

A — WOMAN'S PLACE

On the Road to Equality:
A Two Year Programme
of Contemporary Art & Events

CURATED BY LUCY DAY + ELIZA GLUCKMAN

Introduction

Eliza Gluckman, Senior Curator and
Deputy Director of the Government Art Collection

A Woman's Place (AWP) is an evolving programme of cultural projects where equality provides the contextual backbone. Commissions, exhibitions, events and even a disco have acted as catalysts for change, both small and large, personal and institutional. This publication is a moment of reflection on the work initiated by Lucy Day and myself that has developed into a myriad of responses from resistance to reassessment.

Way back in 2013, Lucy and I had worked together for six years as Day+Gluckman, a curatorial partnership, and were grappling with the system. We worked with institutional structures that perpetuated privilege, while supporting each other to juggle the realities of parenting and survival. In tandem with a rising rumble of feminist voices in the media and the arts, we felt it was time to put our beliefs into our work. A gift of Ruth Adam's social history book *A Woman's Place 1910–1975* (published by Persephone) from Lucy to me spurred us to act. Our next exhibition, 'Liberties: 40 years since the Sex Discrimination Act' (Collyer Bristow Gallery, London and The Exchange, Penzance, 2015–16) was a pivotal step forward and led to the formation of A Woman's Place Project, now a Community Interest Company in its own right.

The highlight of the programme has been six commissioned artworks shown at the National

Trust's Knole, to which much of this publication is dedicated. There is a power in the echo of voices through the centuries that the history of 600-hundred-year-old Knole affords, along with its more recent association with Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf's gender morphing *Orlando*. The contemporary works both respond to and amplify the plight and strength of those women whose lives were shaped and defined by the 'accident of their birth' (see Alice May William's project p36).

Between and 2016 and 2018, a wider programme for AWP wove a strong narrative through multiple voices at different events across the South East that can be seen together here (see pages 8–9). Three, in particular, raised questions about gender and power structures in the art world through both medium and relationships, historical and contemporary: 'Unpicking the Narrative: difficult work, difficult women' saw Freddie Robins in conversation with us at a day-long seminar accompanying the exhibition 'Entangled' at Turner Contemporary (Margate), while at the Royal Pavilion and Museum (Brighton), Erika Tan discussed her film *The Forgotten Weaver* with Dr Lara Perry and at Jerwood Hastings (now Hastings Contemporary) 'Overlap: relationships, reputation and the legacy of women' saw us in conversation with Tate curator Carol Jacobi and artist Jessie Voorsanger.

These three events interrogated the many structures that create an imbalance in the power dynamics of production. Talking about her own practice and with insight from many years teaching textiles at the Royal College of Art, Freddie Robins considered this dynamic through traversing the worlds of art and craft: “The patriarchy looms large and usually fills and controls the purse.” says Robins, “And while the patriarchy might appreciate textiles, for the most part it doesn’t value it enough to invest in it. The hierarchy of value continues.” Robins sees the issue as both gendered and economic, where textiles become associated with domesticity and femininity and, therefore, are valued similarly.

At the Royal Pavilion and Museum, Erika Tan and Dr Lara Perry discussed Tan’s film *The Forgotten Weaver* about Malaysian weaver Halimah binti Abdullah. Halimah was one of many craftspeople from the then British colonies brought to the UK as live exhibition displays at the Great Exhibition in 1851. She died of pneumonia during her visit and was given a Muslim burial in Brookwood Cemetery in Woking. Tan’s ongoing project resurrects Halimah’s personal story to question received narratives, colonial exhibition making, contested heritage and subjugated voices in the transnational movements of people and ideas.

In Hastings, the discussion ‘Overlap: relationships, reputation and the legacy of women’ invited Tate curator Carol Jacobi and artist Jessie Voorsanger to discuss with us a myriad of women artists whose male counterparts have eclipsed them in history. The exhibition displays of work by Jean Cooke and Eileen Agar at the Jerwood acted as catalysts

for Voorsanger to reflect on personal histories and first-hand accounts from her career as an artist. Cooke was painter John Bratby’s wife and subjected to domestic abuse, including, on occasion, the destruction of her paintings, while Agar was, until recently, a footnote in Surrealism, overshadowed by her male peers. Jacobi discussed the careers of a number of women artists, including her research on Isabel Rawsthorne, covering art historical neglect, gallery and market bias and misogyny. The discussion asked how much biography can help or deflect from our ongoing understanding of an artists’ practice. The events covered many of the tropes of historical neglect and power structures that have influenced how women are perceived and valued within the creative sphere, and how artists like Erika Tan look to fill the void left by the unrecorded thoughts and trials of those in history, like Halimah.

At Murray Edwards College, home of the New Hall Art Collection (the largest collection of works by women in Europe), where I was curator, an invited group gathered with the aim of generating conversation around areas of collecting; issues that arise both from the historic growth of a collection to the responsibility of representation going forward. Developed alongside an ongoing research and performance-based project by Barby Asante, working with a group of students, *Looking Further, Looking Harder* specifically looked to discuss the representation in collections of women of colour. The group represented the collection from different perspectives - students, alumna, artists, curators - asking what it means to address, and how to constructively address, representation, or lack of it, in

collections. Collectively, the group interrogated the nuances of labels and language used to discuss representation, alongside statistics from the Black Artists and Modernism project and how organisations respond to data. This conversation has begun many more, and ramifies into organisations beyond the Collection with considered reflections from representatives of the Art Fund and the Arts Council England.

As a whole, A Woman’s Place events programme covered ten venues and reached over 800 people. Pages dedicated to the events introduce Deal-born poet and member of the Bluestocking Society, Elizabeth Carter and artist Rachael House’s ongoing Feminist Disco project (in the University of Sussex student bar). To deliver specific workshops in Gravesend, we worked with Quiet Down There and artist Alinah Azadeh, creating ‘One Day’, a retreat from life for a day exploring the idea of being ‘in-place’ as a woman through creative processes. These precipitated a further series of workshops with Alinah and Lucy in ‘Makers of Change’ craftivism - crafting in the service of social, political or environmental change - workshops in Lewes; nurturing spaces for conversation and well-being through making.

As a rolling programme, the events took markedly different shapes, playing to the ideas and strengths of individual artistic practices. From an atmosphere of post-punk camaraderie and activism to academic discussion, the programme tells a narrative of evolving institutional interest, often hitting new audiences and frequently evolving the discussion. Acknowledging that there is no stand-alone solution to righting historical wrongs, nor

challenging continued inequality, the diversity of the programme was open to failure and looked to test models of engagement. By confronting the personal and the political - the big picture and the everyday - we can see the problems more clearly and we can resist, call-out, enact and celebrate.



Events & Workshops
2017–2018

27/04/17 - TURNER CONTEMPORARY, MARGATE

Unpicking the narrative: Difficult women, Difficult work

Artist Freddie Robins and curators Lucy Day and Eliza Gluckman discussed the feminist voice, gender and the relationship of textiles to curatorial programming in the art world. The conversation covered curatorial hierarchies, whether there is a perceived or actual fear in displaying objects that don't hold their shape and how that in turn relates to discussions around women's bodies.

The conversation formed part of *The Matter of Material* symposium at Turner Contemporary, in collaboration with the International Textile Research Centre University for the Creative Arts. It was published September 2018 in *TEXTILE Cloth and Culture*. Volume 16, Issue 3.



Freddie Robins, *Mad Mother* 2015. Image courtesy the artist

03/06/17 - JERWOOD GALLERY, HASTINGS

Overlap: Relationships, reputation and legacy of women artists

Artist Jessica Voorsanger, Tate Curator/art historian Carol Jacobi and curators Lucy Day and Eliza Gluckman discussed the complex relationship of a woman artist to her personal biography. Against the backdrop of exhibitions of works by Eileen Agar and Jean Cooke, Voorsanger spoke about her mother in law, the painter Deirdre Borlase whilst Jacobi highlighted the numerous omissions of women artists in the art historical canon. The panel, and audience, were treated to an honest and frank conversation



Jessica Voorsanger, *Claude Monet (from the Bald Series)* 2013
Photo credit: Steve Tanner

about the legacy of women artists and how their art is often overlooked in favour of their relationships to male artists.

09-10/09/17 - DEAL

A Celebration of Elizabeth Carter

A Woman's Place contributed to artist Colin Priest's celebration of the 300th anniversary of poet/member of The Bluestocking Society, Elizabeth Carter.

Stirred by the unexpected acquisition of the memoirs of *The Life of Mrs Elizabeth Carter*, with poems by Rev. Montagu Pennington and curiously typed 19th century letters from her relatives regarding her portrait in Deal Town Hall, Priest realised a short text-based animation, a tableau of historic artefacts and documentary film at Deal Town Hall. In addition, an installation of flags designed using animation imagery in collaboration with students from Goodwin Academy flew from Deal Pier for two weeks in September 2017.



Joseph Highmore (1692-1780) *Elizabeth Carter*
Collection and Photo: Deal Town Council

10/11/17 - UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX, BRIGHTON

Rachael House's Feminist Disco

Putting the 'disco' into 'discourse'. Alongside a DJ set featuring records by women Rachael decides are feminist, made between approximately 1976-1983, comic artist/writer Dr. Nicola Streeten wrestled with how and why as a feminist she laughs at things that shouldn't be funny, and doesn't laugh at things that should, and Professor Lucy Robinson presented what fan girls have taught her about feminism. Rachael's artworks and artefacts were raffled, with proceeds going to Sisters Uncut.

Held with the student union bar, Room 76 at University of Sussex and in partnership with the university's Gender Studies and Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research Centre.



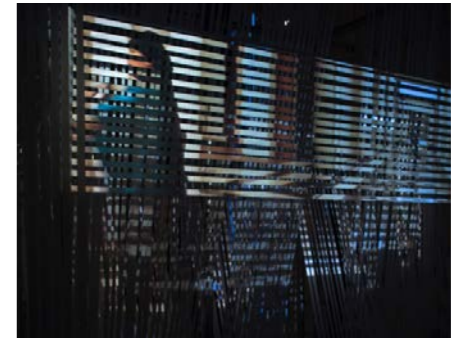
Rachael House's Feminist Disco
Image courtesy Agata Urbaniak and Rachael House

16/11/17 - ROYAL PAVILION & MUSEUMS, BRIGHTON

In Conversation: Erika Tan and Dr Lara Perry

Artist Erika Tan and art historian Dr Lara Perry discussed Tan's series of films focussing on the minor historic figure of Halimah binti Abdullah, an expert weaver who participated in the 1924 Empire Exhibition (London). Tan's project resurrects her story as a way of approaching questions around colonial exhibition tropes, ideas of cultural ambassadors or martyrs and the difficulties of retracing the forgotten in an ever-incomplete archive. Both speakers shared a keen interest in issues of the unrecorded, or unevidenced life and events.

Partnership with Brighton University School of Humanities and Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton.



Erika Tan, *The Forgotten Weaver* 2017. Image courtesy Erika Tan

23/11/17

MURRAY EDWARDS COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Looking Further, Looking Harder, #1. Women of Colour

Invited guests (institutions, organizations and individuals) met at Murray Edwards College for a round table discussion on the representation of BAME artists, specifically women of colour in collections. Discussions included an examination of the impact of art education, past and present, on art careers, intersectionality, invisibility and the role institutions need to take to effect change.

Constructive and enlightening the event provided an opportunity for honest and open reflection - and calls for action.

Held in partnership with New Hall Art Collection, the largest collection of works by women in Europe, housed within Murray Edwards College.



Perminder Kaur, *Turban*, 2012. Image courtesy the artist and New Hall Art Collection, Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge.

25-30/08/17 - DEPOT, LEWES

Women & Activism and Making Change

A Woman's Place contributed to a season of films and events sharing feminist stories of revolution at Depot, Lewes.

Dr Helen Eastman gave a fascinating introduction to Mai Zetterling's seminal 1968 film *The Girls* and screened her short film *Lysistrata, After Aristophanes* alongside *Hairpiece: A Film for Nappy Headed People* by Ayoka Chenzira.

Alinah Azadeh ran a Making Change craftivism workshop inspired by the pioneering, creative campaigns of the Suffragettes, as well as current feminist and other equality campaigns globally. These were hands-on, creative workshops that explored and celebrated the use of art and craft in the struggle for social and political change.

Held in partnership with Depot, Lewes.

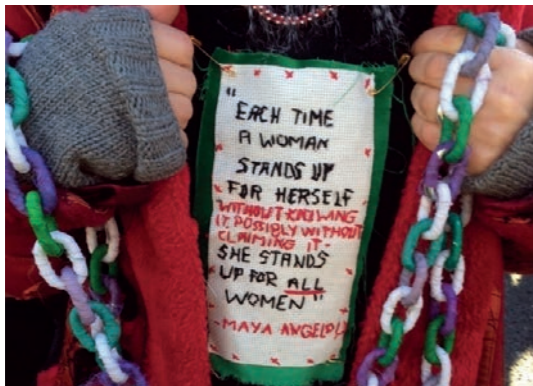


Image courtesy Alinah Azadeh

23/4/18-25/4/18

One Day Workshop

Supported through A Woman's Place Project, Quiet Down There and artist Alinah Azadeh organised three retreats in Kent during April 2018 with the intention of supporting women - and those identifying as women - to explore and build emotional strength and resilience, creativity and self-care.

One Day was a programme of day-long free events for 35 women in Gravesend, Kent centred on a toolkit devised by the artist using creative materials, playful discussion, creative writing and shared reflection to explore a 'sense of place'. Each one took the format of a 'day retreat' which offered participants a full day to focus on themselves, their place in their family, community or workplace, and a chance to work creatively on new or existing projects with others.

The retreats were hosted by LV21 an arts centre based on a lightship, moored in Gravesend and The Grand, also in Gravesend. Päivi Seppälä, Director of LV21, worked closely with Quiet Down There to engage a mothers' group, an older peoples' group and a group focussed on mental health issues.

Through discussion and the sharing of 'objects of care' strong and bonding intimacy developed at each session. A unifying factor was the sense of invisibility expressed by the women who participated, expressing feelings that their wellbeing was secondary to that of their children, partners, and parents in the home, in the family or in the community. Many women spoke of their families' involvement in the shipping industry, which had once been a major employer in North Kent. This was the dominant narrative of their family history and one in which they were not lead protagonists. Quiet Down There subsequently brought a group of the women to visit Knole and the six commissions.



Lubaina Himid

CJ Mahony

Lindsay Seers

Emily Speed

Alice May Williams

Melanie Wilson



A Woman's Place at Knole

Hannah Kay, General Manager
Knole - National Trust



Knole is an iconic historic property. The house is one of the largest and most significant in the country and certainly within the National Trust's portfolio. Knole's solid stone walls have stood firm through world war, civil war, dissolution and reformation: an archbishop's palace, royal residence and the seat of the Sackville family for more than 400 years.

Six hundred years of history, an astonishing visiting tradition spanning centuries and internationally significant collections with royal pedigree - what change and development must have been witnessed from within and from the outside? Yet within this context of progression,

we now - as a 'modern' society - often still tell the stories of our great houses from a single perspective, a male perspective of kings, lords, earls and dukes, MPs, merchants and businessmen, fathers, sons and husbands. Women are often only mentioned as an aside, to record who they married, the number of heirs they produced or which estate they might, or might not, have inherited.

We must do better. We must think more broadly. We must try to make more relevant connections with our visiting audiences. 'A Woman's Place' was conceived to do just that. The project provided a platform for

visitors to see Knole in a different light, to hear different stories and to understand different perspectives. Knole's women hold 600 years of stories, from a world of privilege and power to those who served unnoticed behind the scenes.

For this project, Lucy Day and Eliza Gluckman invited six contemporary artists to immerse themselves in Knole's history, to get to know the women who have passed through its doors and to make connections. The aim was not only to attract new visitors to Knole but also to challenge our existing historic house audience to see things differently.

Knole became the backdrop to the six art commissions. What emerged after months of

research were deeply felt ideas, which evolved by the meshing together of Knole's women and the artists' own life experiences. Each artist brought their own voice and placed it alongside the women who connected with them from Knole's past and present.

Expressions of creativity and experiences inspired by the past, by stories, by people and by historic places, are at the very heart of the National Trust's vision. 'A Woman's Place' was celebratory, reflective, challenging and an honour to present to every visitor who passed through Knole's doors in 2018.

25-30/08/18

Event at Knole

Between May and November we presented a programme of events at Knole, providing additional context and background, to groups of visitors. These included: 21 July a 'walk and talk' with the curators; 7 August *Performing the toilette* - performer Natalie Sharp, commissioned by Emily Speed, demonstrated the 'toilette' - the ritual of dressing and preparing for the day - beside Speed's art installation *Innards in the Orangery*; and 1 September, supported by Trust New Art and hosted by Knole, commissioned artists CJ Mahony, Lindsay Seers, Alice May Williams, Melanie Wilson and curators Lucy Day & Eliza Gluckman reviewed the works and context for *A Woman's Place* at Knole in a panel discussion.

Emily Speed, *Performing the Toilette*, 2018
Image courtesy the artist.



'Love, betrayal, class, gender and inheritance...'

By Lucy Day, Director Curator - A Woman's Place Project

A Woman's Place at Knole represents a fascinating rolling out of ideas and research over four years, coinciding with significant changes in global politics and the snowballing rise of women-focused campaigns. As events unfold across continents with increasing speed, it has been a pertinent moment to again look back at history to reflect on current concerns.

The lack of women on view, as named subjects or authors of art and craft works in the case of historic properties, and as exhibiting artists in the contemporary art world shared interesting commonalities. When visible, women's voices were predominantly heard through the stories of their husbands, sons or employers.

How is it that, in the 21st century, these questions still have currency? As contemporary news stories come out online, in print, in coffee shops, in restaurants and at the school gate, the rise in recent narratives can feel both overwhelming and long overdue.

It was our proposition to look specifically at these contemporary concerns through a historic lens that led us to Knole in 2013. With its complex narratives and the powerful impact of primogeniture[i] on its history, Knole provided a perfect backdrop and reference point for discussion.

Knole, Stone Court
© National Trust Images John Miller



There are, of course, a number of parameters and boundaries when working with a historic property, not least the power of its story and the histories that formed it - usually by the men who wrote them. Dealing with the sheer scale and longevity of Knole was challenging and rewarding in equal measure. Often mistermied a Calendar house, [ii] it nonetheless revealed itself through room after room, grand and ornate, simple and domestic, many on public view and still more behind. In 2018, the house was undergoing extensive restoration, looking to its next incarnation. Our first site visit in 2014 gave access and insight to rooms that are now hidden, a jigsaw in the process of

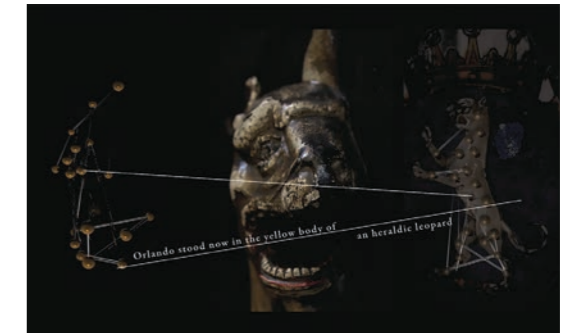
being reconfigured. Verdant lawns proved to be facades, too shallow to host a proposed work.

Certain charismatic historical characters were in evidence across the property, while other stories emerged from conversations with the National Trust curators, conservators and volunteers, who were inexhaustible sources of information. As we researched the stories in parallel, we all shared the references and motifs that emerged. This helped us interrogate different narratives and explore how we might realise a number of our ambitions.

Underpinning it all were the highly individual practices of the artists. The integrity of the overall project centred on the importance of their voices coming through, in whatever form that might take. It was critical to the development of the project that it evolved in parallel with the artists' ideas and the development of specific works.

Several artists came to mind as the research developed. Lindsay Seers' practice felt utterly compelling for Knole, embodying both the sense of location for which she is so well known, the pushing of form, in this instance realised online through film, animation and text, and the psychological impact of time and place on the human protagonists. To several of the artists, the house has felt like a character itself. It holds within its collections the original handwritten manuscript of the novel *Orlando* - a gift, 'a love letter', from the writer Virginia Woolf to her erstwhile lover Vita Sackville-West, also a writer, who was prevented by the rules of primogeniture from inheriting Knole. Seers' commissioned work, *2052 Selves - a biography*, combined the temporality and quality of a novel with that of a film, echoing descriptions of

Orlando as a biography of Vita, and of Knole in novel form.



2052 Selves - a biography
© Lindsay Seers & Keith Sargent 2017

The actress Sarah Sugarman played a central role in the unfolding of the work, her story melding with those of Vita, Virginia and the artist. Evolving across four chapters, released episodically through the duration of *A Woman's Place at Knole*, the work delicately, unsettlingly, unpicked personal stories and those of Knole. Real and fictitious anecdotes interweave as motifs and texts, rhythmically ebbing and flowing through each of the films.

It is a mesmerising, beautiful and ambitious work, which confronts the problems of experiencing a work 'completely'. Unconditioned by the coercion and constructed viewpoints inherent in a physical display, it nonetheless cedes control to the viewer to take or have the time to watch the entire work online.

Orlando was also foregrounded in Alice May Williams' initial proposal for a project exploring 'fluid facts' and the 'unreliable witness'. We had originally planned to take this developing work and site it at Knole. However, a visit to the house and subsequent research led instead to the development of a new film. Williams became fascinated by the similarities

Rose Finn-Kelcey, *The Restless Image*
© The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey
Courtesy Richard Saltoun Gallery



in physical appearance of Vita and Eddy, and how the inequities of primogeniture played such a significant part in shaping their lives and relationships. The resulting diptych film, *By the Accident of Your Birth* (the title comes from a quote in Vita Sackville-West's *The Edwardians* and the conversation between Aquetil and Sebastian atop the Gatehouse Tower, looking out over the rooftops of Knole) explores the impact of categorisations of human beings at birth (as with the classification of plants, a recurring motif in the film) and how these societal constructions shape all of our lives. "The accident of your birth could...be read as the chance by which you are born either one side of a border or the other, to one mother or another...This binary to which we must all be legally assigned at birth (by a medical professional) as either bearers or begetters of heirs, dictates our whole status as a person, regardless of our later reproductive capabilities or decisions in life." (Alice May Williams, 2018).

Inequity, as you stand at the imposing entrance to Knole, seems a strange word to use when applied to Vita, who grew up with considerable wealth and privilege. She stands as a heroine, a badass who challenged the role she was expected to play. She also used and abused what power she had in ways that would have seen her kicked out of a contemporary sisterhood.

It is through an article written by Vita for *The Spectator*, 15th October 1943, that we

encounter one of the few references to Grace Robinson, a servant at Knole listed as working in the household of Richard, Earl of Dorset (husband of Lady Anne Clifford) from 1613 to 1624. Sackville-West speaks of "...a living stream of men and women who laboured, suffered, loved, were ordinary...well over a hundred servants sat down daily to eat at long tables in the Great Hall; the very list of their employments suggests the sound and activity which stirred within the walls of this self-contained encampment, this private burg: the armourer, the falconer...down to the humble Grace Robinson and John Morockoe, both blackamoors..." A fictional Grace Robinson also appears in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*.

This is as much as we know of Grace. Lubaina Himid has held a long interest in this little-known and barely documented story. Her tenacious practice in bringing to the fore the reappraisal of women in history here acknowledges the presence of this woman of colour, whose life, until now, was recognised only as a note, a listing. A simple and evocative shift in the power dynamic is enacted through paintings of and about Grace, hung from the courtyards of Stone Court and through the flying of a new flag, a Kanga [1], from the flagpole.

Space and place: words with multilayered meanings in the context of class and inheritance are also synonymous with creativity. For women, in particular, the words have added

[1] Kanga - rectangular printed cloths, each with their own 'name' or slogan written in the Ki Swahili language in the same place in every design. Kangas are sold in matching pairs and are principally a woman's garment, one being worn as a shawl or headdress, the other as an Islamic 'modesty' garment during the 19th century. However, over the years they have become a vehicle for expressing decidedly immodest ideas and aspirations, and have become a primary means of communication among the women of Eastern Africa.

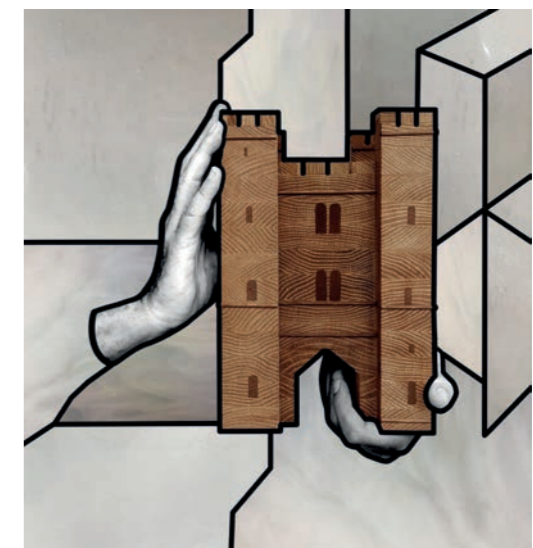
significance. When googling 'a woman's place is...', I have noticed, over the past few years, a subtle and powerful shift. Heading towards the top in searches now are...'in the resistance...', 'in the revolution', 'in the house and senate', while 'bedroom', 'kitchen' and others less empowering are dropping down the list. No doubt this is due to the significant increase in feminist activity: large and small actions contributing to a powerful wave. There is now a sense of no longer having to ask for space but ensuring that space is there.

Emily Speed and CJ Mahony's works consistently play with the relationship between space and place, behaviour and expectation: the relationship between stability and impermanence, material and content. Influenced by the tradition of immortalising patrons of churches, often depicted holding miniatures of the buildings they enabled, Mahony envisaged a work whereby Vita could at last hold Knole. As the research progressed through conversations with biographers and historians, as well as written text, conflicted feelings towards a complex woman, born to extreme privilege, emerged. The primary figures in Knole's 20th-century story are often seen as progressive in the liberal acceptance of same-sex relationships. However, alongside this, evident in both Mahony and Speed's work, are the contentious, charged issues of ownership that bring unease to a contemporary reading.

Acknowledging these contradictions, Mahony turned to Knole itself. This place of privilege and poverty, entitlement, love and abandon: the house that passed through many hands... hands that hold and pass on - still in the family yet also held in part by the National Trust and, by extension, us.

Mahony's research for *Still, Life, Still Waiting* looked at the history and process of stained glass-making. The Arts and Craft moment brought with it greater gender parity through Mary Lowndes, an active member of the suffragette movement who, with Alfred Drury, founded The Glass House in 1896 in Fulham, London, at a point when the Church had less influence on what was depicted in church windows. Female 'hobbyist' artists used church spaces, often the only opportunity for unchaperoned time, to create context for their artistic output.

With this in mind, Mahony worked with staff, volunteers and members of the wider family to take a series of photographs of a number of these different women holding a model of the Gatehouse Tower at Knole. The final design was given to a stained-glass artist, who was commissioned to bring her own interpretation to the final window. The window, in turn, was incorporated into a wider structure consistent with Mahony's previous sculptures. Large screens cut to resemble blinds hold, surround,



CJ Mahony, Draft design for *Still Life, Still Waiting*, 2018
© CJ Mahony

enclose and, at times, obscure the window as you pass by. Suggesting the presence of inaccessible interior spaces, they allude to class and power behind closed doors.

“Ultimately no one holds Knole. Multiple hands have ownership of a space and place.”
CJ Mahony, 2018

Emily Speed’s initial ideas for Knole centred on the ideas of personality and structure. She wanted to “explore further the idea that a house like this shapes the people in it. The women are living with the house as well as inside it and Knole seems like the real protagonist in the story”. Her interests lay in the historically performative nature of everyday life at great estates such as Knole, the spaces in the house that are given very specific functions, carrying with them an expectation of certain behaviours and the relationship between people and buildings. *Innards* explores the impact on three women specifically: Victoria Sackville-West, Josefa Durán known as Pepita (her mother and infamous flamenco dancer), and Vita Sackville-West (her daughter).

Sited in the Orangery at Knole, *Innards* took the form of both fountain and dressing table, reflecting Victoria’s dynamic pragmatism in modernising Knole. A joyous work incorporating handmade painted tiles, planting and flowing water, *Innards* is also underpinned by the knowledge of the difficulties and complexities of these mother-daughter relationships pitted against the very public backdrop of life at Knole. In several accounts by and of the family, the scenario of a daughter watching her mother perform her toilette is mentioned, moments of rare tenderness. In August 2018, a performance directed by

Speed took place in the Orangery. Alongside *Innards* a woman performed her macquillage (body makeup) - performer melding into the work and the walls of Knole. Vita was always to refer to her mother Victoria as B.M, for ‘Bonne Maman’, an irony not lost on Vita, who by turn was fascinated by her grandmother, Pepita, mistress to Lionel Sackville-West, second Baron Sackville. Victoria was notorious for embarking on ill-founded (and underfunded) ventures; an entrepreneur with an eye for detail, she briefly set up shop in South Audley Street. Acknowledging this passion, Speed also created an editioned bespoke calling card. This merging of old and new methods of communication (interest is registered via a weblink, the card then printed and posted by the artist) brings an element of egalitarianism to the narrative, an approach Speed has adopted in other projects.

In Seers’ introductory documentary, *An Encounter*, Robert Sackville-West speaks of the ‘presiding spirits of the house’. Two of these spirits, Lady Anne Clifford and Lady Frances Cranfield, inspired the sound artwork by Melanie Wilson. *Women of Record* invited connections between their experiences as 17th-century women and the lives of contemporary British women, using Knole as the thread. Through an extraordinarily powerful and evocative work, Wilson encouraged the listener to “see Knole as an unbroken line of time, connecting us to the past but located also in our present”. Extracts of Clifford and Cranfield’s letters and biographies, voiced by actors, with additional narrative written and voiced by the artist, were placed alongside first-person contemporary accounts of women, whose experiences echoed or answered those of Anne

Melanie Wilson, Women of Record 2018
A Woman’s Place Knole © National Trust
Ciaran McCrickard



and Frances’s in some way. Wilson says of the work: “It is a witness to everything that has happened for women in the years it has existed for. Like the house, the position of women has changed, but change is often a rearrangement of elements, rather than the invention of the new. Social attitudes, contexts and viewpoints around marriage, gender equality, children and ownership of property have shifted, but the feelings and facts of those experiences for individuals are still deeply personal and emotional, then as now.” The work was experienced in seven chapters, located in different rooms and sites at Knole, taking us on a journey through the spirits of these women, voices slipping between one another, echoing across the centuries.

Wilson’s narrative asked: “Will we always expect our daughters, mothers and wives to carry so much weight so that they must, still, murmur caution to each other in ante-rooms of power?” The gentle, firm resolution of Wilson’s

work addressed contemporary questions - the impact on our lives of love, grief, loss, debt, change and our changing relationship with the legacy of inequality. Echoing the words spoken by Freya Sackville-West, she spoke to our “modern needs...perhaps the need for more ‘rebel women’ upon which to build the future”.

With thanks to all of the rebel women and our allies who made this extraordinary project possible.

Eliza Gluckman - co-founder of A Woman’s Place Project, collaborator and feminist plotter.

Jane Packman - former Visitor Experience Manager at Knole, whose vision for the project met our own.

Hannah Kay - General Manager at Knole, whose energy, generosity and openness to a wealth of ideas has carried the project through.

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Tom Freshwater - National Trust National Public Programmes Manager, who listened to the seed of our idea in 2014 and championed us throughout.

Natalie Duff and Jamila Prowse - our future...

The funders, staff, volunteers, Sackville family and my own, without whom none of this could have come to life.

And the artists - Lubaina Himid, CJ Mahony, Lindsay Seers, Emily Speed, Alice May Williams and Melanie Wilson - the best rebel women one could hope to work with: dedicated, committed, visionary. You made this all possible. This is dedicated to you.

[i] Primogeniture: inheritance by a legitimate firstborn son or in the absence of one to another collateral relative, in a specified order.

[ii] Calendar house: a house that symbolically contains architectural elements in quantities that represent the respective numbers of days in a year, weeks in a year, months in a year and days in a week. championed us throughout.

Lubaina Himid

Two works by Lubaina Himid investigate the story of Grace Robinson, a laundry maid at Knole at the time of Lady Anne Clifford. A flag in an African print of red, white and blue flies from the tower flagpole and small paintings can be seen fixed to the drainpipes which lead down from the ornate guttering in Stone Court. These link Grace's laundry work to the air and water that washed and dried the household clothes.

Through portraiture and motifs, clothing and pattern Himid's works highlight Grace's presence in spaces she would not have had access to, and where a servant of her stature would not have been acknowledged.

Grace is one of the few people of colour who worked at Knole and possibly the only black

servant in the laundry. She is identified by the term 'a blackamoor' in 17th Century inventories and referenced in turn through later fictional literature and newspaper articles.

Courtesy the artist and *Hollybush Gardens*

"Filling in the gaps in the narratives and, through acts of chance encounter, found by visitors..."



Lubaina Himid
Collars and Cuffs
Acrylic on metal
A Woman's Place Knole 2018
© National Trust Ciaran McCrickard



Lubaina Himid
Flag for Grace
Polyester
A Woman's Place Knole 2018
© A Woman's Place Project CIC
Photo. Jonathan Bassett



CJ Mahony

Still Life, Still Waiting reflects on the women whose sense of belonging was tied to Knole, despite the fact that it could never belong to them. Mahony draws on the historical convention of depicting patrons of buildings as figures in stained glass windows, holding miniature versions of the buildings in their hands. Here, the Gatehouse Tower is shown in the hands of a woman, giving Knole to those who could never own it.

As you pass the structure different aspects are exposed. The screens surrounding and supporting the glass evoke the tension between what is hidden and what is revealed in public and private life. Suggesting the presence of

inaccessible interior spaces, they allude to class and power behind closed doors, to histories of privilege, clandestine trysts, and hidden sexualities. Acting as blinds, the panels hide, reveal, obscure and protect, exposing multiple layers, skins, and views.

“Many women fought against the male line, wanted Knole for themselves, it goes beyond Vita, it was women fighting for acknowledgment. This house, Knole, fiercely loved by many women.”



CJ Mahony
Still Life, Still Waiting
Stained glass, leading, MDF, latex rubber,
conservation plastic
A Woman's Place Knole 2018
© A Woman's Place Project CIC. Photo. Jonathan Bassett



Lindsay Seers

Knole holds within its collections the original handwritten manuscript of the novel *Orlando*. This provided the impetus for a digital book and film, presented online, and to be experienced in four chapters episodically throughout the duration of the show.

Orlando was a gift, 'a love letter', from Virginia Woolf to Vita Sackville-West. The book is often described as a biography of Vita, and of the house in novel form. Seers interrogates this idea by interweaving Woolf, Sackville-West and actor collaborator Sara Sugarman through the work. She creates a new biography from the thoughts inspired by the objects, paintings, rooms and rhythm of Knole.

Partly shot during the winter months, whilst the house was under wraps *2052 Selves*

2052selves.com

"For what more terrifying revelation can there be than that it is the present moment? That we survive the shock at all is only possible because the past shelters us on one side and the future on another."

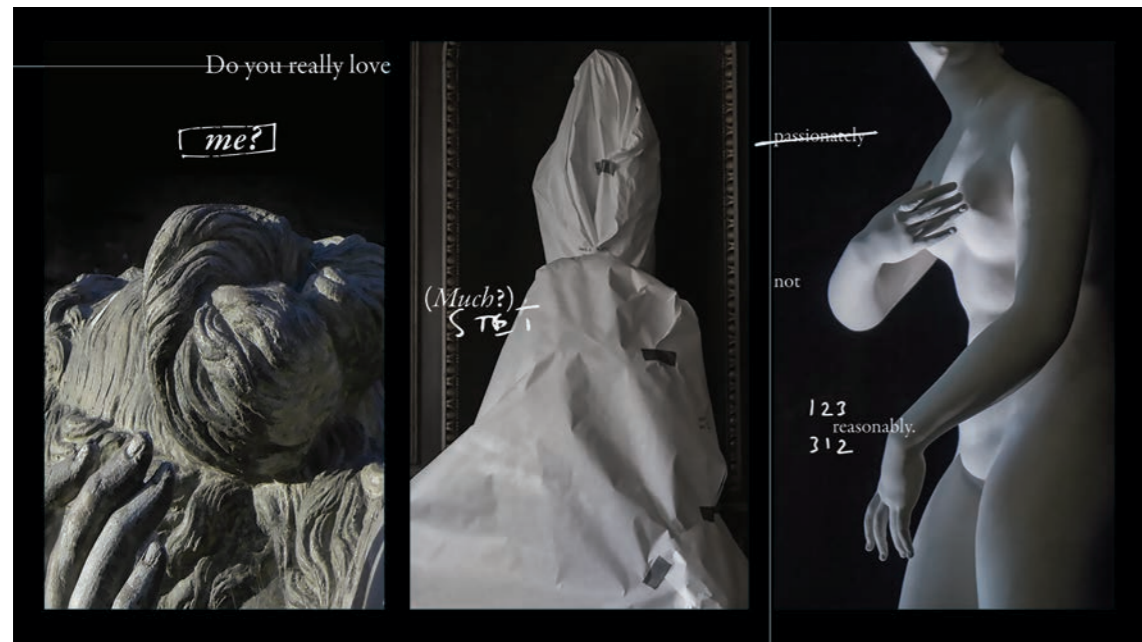
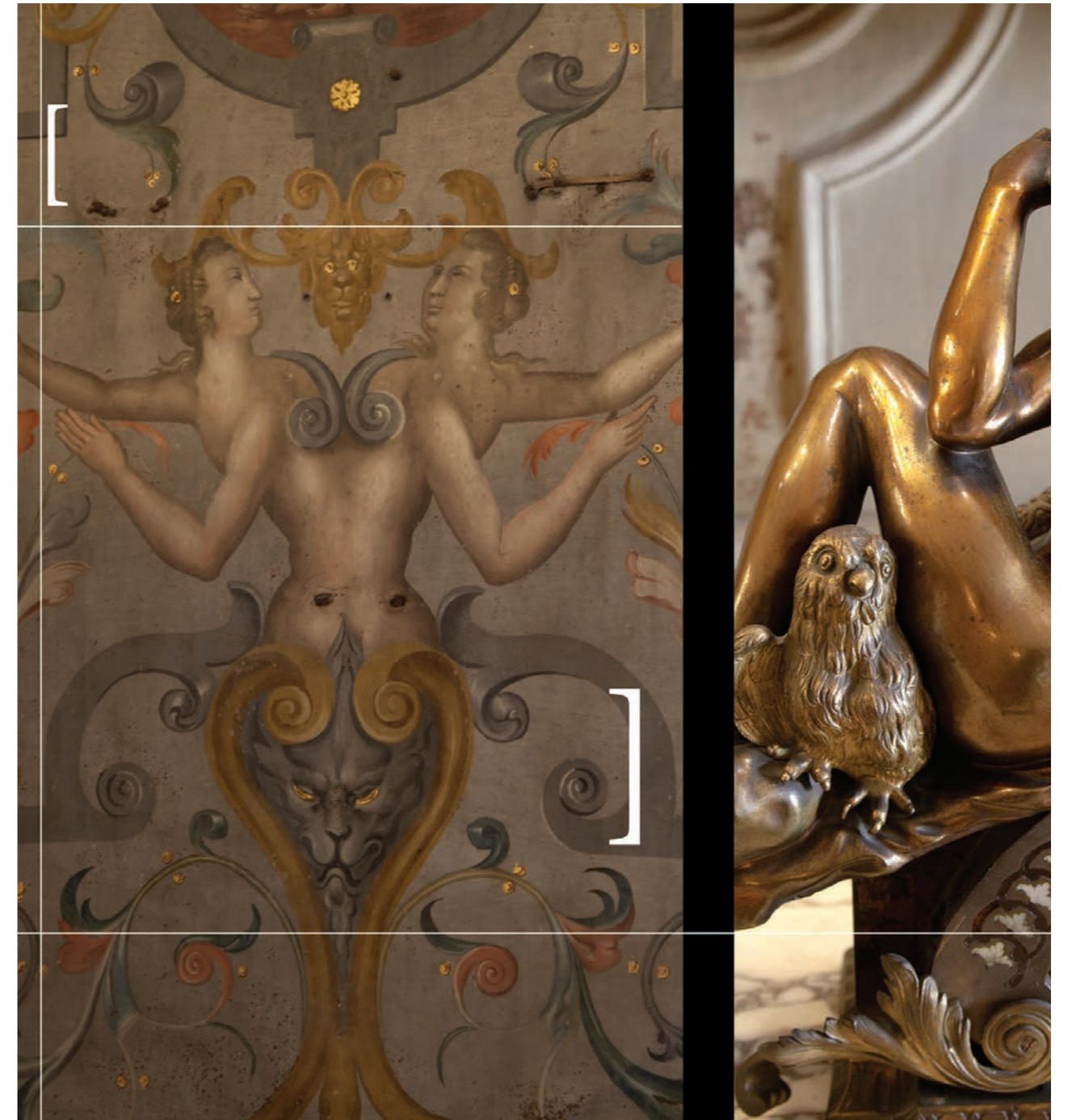
from *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf

[a biography] provides an extraordinary sense of Knole being utterly present in several centuries simultaneously, edited and highlighted by objects and characters both celebrated and forgotten.

Collaborator on all parts - Keith Sargent
Actor - Sara Sugarman
Music - Minski and David Dhonau
Additional camera - Tom Wright & Chris Stone

Lindsay Seers
2052 Selves [a biography]
Digital on-line work issued in 4 chapters
episodically throughout the duration of the show
A Woman's Place Knole 2018 © Lindsay Seers & Keith Sargent





Emily Speed

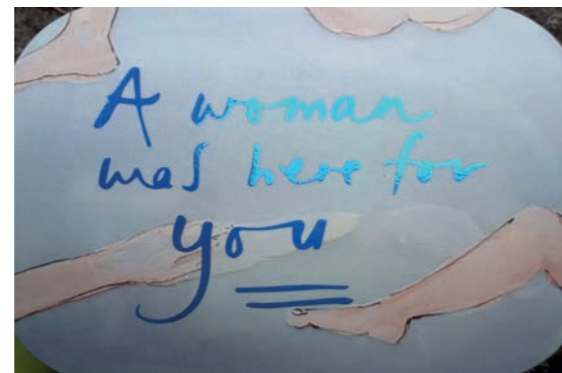
Emily Speed explores the impact of Knole on the women who lived here, and of three women specifically: Victoria Sackville-West, Josefa Durán known as Pepita (her mother and infamous flamenco-dancer), and Vita Sackville-West (her daughter).

Speed's fountain borrows the form of a dressing table and makes public a space usually reserved for private ritual. Water, architecture, gardening and intimacy are brought together to reference important elements of these women's lives.

The fountain echoes Victoria's incredible energy and the installation of running water, electricity and telephone which she oversaw at Knole. The planting of Heliotrope nods to Vita's later career as a gardener. It was also the base note of Victoria's favourite scent.

The work alludes to the difficulties and complexities of these mother-daughter relationships, and of finding moments for tenderness, care and sensuality against the backdrop of public display and the performance of being a 'lady' of Knole.

Speed created a bespoke calling card with an accompanying letter as a nod to Victoria's passion for stationery. This was released as an edition of 100 and sent to those who had signed up for it in the opening weeks.



Emily Speed bespoke calling card, image courtesy the artist.

Emily Speed
Innards

Handmade and hand-painted stoneware tiles, porcelain tiles, heliotrope plants, seasonal flowers, pumps, cement board and wood.

Structure built and installed by Dan Simpkins and Tom Antell.

A Woman's Place Knole 2018

© A Woman's Place Project CIC. Photo. Jonathan Bassett



“After seeing the house, and the typically formal Edwardian images of Victoria, it was a pleasure and surprise to discover this woman as a person with very real desires and potential.”



Alice May Williams

Williams' work takes its title from Vita Sackville-West's book *The Edwardians* and considers primogeniture (inheritance by a firstborn son), which has determined so much of Knole's history.

It explores how we are formally categorised into groups at birth, by sex, nationality or family, and how this shapes our lives. The *accident of your birth* represents chance: which border you are born within, to one mother or another, and at which point you stopped developing as a foetus, making you either biologically male or female.

The work is inspired by the disinheritance of Vita and her disappointment at having been assigned the sex of female. She keenly felt the loss of Knole, and the freedoms of being a man during the era in which she lived.

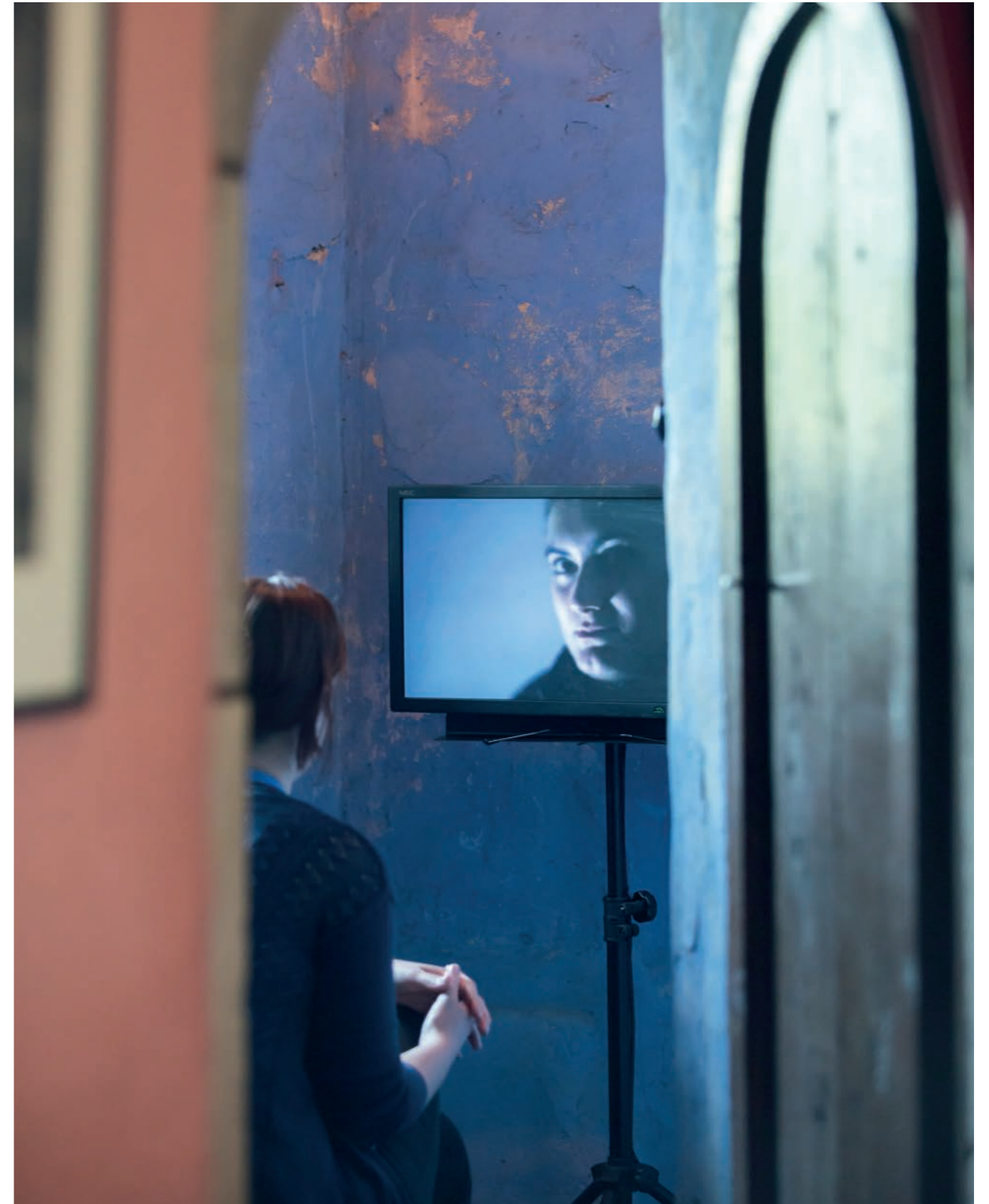
Both Vita and Eddy are key characters in the work. They both flouted the traditional gender roles to which they were assigned, through cross dressing and same sex relationships, in a small way taking back control of their lives, despite the 'accident' of their births.

Voice and Face - Katherine Yesilirmak
Music & Sound Design - Emilie Levienaise-Farrouch
Graphic Titles - Sarah Tynan
With support from The Media Factory

Alice May Williams
By The Accident Of Your Birth
HD Video with stereo sound, 23 minutes
A Woman's Place Knole 2018
© National Trust Ciaran McCrickard

"It is the house where she was born, the house of her father that he will inherit.

The boy cousin's frail legs fail, he slips and falls.
Caught by the girl's strong arms she smiles and says;
If I had a key, I wouldn't feel so locked out."



Alice May Williams
still from *By The Accident Of Your Birth*
A Woman's Place Knole 2018
Image courtesy the artist



Melanie Wilson

This sound piece takes inspiration from the lives of Lady Anne Clifford and Lady Frances Cranfield, both residents of Knole. It invites connections between their experiences as 17th century women and the lives of contemporary British women, using Knole as the thread.

The piece voices extracts from Cranfield's letters and Clifford's autobiography, placing them alongside first person accounts of women today; women whose experiences echo or answer those of Anne and Frances.

Weaving three dimensional sound recordings together with an original score and multi-layered narrative, this richly detailed sound

piece connects the listener to Knole as a witness to the progressive spirit of female endurance across time, and the legacy that presses on.

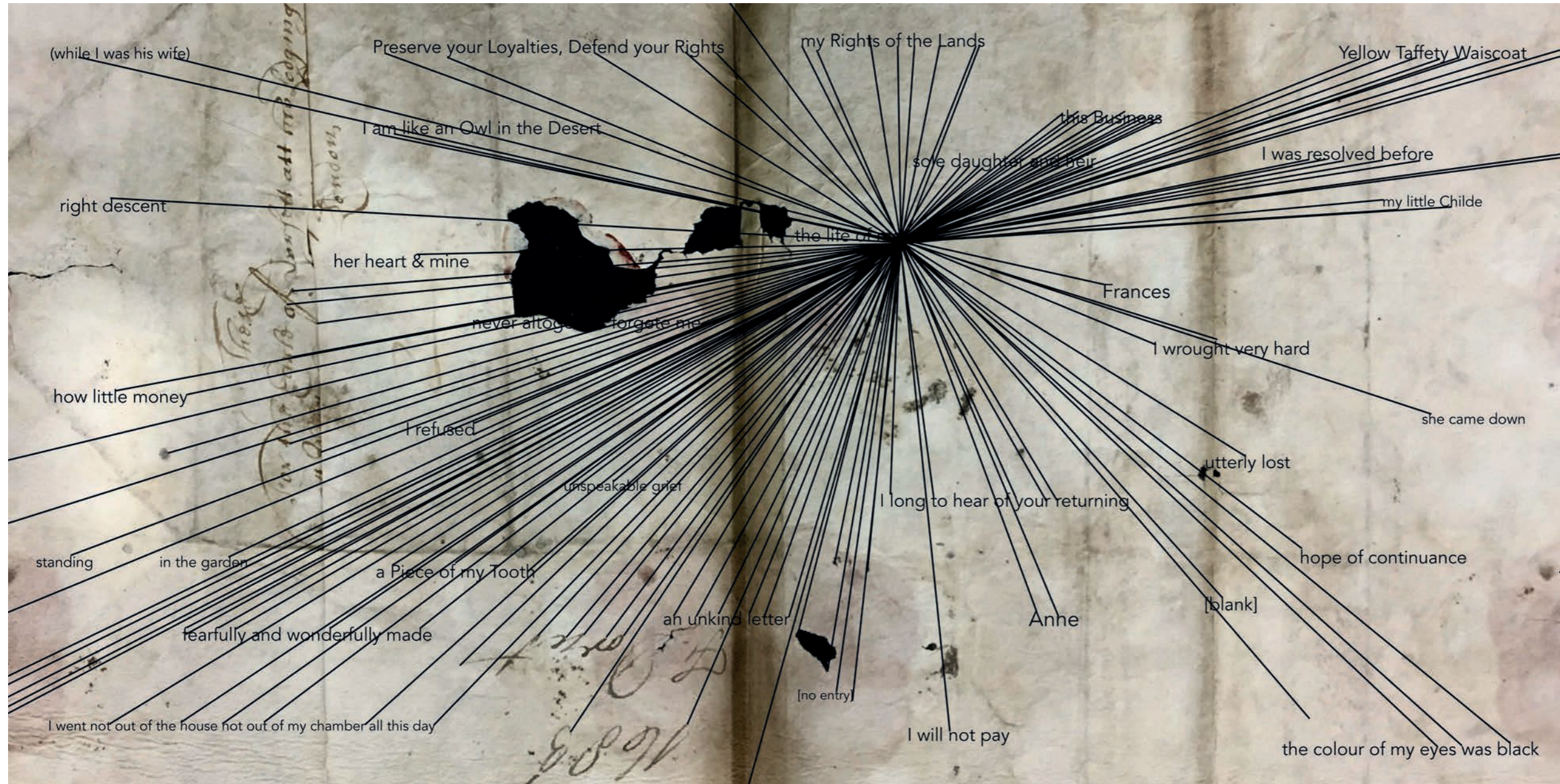
Voice of Anne Clifford - Madeleine Worrall
Voice of Frances Cranfield - Lucy Ellinson
Narration - Melanie Wilson

Melanie Wilson
Women of Record
A soundwork for headphones in seven parts
A Woman's Place Knole 2018
© National Trust Ciaran McCrickard

“For there are voices here, women who write a vast invisible architecture in answer to Knole's stone power, whose lines converge on the house, wrap around its hooks and corners and depart again out into the world, the house one of a multitude of way marks in time, around which to channel silk.”



Melanie Wilson
Production image for *Women of Record*
A Woman's Place Knole 2018,
image courtesy the artist.



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Depot, Lewes

www.awomansplace.org.uk
A Woman's Place Project CIC

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And long suffering families...



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