

PRESS RELEASE

Liberties

Day+
Gluckman

An exhibition of contemporary art reflecting on 40 years since the Sex Discrimination Act

Guler Ates, Helen Barff, Sutapa Biswas, Sonia Boyce, Jemima Burrill, Helen Chadwick, Sarah Duffy, Rose English, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Alison Gill, Helena Goldwater, Joy Gregory, Margaret Harrison, Alexis Hunter, Frances Kearney, EJ Major, Eleanor Moreton, Hayley Newman, Freddie Robins, Monica Ross, Jo Spence, Jessica Voorsanger, Alice May Williams and Carey Young

2nd July – 21st October 2015 (open office hours)

Private view 1st July, 2015

Collyer Bristow Gallery , 4 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4TF

Works by over 20 women artists will reflect the changes in art practice since the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act in the UK. Some artists confront issues that galvanised the change in law whilst others carved their own place in a complex and male dominated art world. From the radical movements of the 1960s and 70s to the current fourth wave of social media inspired feminism, all of the artists question and address equality.

The exhibition presents a snapshot of the evolving conversations that contribute to the mapping of a woman's place in British society, through film, photography, sculpture, performance and painting.

Several works on show are by seminal women artists including Helen Chadwick, Rose English, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Alexis Hunter, Monica Ross and Jo Spence, reflecting the radical feminism of the 1960s and 70s, and highlighting a women's movement that focused predominantly on issues of female subjectivity.

'Suffragette', a Hand-coloured Xerox mounted on paper by Hunter from 1968, is the earliest work on show in *Liberties* and depicts a group of contemporary women in bygone dress, marching with placards, echoing their suffragette predecessors. The concerns of these women of the '60s are writ large on their banners and highlight a women's movement that focussed predominantly on issues of female subjectivity.

Whilst Hunter's 'Suffragette' is overtly political, the 1975 image of Rose Finn-Kelcey on Dungeness beach, 'The Restless Image - A Discrepancy Between the Felt Position and the Seen Position', is characteristic of the ambivalent nature of art practice. The confident handstand (inspired by an old photograph of her mother as a young woman) belies the possibility that the potential for collapse remains ever present.

Many artists in the exhibition use their bodies in their art practice. From performances, both live and documented, including works by Monica Ross and Helena Goldwater, through to film, photography and objects, the exhibition notes the complexities inherent in the personal and public discussions around the portrayal of the female body. Recent graduate Sarah Duffy researched the practice of belly speaking, now more commonly known as ventriloquism. Duffy explores the connection to modern performers, including Marilyn Monroe, whom she considers to similarly have inhabited the roles of both puppet and puppeteer. In 1970, Margaret Harrison founded the *London Women's Liberation Art Group* and has been involved in art, action and feminism for four decades.

The diptychs on show at *Liberties* continue to question gender inequality and the objectification of women.

For Helen Barff the use of her body is an unseen presence in her sculptural works. New work for *Liberties* sees Barff casting the parts of the body where you might rest a baby - your hip, lap or shoulder. These are *"the spaces embedded in the world the world embedded in you"*.

The works of Sonia Boyce (currently exhibiting in the 56th Arte Biennale di Venezia curated by Okwui Enwezor), investigate language and here look at the subjectivity of archiving and memory: the categorization of people that is beyond their control. In *Liberties* we show a work from her 'Devotional Series'; a wallpaper of names of black women involved in the music industry gathered from the general public.

Other works include sculptor Alison Gill's remaking of a piece from 1993. 'It's All Over' included the artist's long plaits, sliced off and placed in a vitrine.. Twenty-two years later the artist is recreating the work, using hair bought on the Internet, creating a multi-layered narrative on ageing, changing ideas of beauty, femininity and the values of production.

From Eleanor Moreton's portrait paintings of celebrated storytellers (Aretha Franklin, Nina Simone and Gillian Welch from the 'Absent Friends' series), through to Guler Ates's ongoing investigation of the power of the veil in contemporary culture, and the highly personal narratives of Sutapa Biswas; the exhibition highlights the individuality of each artist's practice, whilst reflecting on the issues unique to being a woman, being an artist, and questioning one's place in the world. The curators do not presume to have surveyed the past 40 years of women's art practice, but to consider the intervening years since a significant equalitarian law was introduced, and to remind ourselves of what has been fought and won over the years, and what there is still to do.

Lucy Day & Eliza Gluckman

Exhibition background

2015 marks 40 years since the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act in the UK. A law that aimed to change the landscape of our society. Curators Day+Gluckman have been exploring this theme as part of their project *A Woman's Place*, currently in its research phase and supported by Art Council England, the National Trust and the University of Sussex.

A Woman's Place aims to question and address the contemporary position of women in our creative, historical and cultural landscape. Using site-specific and historically significant venues, commissions and works will explore the relationship between a woman's interaction with space and how changing society continues to affect and influence arts practice. The project embraces contemporary art and discussion; commissions, conversations and action. The title is taken from a book by Ruth Adam (Persephone Books) that charts the role of women in society from 1910-1975, ending with the Sex Discrimination Act. The project will be realised in several parts, all under the overarching umbrella of *A Woman's Place*.

The exhibition at Collyer Bristow, a law firm that has supported artists for nearly 20 years, will be the first as part of *A Woman's Place* project.

Curators: Lucy Day & Eliza Gluckman www.dayandgluckman.co.uk mail@dayandgluckman.co.uk

Viewing is by appointment, Monday to Friday, during office hours

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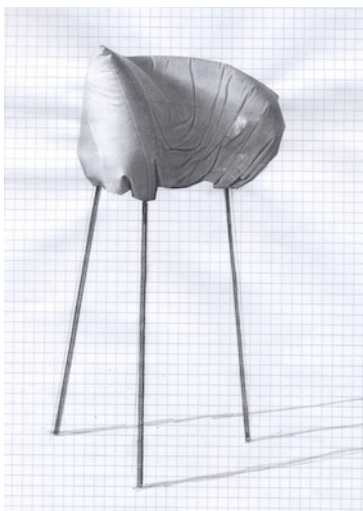
#libertiesexhibition



Alice May Williams, *We Can Do It!* (v.3), 2014 (film)
A short film looking at the figure of 'Rosie the Riveter' from the war time poster 'We can do it!', edited as a dissection of how her image as a cultural icon has been used and endured over 70 years.



Jemima Burrill, *'The New Model'*, 2013, DVD



Left: Helen Barff, *Study for 'Untitled (Hip)*, 2015
Right: Helen Barff, *'Untitled (BB)*', 2012

Editors' Notes:

- A guide to each artist and an essay by Dr. Alexandra Kokoli accompanies the exhibition.
- Sonia Boyce is currently in the Venice Biennale main exhibition 'All the Worlds' Futures' curated by Okwui Enwezor
- Margaret Harrison will be exhibiting at the Jewish Museum, New York November 2015
- Rose English will be opening a solo retrospective exhibition at Camden Arts Centre in December 2015.
- Works by Helen Chadwick, Rose English, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Alexis Hunter and Jo Spence exhibited Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery.
- Works by Monica Ross Courtesy of the Artist's estate and England & Co. Gallery
- An event to accompany *Liberties* will take place at Collyer Bristow Gallery on 24 September and will include a performance by Sarah Duffy. Please contact the Collyer Bristow Business Development Team on +44 (0)20 7470 4408 for further details.