



# Feminist Library Newsletter

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No. 26 Summer 2017

*Keep up with the latest Library news by signing up to our e-bulletin on our website [www.feministlibrary.co.uk](http://www.feministlibrary.co.uk)*

Summer is here and we have a lot of exciting things coming up at the Library, including workshops and events on Self Defence, Yoga, Cycling, and even Vagina Cupcake Making! Our Summer Fayre is always a highlight in our calendar and promises the usual mix of arts, politics, feminism and fun. Our Bookshop stall will also be out and about at a number of events. Make sure you pay us a visit!

We continue to plan for our exciting move to new premises at OKRS next year and are currently hard at work fundraising and revamping our volunteering programme. If you would like to get more involved in supporting the Library you could join our Volunteering team, make a Donation, or best of all, become a Friend.

## **Become a Friend**

If you love the Feminist Library and would like to see us continue for another 40 years, please consider becoming a Friend. From as little as £3 a month you will help to cover our day-to-day costs. This support is vital in sustaining the Library and allowing us to plan for the future.

**Sign up here:** <http://feministlibrary.co.uk/support/friends-scheme/>

## **NEWS**

### **Introducing our new Volunteer Coordinators**

We are very pleased to welcome Jael and Niamh, our two new volunteer coordinators, to the Library. If you are interested in volunteering they can both be contacted on [volunteer@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:volunteer@feministlibrary.co.uk)



Hi my name is Jael de la Luz. I am originally from Mexico. I am a historian, editor and writer about feminist issues, books and spirituality. I also work at Latin American Women's Aid, where I coordinate the Change Maker project, which is a space for popular feminist self-learning from Chicano feminism, Latin American feminisms, and diaspora. I am part of the Latin American Feminist Collective in London and a collaborator in Feminopraxis. I am a mother and companion of battles. You can find Jael at the Feminist Library on Thursdays from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.



Hello, my name is Niamh. I am originally from Leeds, and came to London for university. I have now completed a gender history degree, allowing me to become more involved with the fantastic work and activities of the Library. If you are interested in becoming involved in any part of the Library, however big or small, you can contact us and we will point you in the right direction to get you started. Looking forward to meeting everyone, both existing and potential volunteers. You can find Niamh at the Feminist Library on Tuesdays from 7:00 p.m to 9:00 p.m, and other times by request.

### **Save KVINFO**

The Danish Centre for Gender, Equality and Diversity is under threat of closure.

They have started an international petition to oppose this. Please support our sister library:

[www.petitions24.com/support\\_kvinfo](http://www.petitions24.com/support_kvinfo)



## Visit to Lesbian Herstory Archive NYC

[www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org](http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org)

At the beginning of May I visited New York for the first time. I wanted to walk around Manhattan and get a sense of the city. I enjoyed overhearing people's conversations on park benches, many of them in Spanish, and the surprising sound of birds singing everywhere. I experienced hope with the overwhelming amount of graffiti, stickers, badges, posters, and books opposing Trump in the heart of the city. But I wanted to listen deeper to the stories of lesbian lives in America, and to find common ground, so I left Manhattan for Brooklyn to visit the Lesbian Herstory Archive. I have been a long-time volunteer at the Feminist Library in London and I was told that both archives share similar values. With great timing, the LHA

was open for a few hours on the Sunday I was there, so I invited my friend Megan, who lives not far from New York, to join me in this exploration.

From the outside the Lesbian Herstory Archive has the look of any other house in the neighbourhood. Megan and I felt instantly welcomed from the hall entrance onwards. No security, no library card needed, a zero stress beginning. The archive still looks like a house inside, the rooms full of wonderful lesbian objects. Books, bookmarks, photographs, badges, t-shirts, video tapes, dildos, banners, or anything interesting around the excitement and complexity of living a lesbian life.

We were incredibly lucky to meet Deborah Edel, one of the co-founders of the archive back in 1974, who showed us around the archive, giving us a tour of our lesbian herstory. She explained that the collection's emphasis is on women who have lived an everyday life more than on the lives of famous lesbians. Deborah was there with filmmaker Megan Rossman, who has produced short films about the library. She was filming that day, and Megan and I were invited to participate, being filmed as we explored the archive with Deborah. Megan, not my friend but the filmmaker, pressed the record button as we started the tour in the living room, which is full of anthologies, poetry, theatre, science, feminism, sport, humour, photography, pornography, and spoken word. How exciting to be archived too!

The archive was originally a house where people lived. Many years ago the women of the LHA raised money to buy the house so they could secure its future. LHA is run by volunteers and has no government funding. It is very well organised with a paper catalogue and many online resources. The material is organised in alphabetical order by women's first names, and includes items donated from all over the world.

In the basement, a group of volunteers is working very hard to preserve cassettes and videotapes – an urgent task because of the fragility of these technologies. They wear headphones to listen to what was recorded, and sometimes what is written on the cassette labels is incorrect, as a new recording has erased the first contents.

Upstairs, in what were the bedrooms and the children's room, they have more books, but also t-shirts, badges, a guitar, protest jackets, even little origami lesbian nuns. As Deborah said, 'You name it, we have it.'

The archive is not set up to collect artwork. They refer artists to the Gay and Lesbian Museum instead, but they collect photographs of artwork. Badges are tricky because they can't be easily dated. This commentary made me want to discuss the idea of the unknown object in an archive space, but I opted to carry on listening.

Deborah finished the tour with the story of one of her good friends in the library, Marge, whose books are kept in a bookshelf upstairs. She was the one who raised the first \$50 towards buying the building. In the 1980s she was very sick and decided to go to her parents' house. They were very limited in their thinking. At the reading of her will her parents found out that she was a lesbian, as she wanted to donate her papers and books to the LHA. They got very upset and wanted to destroy her books. A lawyer and a van were hired to come to the family house and rescue such important herstory. Her diaries tell us what it was like to come out in the bars of 1950s Ohio, and deal with the question of who am I?

As always, the best things in life come in simple forms, for free and with gentle manners. After the visit I felt pleased, and made the resolution of becoming a world correspondent on Lesbian Herstory archives, not for the BBC but maybe for the Feminist Library's new foreign affairs press department!

Written by Eva Megias. Photo of Deborah Edel by Megan Saltzman.

## REVIEWS

### '56 Artillery Lane' a Raven Row Exhibition

[www.ravenrow.org](http://www.ravenrow.org)



A cluster of rooms in an 18th Century Huguenot weaver's house in Spitalfields has recently been sent back in time to the spring of 1974, as '56 Artillery Lane', a group exhibition at Raven Row which takes inspiration from the feminist collective S.L.A.G. (South London Art Group) who, in 1974, transformed a former domestic space, South London Women's Centre in Lambeth, to create 'A Woman's Place' – which served as both an exhibition and an immersive artwork in itself. Located in a squatted house, South London Women Centre was one of many repurposed community and activist spaces occupying disused buildings at the time. S.L.A.G took advantage of the domestic nature of this setting to offer a critique of family life.

'56 Artillery Lane' similarly takes place within a domestic setting, and the exhibition as a whole seeks to imagine 'home' as 'a space for social, sexual and political agency', and the 'domestic' 'as a stage on

which kinship and self are formed and transformed through acts of love, cruelty and indifference'. The exhibition does not seek to explicitly restage the S.L.A.G artists' earlier creation. This would have been impossible, partly because A Woman's Place was always meant to be an ephemeral happening, and little documentation of the exhibition remains. '56 Artillery Lane' instead takes its predecessor as a point of inspiration and departure, presenting the works of contemporary artists who offer a multitude of perspectives surrounding the domestic, both within the exhibition and the accompanying programme of events.

The relationships between past and present plays out in myriad ways. One element of the exhibition is a publication produced as part of the research process titled *14 Radnor Terrace: A Woman's Place*. The book reflects rigorous research, carried out in archives including the Feminist Library, through oral histories and in collaboration with the families of some of the original artists. It contains archival documentation including posters and newsletters, and even the comment book from the original show, prefaced with an essay by editor, Amy Tobin, who considers the legacy of 'A Woman's Place'.

Among the works with the most contemporary feel are Lucy Orta's *Refuge Wear*, shown on the ground floor. Pieces of equipment evoking both leisurely outdoor pursuits and survival, such as tents and sleeping bags have been refashioned – rendered as strange hybrids, with a hood protruding through a tent, or a conjoined pair of sleeping bags. The objects are absurd, evoking strange mythical beasts, but also uncomfortably familiar, calling to mind scenes of rough sleepers or refugees. The fact that the latter occupy so much of our visual field in news broadcasts in recent months and years make these sculptural objects particularly affecting, and it comes as a sad surprise that they were actually created in the 1990s, reminding us that for so many, the search for refuge is not a new thing.

On the upper floors, among the newest works in the show are *Poison the Cure* (2017), a film by Jenna Bliss specially commissioned by Raven Row, which plays with the history of pharmaceutical trials in Puerto Rico, thus bringing imperialism to the fore, and *An Evening With the White Queen* (2017), a 360° video work by Martine Syms accompanied by wallpaper and drapes created by the artist for the space.

It is a real pleasure to see such fresh contemporary works alongside those such as *Fenix°*, originally created by Su Richardson, Monica Ross and Kate Walker in 1977 and reinstalled here by Su Richardson. This and other works on show from the 70s and 80s call to mind the Feminist (with a capital F) art I remember seeing in museums throughout childhood and adolescence, and it feels important that they should be brought into dialogue with young feminist and queer artists working today.

The accompanying publication *14 Radnor Terrace: A Woman's Place* is now part of the Feminist Library's collection.

Review by Anna Pigott. Photo of *Fenix°* by Marcus J. Leith.

## EVENTS

### **Women's Self-Defence Workshop. Saturday 22nd July, 3-6pm**

Exciting taster on women's self-defence led by experienced teacher, Carolyn. Tickets £3/£6/£12. Book through Eventbrite: <https://tinyurl.com/flselfdefence>

### **The first ever Feminist Library sponsored vagina cupcake making event. Feminist Library and everywhere. Saturday 15th July, all day**

We will shortly be circulating information about how you can take part in this exciting event, have fun, raise lots of money, and eat cakes. What's not to like? If you would like to help organise this, please contact volunteer [@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:@feministlibrary.co.uk)

### **Feminist Library Summer Fayre, at the Feminist Library. 12th August**

Our feminist Fayre returns for another year, set to be packed with zines, stalls, food and workshops. Full details will be announced on our website and social media. If you're interested in booking a stall or running a workshop, please email [bookshop@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:bookshop@feministlibrary.co.uk)

### **Feminism and Cycling Event, 3rd September at the Feminist Library**

Day of workshops with Bike Grrl, Elly Blue, from Microcosm Publishing in US, and Love Your Bike. Stalls, presentations, discussion, readings and merchandise. Unmissable event. Tickets £3/£6/£12. Book through Eventbrite: <https://tinyurl.com/flcycling>

### **Feminist Yoga at the Feminist Library, every Thursday, 7pm-8.30pm**

How do we reimagine self-care? How do we validate, honour, and love the anger which our feminist activism requires us to use for change? Each week we will explore the relationship between one of these feminist feelings/emotions and yoga (physical postures, breathing and meditation) with a focus on healing. Open to all levels – you don't need to have prior yoga experience.

1) Drop in session – £10 unemployed, £12.50 part-time employed, £15 employed.

2) Four class pass – £40 unemployed, £50 part-time employed, £60 employed.

3) Eight class pass – £80 unemployed, £100 part-time employed, £120 employed.

Book places now, email [affectiveyoga@gmail.com](mailto:affectiveyoga@gmail.com), or pop along one Thursday evening.

## STALLS

The Feminist Library Bookshop will have a stall at the following events. Come along and say hi and pick up some of our great books and merchandise.

### **Gender and Education Association Conference 2017**

21st - 22nd June, 10:30 am - 4:00 pm, Middlesex University, The Burroughs, London NW4 4BT.

### **Feminist Emergency International Conference**

22nd - 24th June, Birkbeck, University of London, Malet Street, Bloomsbury, London, WC1E 7HX.

### **London Radical Bookfair 2017**

24th June, 12 pm-6:00 pm, Great Hall, Goldsmiths, University of London, New Cross, London, SE14 6NW.

### **Grrrl Zine Fair**

8th July 2017, 11am - 8pm, Southend-on-Sea Village Green Arts and Music Festival.

More details at [Facebook.com/grrrlzinefair](https://www.facebook.com/grrrlzinefair).

### **The Feminist Library Newsletter, Summer 2017 - ISSN 0951-2837.**

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[www.feministlibrary.co.uk](http://www.feministlibrary.co.uk) Twitter: [@feministlibrary](https://twitter.com/feministlibrary) Facebook: [FeministLibrary](https://www.facebook.com/FeministLibrary)

Nearest tubes: Lambeth North, Waterloo, Elephant and Castle, Southwark.

Opening Hours: Monday 7-9pm, Tuesday 7-9 pm, Wednesday 2-6pm, Thursday 7-9pm, Friday 11-5pm.  
and Saturday 12-5pm for the Feminist Library Bookshop. We are also open outside these hours by appointment.

Apologies but owing to circumstances beyond our control you still have to climb six stairs before you can access the Feminist Library lift.