

***A Studio of One's Own:*
The Second Meeting of the British Women
Artists 1750-1950
BAN Sub Group**



Thursday 26 May, 2016
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art,
Edinburgh

Today we gather for *A Studio of one's Own: The Second Meeting of the British Art Network Sub Group British Women Artists 1750-1950*. This Sub Group based at the University of York is one of a number concerned with specific topics in British Art that the Subject Specialist British Art Network has been able to establish thanks to the award of Museum Resilience Funding from the Arts Council of England to continue and expand its work in 2015-18.

This event is generously hosted by the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Two to coincide with the very timely exhibition *Modern Scottish Women Painters and Sculptors 1885-1965*. This day-long event will continue the work of the Sub Group by offering papers, a tour of the exhibition, and discussing future directions for the research Sub Group.

The topic of British women artists' studios was brought up at the first Sub Group event. With Wilhelmina Barns-Graham's evocative *Studio Interior (Red Stool, Studio)* as a central image, participants are invited to consider the studio, shared or private, in a home or in a school, painter's or sculptor's, as a key space for considering the work, lives, and receptions of British women artists. How did having a space of one's own to practice, work, create, or study impact what artists produced? How did an artist construct or display a professional identity through or in the studio? What can the archive tell us about how an artist used her studio? This event will open the door to a wide range of questions and invite new and productive discussion from the group.

Additional funding towards the travel and accommodation of Sub Group Members attending this event who are based a significant distance from Scotland has been kindly provided by The Barns-Graham Charitable Trust.



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Cover Image: Wilhelmina Barns-Graham (1912-2004).
Studio Interior (Red Stool, Studio), 1945.
Oil on canvas, 60 x 45.6 cm.
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Schedule for the Day

10.00	Gallery front doors open, please gather in foyer	11:30-13:00	4 x 15 minute Papers + discussion: Sally Woodcock <i>'Furnishing and affording the female studio: evidence from a colourman's accounts (1810-1895)'</i> Patricia de Montfort <i>'Louise Jopling's studio spaces' (1880s-1914)</i> Pauline Rose <i>'Narrating the Sculptor and Her Studio (1890-1945)'</i> Hana Leaper <i>'Vanessa Bell's first and final self-portraits: the role of a studio in women artists self-fashioning' (1879-1961)</i>
10:00-10:30	Coffee and biscuits in Boardroom		
10:30-10:45	Opening remarks by Katie J. T. Herrington (Sub Group Leader) and Melissa L. Gustin (Sub Group Facilitator)		
10:45-11:25	Keynote: Alice Strang (Senior Curator) 'From St Ives to St Andrews: The Working Spaces of Wilhelmina Barns-Graham' + Discussion	13:00-14:00	Lunch (provided)
11:25-11:30	Comfort break	14:00-15:00	Tour of <i>Modern Scottish Women</i> with Alice Strang (Senior Curator)
		15:00-16:00	Roundtable discussion and closing remarks

Paper Synopses

Keynote: Alice Strang

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham's "Studio Interior (Red Stool)"

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham was born in St Andrews, trained at Edinburgh College of Art and moved to St Ives in 1940. On inheriting Balmungo, a house outside St Andrews, in 1960, she thereafter straddled both the English and Scottish art worlds. Barns-Graham was a pioneer of British abstraction. Four of her paintings can be seen in the Modern Scottish Women exhibition, which is accompanied by a display of her prints, selected from a gift to the National Galleries of Scotland from The Barns-Graham Charitable Trust, which she established to further her posthumous reputation and to support living visual artists.

This paper will use research undertaken as part of the Modern Scottish Women project at its starting point, examining the issues surrounding women artists' working spaces before examining those of Wilhelmina Barns-Graham and the insight they provide into her life and career.

Sally Woodcock

Furnishing and affording the female studio: evidence from a colourman's accounts (1810-1895)

For the woman artist the studio was more frequently confined to the kitchen table than offering the luxury of a separate painting room. Only around sixty of more than 2,000 female customers of the colourman Charles Roberson gave a studio address, the majority appearing to work from their homes. This paper will explore what Roberson's records show about the furnishing and location of women artists' workspaces, particularly those working in London. It will investigate whether they were able to work in the same areas as male artists, benefitting from the mutual support and access to services and markets that economic clustering provided, or were dispersed, living primarily as wives and daughters rather than as artists.

As well as providing women artists with their painting materials, Roberson sold them studio apparatus and furnishings as well as equipment for sketching trips that took the studio outdoors. However, when a picture might fetch a few pounds but the easel on which it was painted could cost £10, fitting out a working space sometimes involved difficult financial choices and Roberson's archival records show how challenging it could be to keep a studio operational. From the hard-working Lucy Kemp-Welch to the engagingly unreliable Zinkeisen sisters, Roberson's account books show that for many women artists debt was an unwelcome, but often unavoidable consequence of running a studio of one's own.

Patricia de Montfort

Louise Jopling's studio spaces (1880s-1914)

The London studios occupied by the portrait and genre painter, Louise Jopling (1843-1933), over a thirty year period from the 1880s are unusually well documented for a woman artist of her day. Numerous photographs and black and white line drawings of her studios in Chelsea and Kensington were reproduced in the press thanks to her status as a celebrity artist and social butterfly. They include a remarkable series of images of students at work in the life studio of Jopling's art school (which ran from c. 1887-1914) as well as solo portrayals of Jopling in contrasting and artfully crafted social guises – from fashionable salon hostess of George Du Maurier's Punch cartoon, published in 1878, to sober, industrious portrait painter at her easel (as in Austin Chester's biographical article for the Windsor magazine, published in 1906).

This paper examines a selection of these images in close-up, and considers the extent to which they convey visually and contextually overlapping strands of Jopling's public and private life. Beneath the glossy artifice of these images, the studio functioned as the embodiment of Jopling's social attitudes and public activism as well as a shop-window for her art.

Pauline Rose

Narrating the Sculptor and Her Studio (1890-1945)

This paper draws on my current research for a book on British Women Sculptors c.1890 – 1945. It examines the ways in which interviews with women sculptors 'narrate' them and their work in linguistic and photographic form. Women sculptors have not been the subject of biographies to the extent of male artists, but the illustrated interview has offered a way in which their lives could be laid bare to an avid public. Studio homes have been particularly potent sources for journalism, presenting readers with the illusion of 'getting to know' the sculptor, and so ordinary objects and situations could become overlain with implied significance. The studio is a special place in which to 'stage' art, and despite the sense that these photographs may give us greater access to the sculptor's thoughts and processes, of course they are carefully calculated presentations. The visual and linguistic presentation of those female sculptors who journalists and critics presented to the public are highly revealing in the ways in which they characterize the sculptors and their environments. In the instance of male sculptors such images are often proprietorial in nature: they are assertive. This is much less the case in photographs of female sculptors who frequently appear submissive and uncomfortable, and as they are often photographed in their domestic spaces, the distinction between home and studio is deliberately confused. The setting up of these images, and the accompanying texts, often undercut such sculptors' professionalism through a relentless emphasis on their personal appearance and their domestic responsibilities. There exist many such photographs of British women sculptors – names that today are virtually unknown.

Hana Leaper

Vanessa Bell's first and final self-portraits: the role of a studio in women artists self-fashioning (1879-1961)

The first and final of Vanessa Bell's four known, finished, self-portraits, were painted in her first and final dedicated studios. Despite her reputation as a purely formal practitioner, Bell (1879-1961) utilized these works to create direct statements about both her artistic and personal identities. Through them she positioned herself in relation to the canon, and insisted on her vocational commitment. Coming at either end of her career, these works can be read to provide evidence of the fundamental constituents of Bell's practice, whilst also providing an index of the artist's development. The physical space of these studios embodies and demonstrates the power of having a dedicated environment of one's own in which to express oneself, as outlined by Bell's sister the writer Virginia Woolf in her polemical essay 'A Room of One's Own'.

British Women Artists 1750-1950 Sub Group

Sub Group Organisational Team

Katie J. T. Herrington (University of York) - British Women Artists 1750-1950 Sub Group Leader

Melissa Gustin (University of York) - Postgraduate Researcher/
Sub Group Facilitator

Liz Prettejohn (University of York) - Head of the Department of
History of Art

A to Z of Members

Katie Ackrill (Swindon Museum and Art Gallery)

Peggy Beardmore (University of Aberdeen)

Anna Bonewitz (University of York)

Rosie Broadley (National Portrait Gallery)

Robyn Calvert (Glasgow School of Art)

Helen Gorrill (Coventry University and the Royal College of Art)

Nadia Hebson (Newcastle University, Degree Programme Director
MFA Fine Art)

Olivia Heron (The Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate)

Victoria Howarth (Jerwood Gallery)

Hana Leaper (Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art)

Anna Liesching (Ulster Museum, National Museums Northern
Ireland)

Joanna Meacock (Glasgow Museums)

Patricia de Montfort (University of Glasgow)

Lara Perry (University of Brighton)

Liz Rideal (The Slade School of Fine Art/ National Portrait Gallery)

Jacqueline Riding (Birkbeck College)

Alice Strang (Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art)

Zoe Thomas (Royal Holloway)

Pauline Rose (The Arts University Bournemouth)

Alice Strickland (Imperial College Healthcare Charity)

Glenda Youde (University of York)

For further information about the Sub Group Members please see:
<https://www.york.ac.uk/history-of-art/british-women-artists/#tab-6>.