



colocation, time displacement, 2014, where we are shown around the interior of Pionen, a former civil defence centre in Stockholm designed to withstand a nuclear strike that is now home to a data centre that has provided services to Pirate Bay and WikiLeaks. These visuals are accompanied by speed-reading captions displaying the writing of John Titor, an apparent time traveller who posted his writings on internet bulletin boards from 2000 to 2001. Pionen is a visually striking place; seemingly endless rows of computing equipment are set within walls and ceilings of raw rock, giving it the feel of a Bond villain's lair. The speed of the captions enhances the nonsense-like quality of the language, making this seem like a tour around the facility of an Elon Musk-type figure gone off the deep end.

Rounding out the exhibition, Liz Magic Laser mocks the format of TED talks, which typically provide pop-science within a short, YouTube-friendly format. In Laser's case, she gives us a ten-year-old boy as our speaker. Laser perfectly apes the camera style of TED and the boy mimics the type of delivery we expect from this format, although he actually invokes Fyodor Dostoevsky's exhortation to 'do nothing', in conflict with the blue-sky thinking typical of TED. Laser's welcome injection of cynicism proves a fitting end, reminding us to enjoy developing our own knowledge, but also to question where it comes from. ■

TOM EMERY is a writer and curator based in Manchester.

Liberties

The Exchange Penzance

22 October to 7 January

According to the free printed guide available to visitors, the subtitle of this survey is 'An exhibition of contemporary art reflecting on 40 years since the Sex Discrimination Act'. That prospect, however, was not entirely delivered for although the original act provided for women and men, and has been amended since to apply to transgender people and others, this show, curated by the partnership of Day + Gluckman (and first seen at Collyer Bristow Gallery in London in summer 2015), restricts itself, as the gallery's publicity correctly stresses, to female artists working in the UK who 'reflect the changes in art practice, within the context of sexual and gender equality'. Within the limitations of this exhibition, the organisers helpfully observe significant continuities of practice. Changes, however, such as installation and performance, largely remain beyond its scope and spatial allocation (the large gallery at The Exchange). But at this distance from the act's enactment, the omission of transgender and cis male artists represents a lost opportunity to examine its impact through art on the cultural and social expressions of all genders and identifications since 1975.

The earliest works on show, which predate that watershed, are Alexis Hunter's *Suffragette* and *The Media*. Both artworks

Amelia Crouch
Spectral
Evidence 2016
installation view

Liz Magic Laser
The Thought
Leader 2015
video

<p>PERICLO // Oriel Wrexham 11 & 12 Chester Street // Stryt Caer Wrexham // Wrexham LL13 8BE</p> <p>01978 292093 oriel.wrexham@wrexham.gov.uk www.wrexham.gov.uk/arts</p>	<p>Victoria Lucas After</p> <p>04/11/2016 - 31/12/2016</p>	<p>Paul Eastwood</p> <p>Segrgrair</p> <p>27/01/2017 - 25/03/2017</p>
---	--	--

are dated 1968-73 and depict contemporary women marching to legalise prostitution, a protest the language of which – as the artist's typed text on hand-coloured photocopied images reveals – male officials attempted to censor. The demonstrators wear period costume to identify with the suffragettes in the continuing struggle for civil and sexual rights.

Hunter's career is well-chosen as a starting point since, in the mid 1970s, the UK's socialist feminist artists (and Hunter was highly informed by socialist theories on women and class), as Lucy Lippard wrote in 1984, 'seemed far in advance of most American [feminist] art world expositions'. Moreover, inseparable from their philosophical perspective was the faith demonstrated by Hunter and her contemporaries in the transformative power of collaboration among women. That belief is present, too, in *Monument to Working Women*, 1985, by Monica Ross in which the artist, with Shirley Cameron and Evelyn Silver, superimposes on the commemorative statue of John Bright the memory of women and children who suffered slave-like conditions in the Rochdale factories of a prominent Victorian remembered, ironically, as a social reformer.

Perhaps now a casualty of battles perceived as won and of attitudes altered in ensuing decades, that reflection of a collective process seldom rings through more recent productions. An exception, perhaps, is Hayley Newman's *Domestique*, 2010-14, in which a dozen or more dishcloths, soiled by use and donated to the artist, are mounted high on the gallery wall. Each has been embroidered with minimal traces to suggest a face and there is a connection to be made between the confinement of these vestigial bodies by both the architecture containing them and the emotions they convey that, while hard to read, appear on the threshold of narrative.

References of this kind to the body recur throughout the show. Alison Gill places two cut plaits side by side in a glass vitrine in *It's All Over*, 2015 (recreating with purchased hair the artist's now lost original version from 1993), which imply loss, of both strength or identity, rather than victory. Hair is no less powerfully loaded as a symbol, maybe of the (immortal) self, in documentation of Helen Goldwater's performance *And the Hairs began to Rise*, 1993, in which the dramatised persona assumed by the artist ingests female hair. Jessica Voorsanger's *Bald Series*, 2013, by

contrast, shows the artist, then coping with the effects of chemotherapy, as famous male forebears Monet and Moore. Their hairlessness was also a gender symbol; men gain seniority as they lose hair, their virility intact.

None of these artists dictates an interpretation, however codified the details set in front of the viewer. Instead, narratives arise in which these signs are perhaps examined, rethought or changed. Making carries significance in Helen Barff's casts in *Jesmonite*, all *Untitled*, 2015, that register discrete points of contact around the body – lap, hip and shoulder – on which a woman has supported a child. Motherhood as a theme is explicitly present in Freddie Robins's knitted objects that bristle with anxiety about the maternal role. Her *Bad Mother*, 2013, is a flesh-coloured, tasselled and sleeve-like fetish knitted in wool; its making addresses women's traditional priorities by employing domestic handwork, an avenue that artists have taken since the early years of the women's art movement. Like her predecessors, Robins subverts the benign, passive and homely associations of the materials and techniques. Letters prettily pick out the title along an arm which has a mittened hand at one end while the other end makes an unpretty point with knitting needles driven into its exposed, red-ringed cushion knob.

Helen Chadwick's *Wreath to Pleasure No 8 and No 12*, both 1992-93, move exploratively inside the body, deferring to visually libidinous combinations of fruit, flowers and toxic liquids to invite the viewer into reflections on all manner of manipulations, sensory and scientific. Joy Gregory assumes a subtler aesthetic to interrogate gender stereotypes through items tied to femininity. By reviving early photographic methods seldom encountered now, Gregory seems to extract the single, simple articles she selects from the flow of time to wonder at their collusion in concepts of identity and desire. Her single *Hair Grip*, 1998, is portrayed in a richly tonal, sepia kallitype while the pair of *Kitten Heels*, 2002, evanesce in the blue field of a cyanotype image.

As well as being the year in which the Sex Discrimination Act received royal assent, 1975 also saw Barbara Castle's Equal Pay Act 1970 at last enacted and the publication, in that autumn's issue of *Screen*, of Laura Mulvey's seminal essay 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema'. Mulvey's psychoanalytical and Marxist analysis of the mastering male gaze around which Hollywood cinema was structured had a major impact on the UK's feminist artists. All three documents inform the shaping of this exhibition's examination of how conventions of representation have been ideologically challenged. Margaret Harrison founded the London Women's Liberation Art Group in 1970 and her magnificent double portrait (one a mirror-image in monochrome) *The Last Gaze*, 2013, revisits JW Waterhouse's Pre-Raphaelite *The Lady of Shalott (looking at Lancelot)*. More than a dozen vintage rear-view mirrors mounted nearby cast backward glances on the imprisoned woman, but will the superheroes Harrison sets flying round her thwart the tragic fate assigned her in Tennyson's poem?

The most common critique of those conventional representations in this show adopts some form of restaging. Jo Spence had begun to use role-play to expose stereotypes of class, gender and family life long before making the images included here, *My Mother as War Worker*, 1986-88, and *From a Session on Powerlessness*, 1987. But these examples still exemplify the duality she achieved of being simultaneously the subject of her photographs and the confrontational



Hayley Newman
from the series
'Domestique'
2010-12

metaphor for their wider political significance. Her provocative self-imaging is reflected in Chadwick's composite images (alluded to here by the complex and difficult *Allegory of Misrule*, 1986) and, more recently, in defiant, reflective and even playful work by Frances Kearney, EJ Major and Jemima Burrill, who all demonstrate that familiar themes can still yield fresh narratives.

Women artists' practices and theory have, of course, expanded across contemporary art to be acknowledged now as primary sources for the widespread adoption of tactics like appropriation, text and documentation that, 40 years ago, helped women to circumvent the male-oriented associations of autonomous arts like painting and sculpture. The dissolution of boundaries – for example in the validation of traditional crafts – which underpinned the struggle for a feminist art that should be different, was the liberating force, the effect of which is reflected in the range of media in this show.

Indeed, commemoration of the past appeals to a number of the selected artists as the route for examining current relationships between art, personal identity and power. Present in Eleanor Moreton's paintings, such as *Nina (Absent Friends)*, 2013, is the celebration of strong-willed women who prevailed against sexual, racial or cultural odds, their defiance communicated by stripped-down portrayals on birch panels, the grain of which is visible under varnish as metaphoric accompaniment to the subject itself. Sonia Boyce's *Devotional Wallpaper*, 2008-, celebrates through the textual recitation of names. But it is the collective power of remembrance projected by Monica Ross's video *Acts of Memory*, 2008-13, that recalls solidarity that seems elsewhere diminished. Here, numerous participants recite chapters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that they have memorised, converting the static memorialising sensed often in this show into an active and inspirational defence of hard-won gains. ■

MARTIN HOLMAN is a writer based in Penzance.

Nishat Awan: Migrant Narratives of Citizenship – A Topological Atlas of European Belonging Yorkshire Sculpture Park

West Bretton 31 October to 27 November

Mapping the migrant route along the Black Sea is the theme of this immersive video installation. Presented as an ethnographic study, the project is set across three rooms by Nishat Awan, a lecturer in architectural design, and was constructed by her with students from Sheffield University. Its origins lie in the two-month walk Awan did in 2015 with photographer Cressida Kocienski between Istanbul and Odessa. Lucy Lippard once said: 'The biggest question for both artists and anthropologists should be: are you wanted here? By whom?' In reply to my enquiry about the project's aims, Awan said that apart from informing the general public, this was an exercise in spatial design around the migration problem.

The first video shows Theresa May and husband saluting her Brexit world from the doorstep at Number 10, headlined: 'Our journey begins in Europe, safe at the margins of the refugee crisis.' Nearby is a photo of a smart reception room



Nishat Awan
Odessa 2016

in the Elpida refugee camp in Thessalonika, its neatly institutional decor and deadly absence of people hinting at an ambiguous respect for Geneva Conventions. In the second room is a photo taken on the border between Turkey and Greece of Meric River where, despite the drowning of thousands before them, people still cross via the Aegean Sea only to encounter further dangers. These are revealed in a photo showing survivors being brought ashore in Turkey, where detention centres are set up with funding from the EU-Turkey deal. However, Amnesty International alleges that refugees were returned to war zones by the Turkish authorities. A video of the Turkish Bulgarian border intrigues with its sense of bland normality where shots of passing juggernauts suggest a motorway service station. This image of routine activity is enhanced through the matter-of-fact commentary by a Bulgarian woman border guard; almost as if she was checking supermarket trollies, she describes the daily inspection of lorries where drivers pretend to have just discovered hidden migrants when in fact many have already taken money from the *passeurs/dalals*, the human smugglers. In the third room, videos reveal the mundane waiting game along the route. Syrians, Afghanis and Pakistanis in Istanbul or Odessa recount the slow torture of enforced stasis, a suffering equally intense but less spectacular than the scenarios dramatised by global media. One Syrian activist stuck in Istanbul states: 'I am in exile, I am not a refugee. We all want to go back to Syria. Most refugees are left en route with nothing, no papers no rights no life.' Stories abound of family splits and losses incurred due to the astronomical charges along the endless chain of selling. Videos taken of the migrants by the smugglers are sent back to families with demands for ransom money (similar accounts were shown in Bouchra Khalili's *Mapping Journeys*, 2010, see my review in AM386)

The quaintly ambivalent term *passeur* has been eclipsed by a vast commercialised network or 'economy of borders' that flourishes through exploitation of migrant illegality. This amounts to the commodification of asylum seekers, rendering them invisible when alive but offering asylum to the dead, as happened with the 350 migrants who drowned off Lampedusa in 2013 and who then received Italian citizenship. One Pakistani's bleak tale recounts that when migrants give up, they seek arrest and deportation. The refusal of this by both governments and embassies condemns the seeker to the ancient trap of indentured labour. Where once dealers used to search for slaves, today