

'DEVIANT' WOMEN

Women and the Visual Arts Research Symposium

Programme
10 July 2025



The 'Deviant' Women: Women and the Visual Arts Symposium is organised by Helena Anderson and Valéria Fülöp-Pochon on behalf of the Women and the Visual Arts Research Cluster, University of Bristol, with support from the Faculty of the Arts.

Registration Form: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/ziKA93Qcx0>

Deadline for in-person attendance: 19 June

Deadline for online attendance: 7 July

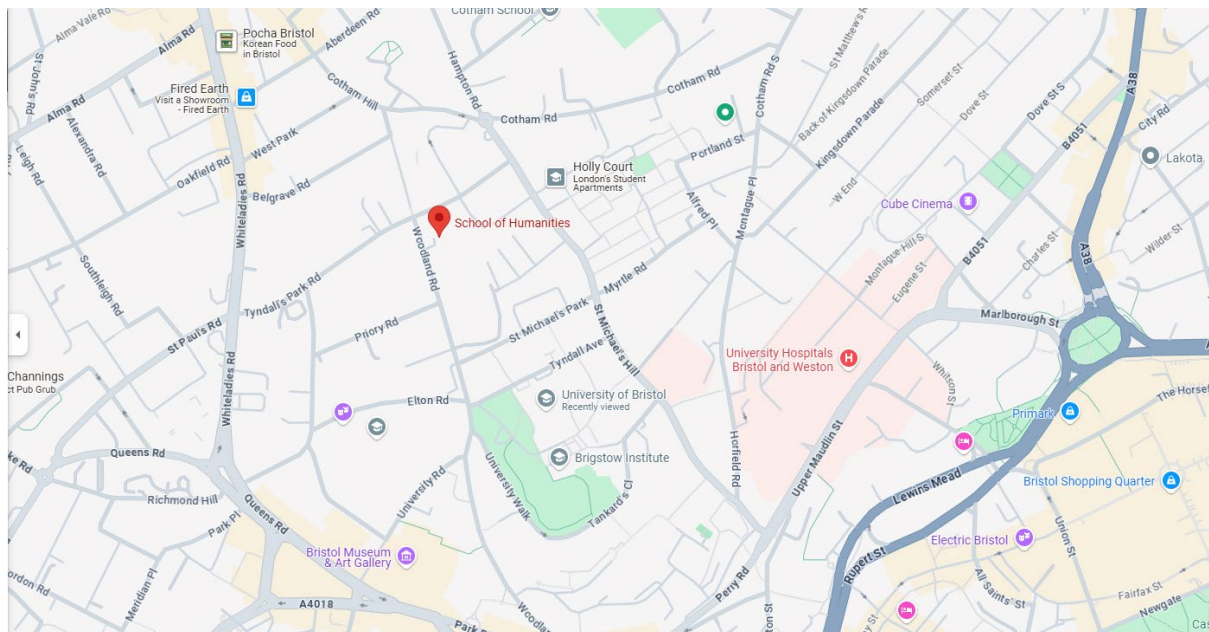
Event online (via Teams links in panel descriptions below) and in person at:

Arts Complex, 1. H020

Humanities Research Space

3-5 Woodland Road,

Bristol, BS8 1TB



Google Maps

What3Words: [///entertainer.cute.crazy](https://www.what3words.com/entertainer.cute.crazy)

How to Get Here: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/maps/how-to-get-here/>

Where to stay: <https://visitbristol.co.uk/accommodation/>

Cover image: Attributed to Elemérné Marsovszky (aka Photo Ada), Untitled, 1930s.

Photocollage, 22.23x13.97cm. Victoria & Albert Museum, London, PH.1013-2024. Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group. ©Victoria & Albert Museum.

Programme

Registration	9:00am - 9:30am
Welcome	9:30am-9:40am
Panel 1	9:40am-10:40am
Break	10:40am-10:50am
Panel 2A & 2B	10:50am-11:50am
Break	11:50am-noon
Keynote	noon-12:45pm
Lunch	12:45pm-1:30pm
Panel 3A & 3B	1:30pm-2:30pm
Break	2:30pm-2:40pm
Panel 4A & 4B	2:40pm-3:40pm
Break	3:40pm-3:50pm
Panel 5	3:50pm-5:40pm
Closing remarks	5:40pm-6pm

Times shown are British Summer Time. All presentations will be recorded unless otherwise noted in the following programme.

To join a panel online, click the link below the panel title on the following pages at the time indicated.

There will be an opportunity to continue discussions afterwards in a local pub.

Panel 1: Transnational Feminine Identities, Room 1.H020, 9:40am

 [Click here to join online](#)

Aisling Keavey, University of the Arts London, akeavey@gmail.com

Home is a Held Image: Irish Women's Migratory Memory and the Deviant Archive

This paper explores how vernacular photography functions as a mnemonic device and deviant archive for Irish women migrants in the UK. Drawing on my practice-led photographic research, I examine how personal and familial images act as counter-narratives to dominant histories, offering intimate insights into memory, exile, and identity.

Framing the “deviant woman” as one who resists cultural assimilation and preserves memory through visual means, I consider how transnational Irish feminine identities are shaped by Catholicism, colonial legacy, whiteness, and gendered migration. Using my own visual practice—working with found family photographs, re-photography, and text—I investigate how these images carry both personal longing and collective memory.

I argue that private acts of image-making and keeping can be read as subversive feminist gestures within postcolonial and diasporic contexts. Photography here becomes a quiet but powerful mode of resistance, foregrounding voices often excluded from official archives.

This paper contributes to ongoing conversations around visual culture, gender, and displacement, positioning deviance not as disorder, but as the refusal to forget or be forgotten.

Alexandra Karg, Philipps-Universität Marburg, alexandra.karg@uni-marburg.de

Uglyness: Moshtari Hilal and the Aesthetics of Deviancy

This presentation explores Moshtari Hilal's self-portraiture across drawing, photography, and digital media as a radical aesthetic and political strategy. Central to Hilal's work is a critical and artistic reflection of Eurocentric beauty norms through the embrace of “uglyness”—a term she reclaims in her publication *Hässlichkeit* (2023)/*Uglyness* (2025) as a tool of critique and self-determination for racialised, post-migrant, and transnational feminine identities.

Focusing on her self-portraits, the presentation investigates how Hilal constructs visual counter-narratives against images of women's bodies within both Western and diasporic contexts. Her artistic language—marked by pronounced features, stylized body hair, and self-reflective gazes—foregrounds elements often read as excessive, improper – or ‘*-deviant.’ In doing so, she not only reclaims visibility but also reconfigures the terms of recognition. In response to the symposium's central question—How can we, as researchers, contextualise this ‘deviancy’ in our work on women and the visual arts?—this presentation also addresses the ambivalence of deviant aesthetics as a site of both Othering and resistance.

Danielle Krikorian, University of Birmingham, dak186@student.bham.ac.uk

Intimate Nonconformities: Huguette Caland's Eroticism and the Politics of Postcolonial Struggle

This paper explores Lebanese artist Huguette Caland's 1970s artworks as a defiant resistance to transnational patriarchal and postcolonial systems. Caland was born into national representation, since she was the daughter of Lebanon's first post-colonial president. Instead, she chose migration, eroticism, and deviancy at a time when Lebanon itself was on the brink of

civil war (1975-1990). Her choice to leave Beirut for Paris and create art focused on pleasure, bodies, and desire was not only personal, but it was also radical and political. Caland showcased the female body not as a conveyer of nationalist virtue, but as a space of disruptive delight, fleshly independence, aesthetic freedom, and political agency. Her embroidered kaftan collection, which started in the 1970s, features bodies, sexual figures, and 'Arab/Islamic' motifs. She drew from them to address intersectional notions of Arab identity struggle, women's liberation, anticolonial and antipatriarchal sentiment. This paper elaborates on feminist theory (Chandra Talpade Mohanty), postcolonial studies (Leila Ahmed), transnationalism and visual analysis to argue that Caland's works rejected the 'moral' and colonial codes that sought to limit Arab women to silence, or symbolic political repression. Her so-called 'deviance' and 'nonconformity' (her lovers, her aesthetics, her freedom) interrupts inherited binaries of East and West, modesty and obscenity, duty and desire. Through her work in the 1970s, the paper explores pleasure as postcolonial Arab and Lebanese resistance against violence and civil war.

Panel 2A: Women and Self-Representation, Room 1.H020, 11:00am

 [Click here to join online](#)

Alex Kett-Baumann, University of Bristol, alexandra.kett-baumann@bristol.ac.uk
Dod Procter: self-representation and performance in the self-fashioning of celebrity

Hailed in 1927 as "That Beloved Star of the Moderns," Dod Procter was arguably one of the first women painters in Britain in the early 20th Century to have achieved national and international stardom in the press, not only through her artistic oeuvre, but also the self-forging of a recognisable and identifiable visual brand by means of self-representation. This paper examines how Procter used masculine dress, smoking, body language and photography as part of a performance to build and drive her celebrity persona and forge her social identity as one of the "Moderns". It focuses on the 1920s, which, based on the quantity of press coverage, formed the peak of Procter's artistic career and more specifically her celebrity years.

Cassandra Levasseur, Université Rennes 2, cgs.levasseur@gmail.com
DISRUPTING THE FEMININE: gender expression in women artists' self-portraiture in early 20th century Paris

This paper focuses on the strategies of gender expression in women artists' self-portraiture in the context of early 20th century Parisian avant-gardes, with an interest in the subversion of gender norms and expectations. I will examine the ways women artists negotiate the feminine in their self-portraits, in an artistic context marked by specific ideas of what a woman artist should be and how they should present.

By integrating elements of traditional masculine artistic self-representation, artists like Georgette Agutte or Mela Muter disrupt the preconceived notions of an *art féminine*, and attempt to distance themselves from the limits of being perceived as feminine, inserting themselves in a masculine artistic filiation. Some, like Romaine Brooks, go as far as to blur the lines of gender, building an androgynous, lesbian or queer self-image. I will compare these works with self-portraits by artists who reclaim some form of subversive, non-conventional femininity through

the use of New Woman or *garçonne* aesthetics, such as Gwen John, Émilie Charmy or Juliette Roche. Finally, I will explore the potential of subversion in reclaiming and performing, or even overperforming, traditional femininity, through the hyperfeminine self-portraits of artists like Marie Laurencin and Jacqueline Marval.

Elizabeth Mann, Yale Center for British Art, elizabeth.c.mann@yale.edu

Between the Lines: Fidelma Cadmus Kirstein's Quiet Defiance

Fidelma Cadmus Kirstein's self-portrait is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, yet she is largely unknown as an artist. She is better remembered as the sister of artist Paul Cadmus and the wife of cultural impresario Lincoln Kirstein—two prominent figures in mid-20th-century New York City. Fidelma's story is tucked into these men's archives and hidden between the lines of their biographies. She was their faithful companion and glamorous muse; however, she also struggled to assert her independence as an artist. Working primarily in muted colored pencil and egg tempera paint, she rejected the visual language of the avant-garde in favor of figuration. She also deviated from the genre of magic realism that was popular among her circle of friends, most of whom were queer, including her brother and husband. Employing meticulous technique, she depicted her subjects with intimacy and psychological complexity. In her self-portrait, Fidelma reveals herself up close and stripped of artifice. With bare shoulders and hair wrapped in a towel, she gazes at the viewer in weary defiance. Although Fidelma's record has been eroded by time, a lack of interest, and in some cases, intentional erasure, my efforts to reconstruct her biography and body of work have revealed an imaginative, idiosyncratic woman who deviated from the traditional roles that were thrust upon her to realize her distinct artistic vision.

Panel 2B: Beyond the Boundaries of Medium, Room 1.H029, 11:00am

 [Click here to join online](#)

Ana Luisa Cubas, University of the Arts London-Central Saint Martins,

luisacubas.ana@gmail.com

Deviant Frequencies: Sound, Silence, and the Women Who Disrupt the Visual Archive

This paper explores how feminist artists and curators deviate from visual and archival norms by engaging sound, silence, and aural disturbance as methods of critique. In particular, it focuses on women working within and against colonial visual archives — photographic collections, museological displays, or institutional repositories — who use sound to expose the gendered and racialized violence embedded in systems of seeing. Rather than inserting themselves into the archive's logic of visibility, these artists stage sonic refusals: whispered oral histories, breathwork, environmental recordings, and silence are used not only to disorient the visual field, but to challenge the epistemic authority of the archive itself.

These acts are feminist not only because they are made by women, but because they embody feminist methodologies — foregrounding the relational, the embodied, and the inaudible. Listening here becomes a political and curatorial act of care, refusal, and world-building: one that resists the extractive gaze, reclaims silenced histories, and unsettles the presumed neutrality of institutional knowledge. Drawing on the work of Ariella Azoulay and Linda Tuhiwai

Smith, this paper frames sonic intervention as a deviant, anti-patriarchal gesture — offering a radical mode of counter-archival engagement rooted in the politics of the feminine and the unheard.

Emma Davis, University of Sussex (from September 2025), emma.j.davis@ucl.ac.uk
Deviant dinnerware: Thérèse Lessore's performances in pink lustre

By 1920 Thérèse Lessore was established as an 'important member of the modern school', rendering incisive and, for some critics, 'brutal' observations of people at play in monumental oils. Over the next decade, however, she would turn her brush to porcelain, selecting the daintiest of eighteenth-century tableware shapes to carry her figurative observations.

Lessore's vessels invaded the tea tables of 'high' culture critics with objects that manifested both 'low' culture subjects and derided decorative conventions of Victorian lady china-painters. Whilst her paintings hung in Mayfair galleries, she invited critics to her Fitzroy Street studio to sip from cups lustred in pink with bawdy music hall audiences. Lessore embraced ceramics' performative potential; lifting and passing one of her jugs, the recipient is confronted by a portly gentleman exhaling a cigar; on another, the server might choose whether the front or rear of a female nude is revealed.

Art-historical mentions of Lessore downplay her ceramics as 'dabbling' in the interest of asserting her a 'modern' British artist. This paper will argue, instead, that it was through her 'deviant' use of the medium that she crafted a distinctly modern artistic identity, one that subverted conventions of both subject matter and feminine delicacy.

Molly-Claire Gillett, University of Galway & Trent University, mollyclairegillett@trentu.ca
'Wanton-eyed women' and 'blue-eyed colleens': subverting and critiquing ideals of femininity with lace in Irish women's craft labour and contemporary art practice

The Irish lace industry rose to prominence in the nineteenth century, entangled with issues of gendered labour, colonial power, institutionalization, and philanthropy. In the twenty-first century, Irish feminist artists and designers such as Camilla Hanney and Natalie B Coleman have capitalized on lace's conceptual resonances to critique Ireland's history of idealizing and constricting constructions of femininity. Their work references the lacemaking labour of 'deviant' women in Catholic institutions such as Mother and Baby Homes, and the ways in which lacemaking as a practice was linked to notions of feminine industriousness and purity. Such critiques are timely, but they can obscure the ways in which nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Irish lacemakers themselves negotiated gendered expectations and discourses, as evidenced by design and industry commentaries that illuminate maker behaviours in discussing their 'improvement.' In this presentation, I will explore how contemporary Irish feminist artists and designers use lace as a tool for critique, while also considering how earlier lacemakers used their craft to subvert gendered ideals and expectations, arguing that centring lace(-making) as both an evocative visual presence and embodied material practice allows for an expanded understanding of the craft's ambiguous relationship with restrictive ideals of Irish femininity.

Keynote

Room 1.H020, 12:00pm

 [Click here to join online](#)

Dr Jon King, National Gallery of Art, London

Maternal Deviants: Vanessa Bell and the Afterlife of the Mother

How does maternal creativity disrupt the boundaries of artistic identity, domestic life and cultural memory? What forms of ‘deviance’ are entailed in becoming a mother, resisting that role or embodying it emphatically? This keynote explores the maternal legacy of British modernist Vanessa Bell (1879–1961) through the critical frameworks of feminist theory, psychoanalysis and visual culture. Focusing on Charleston, the Sussex farmhouse Bell shared with Duncan Grant and their children, it considers how Bell’s maternal subjectivity was lived, styled, staged and contested through her shaping of creative domestic space and family life.

Often overshadowed by her sister Virginia Woolf or confined within conventional biographical frames, Bell emerges here as part of a matrilineal, affective, psychological constellation that includes Julia Margaret Cameron (great-aunt), Julia Stephen (mother) and Angelica Garnett (daughter). Through close attention to paintings, photographs, interiors and memoirs, the talk examines how maternal ambivalence (the tension between care and resistance, attachment and distance) was an intergenerational affair, encoded in Bell’s work, its legacy and the visual and emotional structure of Charleston. It argues that the maternal, far from a retreat from modernism, was a powerful form of artistic and relational invention, shaped by contradiction and carried forward through aesthetic inheritance. The maternal emerges here not as a role, but as a creative force.

Dr Jon King is a curator, researcher and art historian specialising in British art from the eighteenth century to today, with a particular focus on the early twentieth century. He is a Research Fellow at the National Gallery, London, where he co-coordinates the Women and the Arts Forum and contributes to research and public programming. He was previously Bernays Curatorial Fellow of British Paintings at the National Gallery, supporting exhibition projects and a major bicentenary rehang. His writing includes a Tate Papers article on Ethel Walker (2025), as well as contributions to exhibition catalogues. His first book, forthcoming with Bloomsbury Publishing (2026), explores Vanessa Bell’s maternal legacies and the emotional landscapes of Charleston, examining the artist’s house museum as a site of intergenerational memory, creativity and commentary. Jon’s research is grounded in feminist and queer approaches to art history, and he has held research positions at the Yale Center for British Art and Ben Uri Gallery and Museum.

Panel 3A: Domestic Environments and Homemaking, Room 1.H020, 1:30pm

 [Click here to join online](#)

Linnéa Kluge, Sammlung Prinzhorn & University of Heidelberg, Linnea.Kluge@med.uni-heidelberg.de

Deviant Practices of Home-Making: Anna Marie Lieb's Artistic Longing for Belonging within the Psychiatric Institution

How can one create a private space and evoke a sense of home within an environment that embodies both psychological and physical exclusion? How can a sense of normalcy be cultivated when one is perceived as the embodiment of societal and social deviance? And how can artistic practices play a role in these processes? This paper offers a unique exploration of these questions through the intersection of psychiatry and art history. It examines the immersive, spatial installations (Fig.1) of the German artist-patient Anna Marie Lieb (1844-1918) with a focus on the act of home-making. The study investigates how women like Lieb, around the turn of the 20th century, utilized deviant strategies to transform an institutional space, such as a psychiatric asylum, into a site of personal belonging and conquering the uncontrollable. In addition to amplifying the voice of an artist who has been largely overlooked in art history, the paper explores how material, rhythms, ritual acts, and bodily-spatial inclusion in artworks functioned as deviant forms of artistic and female expression in the traumatic context of exclusion and solitude.

Huffa Frobes-Cross, Wildenstein Plattner Institute, huffa.frobes-cross@wpi-art.org
Florine Stettheimer's Imagined Worlds: Domestic environments as spaces of world building between media

This paper considers a broad range of Florine Stettheimer's practice as an interconnected social and aesthetic project of queer world building between imagination and material reality. Drawing on the unprecedented scope and depth of the ongoing research leading up to the launch of the Wildenstein Plattner Institute's Florine Stettheimer Digital Catalogue Raisonné Project, this paper takes a holistic view of the artist's life and work as a circuit of imaging, enacting, and imaging the enactments of, a world she hoped to inhabit along with her family, friends, and social network. This was a world where forms of life, most importantly queer life, that could not exist elsewhere might find a home. As part of this world building project, the artist, most well known as a painter, designed furniture and the interiors of her studios and residences, developed theater productions, wrote poetry, and, along with her family, hosted salons. Independently wealthy, the artist remained at a distance from the commercial art market. As a result, Stettheimer has frequently been mischaracterized as reticent to show her work. This paper will present her choice to most often display her works in domestic environments of her own creation as integral to her world building ambitions. Further, it will consider these environments, the paintings within them, and the salons and parties that populated them as echoing the 19th century experimentation in intermedia art and prefiguring later social, relational art practice. Finally, these environments will be understood as spaces of, and for queer, utopian desire.

Deja Bečaj, University of Maribor and Galerija Božidar Jakac – Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Kostanjevica na Krki, Slovenia, deja.becaj1@gmail.com
Deviant Domesticities: Vila Katarina

This paper shifts attention to Vila Katarina (1989–1998), a self-organized, non-institutional exhibition space in Slovenia initiated and fully self-funded by artist Milena Kosec, who assumed the role of “curator” in her own home and garden. Rather than confronting institutions directly, Kosec subverted their authority by refusing their terms entirely. Her transformation of the domestic into a space for artistic experimentation—particularly in sculpture and early digital practices—disrupted gendered boundaries between private and public, artist and curator, amateur and professional.

Vila Katarina’s radicality lay not only in its spatial form but in its deliberate exclusion from institutional validation, market forces, and bureaucratic norms. In post-socialist Slovenia, Kosec’s quietly deviant curatorial practice offered a provisional, deeply personal model of art-making rooted in hospitality, participation, and shared space—long before these became institutional strategies.

Positioned within a broader genealogy of feminist and alternative exhibition practices, this paper argues that Kosec’s curatorial position challenged dominant structures through a form of domestic insurgency. Drawing on archival research, artist interviews, and theories of institutional critique and outsider curation, it traces how Vila Katarina’s influence resonated in both independent and state-supported art initiatives that followed.

Panel 3B: Writing, Language, Poetry,

Room 1.H029, 1:30pm



[Click here to join online](#)

Nicola Foster, University of Suffolk, n.foster@uos.ac.uk

Deviant and/or Complicit: the case study of Nüshu (Chinese women's script)

The small county of Jiangyong, Hunan province in south China, is rural and remote. The patriarchal system governing it prior to the Communist Revolution (1949), meant that women were not expected to work in the fields. Women's lives were structured by the expectation of their future marriage which at the same time severed them from the support of their birth family. Hence, foot-binding was prevalent and confined women to the home. Unmarried girls spent most of their time in needlework with other women, in preparation for their future marriage. A complex system of sisterhoods with other unmarried girls, allowed them to establish a network of support once separated from their birth family. While literacy was not generally available to women in China, the women of this region developed a script (*nüshu*) that allowed them to continue communicating with each other after marriage. A form of women's song (*nüge*) was developed through which writing in *nüshu* was acquired. In so doing, the women developed a range of complex artistic practices literary, performative and visual. However, their works were not publicly acknowledged and recognised, their circulation was limited to the women engaged in their practice. Lack of public recognition allowed them to develop a very different creative practice and education. On one level, their work was complicit with the patriarchal system, on another they were defiant and subversive of the system, the paper will explore both.

Alessia Scaparra Seneca, IULM University of Milan,

alessia.scaparraseneca@studenti.iulm.it

The Revolution of Silent Writing: Feminine Visual Language in the Art of Ketty La Rocca

Starting from the definition of “deviance” as the insurmountable difficulty of adapting to society’s ethical or behavioral norms, this paper explores deviance as a linguistic shift – a tension toward an “other” language, a feminine one – within the visual art of the 1970s. Drawing on Adriana Cavarero’s feminist theory of sexual difference, particularly her call in the 1980s for a reformulation of language from a female perspective, this study investigates visual strategies that resist the supposedly “neutral” masculine norm. Focusing on the work of Ketty La Rocca (1938-1976), the analysis highlights how the artist rejected conventional modes of self-portraiture, opting instead for alternative means of self-representation – hands, skull, handwriting – crafting what can be categorized as “deviant” self-portraits. These strategies align with practices such as calligraphy, physical trace, erasure, fragmentation, identified by Sauzeau Boetti as hallmarks of another, non-repressed creativity. La Rocca’s visual language becomes a tool of identity assertion and political resistance, contributing to the emergence of a new artistic grammar capable of deconstructing patriarchal visual structures and promoting an inclusive, embodied mode of interpretation. This paper thus positions La Rocca’s work as central in the invention of a feminist language that transforms how we see, read, and relate to images.

Magdalena Mazur, De La Warr Pavilion, magdabmazur@gmail.com

Contingent Gestures: Ewa Partum and the Capture of Conceptual Deviance

This paper revisits Ewa Partum’s early conceptual works, *Active Poetry* (1971–73) and *poems by ewa* (1971), to examine how their material resistance to interpretive closure has rendered them paradoxically vulnerable to curatorial and scholarly capture. These works refuse to signify in stable ways: letters scattered across landscapes, lip imprints functioning as asemic signatures. Rather than conveying a message to decode, they stage a withdrawal from semantic utility. Partum’s gestures have been retrospectively aligned with feminist resistance, linguistic deconstruction, or conceptual negation. Yet such frameworks, while often productive, risk neutralising the deviant openness at the core of these actions.

Drawing on Allan Sekula’s theory of contingency and Irit Rogoff’s concept of “looking away,” this paper argues that the political charge of *Active Poetry* emerges not from its content, but from its refusal to settle within any single discursive regime. Rather than functioning as expressions, these works remain open, exposing the interpretive frameworks that seek to stabilise their meaning. As a counterpoint, I consider *Self-Identification* (1980), a work more readily integrated into feminist art history. Its comparative legibility illustrates how institutional narratives often favour interpretable deviance over unresolved provocation. By foregrounding contingency as both a formal and political strategy, I propose Partum’s early practice as a site of deviance not through opposition, but through excess – gestures that remain out of reach, even as they are repeatedly framed. These are not artworks that evade meaning, but ones that resist capture.

Panel 4A: Against the Grain, Room 1.H020, 2:40pm

 [Click here to join online](#)

Camilla Fabretti, independent researcher, fabretti.camilla@gmail.com

“Io sono Lidel”: Deviant Femininity and Editorial Patronage in Early 20th-Century Italy

This paper examines the visual and editorial strategies of Lidia Dosio De Liguoro—journalist, entrepreneur, and art patron—through the lens of deviant femininity in early 20th-century Italy. As founder of Lidel (Lavori, Illustrazioni, Disegni, Eleganze e Lavori), a refined and cosmopolitan women’s magazine, Dosio positioned herself not only as a cultural mediator but as a self-fashioned icon operating within, and against, the shifting ideologies of the fascist public sphere. Her curatorial vision and editorial authorship challenged the normative separation between muse and maker, feminine taste and political conformity. Through Lidel’s aesthetic codes—its visual language, material luxury, and spatial performance Dosio reimaged the female gaze and asserted a deviant form of cultural legitimacy. The magazine, along with Dosio’s life, became a platform where journalism, fashion, art, and politics converged to redefine modern womanhood. Rather than opposing the fascist ideal of the *donna angelo*, Dosio strategically unsettled its constraints, offering tools not only for herself but also for her readership to challenge and reshape authority, authorship, and aesthetic autonomy. Her story invites a reconsideration of deviance as a generative force within the visual and print cultures of 1920s Italy.

Llara Fuente Corripio, Universidad de Oviedo, fuentellara@uniovi.es

From Waste to Discourse: Women Wool Artisans in the Rural Territory

This research analyses the role of women wool artisans in shaping sustainable production models linked to landscape care, understanding their practice as a form of “deviation” from the dominant discourses of the fashion industry. It also highlights the significance of their creations from a visual perspective, dissolving the boundaries between craft and art, and reclaiming the role of women as cultural agents who, from the periphery, reshape and produce new discourses. Gender dynamics associated with this form of production are addressed transversally, revealing how their labour has been either systematically rendered invisible—despite its impact on the community, territory, knowledge systems, and circular economy—or taken for granted, under the inertia of care roles traditionally associated with women: dressing, nourishing, and tending to both material and immaterial culture. A marginal material, often considered waste, thus becomes a medium imbued with cultural, functional, aesthetic, and political value.

Methodologically, the research combines documentary analysis with qualitative fieldwork through case studies in rural communities in Spain, including ethnographic interviews and visual documentation of creative processes.

Luna Lobão, University of Campinas (UNICAMP), lunavblm@gmail.com

Glass and concrete – Lina Bo Bardi’s modern proposal for MASP

This paper examines Lina Bo Bardi’s pioneering curatorial and display strategies at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) between 1947 and 1968, highlighting her contributions to modern

museography and her role as a woman shaping radical exhibition practices. Bo Bardi's innovative use of industrial materials—such as glass and metal—in the design of crystal easels and modular gallery layouts redefined the relationship between viewer and artwork. Her transparent display supports eliminated traditional hierarchies, allowing paintings to "float" in space and enabling the public to freely navigate and interpret the works without predetermined routes or didactic impositions. Information about the artworks was placed on the reverse of the easels, encouraging viewers to engage directly with the visual content before accessing contextual data. This approach aligned with Bo Bardi's belief in a democratic and didactic museum experience, rooted in both rationalist Italian design and Brazilian social realities. Her methodology foregrounded the autonomy of the artwork and the agency of the visitor, disrupting conventional narratives of authorship and spectatorship. As one of the few women to have profoundly influenced museological thought in the 20th century, Bo Bardi's legacy continues to shape contemporary debates on feminist curating and exhibition design.

Panel 4B: Alternative Approaches to the Archive, Room 1.H029, 2:40pm

 [Click here to join online](#)

Elise Maynard, University of Bristol, gi20671@bristol.ac.uk

A Legacy of her Own Design: Julia Trevelyan Oman's Archive as Feminist Intervention

This paper explores the personal archive as a strategic act of defiance, foregrounding the case of British stage and television designer Julia Trevelyan Oman (1930–2003). Despite a distinguished career, Oman's contributions were often under-attributed by the institutions she worked with—a form of gendered marginalisation echoed across the cultural record. Drawing on feminist theorists Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker, whose work interrogates the systemic devaluation of craft under fine art as "women's work" (Parker, 1984), this paper situates Oman's archive within a broader discourse of archival agency and feminist legacy-building. Now housed at the University of Bristol, Oman's meticulously curated archive resists institutional narratives and reasserts her authorial voice. Two case studies illuminate this intervention: *Enigma Variations* (1968), in which Oman originated a conceptual approach later credited to choreographer Sir Frederick Ashton, and *The Nutcracker* (1984), for which Oman fought against her erasure in her lifetime. These examples underscore how the archive not only preserves Oman's creative legacy but reconfigures the frameworks through which her work is understood, shedding light on how institutions excluded Oman's voice from the legacy of the production. In doing so, the archive exemplifies a feminist archival praxis—an act of reclaiming visibility, authority, and historical memory within a field that has long marginalised women's creative labour.

Vasileia Anaxagorou, University of Cyprus, vanaxagoroustudio@gmail.com

Performance as Un/Archive: Deviant Aesthetics in the Works of Economou and Haraki

My research explores how women artists in Cyprus have resisted dominant norms of art history, national identity, and visual representation through performance and archival disruption. Drawing from my practice-led research and the concept of the seascape of trauma developed in my thesis, I focus on the embodied practices of Arianna Economou and Lia Haraki based in

Cyprus. Both artists inhabit a “deviant” position that challenges aesthetic conventions and disrupts postcolonial narratives on the island.

In a context where women’s performance art remains under-documented and marginalised, their work positions the body as both a site and archive of resistance. Economou and Haraki engage performance to interrupt dominant visual and historical discourses, critiquing nationalism, patriarchal storytelling, and the legitimising mechanisms of the art canon. Their “deviancy” becomes a generative feminist strategy that opens alternative epistemologies.

The paper also addresses their approach to un/archiving as a method of reclaiming authorship over their legacies. Events such as *Revisiting the Tools, Tending the Scores I* (Dance House Nicosia, 2023) and Haraki’s *Performing Biography* (Rialto Theatre, 2023) are examined as performative acts of memory. These gestures rewrite the archive, asserting agency over how their work is preserved and by whom.

Ultimately, this research situates Economou and Haraki as critical agents reshaping the visual arts in Cyprus and beyond. By engaging themes of embodied memory, conventional archival refusal, and the politics of medium, their practices challenge how we see, remember, and historicise feminist performance in a postcolonial context.

Clare Sully-Stendhal, University of King’s College, Halifax, clare.sully-stendahl@ukings.ca
Outside the Canon: Parafiction, Performance, and Strategies of Archival Deviation in The Natalie Brettschneider Archive

Since the 1990s, artist Carol Sawyer has been “researching and documenting” the life and art of Natalie Brettschneider, described as a Canadian-born Dada artist excluded from the avant-garde canon. Sawyer’s exhibitions of *The Natalie Brettschneider Archive* initially appear to be revisionist feminist art history. As scholars such as Griselda Pollock have argued, such attempts to retroactively integrate women artists into the canon risk forcing them into a dominant narrative that may not have the methodological capacity to conceptualize their divergences on their *own* artistic terms. The challenge of respecting the “deviancy” of historical women artists while granting them institutional legitimacy is, furthermore, enhanced in the case of women working within movements that are themselves “deviant,” such as Dada and performance art.

I argue that what has been overlooked in these discussions is the creative deviancy of women artists who *never existed*. Brettschneider is, in fact, a fictional creation of Sawyer. By weaving a fictional history with a factual past, Sawyer inventively bypasses the acknowledged pitfalls of even well-intentioned identity-based exhibitions and research. The parafictional exhibition additionally becomes a conceptually new space to encounter real women artists, inviting viewers to reflect on how deviances from the canon have been obscured in the construction of traditional archives and exhibitions. I argue that *The Natalie Brettschneider Archive* demonstrates potential new paths for contemporary feminist art history and archival research more broadly: paths that are more joyful, playful, and performative, and that demonstrate that imagining new approaches to women in art history may require imagining new, diverging stories of the past.

Panel 5: The Body, Labour, and Visibility (double panel), Room 1.H020, 3:50pm

 [Click here to join online](#)

Amy Russell, Manchester Metropolitan University, amy.russell2@stu.mmu.ac.uk

Making Time: The “Cult of Busy”, Deviancy and Mother Artists

In this paper I will examine existing thinking on the “Cult of Busyness.” If we are currently undergoing what Byung Chun-Hal (2015) describes as a “Mounting burden of work” then what are the implications for mothers who typically take on more of the childcare, domestic work and the mental load? This research will identify and explore the intersection between domesticity, motherhood, precarity and the overlapping of occupation of everyday life by art within our neo-liberal society.

I aim to establish whether there is a way in which a mother/artist’s approach to working with time constraints could be seen as a form of ‘deviant’ activism. Researching three key areas: motherhood, time and art activism, the territory will be mapped out by discussing these changes in terms of the concepts of busyness and precarity. This research will utilise Hito Steyerl’s (2011) redefinition of occupation as being situated between “appropriation, colonisation” and an “endless, relational “labour that is often unremunerated. Thus, deviant activism offers a potentially radical antidote to dominant discourses on the intersection between motherhood, art, domesticity, and precarity.

Dorothee Wimmer, Technische Universität Berlin, dorothee.wimmer@tu-berlin.de

Empowerment, Misery, Dignity: Presentations of Prostitution by Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler

As a result of the November Revolution, a democratic form of government replaced the German monarchy after the First World War. In this process of democratization in Germany, women were equalized in the right to vote, and they became “independent” professionals in these capitalist democratic structures. This emancipation of the “modern woman” was accompanied by male physical mutilations, traumatization of violence, and a loss of legitimacy of masculine ideals after the First World War lost by Germany.

On the one hand, this period of the Weimar Republic was dominated by inflation, high reparation claims, the world economic crisis and on the other hand, characterized by a dynamic technological progress of “modernity” and supposedly permanent possibilities of night-time entertainment especially in the newly emerged metropolis of Berlin. Prostitution as a trade in these night-time entertainments and on the streets was a – very often additional – female profession in this financial and existential plight times. The lecture aims to analyse how this modern capitalist prostitution was presented in the artworks by the artist Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler (1899-1940) – ‘deviating’ from the male gaze of desire and/or violence – as a female empowerment, misery and dignity.

Chiara Harrison Lambe, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, harrison.lambe@hu-berlin.de

‘Unsuitable for Public Showing’: Stella Steyn’s Radical Female Nudes

This paper examines the limitations on women artists in post-war England, using Irish painter Stella Steyn (1907–1987) as its case study. Although her name rarely features in accounts of

notable twentieth-century Irish artists, Steyn challenged what was expected of her through confrontational female nudes and nude self-portraits.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, Steyn lived and worked in Paris and studied at the Bauhaus in Germany. She settled in London after the war and, drawing on these uniquely mixed influences, exhibited female nudes in a variety of styles at London's forefront art institutions. One of these works, chosen as part of a large-scale touring exhibition, was deemed 'unsuitable for public showing' by a West Midlands art society and turned to face the wall.

In the privacy of her studio, Steyn was able to go further. Standing at the junction between advances made by women before the world wars and greater freedoms achieved in the 1970s, she disrupted the traditional image of the female nude through a transgressive self-fashioning: depicting herself as a middle-aged nude.

This paper explores Steyn's engagement with and resistance to art historical and gender norms, illustrating how her female nudes were a powerful expression of defiance.

Anastasia Wildig, independent artist and researcher, anastasia_wildig@hotmail.com
Intimate Portraits: The artist-muse relationship and implications of explicit nudity in contemporary fine art

The depiction of the nude forms the core concentration of my work with a fascination of genitalia as a focused vignette rendered through the medium of oil painting. My practice-led research emerged as an examination of the artist-subject connection through the genre of still life which has transitioned to the painter-muse relationship determining the direction of my post-doctoral practice. The thematic discipline is contextualised within a rich and extensive history regarding the contemplation of the nude model in the life room, a rigorous and challenging exercise that is considered to be a fundamental practise for the artist. My work is highly controversial but through respectful observation to censorship I have acknowledged that there is considerable scope for my paintings as they have begun to generate significant interest appealing to an increasingly diverse audience. The value that has emerged regarding the conversations that surround this complex enquiry has prompted my documentation of the experiential engagement involved in the collaboration as a parallel operation. My inspired visual perception is aligning with advanced anatomical knowledge, psychological and associated physiological considerations as I enter into frank and personal discussions with my models. I am now in the process of refining a methodological framework of analysis to present my exploration of this unique theme that I attribute to an aspect of human portraiture.

Emanuele Carlenzi, IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca,
emanuele.carlenzi@imtlucca.it

"Everything I do has double sex." Intersexuality and Artistic Practice in the Archive of the Sculptor Fiore de Henriquez (1921–2004)

This paper investigates the artistic trajectory of Fiore de Henriquez (1921–2004), an Italian-British sculptor whose work remains largely underexplored. Trained in Venice and Florence, de Henriquez rose to prominence in the post-war period, later relocating to London—where she obtained British citizenship—and subsequently to the United States. In 1968, she permanently settled in the Tuscan village of Peralta, which she purchased and transformed into her home, studio, and archive.

The artist's archival holdings—including personal writings, photographs, sketches, and costumes—bear witness to a sustained reflection on her intersex and lesbian identity. These materials foreground a lifelong engagement with questions of gender and sexuality, offering

fertile ground for a queer re-reading of both her artistic production and the archive itself, conceived as a space of introspection shaped by what she defined as her “double sex.”

In light of recent preservation and research initiatives undertaken by LYNX (Center for the Interdisciplinary Analysis of Images, Contexts, Cultural Heritage) at the IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca, this paper aims to reposition de Henriquez’s work within contemporary debates on marginalized identities. By centering the biographical dimensions of her practice, it proposes an interpretation of her oeuvre as a narrative of embodied deviance, reclaiming critical visibility for a historically overlooked figure in art history.

Virginia Marano, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut, MASI (Museo d’arte della Svizzera italiana) Lugano, University of Zurich, virginia.marano@khi.fi.it
Becoming Wings: Deviance, Agency, and the Art of Misfitting in Sarah Biffin and Lorenza Böttner

This paper reframes how Sarah Biffin (1784–1850), a British artist born without arms or legs, and Lorenza Böttner (1959–1994), a Chilean-German artist who lost both arms in childhood, redefined visibility, dependence, and vulnerability, challenging the aesthetic and social frameworks that marked their bodies as deviant. Drawing on Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s concept of “misfit”, I argue that both artists engaged with the connection between body and environment, disrupting ideas of bodily lack and emphasizing how relational dynamics can catalyze creative transformation.

Feathers in Biffin’s work and wings in Böttner’s evoked alternative embodiments—active, mobile, and complex. Both artists rejected normative framings, using flight not to escape the body, but to reimagine its expressive and political potential. Through acts of self-representation, Biffin and Böttner claimed agency in how their bodies were seen, represented, and valued.

Their practices raise critical questions about who holds the right to create images, how modes of making—trained or self-taught, by hand, mouth, or foot—intersect with power, and how vulnerability can generate new aesthetic and political forms. By tracing how Biffin and Böttner redefined representation through recurring themes and non-normative methods, this paper emphasises common artistic approaches that challenge prevailing standards of authorship, value, and embodiment.

Organiser bios and contact details

Helena Anderson, University of Bristol & Amgueddfa Cymru-Museum Wales,
helena.anderson@bristol.ac.uk

Co-convenor, Women and the Visual Arts Research Cluster

Helena Anderson is an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership student with the University of Bristol and Amgueddfa Cymru-Museum Wales, researching Gwen John's studio collection and archive using theories of visual and linguistic translation.

Helena holds a BA in Art History and French from Macalester College and an MA in History of Art from the Courtauld Institute of Art. Before starting her PhD, Helena worked as a Modern British picture specialist in the London art market. Now based in Wales, she has taught art history at Aberystwyth University and written for the Burlington Magazine and Planet Magazine. She recently completed a curatorial placement at the Victoria & Albert Museum and is assisting with research for a major Gwen John retrospective opening in Cardiff in 2026 and touring internationally. Forthcoming publications include a catalogue essay on John's writing as creative practice and an article on sculptors' drawings at the V&A, co-authored with Rosalind McKeever, for the Burlington Magazine.

Valéria Fülöp-Pochon, University of Bristol, vf15404@bristol.ac.uk

Co-convenor, Women and the Visual Arts Research Cluster

Valéria Fülöp-Pochon is a doctoral candidate in History of Art at the University of Bristol. She holds an MA in History of Art from UoB, and a BA (Hons) in Humanities with Art History. She is a seminar leader in the History of Art and Liberal Arts departments teaching subjects including global visual cultures, the histories and theories of art, and aesthetics.

Valéria's doctoral thesis investigates the art productions of Hungarian women artists between c.1930-60, in the context of Hungary's political transition from fascism to post-war communism. Her dissertation explores women working in exile, emigration and state-support. She has research interests in twentieth-century art, design, and modernisms; CEE European visual cultures; the representation of trauma, identity and sexuality in the work of female artists; Cold War cultures, art and revolution, folk art and applied art and peace activist art. Valéria's forthcoming publications include contributing chapters to *Craft and War: A Global Anthology* (Bloomberg) and *Making Britain Home* (Routledge).

The Women and the Visual Arts Research Cluster was started in 2024 by doctoral students in the History of Art Department at the University of Bristol. Its core aim is to bring together researchers from different disciplines working on female artists, women's art practices, intersections of art and feminisms, and the visual representations of women, women's sexuality and gender identity, from any period and geographical area to create a lively and supportive research network.

The group is a forum for discussion and for sharing our diverse research interests. We welcome researchers to join us from all fields of historical studies, visual cultures, and the arts.

If you are interested in hearing about future events organised by the WVARC, please get in touch.