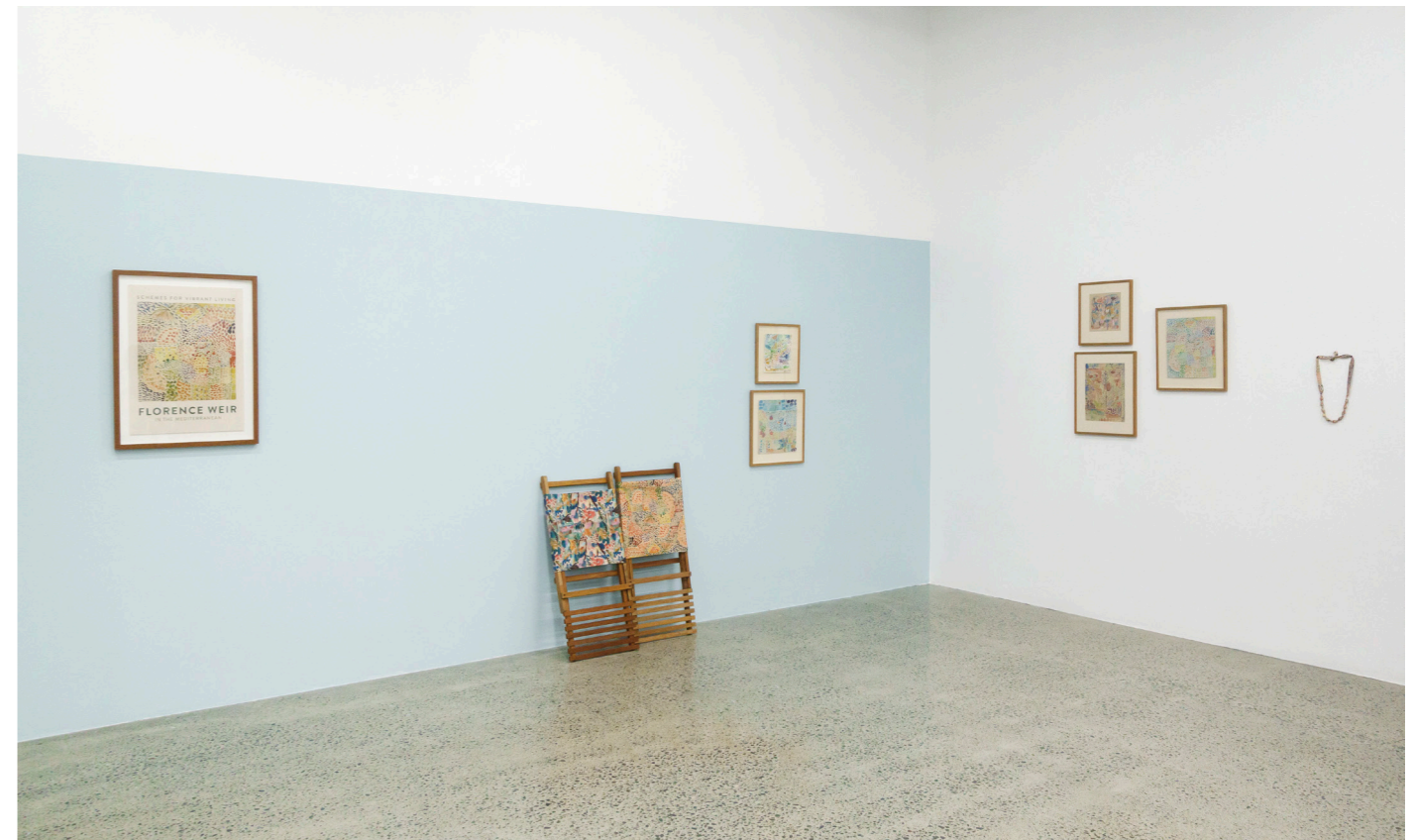
Figs. 190, 191. Florence Weir: a poster archive & *Schemes for Vibrant Living*, (installation views), 2022. Gallery 11, ST Paul St Gallery, AUT University. Photographs by Sait Akkirman.



Fig. 192. *Les Terrasses, Menton with Florence Weir, 2022*. Watercolour on paper. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.



Fig. 193. *Jardin Maria with Florence Weir, 2022*. Watercolour on paper. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.



Figs. 194 – 197. Florence Weir: a poster archive & Schemes for Vibrant Living, (installation views), 2022. Gallery 11, ST Paul St Gallery, AUT University. Photographs by Sait Akkirman.



Fig. 198. *View to the Bay with Florence Weir*, 2022. Watercolour on paper. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.



Fig. 199. *Hill and Sky with Florence Weir*, 2022. Watercolour on paper. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.

Audio guide: *Schemes for Vibrant Living*

“I have been thinking about how we might explore some of the ways artist designer Florence Weir has worked with and for her friends. She dreamt of a Vibrant way of Living and I am fascinated by how her friendships and personal interactions informed her practice. Let’s begin.

Make your way to the vitrine displaying several of Florence’s letters. She was a great correspondent often including small patterns, doodles and motifs in the margins of rather short but lively letters, thanking hosts for having her to stay or newsy updates. Sometimes the envelopes were handmade and decorated on the back like this one displayed here. In a letter to a close friend and writer in May 1934, Florence shared her desire for a group studio.

She wrote:

I have always longed for a shared studio space. I imagine that at times it would be used as an exhibition space, a place for coming together. I can see long tables with various changing arrangements of objects set in the middle...bowls of fruit, vases with fresh flowers, interesting fabrics. Comfortable nooks for tea drinking and conversation. Abundant supplies set up in attractive storage. A range of plinths for still life set ups, sculptures or the life drawing model. ...In all reality, I am probably best suited to working on my own now. Though it’s good fun to imagine this other studio.

*

Florence established a studio and adjoining showroom in South London not long after this. And indeed it was a solo working space. However she continued to work with others in a variety of ways. Her studio was often visited by friends, artists, clients and commissioning designers. She stopped for afternoon tea at 3pm and it was never spent alone. It has always been interesting to me that Florence’s work has had so many design applications, yet her studio was set up like that of a fine artist. Surfaces littered with layers of fabric samples, papers and brushes.

This room focuses on some of her studio practices and some of the surviving ephemera from her design processes. In the far vitrine you will notice a workbook of textile designs that are clearly inspired by floral arrangements. Margie Watson described to her daughter how Florence would often cut flowers from her garden in Sussex when she came to stay, snipping petals and leaves into various shapes and slivers. She let them fall onto coloured paper backgrounds. And then used gouache and watercolour to record these arrangements.

I wish I could see how they looked as fabrics, and also know what the fabrics were used for. She liked working on a small scale. Portable workbooks. She was often travelling and visiting people for a night or two. Margie’s daughter remembers her colourful skirts and strong musky perfume.

But they all remember Florence’s use of colour. Straight in front of you on the green table is a hand-dyed colour wheel which was made by Florence Akins as a teaching resource for her influential textile course at Canterbury College School of Art. Florence knew Florence Akins and learnt some weaving techniques from her. Note the cyan blue and crimsons that Florence Weir often used in her rug designs.

Make your way into the room which displays some of Florence’s hand-painted furniture. Mantlepieces, footstools, long benches, tabletops... patterns, squares, vibrant marks and colour combinations. Her most popular were the armoires with the bold stripes and geometric edgings. She was also invited by clients to visit new homes and design schemes for an entire room.

On the pale-yellow coloured bureau, you will see some ceramic tiles laid out. Florence had a close association with Ngaio Marsh after designing set and costumes for her theatre productions in Christchurch. Not long after arriving in London in 1928 or 1929, Marsh established an interior decorating boutique in Knightsbridge with her friend Nellie Rhodes. The shop was called Touch and Go. Janet Carlyle has noted that she bought these Florence Weir tiles there. She had wanted 50 odd for a kitchen area, bought this small set initially and could never get her hands on more. The backs of the tiles are rough to touch, a sensation of dried Summer earth.

I imagine that Ngaio must have been a great friend for Florence when she arrived fresh in London, giving her an outlet to sell objects, and introducing her to contacts.

Now, move into the final room. You will see a small collection of her most popular fabrics used for furnishings and other objects. Many others have been lost. Her colourful linens and silks were often produced in multiple colourways. She produced strong, bold, graphic geometric patterning as well as softer, more organic designs that came from her watercolour painting. Note the one with its blue and yellow circles and the way the repetition of the black rectangle folds in on itself and leaps around the white areas. This is clear evidence of Bauhaus

textile influence and a strong command of colour play.

Around 1927, before leaving for Europe, Florence exhibited with The Group, an association of young artists. They held annual exhibitions in Christchurch. This was in some ways the beginning of how Florence positioned herself alongside other artists and designers. We were told that company was very important to her. On your left in this space, you will see some of her vases from this time, re-made from a photograph.

In 1936, during a holiday in the South of France with a group of English artists and writers, Florence Weir created a series called *Mediterranean*. Inspired by coastal flora and landscapes and the vertical gardens that made their way up the cliffs behind Menton, they consisted of small, overlapping brush marks in a vibrant array of colours: turquoise, oranges, lemons, aquamarine and dark pinks. A woman writer remembers this series in her memoir but recounts a slightly different timeline:

Florence thought of a new line of textiles for folding screens, scarves and cushion covers, developed from watercolours, that would be simply called 'Mediterranean' and she made plans to visit accordingly. She knew that would appeal to Londoners, too; that the series had been created in situ. She stayed with us for two weeks and then another few in the diplomatic villa that artists and writers took over in the summer months. In fact, during this time she focussed on ceramic making, a delightful series of rustic plates. We spent a great deal of time cooking and eating. I recall Florence's enthusiasm for harvesting tomatoes and the pale green zucchini. Her loud laugh and the smell of pine trees in the bay where we swam. The highly successful Mediterranean series was created largely back home in London about a year later, with Florence painting from memory.

*

The story goes that around this time Florence was so taken with Rhona Haszard's impressionistic landscape paintings from Europe and Egypt that she designed a 'plein air' chair for her, and sent it to her as a gift. She thought it might become a desired object for other landscape painters in the region. This basic wooden chair with a canvas back support did not sit at the right angle for use with an easel outdoors. Rhona was honest about that. However, commissions came in after a buyer saw it in her studio. Florence re-presented it as a beach chair, creating multiple fabrics for it from her *Mediterranean* series. You will find two replicas on the back wall."



Figs. 200, 201. Florence Weir: a poster archive & Schemes for Vibrant Living, (installation views), 2022. Gallery 11, ST Paul St Gallery, AUT University. Photographs by Sait Akkirman.



Fig. 202. *Porte de Menton with Florence Weir*, 2022. Watercolour on paper. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.



Fig. 203. *Florence Weir: a poster archive & Schemes for Vibrant Living*, (installation view of opening event, 2022. Gallery 11, ST Paul St Gallery, AUT University. Photographs by Sait Akkirman.

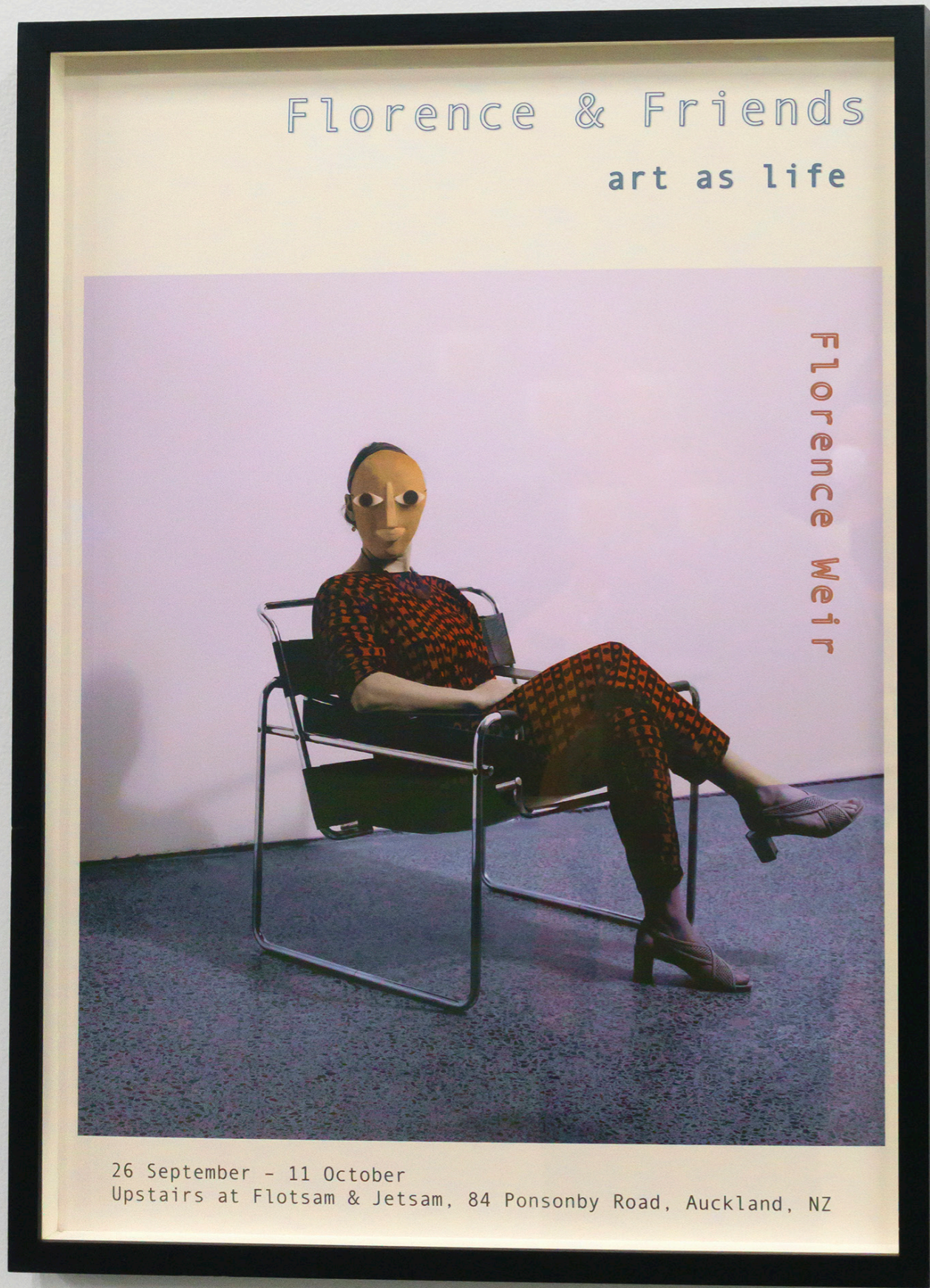


Fig. 204. Framed poster in *Florence Weir: a poster archive & Schemes for Vibrant Living*, 2022. Gallery 11, ST Paul St Gallery, AUT University. Photograph by Sait Akkirman.



Fig. 205. Framed poster in *Florence Weir: a poster archive & Schemes for Vibrant Living*, 2022. Gallery 11, ST Paul St Gallery, AUT University.



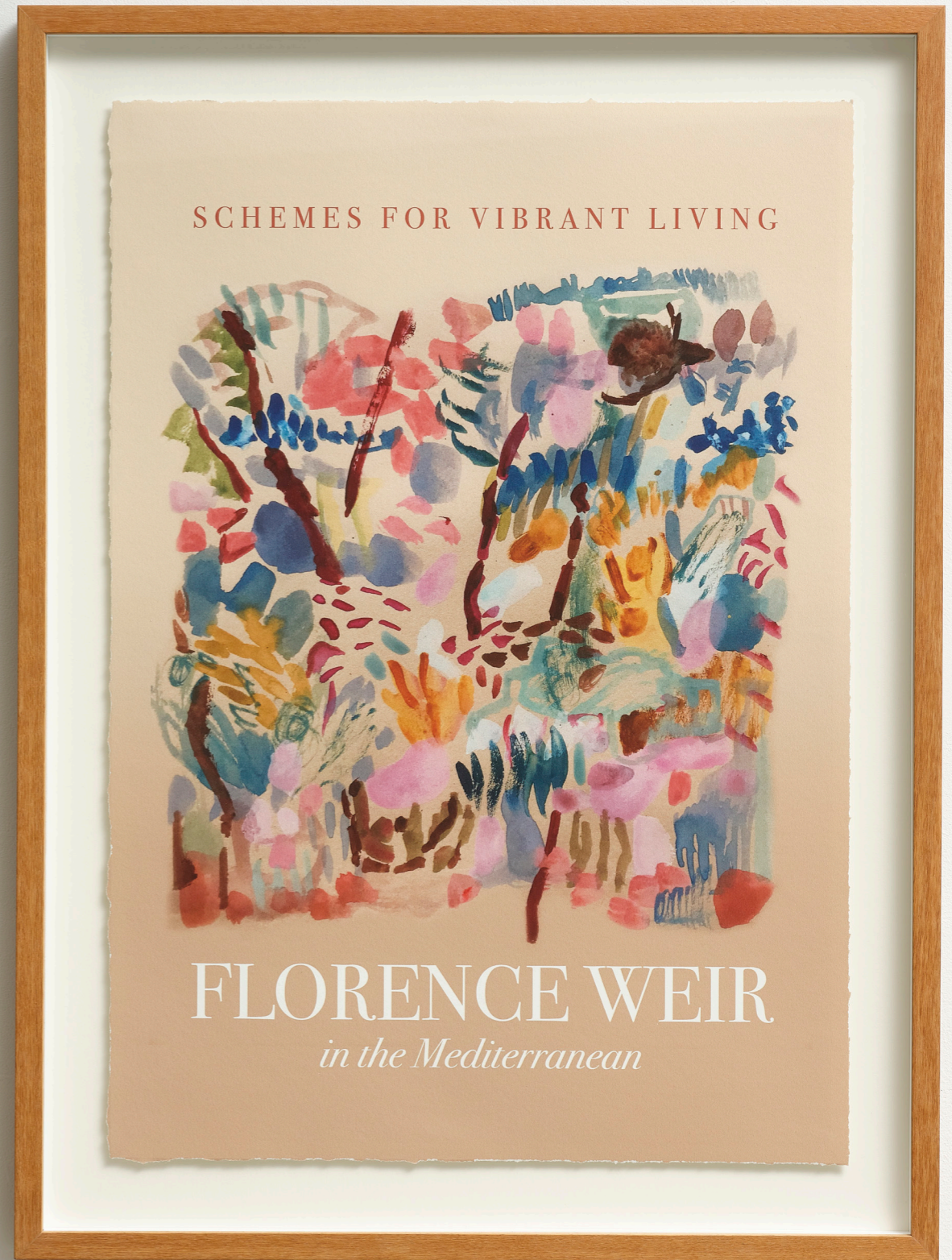
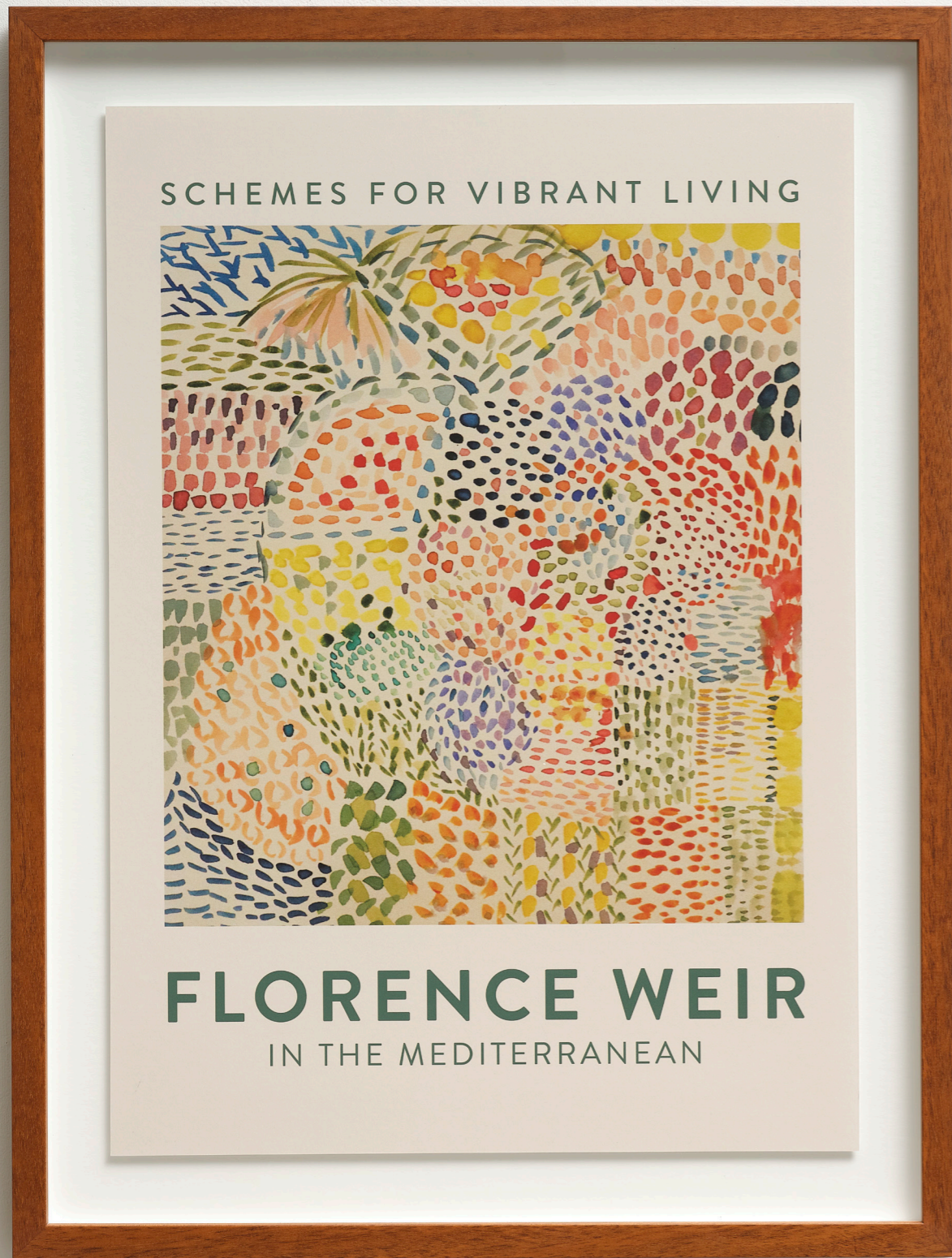
Fig. 206. Florence Weir: a poster archive & Schemes for Vibrant Living, (installation view), 2022. Gallery 11, ST Paul St Gallery, AUT University. Photograph by Sait Akkirman.



Fig. 207. Necklace for Margie, 2022. Silk and various beads. Gallery 11, ST Paul St Gallery, AUT University. Photograph by Sait Akkirman.



Figs. 208 - 211. Florence Weir: a poster archive & Schemes for Vibrant Living, (installation views), 2022. Gallery 11, ST Paul St Gallery, AUT University. Photographs by Sait Akkirman.

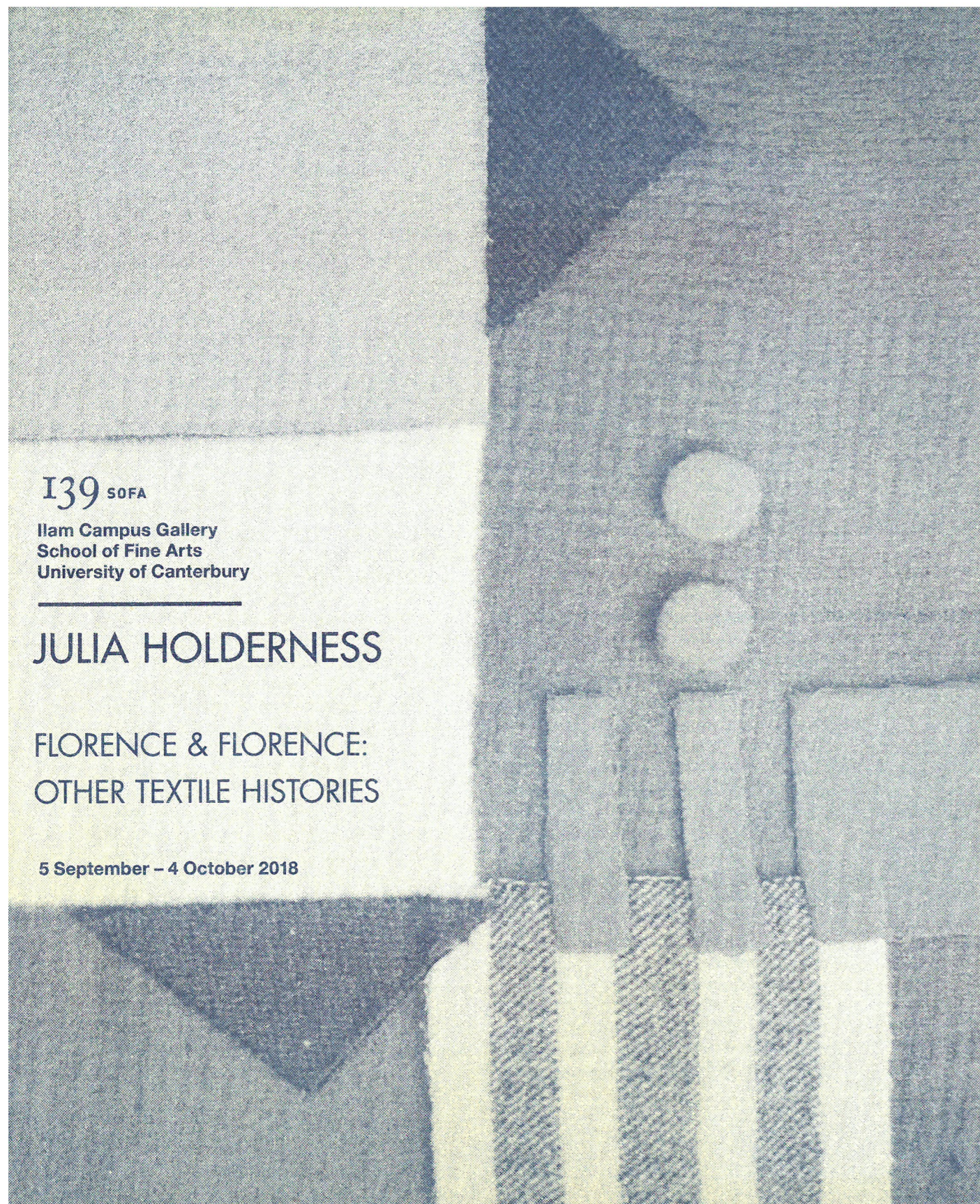


Figs. 212, 213. Framed posters in *Florence Weir: a poster archive & Schemes for Vibrant Living*, 2022. Gallery 11, ST Paul St Gallery, AUT University. Photographs by Sait Akkirman.



Fig. 214. *Rhona chairs*, 2022. Sanderson Contemporary. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.

Appendices



Publication for Julia Holderness, *Florence & Florence: other textile histories*, Ilam Campus Gallery, University of Canterbury, September 5 – October 4, 2018. Essay by Linda Tyler. Risograph print.

Through the eye of her needle: Women's textile histories in Canterbury

Linda Tyler

You don't have to probe far into the etymology of the word "textile" to bump into the root term "text". It is there right at the start, and it means – literally – that which is woven, from the Latin adjective *textilis*, past participle of the verb *texere* to weave. In relation to the exhibits on display in Julia Holderness's exhibition "that which is woven" can be interpreted variously. Weaving generates a material surface, resulting in a textile. A written text is created from marks on a surface which generate symbolic meanings. The tale of Florence Weir (1899-1979) is a fragmentary text. She is cut from Canterbury cloth, and the details of her life emerge from the tissue each time an audience encounters references to her work. Florence has left her traces in the archive, and we are invited to read in detail. We sense her inclination for fabric, which presupposes some fabrication.

Fragments require piecing together to make sense, and Holderness introduces the technique of appliqué, making colourful patterns on surfaces which bring the rhythms of modernism into play. She skirts around Swiss artist Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889-1943), hinting at the asymmetry of her Hopi Indian-inspired costume in her designs, and nods to the geometries of German-born American artist Josef Albers (1888-1976). Taeuber-Arp and Florence Weir are fellow travellers, interested in using the body to put avant-garde ideas into motion to increase

art's reach and connectedness to life. Like Gunta Stölzl who had begun studying for her weaving diploma in 1919, the year before Albers started at the Bauhaus, Taeuber-Arp treated her textile works like paintings, hanging them on the wall. These modernist women could see how the applied arts gave them freedom to pursue abstraction, and perhaps economic independence as well. In the four years Stölzl ran those seven Bauhaus looms, her workshop was the only profitable part of the school. Yet if you search for Stölzl's name in either of the two texts prescribed for the teaching of the Bauhaus as part of Sixth Form Certificate art history in Aotearoa/New Zealand from 1986 onwards (Frank Whitford's *Bauhaus* (1984) and Hans Maria Wingler's *The Bauhaus* (1969) there is scant mention. Her lost thread is picked up and drawn into Holderness's exhibition narrative with the inclusion of *Rug Sampler*, a 2015 pencil drawing on linen based on Gunta Stölzl's *5 Chöre (Five Choir)* 1928 jacquard weaving in cotton, wool, rayon and silk.

As we have seen, weaving threads together makes a textile (being a surface) and laying pieces down results in appliqué (on top of a surface), while the material practices of embroidery puncture that skin (going through the surface). Sheila Paine goes so far as to draw a connection between ancient embroidery and tattooing practices, which the explorer Marco Polo described

as “flesh embroidery”. Both tattooing and embroidery, Paine argues, can be read as manifestations of identity, and technologies of memory.¹ The embroideries in this exhibition are reminders of the past, and of institutional memory. Audrey Black (later Audrey Prouse) who gained her diploma in fine arts majoring in design at the Canterbury College School of Art in 1943 did so through embroidery. So did the daughter of James Johnstone, the metalwork lecturer at Canterbury, Ngarita Johnstone (born 1928, Christchurch) who completed her diploma in 1950. Their mid-century samplers are excavated from the Macmillan Brown Library and Heritage Collections for display, neat lexicons of not just picot, pistil, back trellis and scallop stitches but open work, drawn thread, and broderie anglaise. Produced under instruction from the other Florence in the foreground here, Florence Akins (1906-2012), the first student at the school to get her Diploma of Fine Arts by examination in 1931, they are exemplary of needlework as serious art.

Akins taught a variety of subjects at the school from 1936 until 1969 including design, embroidery, tapestry, lino-cuts and modelling. Her teaching notes and colour exercises are akin to the *Farbenlehre* (Theory of Colour) taught at the Bauhaus. This used a colour wheel system to indicate seven contrasting pairs: light and dark, cold and warm, complementaries, simultaneous contrast, qualitative and quantitative contrast, deriving from Sir Isaac Newton’s study of optics. Akins’s syllabus for needlecraft relied on a sound grasp of theory for “designing in black, white and colour” and also lists drawing from the common objects, drawing from the cast, principles of design, peasant embroideries, plain and tapestry weaving. None of that sounds particularly modernist, but an

envoy from one of the European centres of modernism did arrive in Christchurch just as the famous Art Deco exhibition was opening in Paris in April 1925. This was Louise Etienne Sidonie Henderson (1902-1994) who taught embroidery at Canterbury from 1926 until 1941. She had studied at l’École de la broderie et dentelle de la ville de Paris and graduated as a designer in 1921, writing articles on embroidery design for the weekly journal *Madame* and *La femme et le home*.² If we accept that embroidery as a practice is a form of meaningful mark-making, a polysemous system of writing even, then Henderson knew how to read and write the textile. Her notes do not feature in this exhibition, but perhaps something of her studio pedagogy is latent in the embroidery. In 1946, five years after Henderson left the School of Art to move to Wellington, Florence Akins introduced a new course in weaving and tapestry, but this does not seem to have been Bauhaus-inspired. Ngarita Johnstone remarked “We didn’t really feel in touch with international developments at the end of the war.”³ Nevertheless, we can see that in the making of the samplers here that students at Canterbury were engaged in a heuristic process that would provide them with a vocabulary of stitches with which to enunciate their own ideas in the future.

The word sampler is derived from a combination of the Latin *exemplum* and the Old French *essamplaire* which means “a pattern” or “an example”, and this is what these are – not an end in themselves, but the means to an end. As feminist art historian Rozsika Parker observes, “samplers were ... educational exercises in stitchery – individual tests of skill rather than storehouses of motifs.”⁴ The lesson in the text is one designed to be felt by the maker and learned in the stitching. After all, it is only modern

Cartesian epistemology that has separated knowing from doing, and created the premise that knowledge resides in the text (a pattern book) rather than in the practice (sampler-making). Cultural histories of craft and design are stitched up by hierarchies of gender, class, and aesthetic classification, yet Parker bravely calls the needle’s prick “a weapon of resistance” arguing that craft’s slow processes create space for reflection and assessment. In “educating women into the feminine ideal,” she writes, “needlework paradoxically provides the means of expression for breaking the restraints of femininity in the so-called traditional sense.”⁵ This paradox of subversion and tradition still forms the basis of the needle’s potential to rewrite the history of art. Like these sewn samplers, Holderness’s project seeks to demonstrate that knowing can be put back into doing and that we might be able to feel the historical by rehabilitating the textural qualities of archives and records.

Notes:

1. Sheila Paine, *Embroidered Textiles: Traditional Patterns from Five Continents with a Worldwide Guide to Identification* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 7.

2. Elizabeth M. Grierson, ‘Henderson, Louise Etienne Sidonie’, *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published in 2000. *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5h16/henderson-louise-etienne-sidonie> (accessed 9 August 2018)

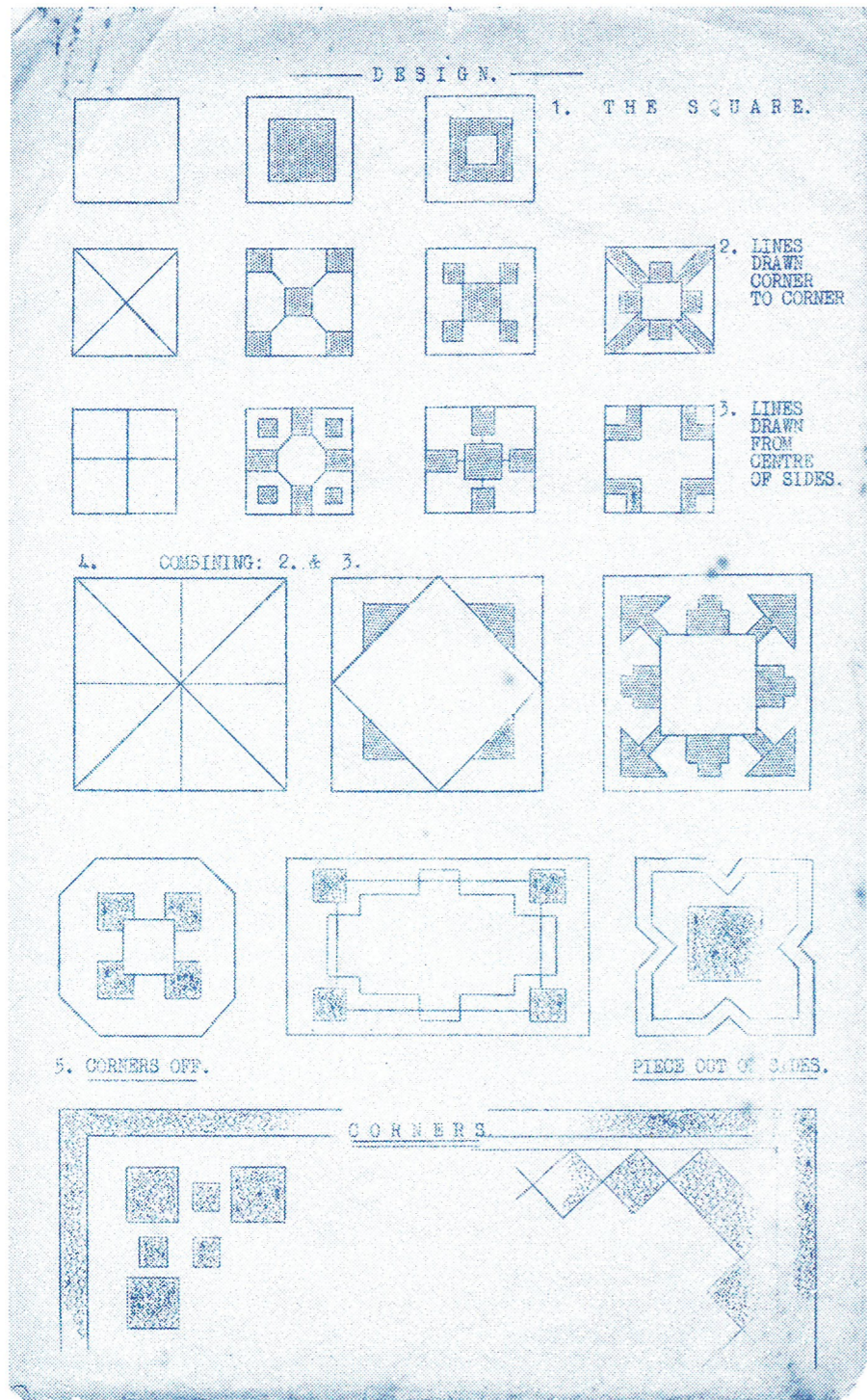
3. Ngarita Johnstone in an interview with Ken Hall, September 2007, quoted in Lara Strongman (ed.), *Art School 125: 125 years of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury*, http://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/artschool125/interviews/N_Johnstone/index.html

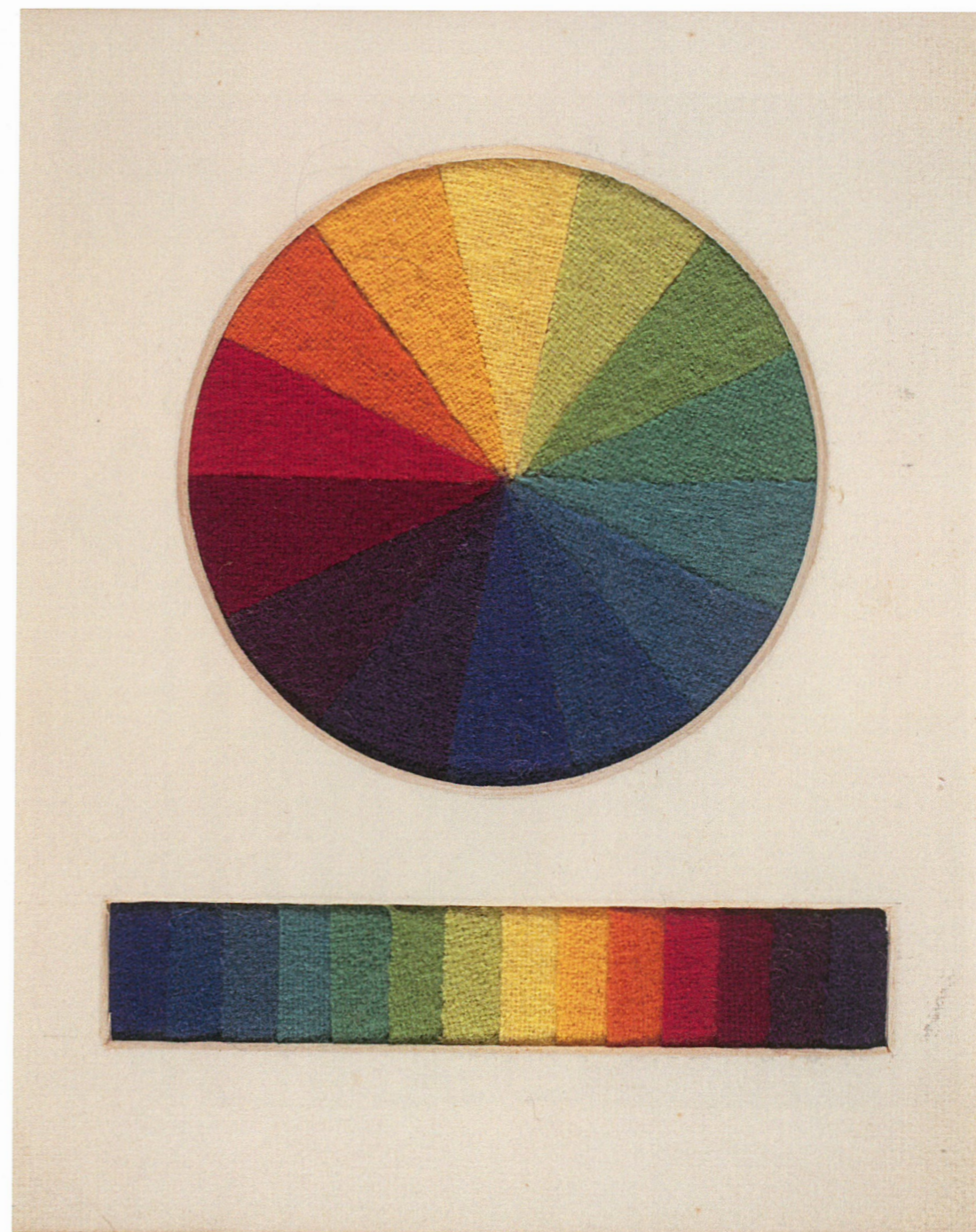
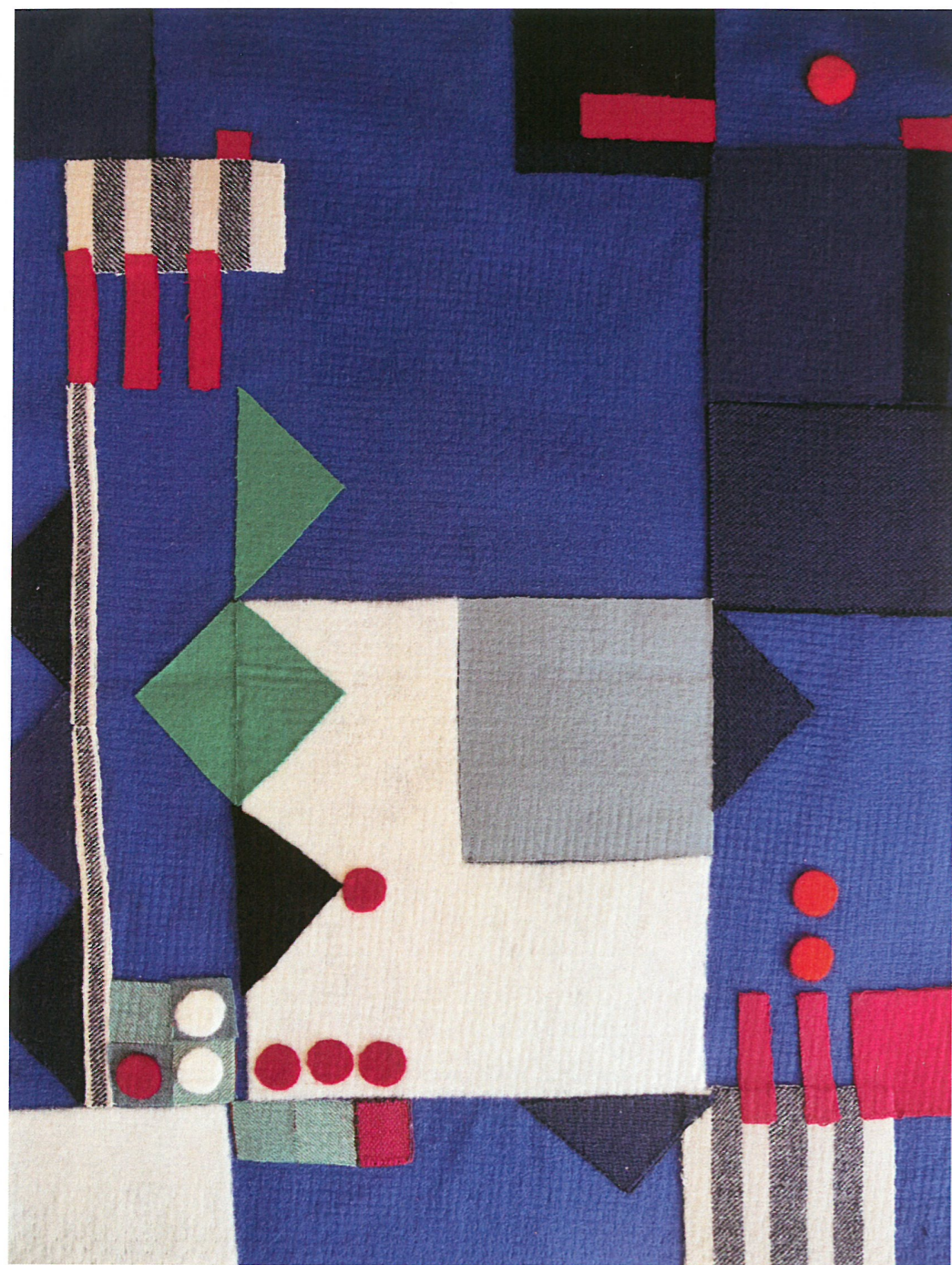
4. Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 85.

5. Parker, 5.

Acknowledgements:

Professor Jill Smith, Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland for her provision of the Sixth Form Certificate Art History prescription.

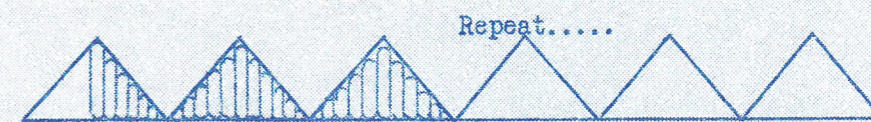




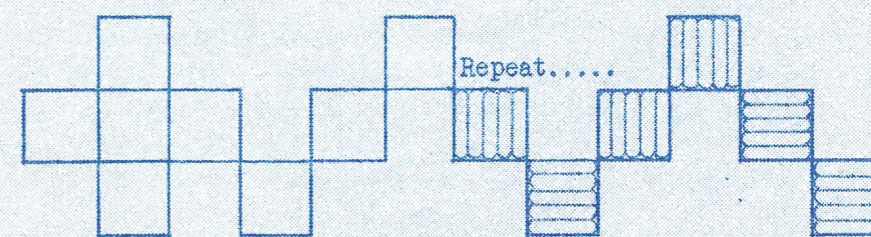


VANDYKE or PYRAMID Border: is satin stitch taken over two threads, then three, then four, five and six - then decrease to five, four three and two, working two two's between each pyramid.

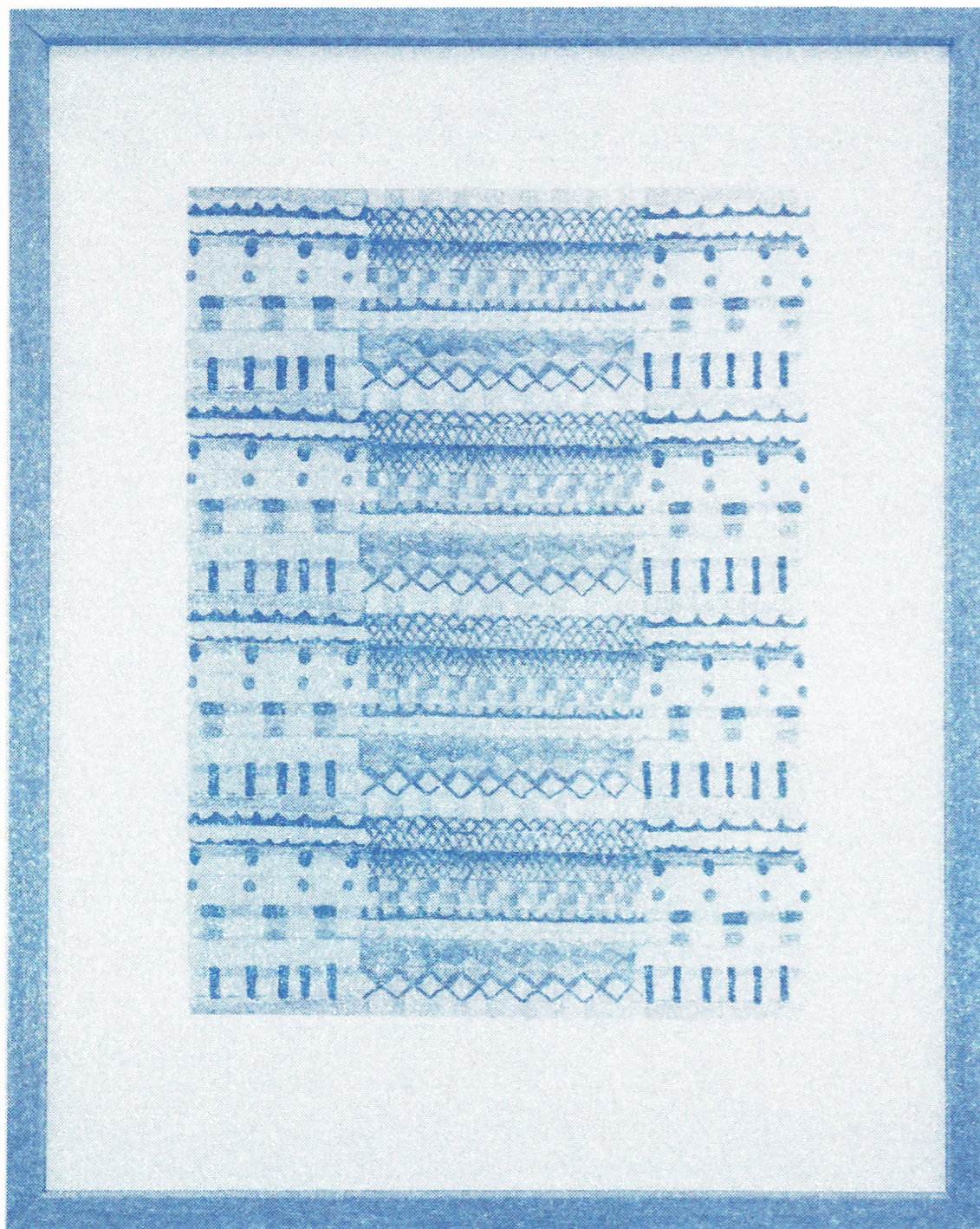
BATTLEMENT Border: is satin stitch taken over two, three or four threads and worked in groups of five stitches, first widthways, then lengthways.



VANDYKE or PYRAMID BORDER.



BATTLEMENT BORDER.

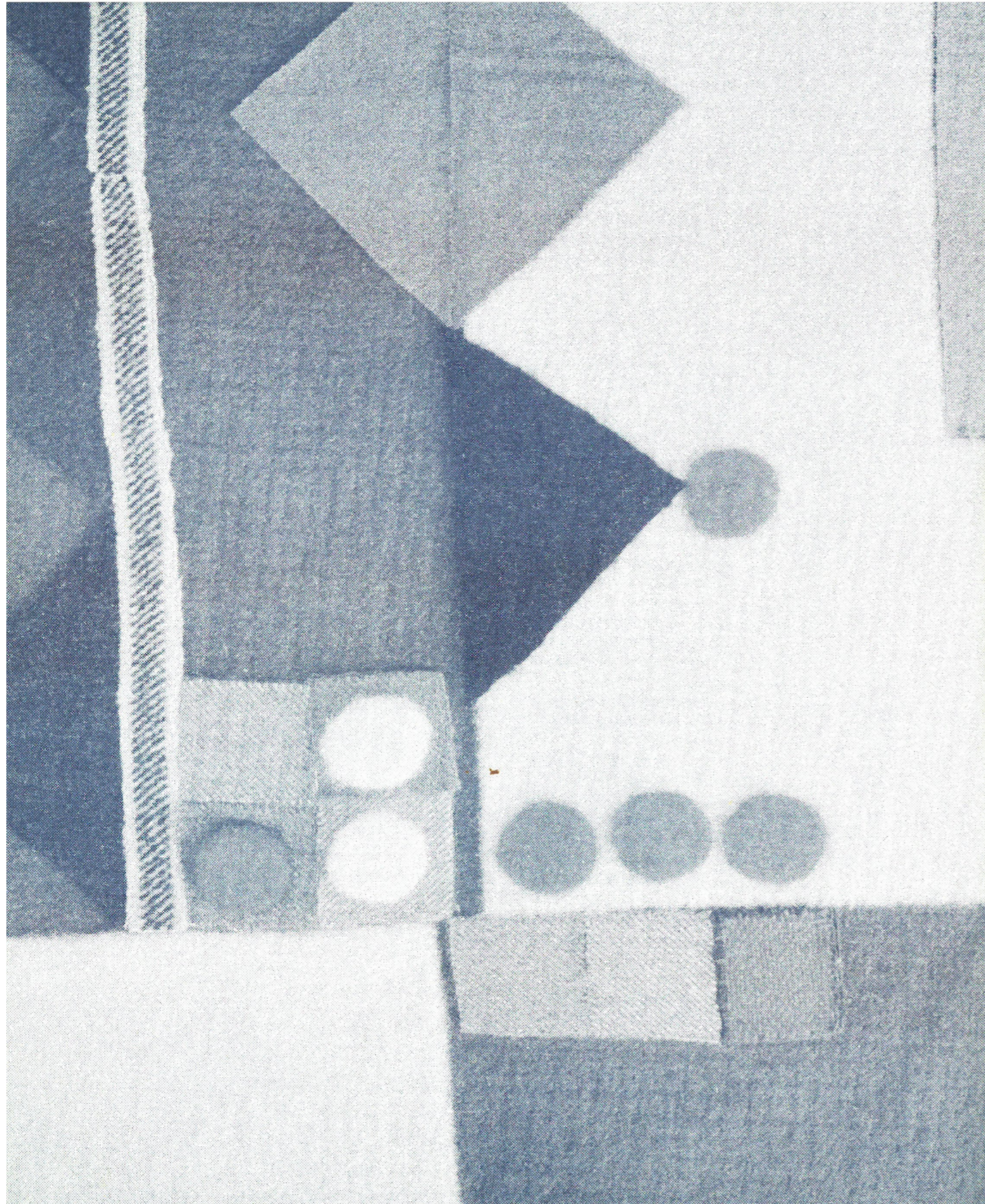


Julia Holderness completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury in 2002 and an Honours in Visual Arts from Auckland University of Technology in 2015. She is currently working towards a Visual Arts PhD in practice-led research at AUT. Titled *Ever Present Archiving: new methodologies for art histories*, Holderness develops practices of fabrication, approximation and invention to interrogate archives and their construction of art-historical narratives. Her project revisits particular epochs in New Zealand's art history and imagines their possible entanglements with international movements such as the Bauhaus. This research deliberates on the role of fiction in both the collection and interpretation of material histories, and critiques traditionally held divides between art historical scholarship and artistic fabrication. Holderness was awarded an AUT Vice Chancellor's Doctoral Scholarship and won the Glaister Ennor Graduate Art Award in 2016. Recent exhibitions include *Overlooked Details* at Bartley & Company Art, *Book covers – Textiles of the Bauhaus* at Sanderson Contemporary, *Gallery 91* for Scape Public Art, and *The Group: homewares* which was shown at Objectspace and The National. Holderness's collaborative work as Fitts & Holderness has seen her participate in exhibitions and residencies both nationally and internationally.

Linda Tyler teaches Art Writing and Curatorial Practice at the University of Auckland, and is the convenor of the Museums and Cultural Heritage Programme in The Faculty of Arts. She is currently part of the Bauhaus 100 research project investigating the impact of the Bauhaus on design education in Australasia.

List of works in publication in order of appearance :

1. Design note, Florence Akins Papers, FD1994, UC Archives, Macmillan Brown Library, Christchurch, New Zealand
2. Audrey Pearl Black, *Sampler*, c. 1940, silk and cotton embroidery on linen, UC-MBL-1350, UC Art Collection, Macmillan Brown Library, Christchurch, New Zealand
3. Julia Holderness, *Florence Weir skirt design with vandyke border (for Brigid, Act 1)*, felt and wool appliqué, 2018
4. Florence Akins, *Colour Wheel*, c.1936-1969, Ink and wool fabric on folded card, UC-MBL-1808, UC Art Collection, Macmillan Brown Library, Christchurch, New Zealand
5. Julia Holderness, *Florence Weir skirt design with battlement border (for Veronika, Act 1)*, felt and wool appliqué, 2018
6. Embroidery note, Florence Akins Papers, FD1994, UC Archives, Macmillan Brown Library, Christchurch, New Zealand
7. Julia Holderness, *Rug Sampler, pencil drawing on linen based on Gunta Stölzl's 5 Chöre (Five Choir) 1928 jacquard weaving in cotton, wool, rayon and silk*. Photograph: Vicki Piper



The Studio

Julia Holderness

With Florence Weir, Doris Lusk, Anne Hamblett,
Mollie Lawn, Max Walker, Julia Holden,
Tatyanna Meharry, Kirstin Carlin,
Richard Orjis, Erica van Zon & Emma Turner

With special thanks to the families of
Doris Lusk, Anne Hamblett and Mollie Lawn.

Exhibition supported by AUT University
School of Art & Design Doctoral Programme.



Productive arrangements

"In order to provide continued support to each other to paint and exhibit, Doris Lusk, Mollie Lawn and Anne Hamblett established an all-women's art gallery and studio in 1939 in central Ōtepoti Dunedin. The space was always filled with fresh flowers in vases and pots. Extraordinarily for their time, this group of women shared a vision that they would all become professionals with a lifetime of painting ahead of them."

Linda Tyler, 2020

I have always longed for a shared studio space. I imagine that at times it would be used as an exhibition space & a place for coming together. I can see long tables that can be reconfigured depending on the activity, with various arrangements of objects set in the middle...bowls of fruit, vases with fresh flowers, interesting fabrics. Comfortable nooks for tea-drinking & conversation. Shared bookshelves & abundant supplies set up in attractive storage. A range of plinths for still life set-ups, sculptures or the life drawing model. Space dividers, framing materials, easels... In all reality, I am probably best suited to working on my own now. Though it's good fun to imagine this other studio.

Florence Weir, 1936

"Tulips, bluebells, lilac and greenery. Was it Doris, Anne or Mollie who picked these flowers? We can probably say it was September, a spring arrangement."

"Doris once said she designed fabrics. She said they ended up in Japan, but no one knows any details, it was just a casual comment."

"...a sure touch...and a strong sense of design."

"We need to clear out our easels and get hanging our works for the exhibition. There will be a preview on the Friday."

"I remember Anne's painting *Studio Interior*. There was a table and a cushion-covered divan in the scene. Glimpses of several works hanging in the background, with the suggestion of an easel and some kind of space divider on the left. I can even recall the fashionable young couple who were delighted with their purchase of it."



Rita Angus. *Marjorie Marshall*, 1938-39/1943. Oil on canvas adhered to plywood.
Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa.

**Artist and writer
Julia Holderness
responds to
*Marjorie Marshall***

I am imagining that Rita wrote to Marjorie after her stay in Wānaka. Her cursive handwriting is difficult to read, but I can make out the following about their time together:

An escape to a room in mountain air, a friend to paint and draw with, backpacks of sandwiches, paintbrushes, and paper, tussock hill country, collecting high-country posies, a portrait nearly finished, matching brown for hair and eye colour, flicks of tassels on an orange headscarf, the lake in high-key blue, borrowed clothes, conversations in Marjorie's warm kitchen.

Julia Holderness, artwork label for
Rita Angus: New Zealand Modernist,
Te Papa Tongarewa.



The Bauhaus – alternative facts

Linda Tyler considers the work of Julia Holderness, her creation of our very own Bauhäusler, Florence Weir, and how approximations of the truth make the best lies.

Opposite: Julia Holderness, installation detail of *The Group: home-wares*, shown at Objectspace, 2016. Photo: Richard Orjis. Images courtesy of the artist.

Right: Julia Holderness and Richard Orjis, *Woman, Bauhaus Theatre Workshop*, (circa 1926), digital photograph, 2015. Cover image for *Florence & Friends: art as life*, exhibition at Flotsam & Jetsam, Auckland, 2015.

Who doesn't love the Bauhaus these days? Existing for just 14 years, from 1919 until 1933, it has had a long-lasting impact on design education worldwide. Radical angles and dotted designs, as well as plenty of rejoicing in craft skills, helped make the short-lived German school memorable. Thanks to the jackboot of National Socialism coming down on its last iteration in Berlin, its teachers and students were scattered far and wide, becoming messengers of modernism on a mission. Expect an excess of geometric homages next year, when the centenary of its founding in Weimar will be commemorated all over the world.

Julia Holderness is one New Zealand artist prepared for Bauhaus redux in 2019. She has been modestly remaking modernism for the past four years, weaving connections between the avant-garde mid-20th-century artists of her hometown of Christchurch, who exhibited as The Group from 1927 until 1977, as well as both the Bauhäuslers and their English antecedents, the Omega Workshop (1913–1919).

These movements had bloomed brightly and then were scorched by postmodernism before Holderness was born in 1980, but that eclipse of fashion only helped her recuperate her own versions of what they were, and come to terms with what they represent.

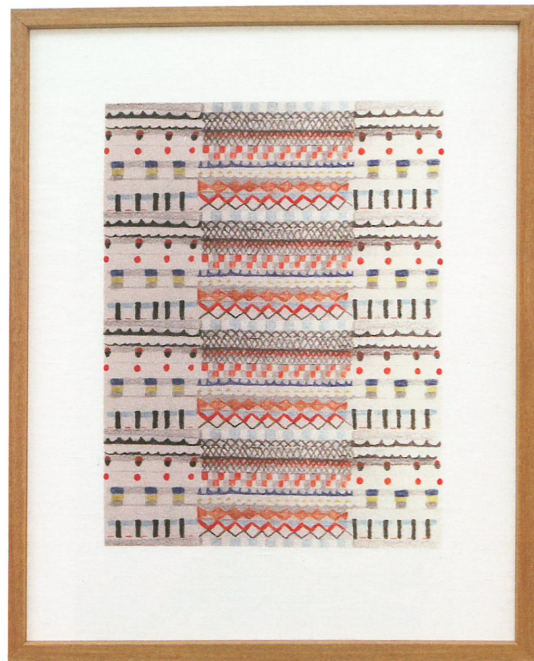
Using a combination of digital and analogue sources to blend fact with fiction, Holderness has gone looking for the overlooked. The apotheosis of these endeavours was the creation (with fellow artist Richard Orjis) of a fictional character called Florence Weir in 2015, a hitherto unknown Canterbury-born artist who had enjoyed a successful career as an expatriate interior designer in London. Associated with The Group, and known to have attended the Bauhaus weaving workshop in Dessau, Weir had conveniently left her modernist fingerprints in various key locations.

Detective work is integral to Holderness's practice. As one half of Fitts & Holderness, she worked in collaboration with Emma Fitts for nearly a decade, creating the mise-en-scène for various fictional dramatic events which they staged or filmed. Visitors to *Snoop*, shown at Artspace in 2005, had to search an office for clues relating to astral traveller Howard Sutherland. The following year, a cottage at a remote location on Banks Peninsula was the setting for *The Watchman of Okains Bay*, where a 24-hour investigation was conducted at the behest of the family of a fabricated character called Brent Dyer, supposedly after the police had closed the case in 1975.



In 2009's *Holloway Road: The Alleged Visitation by L.M.*, the duo conducted screen tests for would-be actors to participate in a ghost story set in the slightly creepy area in Wellington soon to be made infamous in Danyl McLauchlan's novel, *Unspeakable Secrets of the Aro Valley*. While on a residency together in Iceland in 2010, Fitts & Holderness made *Ása Ragnarsdóttir: Six interviews in Reykjavik* in which, emulating the style of a 'cold case' documentary, they examined the make-believe disappearance in 1997 of a young girl named *Ása Ragnarsdóttir*. Her mother was interviewed, along with her sister, the policeman who searched for her, Haraldur Sigursson, and the last people to have seen *Ása*, a local soothsayer and a jogger. All the interviewees address the camera, giving deadpan answers to questions prompted by photographs and the production of artefacts.

These filmic investigations of sinister goings-on culminated in *Operation Tully*, a specious documentary on the undercover work and disappearance of policeman Garth Mayhew, made during the artists' residency at Artspace, Sydney, in 2011. The Fitts & Holderness body of work probed a genre of forensic documentary investigation rarely explored in art, tellingly focusing on variations of 'truthiness'. Or, in their words, "the notion that the document is only a partial resource and that it can have its variants". This is a key concept that Holderness has carried forward into her solo practice.



Left: Julia Holderness, *Rug Sampler*, 2015, pencil drawing on linen based on Gunta Stölzl's *5 Chöre (Five Choirs)*, 1928, jacquard weaving in cotton, wool, rayon and silk, 440 x 340mm. Photo: Vicki Piper

Below: Julia Holderness, *Max Peiffer Watenphul, Bauhaus tapestry*, 1921, 2015, felt and wool applique, 980 x 710mm. Photo: Richard Orjis

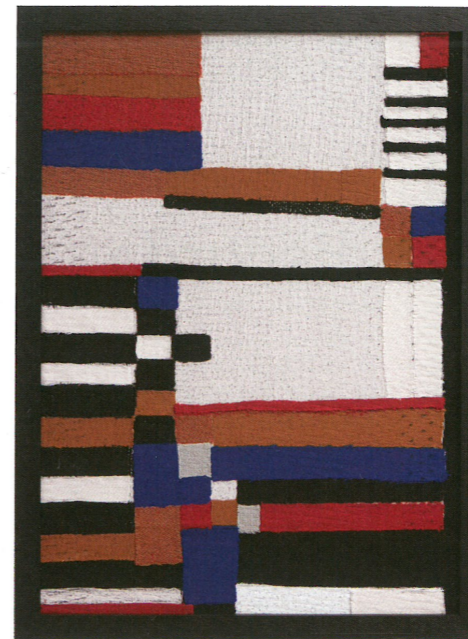
Julia Holderness met Emma Fitts at Canterbury University's School of Fine Arts where both completed their Bachelor of Fine Arts, majoring in painting (with studio instruction by Julia Morison), in 2002. They started their collaborations in Sydney while Holderness was working for Performance Space, based in Carriageworks in Eveleigh. After working in events management for alumni relations and development at the London School of Economics, Holderness returned to New Zealand in 2015 to enrol at Auckland University of Technology in a Bachelor of Arts and Design, Honours. She won the Glaister Ennor Graduate Art Award and was awarded a Vice-Chancellor's Doctoral Scholarship, which resulted in several exhibitions and the dissertation, *Art and Fiction: Fabricating social and art histories through production, approximation and invention*.

Traces of Florence Kowhai Cunningham Weir (1899–1979) first appeared in Holderness's Honours year, 2015, when textile designs which had somehow escaped from Weir's meticulously documented archive in Sussex were purportedly "discovered in the personal collection of Thomas Wild, a relative based in Auckland".

The textile designs, and a 'rediscovered' Florence Weir sketchbook became the inspiration for a range of hand-painted ceramics produced collaboratively with Richard Orjis, in which they used stuck-together bisque-ware pieces salvaged from Studio Ceramics Ltd., the last vestige of the mighty Crown Lynn manufacturers of New Lynn. The various stacked forms, comprising eggcups stacked into columns and inverted and conjoined spherical pots, were exhibited at Flotsam and Jetsam in Ponsonby, accompanied by the work of various crafty fellow travellers, construed as Friends of Florence. Florence herself was represented by a photograph styled after Erich Consemüller's 1926 photograph of a woman in a B3 club chair by Marcel Breuer, wearing an Oskar Schlemmer mask and a dress by Lis Beyer.

According to the exhibition's publicity, Florence had worked alongside fellow South Islander Frances Hodgkins (1869–1947), at the Calico Printers' Association in Manchester (and perhaps even accompanied her on her visit to the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, held in Paris in 1925). Unlike Hodgkins, Florence Weir's designs were put into production and "became popular furnishing fabrics. However, it is believed that the eight designs found in New Zealand were never commercially produced."

The construction of Florence's career proves that approximations of the truth make the best lies, and a small deviation is most easily accepted after comfortable



Julia Holderness, *Women's Work: Textile art from the Bauhaus*, 2017, wool applique, 560 x 420mm. Photo: Sam Hartnett

made by women in the weaving workshop, notably her copy of Gunta Stölzl's iconic *Five Choirs* jacquard weave wall hanging, and Max Peiffer Watenphul's tapestry of 1921. "The exactness of the replication is less important here than evoking the spirit of the era" Holderness writes in her dissertation, "the characters and their objects, their collective lifestyle."

Purity is not Holderness's aim. She offers instead a joyous cross-pollination of artists and influences across the centuries. In a recent exhibition, *Overlooked details* at Bartley + Company Art in Wellington, the legendary Florence is put into dialogue with English modernist Winifred Nicholson (1893–1981) in a stop-motion animation where colourful geometric cut-out bits of woollen fabric jump around in syncopated rhythms in a way that would have made Len Lye proud (*Florence and Winifred*, 2018, limited edition video).

Holderness points out that all her sources are second-hand: the woollen appliqué picture, *Women's Work: Textile art from the Bauhaus* (2017), is titled after the 1993 book by Sigrid Wortmann Weltge which carries this image on the cover, rather than the originary textile itself. This tactic, of referencing the reproduction, inserts its own tale into the narrative. It was Weltge's book that conclusively established that Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius had never been able to sustain his declaration of equality between "the beautiful and the strong" genders, relegating textiles as "women's work". Ironically, this was the only section of the Bauhaus that was financially successful and able to adapt designs for mass production in industrial manufactures.

For her forthcoming exhibition at the School of Fine Arts gallery at Canterbury University, Holderness will make an installation premised on the notion that Florence Weir returned to New Zealand with ideas for costumes and stage sets she gleaned in the Bauhaus theatre design workshops. These could then have been deployed by the doyenne of theatre in Christchurch Dame Ngaio Marsh (1895–1982) with fantastic results.

The invention of our very own Bauhäusler is a conceit that offers infinite scope for locally inflected variations. As Holderness writes, "Florence can be inserted into any history, any group, any movement. She is a fantasy persona, a device used to bridge various movements, periods and people, and in doing so enables further connections."

Julia Holderness has exhibitions at Ilam Campus Gallery, University of Canterbury, 5 September to 4 October 2018, and at Sanderson Contemporary, 27 November to 16 December 2018.

navigation down a well-worn path. In this case, the garden path that visitors are led down allows them to make their own discoveries of forgotten artists, mostly women, and their sometimes marginalised practices.

The ceramic works were titled with the first names of the women (and two gay men) who exhibited with The Group; Doris [Lusk], Helen [Mason], Ida [Lough], Leo [Bensemann], Louise [Henderson], Ngaio [Marsh], Rata [Lovell-Smith], Rita [Angus], Rona [Fleming], Theo [Schoon], Olivia [Spencer-Bower], Evelyn [Page], Frances [Hunt] and Juliet [Peter]. The vases, dishes and platters commemorated the achievements of those whom art history has relegated to supporting roles to the heroes of the age, such as Colin McCahon and Toss Woollaston.

"I see [these women artists] as my own art ancestors and getting to know them and the period in which they made work is the basis for this research project," Holderness wrote in her dissertation at the end of the year. Decorated with delicate colours and geometric patterns reminiscent of the styling of The Group's post-war catalogues, originally designed by Leo Bensemann (1912–1986), the artefacts presented as "Florence Weir Ceramics" were styled with a mid-century Bauhaus aesthetic.

In the installation, *Bauhaus influence in New Zealand 1947–1959 (and 1964)*, which she made in September 2015, Holderness combined documents, ceramics, digital prints, textiles, books and drawings as a facsimile archive. Prominently displayed was a perfectly scaled black-and-white painted ceramic copy of the silver and ebony teapot created by the head of the Bauhaus metal workshop Marianne Brandt (1893–1983). Holderness has also made works in response to some of the similarly iconic pieces

Ngaio Design Series | Touch & Go. (project idea, 2015)

Participating artists:

Emma Fitts
Fitts & Holderness
Richard Orjis
Kristin Carlin
Julia Holderness
Hannah Upritchard
Erica Brenton

Touch & Go

In 1929, after beginning and ending a painting practice, and before she turned her hand to the crime fiction genre, Ngaio Marsh opened a homewares shop called “Touch & Go” in London with her good friend Londoner Nelly Rhodes. This shop ran for about 18 months, over two different premises and morphed in description from a gift shop in its early days to an interiors shop. Most of the items were made by Ngaio and Nelly and have been described as ‘homemade decorative objects or ‘gift’ objects’. Only a few descriptions of the actual items exist in her autobiography and biography: “a tray decorated with lips, glasses and swirls of smoke”. Both shops - they moved to a larger one after the success of the first - were in Brompton Road, South Kensington.

In 1931 they became known as interior designers, with several repeat clients and some rather grand projects. The arrival from a friend from New Zealand, Florence Weir was integral to this. As a recent architecture graduate, Florence moved to the United Kingdom to advance her career as an interiors architect in 1925 after spending a short period at the Bauhaus School in Germany. After extended periods travelling and working in Spain, France and Italy, she then spent 18 months working for the Calico Printers’ Association in Manchester (she briefly worked alongside Frances Hodgkins in 1925), Florence moved to London, expanding her practice to architectural interiors. It is thought that she worked alongside Ngaio and Nelly because they had key London clients and networks.

A visit to Ngaio’s home in the Cashmere Hills in Christchurch (she lived there since she was a young girl, except for her visits to England) is a curious experience. The house has an interesting collection of art and objects, teemed with props from her theatre producing days and possibly the sort of items made for ‘Touch & Go’ (decoupage etc). The Group Show catalogues from this time will also be studied as a reference.

This project will create a collection of home-wares under the name Touch & Go in memory of Ngaio’s enterprise and stint as an ‘interior designer’. Each maker will be given an image from Ngaio’s home in Christchurch and the transcript of a made-up interview with Ngaio and Nelly Rhodes and Florence Weir. They will be asked to produce an image, motif, pattern or graphic interpretation. These images will then be turned into a series of homewares that might include: lamps, placemats, napkins, cushion covers, table-ware.

Linda Tyler**Julia Holderness, *Florence & Florence: Other Textile Histories***

School of Fine Arts Gallery, University of Canterbury, Christchurch,
5 September – 4 October 2018

3

Visiting the SoFA Gallery at Canterbury University fills me with happy memories of studying there in the early 1980s. The buildings were new then, and the fair-face concrete walls of its brutalist facades freshly poured. Daring exposed rafters with lighting track on the trusses were a sober modernist nod to the city’s Victorian Gothic heritage, but the design was future-focussed. If not a tabula rasa, it was a proper gallery trying to be a white cube.

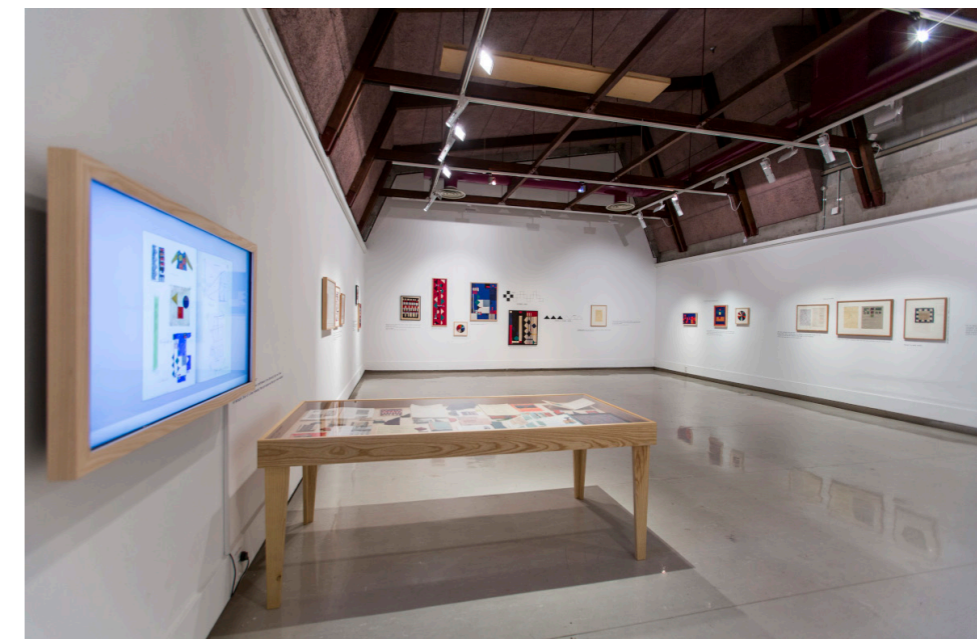


Figure 1: Installation view of Florence & Florence: other textile histories, showing digital screen with Florence Weir workbook pages, vitrine and framed works. Photograph: Duncan Shaw-Brown.

Linda Tyler, “Review: Julia Holderness, Florence & Florence: Other Textile Histories.” Context 28 (Winter 2019).

Forty years later, these four walls exude a kind of mid-century modern charm. Having survived the earthquakes relatively unscathed, the School of Fine Arts is now anointed as heritage architecture. Across town in the slowly recovering city centre, buildings rise up shining, resplendent in golden veils, clothed in corten steel decorated with perforated indigenous designs. Back in the late modern period of the twentieth century, ornament was crime, but it has undergone rehabilitation.

The nuances of this venue complement Julia Holderness's investigation into textile histories at the University of Canterbury very well. Part of a practice-led doctorate that she is completing through AUT, this is a presentation of her research into the teaching of embroidery in the mid-twentieth century at the School of Fine Arts. It is a well-designed and executed exhibition, situated in the space between the unadorned and the decorative, where pure and impure modernisms meet. Incorporating material culture from the University's own archives, and deploying an aesthetic of display based on an approximation of the Bauhaus grid, it addresses the unspoken gendering of modernism. Through her use of wall texts Holderness gives voice to a representative silenced woman artist and thereby points to the omissions and elisions of the official art historical record.

4



Figure 2: Installation view of Florence & Florence: other textile histories. Entry panel didactic and samplers from pupils of Florence Akins and Bauhaus rug samplers by Julia Holderness. Photograph: Thomas Herman.



Figure 3: Installation view of Florence & Florence: other textile histories. Samplers from pupils of Florence Akins and Bauhaus rug samplers by Julia Holderness. Photograph: Thomas Herman.

5



Figure 4: Installation view showing works based on Florence Weir costume designs, colour wheel teaching aids by Florence and textual annotations which include quotes from Florence Akins. Photograph: Thomas Herman.

This physical and conceptual space is one that the artist knows well. She is herself a 2002 Bachelor of Fine Arts graduate from Canterbury, who has built a reputation as an artist interested in the investigation of the porosity of the border between the fictive and real. As part of the duo Fitts & Holderness from 2001, she collaborated with fellow Cantabrian Emma Fitts in an art practice centred on probing unsolved disappearances. Presenting their findings in galleries such as Enjoy in Wellington, a predilection for the protocols for presenting documentation of the past was evident.



Figure 5: Sampler by one of Florence Akins' pupils, Audrey Pearl Black, Sampler, c 1940, silk and cotton embroidery on linen, UC-MBL-1350, UC Art Collection, Macmillan Brown Library, Christchurch, New Zealand



Figure 6: Julia Holderness, Rug Sampler, pencil drawing on linen based on Gunta Stolzl's 5 Chore (five Choir) 1928 jacquard weaving in cotton, wool, rayon and silk. Photograph: Vicki Piper.

Where better to look for the past than in an archive?¹ The archive in this instance is that of Florence Akins in the Macmillan Brown Library & Heritage Collections. Completing her Diploma of Fine Arts in 1931 at the beginning of Peter Simpson’s “Bloomsbury South”² era, Akins had the good fortune to be taught embroidery by that glamorous Parisienne, Louise Henderson. Only four years older than Akins, Henderson had studied at the *École de la Broderie et Dentelle de la Ville de Paris*, and taught Embroidery and Design. She shifted the Canterbury curriculum on from the Art Needlework of the Arts and Crafts movement into the modern era.³

8

Florence Akins lived to be 106. From the age of 30 until her retirement at 63 in 1969, she taught at the School of Fine Arts—continuing to mark student work until 1980—and in 1994 gave her considerable archive of textiles, teaching notes and paintings to the Macmillan Brown. Design historian Ann Calhoun interviewed Akins for her seminal study on the Arts and Crafts Movement in New Zealand⁴, and her transcripts supplied Holderness with material for putting Florence Akins’ voice into the exhibition through textual annotations to the art works on the wall. (Figure 4, Figure 5 and Figure 6)



Figure 7: Vitrine with Florence Akins teaching notes, textile ephemera and Florence Weir-derived material. Photograph: Thomas Herman.

Holderness pairs the unsung Florence Akins with Florence Kowhai Cunningham Weir⁵, a Bauhausler no less, who is Holderness’ own discovery. (For her BFA Honours degree at AUT in 2015, Holderness presented a series of ceramics based on Crown Lynn blanks attributed to Weir.) Here she interpolates pages from Weir’s workbook into a vitrine alongside Florence Akins’ design notes and Holderness’ own appliqué homages to European modernism. On the wall, works by Florence Akins and her pupils adjoin Holderness’ interpretations of Florence Weir designs for a Ngaio Marsh play in works such as *Florence Weir skirt design with Vandyke border (for Brigid, Act 1)*, 2018, felt and wool appliqué. Holderness’ coloured pencil drawing based on Bauhaus weaver Gunta Stözl’s 5 Chore (Five Choir) 1928 jacquard weaving in cotton, wool, rayon and silk is strategically placed nearby. (Figure 7)

9



Figure 8: Installation view showing works based on Florence Weir costume designs, colour wheel teaching aids by Florence Akins and textual annotations which include quotes from Florence Akins. Photograph: Thomas Herman.

Jazzy syncopations of colour bounce around the room in what appears to be a celebratory simulation of modernist style. You need to look beneath the surface to find the “other” histories of the exhibition’s title: subtle shifts in the stitching of samplers to show stylised geometrical elements, rather than the traditional emblems of nineteenth century art needlework. In this exhibition,

Holderness suggests that textiles are the subaltern of modernism, with “fine arts” occupying the higher ground in the hierarchy. It is a gendered divide, Holderness suggests, but one across which textiles, both historical and contemporary can communicate. She invites us to understand them as texts, vehicles of meaning beyond the ornamental. With needle and thread, she shows that indeed, the subaltern can speak⁶.

Contributor details:

Linda Tyler is Convenor of Museums and Cultural Heritage at the University of Auckland.

10

Notes

- 1 Holderness’ doctoral project is entitled *Ever Present Archiving: new methodologies for art histories*.
- 2 Simpson characterises Christchurch in this period as New Zealand’s creative capital; a city where artists developed a powerful synthesis of European modernist influences and an assertive New Zealand nationalism that gave mid-century New Zealand cultural life its particular shape. See Peter Simpson, *Bloomsbury South: The Arts in Christchurch 1933–1953*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2016.
- 3 Vivien Caughley, “Balance and Beauty: Louise Henderson’s Art of Embroidery and Design”, *Art New Zealand* 130, Autumn 2009, pp.60–65.
- 4 Ann Calhoun, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in New Zealand 1870–1940*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000.
- 5 Florence Weir has her own Facebook page where it is explained that “Florence Kohai Cunningham Weir was a Bauhaus trained New Zealand interior architect and a pioneer of Modernist homewares. 1899–1979”, https://www.facebook.com/pg/FlorenceWeir/about/?ref=page_internal (Accessed 17 July 2019).
- 6 In her 1988 essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Gayatri Spivak describes how western cultures investigate other cultures and points out the ethical problems of investigating a different culture base on “universal” concepts and frameworks.

Florence & Friends

**Flotsam & Jetsam, 84 Ponsony Road, Grey Lynn
26 September – 11 October 2015**

Florence Kowhai Cunningham Weir was a New Zealand born interior architect and a pioneer of modernist home-wares. 1899 - 1979. Born in Christchurch, most of her life was spent in the UK where she built a successful career as an interior architect. Florence is the only New Zealander who studied at the Bauhaus in Germany, on a post-graduate visit in 1926*. Recently, some textile designs have been discovered in the personal collection of Thomas Wild, a relative based in Auckland. It is not known why they were sent back to New Zealand and excluded from her meticulously preserved estate in Sussex. Florence was also a textile designer for a brief period in 1926, working at the Calico Printers’ Association, a prestigious textile company in Manchester. Interestingly she worked alongside Frances Hodgkins at this time, who also spent a brief period there. Some of Weir’s designs became popular furnishing fabrics. However, it is believed that the eight designs found in New Zealand were never commercially produced.

The range of ceramics exhibited are faithful reproductions from recently discovered sketchbook designs. They have been made and hand-painted at the site of the old Crown Lynn Studio in Auckland, New Zealand.

Florence Weir Ceramics

Vases

Doris \$140
Helen \$165
Ida \$160
Leo \$140
Louise \$130
Ngaio \$175
Olivia \$125
Rata \$130
Rita \$130
Rona \$140
Theo \$130

Dishes

Olivia \$30
Rose \$20 (stack of 5 with tile \$85)

Platters

Evelyn \$120
Frances \$150
Juliet \$130

Ordering

All pieces are bespoke and are made to order. Due to the nature of the hand-painted glazing process, no two pieces will be exactly the same. For ordering, retail and media enquiries, please email florenceweirdesign@gmail.com | Julia +64 21 227 209 / Richard +64 21 417 409

*Not all this information can be verified.

& Friends...

Works in foyer (left to right)

1. Steve Lovett / A Last Backward Glance / ink on paper / ed 3 / 560 x 760mm / 2015 / \$300
2. Oscar Rune / Llama / acrylic on canvas / 1934 / NFS
3. Julia Holderness / Bauhaus rug on linen / digital print on fabric / 2015 / \$200
4. Richard Orjis / Disc / ceramic / 2014 / \$850 / courtesy of Melanie Roger Gallery

Works in room (left to right)

1. Emma Fitts / Glove on the Handle / 2015 / leather, velvet, brass / 350 x 260 x 12 mm / \$750 / courtesy of Melanie Roger Gallery
2. Emma Fitts (UK) / Headband Through the Strap / 2015 / leather, velvet, brass / 370 x 130 x 10 mm / \$750 / courtesy of Melanie Roger Gallery
3. Hannah Upritchard (UK) / hair combs / bronze / small \$100 / large \$130
Mackintosh earrings / silver with fine silver plate / \$80 (matt and lustre available)
Mackintosh necklaces / silver, brass, gold plate / \$135
4. Kirsten Dryburgh / Bauhaus Teapots / glazed earthenware / 2015 / small \$90, large \$120
5. Gavin Hurley / Still life with Bones / 1998 / Oil on Linen / 400 x 300 mm / NFS / courtesy of Melanie Roger Gallery
6. Kristy Gorman / Elevation / 2013 / ink on paper / 350 x 280 mm / \$1250 / courtesy of Melanie Roger Gallery
7. Greta Grossman (US) / Gräshoppa Floor lamp / 1948 / Steel and Aluminium / 1255 x 435 mm / \$1630 / courtesy of Cult Design
8. George Hamilton / Forest Study 111 / 2008 / Indian ink on paper / NFS
9. Kirsten Carlin / Untitled (Painting for Christchurch) / 2014 / watercolour on paper / 405 x 325 mm / \$1500 / courtesy of Melanie Roger Gallery
10. Christopher Duncan / Untitled / 2015 / merino & silk / hand-woven / 400 x 600 mm / \$300
11. Erica van Zon / The Wash #1 / 2014 / tapestry / 340 x 285mm / \$950 / courtesy of Melanie Roger Gallery

Spring Blossom**ANNE HAMBLETT**

Oil on board, 1939

Collection of Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, purchased 2020

“An outstanding student at the Dunedin School of Art from 1934–1937, Anne Hamblett (1915–1993) became an accomplished painter of landscapes, portraits and still life compositions who exhibited her work at the Otago Art Society and with the Wellington Sketch Club to considerable acclaim. At this time, many of the male art students were enlisted to serve abroad in the Second World War. In order to provide continued support to each other to paint and exhibit, Doris Lusk, Mollie Lawn and Anne Hamblett established an all-women’s art gallery and studio above the UFS Dispensary in Princes Street¹ Dunedin in 1939. The space was always filled with fresh flowers in vases² and pots, and these were a favourite subject for Anne.”³

Linda Tyler

“the time when she was a practicing artist in Dunedin, sharing a studio with friends, earning money drawing specimens at the Medical School and attending art school where she met my father, Colin McCahon.”⁴

Victoria Carr

1. We have established the Lawn/Lusk/Hamblett studio was probably on Moray Place. Peter Entwistle thought it might be above where Moray Gallery is now. The studio above the UFS Dispensary on Princes Street housed a larger group, which included Lawn, Lusk and Hamblett, and also Colin McCahon, Max Walker and Morris Kershaw. This studio preceded the all-women’s space.

2. I see the same vase here that is featured in Doris Lusk’s *Flower Study*.

3. Linda Tyler, exhibition information included on Michael Lett’s gallery website, accessed 3 October, 2020.

4. Victoria Carr’s (Anne Hamblett’s daughter) essay in the publication accompanying *A Table of One’s Own: the creative life of Anne McCahon*, Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, p17.

Replica of vase in *Mixed Flowers* (Doris Lusk) and *Spring Blossom* (Anne Hamblett)**EMMA TURNER**

Earthenware, 2021

Studio Interior

ANNE HAMBLETT

c.1939–1940, [exact materials and whereabouts unknown]

Studio Window

ANNE HAMBLETT

c.1939–1940, [exact materials and whereabouts unknown]

Another two works Hamblett exhibited in the 1940 Otago Arts Society exhibition were not able to be located for curator Linda Tyler's exhibition on Anne Hamblett at Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery in 2016. Tyler infers that these interior scenes, titled *Studio Interior* and *Studio Window*, "seem to be celebrations of having an independent space to paint in."¹ The studio featuring as subject matter shows how significant it was to the women.

(Julia Holderness)

"Studio Window" had this wonderful collection of vases sitting in front of a small window framed with blue curtains. Outside the window was the suggestion of tall city buildings.

Florence Weir

1. From Linda Tyler's essay in the publication accompanying *A Table of One's Own: the creative life of Anne McCahon*, Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, p36.

Pink Roses

DORIS LUSK

Oil on board, c.1935
Collection of Jancis Meharry

Flattened green dining room chair in the background. Or could it actually be a striped wallpaper? This painting can be seen in the photo of Doris in the studio – hanging to the right at the back. Her first solo exhibition. The teacup reminds me of Poole. Pink and grey, but the fine black rim isn't Poole. Jancis, Doris's daughter, has the painting in her bedroom in Christchurch now. Three pink roses in a small, brown pottery vase.

(Julia Holderness)

It's the sort of arrangement I put on the dresser in my guest bedroom when a friend comes to stay. Speaking of which, Joan is coming to stay with me next month. She wants to spend a few weeks in the studio. I must clear the wardrobe. Her ensembles always inspire me. Such a colourist!

Florence Weir

Untitled (Still life)

MOLLIE LAWN

Watercolour, 1940
Collection of Kershaw family

“It was a wonderful period. We’d have meetings and chats around the fireplace and solve all the world’s problems. It might sound like we were just socialising but it was actually a fairly frugal existence where a lot of art was produced.”¹

Mollie Lawn

“Fun then consisted of drinking a little, listening to records and talking.”² Jazz records and Jazz apples (past their best) turning a little orange-yellow, pale yellow teapot thrown by a friend. They drank a lot of tea back then. Brown flask with curved handle. Mollie Lawn was born in 1919 and attended Dunedin School of Art for two years from 1937 where she met Anne Hamblett and Doris Lusk. It appears that the studio days were a very happy time for Mollie. As a student she was also invited to join the Otago Art Society and exhibited in their annual exhibitions. She later married the photographer Morris Kershaw.

(Julia Holderness)

1. *Artist Profile: Mollie Kershaw*, Dunedin Star Weekender, July 24, 1994.

2. Peter Entwistle’s quote that records Anne Hamblett’s sister Majorie talking about parties and happy days in the Pharmacy studio. Majorie also “mentioned staying up late there and going out to watch the dawn at Balmacewen.” Entwistle interviewed her for *The Birth of Modernism in New Zealand Painting, 1999*, unpublished manuscript, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago.

Still Life Colour Study (after “Mixed Flowers” by Doris Lusk)

TATYANNA MEHARRY

Ceramic beads, 2021

Tatyanna Meharry’s *Still Life Colour Study* explores the tones and hues found in *Mixed Flowers* by her grandmother Doris Lusk. The beads are made with gathered materials from the Canterbury landscape to create a focus on locality that connects Doris’s early shared studio in Dunedin with her later one in Christchurch. Tatyanna told me she has strong memories of this Christchurch studio, especially the ceramic fragments that littered every surface. She also remembers many ice-cream rewarded trips around Banks Peninsula with her siblings on Sunday afternoons, so that Doris could paint on the run.

(Julia Holderness)

“There were two black lacquered containers on her bedroom chiffonier filled with coloured beads. I recall how humble Doris was in both her manner and attire. Her only vanity seemed to be these strands of non-precious beads, collected as her own bookmarks of place and time, worn with a particular shade of red lipstick.”

Tatyanna Meharry

Studio bench for Julia Holderness**HARLEY PEDDIE**

Plywood and salvaged rimu, 2020

Weaving with ribbon (depicted in Florence Weir studio portrait)**ANN MACARTHUR** 1960s**Metal paintbox containing pallet (owner unknown)**

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Given 2011 by Joan and Nylda Gooseman.

Doris Lusk sketch bookWatercolour and pencil on paper
Courtesy of the Doris Lusk Foundation**Watercolour designs****JULIA HOLDERNESS** 2020**Florence Weir ceramic vase (red, white)**Fabricated by **RICHARD ORJIS** and**JULIA HOLDERNESS** 2015**Various ceramics****JULIA HOLDERNESS** 2012-2015**Felted wool textile (blue)****JULIA HOLDERNESS** 2020**Impromptu cushion-sofa****JULIA HOLDERNESS**

Various found and printed fabrics (digital prints on linen), 2021

“There was another exhibition in August when Doris Lusk had her first solo show in the all-woman studio in Moray Place. There is a surviving photograph of the exhibition with the artist, rather severely dressed in her role now as part-time teacher at a private girls’ school, and committed avant-garde painter and intellectual. She sits on an impromptu cushion-sofa, her hands crossed, her expression serious, while a self-portrait¹ on an adjacent wall shows her in a similar pose, but dressed in more stylish tweeds.

Someone has taken pains to record the artist and the occasion. The photograph is a little over-composed for a modern taste but it is characteristic of such things then. The show was well received. *Art in New Zealand* commented the exhibition ‘provoked much interest’; that ‘There is much breadth of treatment in Miss Lusk’s work and a strong sense of design...’ It said ‘That Miss Lusk has produced such strong and attractive work this early in her career augurs well for future exhibitions.’²”

Peter Entwistle³

1. This painting is in fact a portrait of Anna McLeod (see the black and white photograph of Doris standing in front of the painting).

2. *Art in New Zealand*, p20.

3. Peter Entwistle, *The Birth of Modernism in New Zealand Painting*, 1999, unpublished manuscript, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago, p50.

Still life fruit

“Mollie brought in some lovely looking pears today. I’ve been mainly painting flowers, but I may try one with fruit. I will do some drawings first. Mollie often combines fruit with ceramic vessels. We must remember to eat the pears before they turn...”

It might be nice to note that during their student days over the Summer months, Doris (and maybe the others too) had fruit-picking jobs around Central Otago.

(Julia Holderness)

The Pear

ERICA VAN ZON

Clay, acrylic, gouache, 2014
Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Old Lemon with Peel

ERICA VAN ZON

Clay, acrylic, gouache, 2014
Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Flatto

ERICA VAN ZON

Clay, acrylic, gouache, 2014
Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Archives & Resources

Catalogue (works list) for solo exhibition by DORIS LUSK, 1940. Hocken Collections.

Sketch of Mollie Lawn seated, DORIS LUSK, pencil on paper. Courtesy of the Doris Lusk Foundation.

Watercolour, KIRSTIN CARLIN, 2021.

Christmas card, DORIS LUSK, watercolour on paper. Courtesy of the Doris Lusk Foundation.

Photographs of Doris Lusk in the studio, EDWARD ARTHUR PHILLIPS. Courtesy of the Doris Lusk Foundation.

Photographs of the studio, EDWARD ARTHUR PHILLIPS. Courtesy of the Doris Lusk Foundation.

Photographs of Doris with her portrait of Anna McLeod, EDWARD ARTHUR PHILLIPS. Courtesy of the Doris Lusk Foundation.

Reproduction of Leo Bensemann’s *Untitled (imaginary portrait on cloth)* in Caroline Otto’s *Leo Bensemann: Portraits, masks & Fantasy Figures*, 2005, page 31.

Study for Florence Weir studio portrait, JULIA HOLDEN, 2021.

Sketches and design ephemera, FLORENCE WEIR.

Woodblock print of a vase of flowers and a dog, DORIS LUSK, ink on paper, Courtesy of the Doris Lusk Foundation.

Photograph of “Doris Lusk with a self portrait in the studio at Moray Place above Marjery Mills dress shop, Dunedin.” Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Doris Lusk Foundation.

Photograph of “The Old Barn, Max Walker, Mollie Lawn, Doris Lusk, Don Reid and Anne Hamblett.” Photographer unknown, 1937. Courtesy of the Doris Lusk Foundation.

Doris Lusk sketch books (floral images), watercolour and pencil on paper, dates various.

Folder of Drawings and Prints. Courtesy of the Doris Lusk Foundation.

Still Life Colour Study (after “Mixed Flowers” by Doris Lusk), TATYANNA MEHARRY, ceramic beads, 2021.

Photograph of Anne Hamblett in the publication *A Table of One’s Own: the creative life of Anne McCahon*, Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, 2016.

Another Exile Paints a Spring Portrait of Katherine Mansfield
(for Eric McCormick)

Riemke Ensing

There are all these lines
without words telling you a whole
story. The portrait is a yellow table
a ginkgo leaf shaped fan you think
might smell of sandalwood, a paperweight
some flying sheets of paper and a Chinese
vase of 'yellow-grey, 2 blues and brown'
curving itself round mountains and the wide open
branches of trees looking up river. Also an apple
hgalved, on a plate with knife and rose. Maybe
there's a cat asleep beside the blue cup. Certainly
a teapot (and you fill in the cake from the corner shop).
Everything is luminous and shines. Green
makes a slight impression on the wind
flowing in the way sky runs
through the open window snaring the light
on a jug of jonquils catching fire
at the edge of spring.

And there's your *still-life portrait*
landscape in a figure.

This poem, based on an imagined encounter between Frances Hodgkins and Katherine Mansfield, was published in Riemke Ensing, *The 'K.M.' File and other poems with Katherine Mansfield*, Christchurch & Melbourne: Hazard Press, 1993, whence is it reprinted with permission. The author read it at the end of the Hodgkins '97 symposium.

(guess who)

(yes, you've got it,
Frances Hodgkins)

- | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Dieppe, 1959 (section of) | 29. Some of Us, the late | 58. Black Scraffito Vase |
| 2. Tiles, Toulouse. | 30. Painting No. 15 | 59. Pot Stand |
| 3. The Red Vase | 31. Brown Painting | 60. Ash box |
| 4. Hydrangeas | | 61. Sugar Bowl |
| 5. Flower Piece | 32. The Group Show Catalogue cover, 1947 | 62. Ashtray |
| 6. Jug | 33. Ceramics Group | 63. Small cloths, packeted singly |
| 7. Vase (blue-grey) | 34. Folded Form | 64. Wall hanging |
| 8. Raisin dish | 35. Three Forms | 65. Set of Food Dishes |
| 9. Cut back Macrocarpa | 36. Two Necked Form | 66. Kowhai vase |
| 10. Fish Rock | 37. Black Flowers (litho) | 67. Small vase |
| 11. Volcanic Harbour 2 | 38. Collection (oil) | 68. Wall rug |
| 12. Boats, Island Bay | 39. The Group Show Catalogue cover, 1961 | 69. Wool rug |
| 13. Watermelon | 40. Napkin rings | 70. Floor rug |
| 14. Woman with two plates | 41. Four mugs with black saucers and handles | 71. Rag rug |
| 15. Still Life | 42. Three chair-backs | 72. Wall hanging |
| 16. Idlewild Airport | 43. Set of 8 Dinner Mats | 73. Composition in yellow |
| 17. Artichokes | 44. Textile for a table lamp | 74. April Morning |
| 18. French Bay | 45. Platters | 75. Coromandel |
| 19. Sketches for a Residence in Summer | 46. Ceramic Form I | 76. Bealey Landscape |
| 20. Flag Image | 47. Ceramic Form II | 77. Monterey Landscape |
| 21. Two shapes, The Group Show Catalogue, 1964 | 48. Ceramic Form III | 78. Edith |
| 22. Study in Oils No. 6 | 49. Floor plan for a two bedroom house | 79. Nut Bowl |
| 23. Self portrait | 50. Floor plan for a Garden studio (EF for OSB) | 80. Jug |
| 24. Small compartment with lines | 51. 'High Summer' cushion | 81. Tile |
| 25. Straight and Curved Edges | 52. 'Cloudy With Bright Intervals' cushion | 81. Bowl |
| 26. Drifting Apart | 53. 'Morning Cloud' cushion | 82. Blue teapot |
| 27. Launching into Space | 54. Plate | 83. Covered Vase |
| 28. Uprising | 55. Sherry Jar | 84. Abstract No. 1 |
| 29. Sudden Move | 56. Punch bowl | 85. Abstract No. 2 |
| 28. Design for a wall rug | 57. Branch Pot | 86. Abstract No. 3 |

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Any artwork and imagery that is part of the project has not been attributed to Julia Holderness or Florence Weir as I do not wish to assign authorship. Sometimes ‘Florence Weir’ will appear in artwork titles. All artworks by other artists are attributed and have been labelled accordingly. Many thanks to the artists who have given me permission to include images of their artworks and projects. Also thank you to the various professionals, foundations, galleries and agencies that have assisted me with this copyright process.

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