

Call for Papers

Material Histories: Networks of Women and Art in Cornwall

Seminar for Tate Research Centre: Creative Communities

Saturday 20 June 2015

Borlase Smart Room, Porthmeor Studios, St Ives, Cornwall

Deadline for abstracts: Monday 27 April 2015



Keynote speakers

Artist **Linder Sterling** in conversation with
Professor Dawn Ades CBE, University of Essex

Panel chair

Dr Sarah Victoria Turner, The Paul Mellon Centre for
Studies in British Art

Linder, *Child of the Mantic Stain*, 2015. Acrylic on magazine page. © the artist

On 13 March 1950, the composer Priaulx Rainier wrote to her close friend Barbara Hepworth: 'There are moments in life when meetings can be turning points. One may perhaps have little intercourse later but the time has been taken, the significant germination continues an inevitable process of development.' This one-day Tate Research seminar *Material Histories: Networks of Women and Art in Cornwall* seeks to explore how connections between women, such as Rainier and Hepworth, have shaped artistic legacies in Cornwall over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These connections are often characterised by creativity, friendship, patronage, community, travel, dialogue, care and support, and have had significant impacts upon how art is made, understood and displayed. Today, these connections continue to be felt in the places and institutions – both in Cornwall and elsewhere – through which art is created, experienced and researched.

Many of these histories, however, have remained peripheral to narratives and displays. As Shari Benstock has written of the marginalisation of women from the canon of literary modernism in her seminal study of women's networks in Paris, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900–1940* (1986): 'In rediscovering the lives and works of these women, however, I also confronted the ways in which our working definitions of Modernism – its aesthetics, politics, critical principles, and poetic practices – and the prevailing interpretations of the Modernist experience had

excluded women from its concerns.' What Benstock's study achieves is a remapping of modernist Paris as seen through the networks of women writers and artists of the period. This seminar likewise aims to take a forward-looking approach by considering whether connections or communities between women can form an alternative reimagining of the networks surrounding art in Cornwall.

Additionally, the seminar seeks to explore the continued impact of these networks today for contemporary artists, institutions and others working in heritage or research. The seminar keynote speakers, Linder Sterling and Professor Dawn Ades, will discuss their shared interest in the surrealist artist Ithell Colquhoun, whose writings and 'mantic stain' paintings have stimulated Linder in the creation of new works, including her experimentation with acrylic pigment on found magazine images and the development of a new ballet commission. The seminar will also include an alternative tour of St Ives by Jeanie Sinclair (Falmouth University / Tate St Ives).

We invite current or recently completed PhD candidates across the humanities and social sciences to propose abstracts for 15-minute papers. Proposals that highlight women's relationships or provide engaging comparisons are particularly welcome.

Papers might investigate the relationships, connections and practices of women artists, networkers and gallerists, including (but not restricted to): artists Eileen Agar, Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Sandra Blow, Romaine Brooks, Ithell Colquhoun, Gluck, Barbara Hepworth, Rose Hilton, Frances Hodgkins, Laura Knight, Jeanne Du Maurier, Margaret Mellis, Marlow Moss, Winifred Nicholson, Dod Procter and Marianne Stokes, and others who combined careers and family life such as Elizabeth Forbes, Mary Scott and Monica Wynter; architects Jane Drew and Sadie Martin; composers including Priaulx Rainier; ceramicists Janet Leach and Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie; writers Daphne Du Maurier, Cindy Nemser, E.H. Ramsden and Virginia Woolf ; gallerists Elena Gaputyte, Kay Gimpel, Nicolette Gray, Martha Jackson and Kathleen Watkins; and patrons including Margaret Gardiner.

Subjects are not restricted to discussions of art in St Ives, but should either relate to an artist who was associated with Cornwall for a time or provide context to the theoretical or historical underpinnings of the seminar. Possible topics include:

- Relationships between women and the creation of networks of exchange
- The role of conversation, dialogue and co-production and material appropriation and quotation
- The spaces of production, contact and display, including studio, home, art school and gallery
- The role of financial support, patronage, custodianship and gatekeeping, as well as friendship, hospitality, families and care
- The changing ideas of family and how this was negotiated or represented in women's work
- The gendering of style, dress and presentation in photography, press and film, and in the language used by artists and critics
- The gendering of 'St Ives' and the production of space

- The role of women in the production of local, national and international artistic histories and legacies
- Connections between women across time and place facilitated through materials, objects and technologies
- Institutional responsibilities and legacies, and the role of archives and oral histories as repositories of alternative histories
- The intersection of theoretical debates on gender, networks, mobility and modernity
- Interdisciplinary approaches to women artists, moving across fine art, ceramics, literature, music, film and dance, including reflective comparisons
- The role of formalist art histories for examining relationships between women artists across media and place
- Signs of gender and the production of gendered and queer icons for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries
- The generation of new legacies through contemporary artists' work and the founding of new museums such as The Hepworth Wakefield
- The impact of artist residency programmes in Cornwall on creating new networks and legacies for women artists today
- The presence of women artists in museum collections, display and exhibitions, which might include recent or current exhibitions of Barbara Hepworth (Tate Britain) or Emily Carr (Dulwich Picture Gallery).

Please email abstracts of up to 250 words and a short biography to the convenors, Helena Bonett and Rachel Smith, at helena.bonett@tate.org.uk and rachel.smith@tate.org.uk by Monday 27 April 2015. We are open to proposals for presentations that use alternative methods or technologies. Seminar speakers will be invited to a midsummer supper on Saturday 20 June and a field trip on Sunday 21 June. A contribution towards the costs of travel and accommodation will be provided. The seminar will also include a poster session; please get in touch if you would like to present in this format.

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and The Barns-Graham Charitable Trust

