

# EVENTS

4 Dec 7–9.30pm TALK

*Shattered: Contemporary Perspectives On Second Wave Feminism And Its Art Forms*

Speakers: Dr Angela Dimitrakaki (Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Art History and Theory, University of Edinburgh), Dr Catherine Grant (Lecturer in Critical Studies in Art, Goldsmiths), Marlene Smith (Artist, and Curator, The Public).

‘In order to create an alternative, an oppressed group must at once shatter the self-reflecting world which encircles it and, at the same time, project its own image onto history. In order to discover its own identity as distinct from that of the oppressor it has to become visible to itself. All revolutionary movements create their own ways of seeing. But this is the result of great labour.’

– Extract from workshop documents, ‘Workshop on Images of Women’, by the Women’s Workshop of the Artists Union, c 1972

Titled *Shattered*, the event aims to explore second wave feminism and its intersection with artistic practice from a contemporary perspective. The event runs in parallel to Goldsmiths CCA’s exhibition of work by Alexis Hunter, a feminist conceptual photographer whose work directly intervened in the realm of the political with a view to disrupt socially inscribed gender roles and their mediation. Within a contemporary context of feminist activism amongst artists and thinkers, it becomes ever more important to understand the achievements, languages and strategies of second wave movements, whilst troubling their legacy and articulating their limitations. Invited speakers will examine this seismic moment in which art and politics were irrevocably intertwined, to complexify, challenge and find potential solidarities. Furthermore, the question will be asked, does the move towards a pluralised concept of ‘feminisms’ threaten the potential for communal focused action at a time in which liberal ideals of equality are threatened?

5 Dec, 2–2:45pm TOUR

*The Feminist Archive, With Dr Althea Greenan*

Join Dr Althea Greenan for a tour of the archival items drawn from the Womens’ Art Library (WAL), which are on show as part of Goldsmiths CCA’s exhibition of work by Alexis Hunter.

Hunter meticulously documented her practice, donating decades worth of slides, posters, ephemera and photographs to the WAL in order to preserve both her own practice, and the history of the feminist art movement. Archiving for Hunter was an explicitly political act, that addressed the lack of representation of women artists in institutions, and more broadly, art history.

From 8 Dec EXHIBITION TOURS

Every Saturday 2–2.45pm

Join members of CCA’s curatorial team for a 45 min guided tour of our current exhibitions, including a brief history of the CCA building. There will be plenty of opportunity to ask questions and learn about the works on show in an informal setting.

Please note that due to the nature of themes addressed in the exhibitions, the tours may not be suitable for younger viewers.

Please meet at 2pm at the Reception desk.

# EXHIBITION GUIDE

ALEXIS HUNTER

SEXUAL WARFARE

23 Nov 2018 – 3 Feb 2019

Ground Floor & Basement

*Sexual Warfare* presents key work by Alexis Hunter (1948 - 2014) made between 1968–86. The first solo presentation of Hunter’s work in the UK since 2006, and in London since 1981, the exhibition brings her acerbic critique into dialogue with the contemporary moment and reinforces her importance both as an artist and a feminist.

An influential figure in the Women’s Art Movement in Britain in the 1970s, Hunter is best known for her staged photographic works in which she used the medium as a tool to manipulate normative power dynamics within society through gender role-play and fetishised objects. Her images draw upon the violence within capitalism’s abuse of gender stereotypes and sexuality for the pursuit of profit. As feminist discourse is reactivated with new concerns, and victims are presently afforded a visible platform, revisiting Hunter’s work after some four decades highlights a corresponding energy, anger and strength.

New Zealand born, Hunter moved to London in 1972 where she was an active part of The Women’s Workshop of the Artists Union, the founding of which recognised that ‘Women in art are subject of conscious and unconscious discrimination and the artworld in all its manifestations from gallery system to educational system is based totally upon a masculine identity... Women need to massively redress the massive disbalance which history has created...’ The context of the 1970s for female artists was a challenging one. Hunter complained that she struggled to find photographic printers who would print her images, simply because she was a woman. Nonetheless, she achieved recognition for her ‘narrative sequences’ and was part of landmark exhibitions that fought to make space for the serious consideration of work by female artists; such as ‘Both Sides Now’, curated by Lucy Lippard, and the Hayward Annual 1978, which was the first to be curated by women and featured almost only female artists.

Her work was greeted with controversy, and frustratingly often critiqued for its feminist stance rather than artistic merit. The most virulent opposition was the work included in a touring exhibition from the Whitechapel Gallery titled Art for Society. The show was threatened with closure by the museum’s staff unless *Object Series* (1974-75), in which Hunter’s camera zooms in on parts of male bodies, were withdrawn. Hunter’s inversion of the objectifying gaze was enough to cause

outright mutiny amongst the male museum workers who unpacked the art works.

Hunter worked across painting and photography throughout her life, but during the ‘70s was specifically drawn to photography as a means for transmitting politicised feminist messages to a wider audience than that of the art world. Her images militate the commercial language of magazines and advertising. This is most directly felt in the *Approach to Fear* (1976-77) series which picture hands - nails red lacquered – performing various actions that confound gendered expectation. Compositionally, these could be your own hands, directly implicating the viewer in the work. The exhibition includes a presentation of lecture slides found in Hunter’s archive. She collected images of magazine pages advertising commodities aimed at women, most of them feature the same immaculate red finger nails. Others show how misogyny was a key strategy in advertising targeting men.

Through a use of grids, serialisation, and interplays between text and image, each ‘narrative sequence’ becomes animated, speaking directly and urgently to the viewer. *Domestic Warfare* (1979) is the most extensive of these, running to twenty images, the work depicts a steadily deteriorating wedding anniversary dinner. What starts as a romantic candle lit dinner, descends into all-out war, ending with the female character taking an axe to the room. The work was originally shown as a slide projection, later as a series of photographs, and documents the restrictions women faced within a nuclear family structure. The serial composition of this and other works on show resemble storyboards for a film. Indeed, Hunter worked as an animator to support her artistic practice, the two disciplines palpably bleed into each other.

*Dialogue with a Rapist* (1978) is the most challenging of the displayed works, and articulates an intersection of issues surrounding gender, race and class within society at the time. The serial work relates an attempted attack on Hunter whilst she walked through Bermondsey in the small hours. Using language, she manages to dissuade her young black male attacker, gaining the upper hand through appealing to him to think of his mother and sisters – the area had a strong National Front constituency, and would be bound to use the example of his violence to justify targeting the black community. At one point in their exchange he comments; ‘it sounds like you are on my side.’ That

# EXHIBITION GUIDE

a white woman used her power to diffuse the situation through threatening racial violence demonstrates the entrenched hierarchies at work at the time, and points to a complex entanglement of discriminations. Whilst the methodology and language of this work seems problematic in 2018, the context and intention were at that time aiming for empathy and understanding. This work highlights important shifts in feminist practices from the 70s to today.

Items from Hunter's archive and the Women's Art Library are shown alongside the artworks. These include sketches for the staging of photographs, contact sheets, notes, slides, articles, books and illustrations that outline Hunters' process of composition, sense of humour, and investment in the professionalisation of women's art and its preservation. Both of the latter points are highly politicised acts when viewed with a regard for the context within which women were making art at the time - against a male dominated canon and with very little opportunity for exhibition or museum acquisition.

A specially commissioned publication has been produced on the occasion of the exhibition featuring essays by Dr Althea Greenan, Special Collections Curator at the Women's Art Library and Amy Tobin, Lecturer in the History of Art and Curator of Exhibitions, Events and Research at Kettle's Yard.

Supported by the Alexis Hunter Estate, Simon Bishop, and the Alexis Hunter Exhibition Circle.

# LIST OF WORKS

*Suffragette*, 1968  
Hand-coloured Xerox mounted on paper, vintage  
22 x 38 cm

*Sexual Warfare*, 1973  
Collage with newsprint, felt-tip drawing and text, vintage  
42 x 59 cm

*Approach to Fear: Voyeurism*, 1973/2011  
Set of 12 hand-tinted silver bromide photographs hand-tinted with oil  
44.4 x 38 cm each

*The Model's Revenge I*, 1974  
Signed, titled and dated in black ink  
Silver gelatin print  
50.8 x 61 cm

*The Model's Revenge II*, 1974  
Signed, titled and dated in black ink  
Silver gelatin print  
50.8 x 61 cm

*The Model's Revenge III*, 1974  
Signed, titled, and dated in black ink  
Silver gelatin print  
50.8 x 61 cm

*Object Series: Hoxton London, New York*, 1974-75 / 2012  
3 Black and white photograph  
Sheet size 41 x 50 cm  
Image size 32 x 48 cm

*Sexual Warfare*, 1975  
Signed, titled and dated  
1 panel of 18 colour photographs mounted on board, vintage  
59.5 x 49 cm

*Approach to Fear I: Violence - identify with aggressor*, 1976  
8 colour photographs in 2 framed panels  
100 x 41.5 cm each panel

*Approach to Fear: XVII: Masculinisation of Society - exorcise*, 1977  
Signed  
10 vintage colour photographs, mounted on 2 panels  
25 x 101 cm each

*Self-Portrait*, 1977/2010  
Silver gelatin print  
61 x 30 cm

*Approach to Fear VII: Pain - Solace*, 1977  
4 vertical photographic narratives  
46.1x38.5cm

*The Marxist's Wife (still does the housework)*, 1978/2005  
20 colour laser copies on archival paper, in 4 framed panels  
109.5 x 36 cm each panel

*Dialogue with a Rapist*, 1978  
10 unique black and white photographs with handwritten script in indian Ink  
41 x 36.2 cm each

*Domestic Warfare*, 1979/2012  
20 c-type photographs  
20.3 x 25.4 cm (each)

*To Silent Women (alone we failed)*, 1981  
24 vintage color Xeroxes  
21 x 29.5 cm (each)  
119.4 x 36.8 cm each panel (overall dimensions 119.4 x 220.8 cm)

*Tits and Bums*, 1986  
Ink and photo-collage on paper, vintage  
29.8 x 20.9 cm

All works courtesy of the Alexis Hunter Estate.