

# Object\_Memory\_Archive: art histories, formal knowledge and the power and problem of what we remember

CANTERBURY  
UNIVERSITY

SATURDAY  
30 JULY, 1-5PM

LAWS105 Law Building,  
UC, Ilam Campus

In this half-day symposium, research relating to the archive, and accepted methodologies for recording art histories and material culture will be examined. With particular focus on how existing frameworks fail to account fully for the idiosyncratic nature of the telling of histories, speakers will consider how a feminist method might create a new and alternative form of archive. Considering questions such as how can both research and creative practices make room for intuition and subjective voice, this reimagining of the archive as an imperfect and malleable system, acknowledges the roles of fiction and story-telling within it. How can we reposition the archive with the potential to support and make heard a range of voices?

**Object \_Memory\_Archive**  
is presented by Object-  
space, The National and  
Canterbury University.  
In association with the  
exhibition *The Group:*  
*home-wares*, by Julia  
Holderness, The National  
15 July – 6 August, pre-  
sented by The National  
and Objectspace.

# PROGRAMME

1pm **WELCOME:**  
**CAROLINE BILLING /**  
**KIM PATON**

1.15pm **KEYNOTE**  
**PRESENTATION:**  
**JULIA HOLDERNESS**

**Ever Present Archiving: new methodologies for art histories through fabrication, approximation and invention**

By revisiting particular epochs in New Zealand's art history (for example, the Christchurch art collective called 'The Group' 1927–1977) and conflating it with international movements such as the Bauhaus and invented historic figures, this visual arts research project develops practice-led methodologies for art historical investigations. Tracing alternative histories of modernism in New Zealand, these installations privilege the decorative, domestic and design — categories often overshadowed by the dominant fine art impetus in New Zealand's art history. Jacques Derrida argued that our quest for access to the past is always evaded by the ever present archiving processes and mediating influences, processes that invariably shape what might be understood from an archive's records. He concluded that "the archiving produces as much as it records the event..."<sup>1</sup>. With this in mind, the installations and ceramic and textile fabrications purposefully make room for

invention and the surfacing of small and overlooked details. Accordingly, allowing the artist/author's position, along with slippages and excesses to inhabit these art narratives ensures that acts of storytelling and historiography are implicit components. This relates to how Hal Foster sees archival art as not only drawing on informal archives but producing them as well, and in a way that "underscores the nature of all archive materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private."<sup>2</sup>

Julia Holderness is currently undertaking a practice-led PhD in Visual Arts at AUT.

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2pm: **PETRENA FISHBURN**

**Barbara Brooke,**  
**an Arts Professional**

Barbara Brooke was an advocate for contemporary New Zealand art and its developing professionalism in Christchurch throughout the late 1950s to 1980. However in contrast to her contemporaries — such as, the prominent art dealer Peter McLeavey, leading contemporary art collectors Jim and Mary Barr, the early contemporary art champion Ron O'Reilly, and the progressive public gallery director Peter Tomory — Brooke is virtually unknown. In this paper Fishburn will examine Brooke's significant role in the development of a local professional infrastructure — amongst her achievements, Brooke established two of

Christchurch's earliest contemporary dealer galleries, she was the first female Secretary-Manager of the Canterbury Society of Arts, she founded Christchurch's first craft market, and she produced Christchurch's earliest professional arts magazine.

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## 2.20pm: WARREN FEENEY

### A Community of Artists

Olivia Spencer-Bower (1905–1982), and Yvonne Rust (1922–1987) were professional artists whose practices were sustained by the community of artists that they learned from and supported throughout their life.

For Spencer-Bower this encompassed an intuitive, holistic approach: A member of the 'radical' Group in Christchurch (1927–1977), and member of the Canterbury Society of Arts from 1947, (later its president) and advocate for the arts in the broadest sense of a community of painters, craft, arts clubs and societies. Similarly, Rust's role as an educator, potter, painter and community advocate for the arts, represents an important perspective on New Zealand art from the 1970s to the present day.

Warren Feeny is an art historian and writer, contributing regularly to *The Press*, as well as Adjunct Fellow in the School of Humanities at the University of Canterbury.

[short break]

3pm

BARBARA GARRIE

### Feminism in the Archive

Taking Kate Eichhorn's assertion that archives and special collections in the twenty-first century should be understood as 'central rather than peripheral sites of resistance', this paper looks at the Macmillan Brown Library as a case study and examines its holdings of feminist ephemera and printed matter. In looking more closely at these objects and considering their afterlives within the collection, this paper advocates for the archive itself as a potential site of defiance or activism that has the potential to energize or reanimate feminist discourses.

Dr Barbara Garrie is a Lecturer in Art History in the University of Canterbury. Her current research focuses on the intersection of art history and material culture, with a particular emphasis on aspects of contemporary art practice.

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## 3.20PM: PANEL DISCUSSION

### Cultivating practice in the historical-present

Panelists Julia Holderness, Elle Loui August and Sophie Davis will give 5 minute presentations on areas of contemporary research and practice reflecting on ideas that reposition the archive in a critical and changing context.

Photo: Richard Orjis



Objectspace  
8 Ponsorby Rd  
Auckland  
New Zealand

**Objectspace**

Touching on feminist conceptions of time, embodied archives and critical forms of reciprocity between makers/artists, writers, researchers and curators. This will be followed by an opportunity for discussion.

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**4.30pm: CLOSING DRINKS  
at The National**

**241 Moorhouse Avenue  
Christchurch**

*The Group: home-wares,*  
by Julia Holderness

12 July – 6 August

1. Jacques Derrida,  
“Archive Fever: A Freudian  
Impression”, translated by  
Eric Prenowitz. *Diacritics* 25,  
no. 2, 1995, p.12.

2. Hal Foster, “An Archival  
Impulse” *October* 110, 2004,  
p. 5.

**THE NATIONAL**



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