



**Addressing the Absences:
Discussion Day**

**Wednesday 21 September
10am till 4pm**

TOWNER Eastbourne

Addressing the Absences: Discussion Day

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A discussion event addressing the gender imbalance in collections and archives. Women and non-binary artists are represented in public collections, but in small proportion and their stories often remain hidden. Much work is being done to redress underrepresentation in collections. We acknowledge this discussion event will not address all the absences in our public collections, but that it will contribute to wider conversation and action.

This event brings together artists, curators, art historians, and interested groups and individuals for a day of presentations and open discussion. We hope to provide a welcoming space to explore gender imbalance from a range of perspectives, focusing on the visibility of women artists in public collections and archives.

The day will also provide an opportunity for Obscure Secure artists Hayley Field and Jacqueline Utley to present their findings and launch their publication on their project on Kathleen Walne following a period of research and a residency at Towner Eastbourne.

Contributors include: Natalie Bradbury, writer and researcher; Rebecca Birrell, curator and author of *This Dark Country*; Sara Cooper, Head of Collections & Exhibitions, Towner Eastbourne; Professor Meaghan Clarke, University of Sussex; Lauren Craig, artist and cultural researcher; Harriet Loffler, Curator of The Women's Art Collection; Gina Nembhard, artist; Obscure Secure artists Hayley Field and Jacqueline Utley; Renee Vaughan Sutherland, artist; Karen Taylor, curator of the Lucy Wertheim exhibitions at Towner Eastbourne.

@townergallery @obscuresecure #lucywertheim

Image: Kathleen Walne, *Girl in Caravan*, 1935. ©The Artist's Estate. Towner Eastbourne

Ticket price includes tea or coffee on arrival, Addressing the Absences discussion day, free entry to the Wertheim exhibitions and a copy of the publication *Listening to Kathleen*.

£14 (General) / £10 (Concessions & Towner Members).

To book please visit: <https://townereastbourne.org.uk/whats-on/events/addressing-the-absences-discussion-day>

Towner Eastbourne, Devonshire Park, College Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4JJ

Generously supported by:



Speaker Presentations and Profiles

Obscure Secure
Hayley Field and
Jacqueline Utley
Listening to Kathleen



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Obscure Secure's presentation will discuss the gentle and intuitive approach used during their project on artist Kathleen Walne (1915- 2011). Through their work, Obscure Secure have imagined what led Kathleen to develop such a fresh and vibrant visual language. Following a process of looking at her work closely and slowly; learning about her life through friends and family; understanding her unique friendship with Lucy Wertheim; and making accessible their questions and processes through a residency at Towner Eastbourne, Obscure Secure will share their findings.

Obscure Secure artists will discuss how their work with mentors, curators, and writers has supported them to share their research more widely through the Kathleen Walne residency (Towner Eastbourne, July 2022) and their new publication. *Listening to Kathleen*, launched at this discussion event, includes written contributions from Rebecca Fortnum, Jennifer Higgin, Emma Roodhouse, Karen Taylor and visitors to their residency.

Obscure Secure is a collaborative practice that began in 2014 to explore the visibility of twentieth century women artists in public collections. Past projects include Obscure Secure at Christchurch Mansion, (Colchester and Ipswich Museums) and Red Studio Enquiry (Britten Pears Arts, Suffolk). Their current project focuses on the work of artist Kathleen Walne from a position of care as fellow painters. Obscure Secure artists Hayley Field and Jacqueline Utley recently worked in residence at Towner Eastbourne to conduct research and share their process as practice-based artist researchers.

Hayley Field and Jacqueline Utley met at Chelsea School of Art (1986-1989).

Hayley Field is an artist who lives and works in Suffolk. Her work (largely oil paintings on board) is intuitive and builds over time, drawing in threads from observations and ideas. Her collaborative practice allows her to share her interests in process and legacy. She has worked in participatory arts as a practitioner and manager.

Jacqueline Utley is an artist who lives and works in London. Her work incorporates painting, drawing and collaborative practice-based research projects and events. Her nonlinear narrative paintings bring women together in imagined non-hierarchical spaces.

Harriet Loffler

**The Women's Art Collection:
Making an Appearance**



@womensartcollection
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This talk will share the unique story of The Women's Art Collection. Europe's largest collection of art by women, the Collection is displayed throughout Murray Edwards College, an iconic Brutalist building designed by Chamberlin, Powell and Bon in 1964 as a manifesto for women's education. The Collection challenges the underrepresentation of women artists in museums and galleries. It is a celebration of women's agency and creativity, an art historical record and a living, evolving body of art. At the heart of its founding mission is the principle of collaboration and community in which women take centre stage as administrators, artists, collectors, curators and patrons.

Harriet Loffler is the Curator of The Women's Art Collection at Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge. Prior to joining the College, Harriet was the Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery from 2009-2018. In her role she led on all the contemporary exhibitions and public programming, partnership projects as well as the development of the modern and contemporary collection. She has also worked at Frieze and the Frieze Art Fair in London and has an MA in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art. From 2019-2021 she was on the Board of Trustees at the David Parr House.

Lauren Craig and Gina Nembhard

The Perception of Archives:
Dead or Alive, You're
Coming With Me



Gina Nembhard:
[@displacement_](#)
[activies](#)

What are the conditions that create hierarchies and the barriers in who is allowed to be represented in archives and collections? Through artist examples and our collective research, we will explore our experience of archiving and their afterlife - where does the work go, how is it acquired, and who can access it? How can a living artist start to think about their legacy, be their own advocate and entrust their archives to the care of different people and spaces?

Lauren Craig is a London-based cultural futurist, artist, curator, full-spectrum doula, and celebrant. Moving between performance, installation, experimental art writing, exhibition making, moving image, research and photography, her approach is a meditation on celebration, commemoration and tribute. Through archival research, reactivation, and socialisation, she centres on lived experience whilst striking through and reframing past and present dominant narratives. Craig is a former member of collectives Rita Keegan Archive Project (RKAP) and 'X Marks the Spot'. She has founded and directed six creative organisations with a background in ethical, social and environmental entrepreneurship and reproductive justice.

Gina Nembhard is a practitioner and assistant to artists. Initially trained in mixed media textiles, she later worked for the London-based Anne Thorne Architects whilst studying. Further studies in sustainable product design led her to develop a business/practice combining art/craft workshops, focusing on a broad range of making including upholstery, textiles, stitch, and dyeing. As a member of a collective of women practitioners called 'X Marks the Spot' which initially formed in residency at Studio Voltaire, Gina was exposed to working with artist's archives. This link continues today with the Rita Keegan Archive Project (RKAP), a social history curatorial collective.

Rebecca Birrell

This Dark Country: Women Artists, Still Life and Intimacy in the Early Twentieth Century



@rebeccabirrell

This talk will explore the research and writing behind my first book, *This Dark Country*. The book is a feminist and queer study of the ways in which gender, subjectivity, domesticity and the cultures of interior space were articulated, interrogated and renegotiated by early twentieth century women artists. It was a Guardian Art Book of the Year 2021, and received praise from Celia Paul, Leanne Shapton, Thérèse Oulton, Jennifer Higgie and Doireann Ní Ghríofa, amongst others.

Rebecca Birrell has occupied curatorial positions at the Jewish Museum London, The Department of Prints and Drawing at The British Museum and at The Charleston Trust. In 2018 she undertook a fellowship at the Yale Center for British Art. While finishing her PhD at the Edinburgh College of Art, she worked on the photographic archive at The Wilhelmina Barns-Graham Trust. She is Curator of 19th and 20th Century Paintings and Drawings at the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. Her first book, *This Dark Country: Women Artists, Still Life and Intimacy in the Early Twentieth Century*, a blend of collective biography and art criticism, published by Bloomsbury in August 2021.

Karen Taylor
Finding Lucy:
Conversations in the
Wertheim Archive



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There is a privilege in handling an archive, a responsibility to consider how the material is perceived, interpreted, and shared. Through this talk, Karen will discuss the questions that occurred, the discoveries made and her insights in navigating the path to ‘find’ the patron, collector, and gallerist Lucy Wertheim (1883-1971). She will also explore the challenges she found in reuniting the women in the Twenties Group who exhibited at the Wertheim Gallery between 1932 and 1937.

Karen Taylor is the Collections and Exhibitions Curator at Towner Eastbourne, where she curates exhibitions with a focus on the artists in the Towner Collection. She researched and curated Towner's 2022 summer exhibition *A Life in Art: Lucy Wertheim, Patron, Collector, Gallerist and Reuniting the Twenties Group: from Barbara Hepworth to Victor Pasmore*. Other exhibitions include *Margaret Mellis: Modernist Constructs* (2021), *Inhabit* (2018) and *The Museum of Art* (2017). Karen has also worked as a freelance artist and art facilitator, specialising in performance, costume and constructed textiles. Before joining Towner, she conceived and curated the exhibition *Stitch for Victory* (2011) and coordinated the *Stitch for Victory Community Project* funded by HLF (2013).

Renee Vaughan Sutherland
Collectively Cruising the
Collection: Feeling and
Following the Traces



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Being introduced to Towner's Collection in 2021 as part of a project, Renee worked with fellow members of the LGBTQIA+ community to explore personal responses to the artworks for the Collectively podcast series. This evolved into a collaboratively curated exhibition: Cruising the Collection. Renee will share the process from her initial steps, the importance of past experience, intuition and listening to art pieces to surface traces of narratives that have been hidden, neglected or forgotten.

Renee Vaughan Sutherland is an artist, creative director and lecturer living and working in Essex. Her creative practice explores the body and landscape and the potential of inhabiting bodies being carriers of narratives. She has exhibited and screened film work in the UK and Europe.

Natalie Bradbury

Pictures by and for children:
Nan Youngman and the 1931
Wertheim Gallery exhibition
of children's art



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This talk will take as its starting point an image of Nan Youngman hanging children's artworks at the 1931 exhibition of children's art she organised at the Wertheim Gallery, London. It will ask what this image says about Youngman's dual - and sometimes conflicting - roles as an exhibiting painter and an educationalist. It will place her work as an artist, teacher and organiser of exhibitions within the artistic and educational contexts of the time, including the contemporary enthusiasm for Child Art.

Natalie Bradbury is a writer and researcher based in Greater Manchester. Her interests include education, social history, twentieth-century British history, art, architecture and design, and art experienced outside of an art gallery context. She completed a PhD at the University of Central Lancashire in 2018, entitled 'Pictures for Schools: Art, Education and Reconstruction in Post-war Britain'. This focused on a series of exhibitions organised by the painter and educationalist Nan Youngman at various venues in London between 1947 and 1969, with a parallel series of exhibitions taking place in Wales between 1951 and the 1980s.