Future Feminist Archive

EXHIBITION, 1979 MARCH RECONSTRUCTION + FEMINIST ARCHIVES
CURATED BY JO HOLDER & CATRIONA MOORE

Archives matter. The humanitarian values of archival care and civic reckoning resonate alongside grim reminders of destroyed heritage around the world, telling us yet again that the power and politics of archival memory determine history's winners and losers. Archival memory is never a question of the past; for it confirms what counts as knowledge, right now and in the future.

Artists know this. Contemporary art's much-touted 'historical turn' draws upon feminist thought and action to intervene and enliven the repositories of history and memory. The artistic canon is itself a prestigious and hierarchising form of archivisation, and women have fought long and hard for more diverse and inclusive exhibitions and purchases, public art commissions and related employment opportunities.

Decades on, feminism has itself generated a mass of archival materials. But what happened to those lettsen or silkscreen Witchworks posters you once pinned to your bedroom wall? Where are those old demo snapshots and badges? Do you now wish that you'd interviewed and recorded your mum, aunty or grandmother? What valuable herstories lurk in your shelves or filing cabinets? Much of feminism's archival material is vulnerable, as it was cheaply improvised and predated the digital revolution. It is important to combine online archivisation with the collection and care for analogue materials not found in our mainstream cultural archives, just as most women artists struggle to find a prominent place on the Net.

Please join the open-ended Future Feminist Archive project, which kicked off in 2015, forty years after the 1975 International Women's Year and those pioneering exhibitions and actions promoting Australian women's art. Despite this, the subsequent United Nations call for a Women's Decade and the often-chanted slogan of 'A Life Not Just A Year', it was clear that important materials were scattered and disappearing. We started to commission artist-researchers to work with hidden, under-appreciated or inaccessible activist histories. Our case studies revealed the need to prioritise non-metropolitan archives, as many regional artists have a faint digital footprint, and regional archives are often precarious. The goal is to create communities of interest in metropolitan and regional areas to foster counter-histories to the narrative of 'diminishment', just as the (often voluntary) building and keeping of local archives, libraries, galleries, museums and keeping places stress the need to connect and communicate outwards to the world.

This exhibition is dedicated to the 1938 and 1979 Wollongong Marchers, and their legacy of diverse yet united sisterhood!

8/3/1979 / 8/3/2019

Wollongong Art Gallery is a service of Wollongong City Council and receives assistance from the NSW Government through Create NSW. Wollongong Art Gallery is a member of Regional and Public Galleries of NSW.

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The report of cooperation! Over 30 young women from local schools joined the 1979 IWD lunchbox to hear Dr Winifred Mitchell speak on 'Women in the Coalfields', and about 200 people stepped out along the traditional May Day route from Lang Park (South Bank) in 1980. Over 1,000 people stepped out along the traditional May Day route. Over 1,000 people stepped out along the traditional May Day route and over 1,000 people stepped out along the traditional May Day route.
of The Depression hit home, and women marched in posters and broadsheets. 

7. Ibid p.8

unpaid…') by the Sydney activist Joyce Stephens (1928-2014). It has been often used in feminist flyers, open statement ‘We will march because …’4. The tumble of

opened its arms wide with the present? Well, yes. The herstory of one key event — the Day archives contain strategic and useful lessons for the

gallery to seek other social spaces. Art can be a sharp tool

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw.5 What does this term mean

the captive housewives, went to meetings.”7 Housewives, “all expectations”, wrote one of the organisers, the Russian

Mercury

on the South Coast  in the Bicentennial year of 1988. Today

inform women (again in all community languages) of the role,

devise and promote the ACTU Working Women’s Charter to

of police management of such cases and won the rape crisis

operative creed of ‘Each for All and All for Each’ — translated in

some men marched in creative disorder to claim a breadth of

activism and engagement with issues facing Australia, and indeed the world. The women, meeting every quarter, would draw up a series of resolutions that they would

act upon by a variety of methods. One was to write and post their ‘resolution’ to the parties involved requesting clarification or change to policy and action. The women

would protest in the streets holding aloft signs and placards and hold events and stalls to raise funds for their families.

One ‘resolution’ that stood out to me, when looking through the archival records, was the Women’s Auxiliary members supporting the Gurung people in 1964 during the War

Hill walk off. They lobbied the Australian Governor-General and the Administrator of the Northern Territory and raised money to assist the strikers. Another ‘resolution’ was

sent, by telegram, to the President of France, demanding that the French Government stop atomic testing in the Pacific, in support of

their Pacific neighbours.

These new posters recall the campaigns of the past using the screen-printed blends and tropes of the 1980’s. They celebrate the Miners’ Women’s Auxiliary who were
determined to build a progressive and fairer society but importantly they continue the women’s work as a claim for action on issues facing us all today. – L.M.

Belle Blau

MERGE, 2018 (ABOVE)

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 152.4 X 152.4 CM (SQUARE)

THE NEW OLD FLAG, 2019

ACRYLIC AND PENCILS ON PAPER, 61 X 61 CM (SQUARE)

Belle Blau begins her work in writing, using poetry as the starting point for the creation of both music and paintings, language acting as source material to generate new avenues of abstraction.

By allowing subjectivity and meaning to infiltrate the self-referential purity of formalism, she subverts the traditional tenets of the genre: placing emphasis on the value of intuition and intersubjective experience over objective rationalism.

Blau enacts a feministic expansion of the movement – allowing themes of intimacy, autonomy, power, social politics and love to infiltrate a playing field once reserved only for the imperial.

Deborah Kelly

MY SYDNEY SUMMER, 2011

DIGITAL PRINT ON PAPER, 48.3 X 34.3 CM

Deborah Kelly revises modern, anti-fascist montages traditions to her contemporary art actions and exhibitions. The banner My

Sydney Summer began during a residency at Gallery Nova in Zagreb (natives WHH being Whit Ho and for Whom, a feminist curatorial collective) during the time of

Occupy Flower Square. Other components in the montage include Occupy Sydney, Maadi Gras, the artist’s friends and a hommage

also in the title to Matie McMahon’s 1978 screen-print Keep Warm this Winer.

Fiona MacDonald

SURFACE TENSION –

WIWS MARCH 1979, 2019

WATERCOLOR ON CANVAS, 71 X 71 CM

Lobby, 2007

SILK CURTAIN, VARIOUS DIMENSIONS

Exhibited in the foyer of the Melbourne National Centre for the Arts at the University of Melbourne or in association with other Melbourne, Perth, Sydney, Bathurst and Adelaide venues as part of the National touring exhibitions until 18th April 2007.

The photo was used twice by Ichabod, but there had been more negatives on the roll. Luck has it that the Illawarra Mercury photographic negative archive is held by Wollongong City Libraries – so soon I had the negatives to inspect and felt like I was standing on the footpath of Crown Street, watching the crowd of marchers heading down to the Red Park.

I was so pleased to see recorded the great mix of women and men of all ages, carrying a whole bunch of banners, placards and handing out brochures along the way. A week after the second column by Ichabod appeared in the paper, the Mercury issued an apology and listed of all the groups that been deviated for joining Wollongong’s first International Women’s Day March. – L.M.

Julie Freeman

GHERA & KEMBLA, 2009 (ABOVE)

WOODBLOCK PRINT, BLUE/GREEN INK ON PAPER, 48.5 X 34.5 CM IMAGE/SHEET

GULAPA, 2009

WOODBLOCK PRINT, BLUE/GREEN INK ON PAPER, 48.5 X 34.5 CM IMAGE/SHEET

Printed at Duck Print, Port Kembla for the exhibition Pallingjang, Saltwater: Freeman’s works tell important creation

stories of their Pacific neighbours.

Tertangala


The Miners’ Women’s Auxiliary in Wollongong has a stellar history of
Ciara Phillips & Jessie Street
Women’s Library

TO KEEP WOMEN’S WORDS, WOMEN’S WORKS, ALIVE AND POWERFUL, 2018
SILK SCREEN FOLDER

In 2018 Jessie Street Women’s Library were invited by Glasgow based artist Ciara Phillips to collaborate on an artwork. The connection was made via Glasgow Women’s Library. The workshop was part of the 21st Biennale of Sydney (2018) at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Phillips highlights the strong historical connection between print-making and DIY or ‘artist-prop’ collaborative political and social activism. She worked with a number of groups committed to improving the lives of women. The workshops (8 participants) took place over three weekly sessions of 3-5 hours each. Five variations on a poster with Ursula Le Guin’s “To Keep Women’s Words, Women’s Works Alive and Powerful” were printed.

SLAM POETS

LOREN ELIZABETH

Lorin Elizabeth is a local Spoken Word Poet who writes with a strong focus on sound, rhyme and meter, creating a mixture of hip-hop and magic realism to engage live audiences.

ISABELLA LUNA

Isabella Luna is a local Spoken Word Poet. Isabella and Lorin are both core team members of Doughty said Poetry Slam, organising poetry activities across Wollongong and the Illawarra.

KIRLI SAUNDERS

Kirli Saunders is a proud Gunai woman with ties to the Yuin, Gundungurra, Gugu-gai and Biripi people. She is a children’s author, poet, emerging playwright and multidisciplinary artist. Kirli is the Manager of Poetic Learning and Aboriginal Cultural Liaison at Red Room Poetry.

FILM

INTERVIEW WITH CARMELITA STEINKER, 1975

WIN TV ARCHIVES HELD AT WOLLONGONG UNIVERSITY.

NOW was set up in 1965 by Carmelita Steinkir, a prominent media professional and campaigner for women’s rights who became well known in the Illawarra over the following decades. The UW Archives, based within the University Library, holds 7 boxes of records about NOW. New Opportunities for Women was a Wollongong based support group for women dealing with employment, childcare and discrimination. In the interview Carmelita Steinkir talks about her hopes for an end to prejudice for women in employment and the importance of equal pay for women. She comments that in the early 1970s the Wollongong region was still denied all the benefits of having a cultural centre, performing arts theatre or regional art gallery.

ARCHIVES

BADGES

SELECTED BADGES APPAREL ON T-SHIRTS WORN BY MARCHERS IN THE 1979 MARCH (ILLAWARRA MERCURY PHOTOGRAPHERS)

KANDOS MUSEUM COLLECTION, KANDOS NSW

DONATED BY: KATH BUTLER, WHO WAS MARRIED TO KANDOS, AND HER MOTHER MARGARET BUTLER WHO WAS A SCHOOL TEACHER IN WOLLONGONG.

TRADES HALL COLLECTION, SYDNEY

14 BADGES DONATED BY: CATHERINE BLACK, NEW TEACHERS FEDERATION, SYDNEY AND WOLLONGONG, KURT BROWN, UNION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN, PEACE FIGHTERS, BEACH RAG, MAHER’S UNION DONATED BY KUNDELA (KNOWN AS DELLAL ELLIS) (1917-2011), WHO IN THE 1930S WORKED FOR THE MATERIAL WORKERS’ FEDERATION, THEN NEW SOUTH WALES UNION FROM 1945 TO 1956, IN RETIREMENT HELPED ESTABLISH THE ISSUE ISSUE STREET WOMEN’S LIBRARY, BILL PERRY COLLECTION, SYDNEY TRADERS HALL, HERITAGE OFFICER. SEE LOGO ON BACK OF BADGES.

PRIVATE COLLECTION, SYDNEY

3 BADGES, UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN, 1975-85.

TRADES HALL COLLECTION SYDNEY, FROM THE UNION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN

EQUALITY DEVELOPMENT FUND (INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY 1975)

UNION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN (1934-1944), SILK SCREEN POSTER. DONATED BY: AUDREY MCDONALD.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN’S LIBERATION MOVEMENT, 1972.

PEACE TABLE

UNION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN, PEACE TABLE, APRON AND HAND-PRINTED SIGN

NOT A DAY BUT A LIFE