



HOME PROJECTS

SARAH-JOY FORD: ARCHIVES AND AMAZONS

Mon 17 May – Sun 11 July. Granada Foundation Galleries 1 & 2.

A Quilter's Guide to the Lesbian Archive

Sarah-Joy Ford presents a new body of work following several years of research in the Lesbian Archive Collection at Glasgow Women's Library. Sarah-Joy's work takes pleasure in connecting with this lesbian heritage, acknowledging the complexities of queer archiving, and stitching through to new legacies.

This exhibition is an exercise in taking pleasure in identification, recognition and connection with the lesbian pasts represented in the archive. It provides material space to remember the stories of the dyke lands, lesbian history walks, and lesbian spaces hidden in their vaults. Ford's work examines what it means to look backward through a largely unknown history; acknowledging failed utopias, and stitching through the complex politics, feelings and affects of the Lesbian Archive. Creating a new legacy for lesbian lives in every thread, whilst acknowledging the complexities of the lives recorded within it, and the limits of visibility as the primary tool for lesbian liberation.

Using quilt as a methodology, Ford has responded to and re-visioned archival material. Each stitch is a mediation between the feelings, sensations, and pleasures of exploring lesbian pasts. This reflection indulges in the images, iconographies and symbols that have been used to invoke lesbian strength, power, and community throughout the 20th and 21st century. These iconographies are woven textile tales from Lesbos, the interlocking Venus, and the labrys to the Amazon woman.

The Lesbian Archive and Information Centre was founded in London 1984 to create a community repository for lesbian history, culture, and memory. As a result of shifting politics, political disagreements, the effects of Section 28 and the loss of funding, it closed in 1994. There is now no dedicated Lesbian Archive in the UK, LIAC's material is now housed at Glasgow Women's Library. Taking this into account Ford considers the emotional and political difficulties that eventually fractured and fragmented the archive and considers the complex reality this exposes.

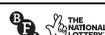
www.sarahjoyford.com

Continues overleaf...

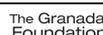
Exhibition Partners



FUNDED BY



FOUNDING SUPPORTERS



Gallery 1

The Amazon warrior is iconic in lesbian feminist culture; she represents the strength and ferocity of women unbridled from patriarchy. In Greek Mythology Amazons were fierce warrior women, skilled in battle and war craft Lesbian writers, poets, and artists in the 70s and 80s, including Mary Daly, Audre Lorde and Monique Wittig claimed the amazon as a lesbian symbol to connect with a heritage of powerful women, loving women and living without men.

In *Archives and Amazons* four digitally embroidered amazons ride across the quilt, based on the illustration used on The Lesbian Archive and Information Centre Newsletters. The same illustration of an amazon also appeared on the cover of *Amazon Quarterly*, an American Lesbian Arts publication from the 1970s, who's editors included Audre Lorde.

The *Veiled Wet and Wild* series re-visions are another depiction of the lesbian amazon. Each veil bears a digitally embroidered, hand beaded, symbol from the lesbian archive. Glimpsed beneath these protective emblems, is another layer of embroidery based on photographs by the groundbreaking lesbian artist and academic Tessa Boffin (1960-1992). The series, titled *Wet and Wild Women of the Cleaxe age* was published in *Quim* magazine (1989-1994); a British lesbian erotic publication established in resistance to the censorship of lesbian erotic cultures during the feminist/lesbian sex wars.

We think of the archive as an orderly record of history: a collection of available and accessible materials. But the archive is vast, and its objects include records of intimate encounters, secret languages, and the fragments of complex lives. The veil is a reminder that in a contemporary moment defined by online immediacy, that the lesbian archive must be approached with tenderness and encountered intimately. Visibility is not our only weapon in the fight for lesbian, and queer liberation.

Gallery 2

Hung as a patchwork this series of digitally printed silk scarves act as souvenirs from important places referenced in the LIAC collection. The first map depicts the Greek Island of Lesbos, home to the famous antiquarian poet Sappho, and the root origin of the term lesbian. The second depicts a map of the 'Women's History Walk in North Lambeth', organised by the Lesbian History Group (1984-1995). These history walks allowed women to feel connected to the queer and lesbian pasts of a place that were often not acknowledged by mainstream culture. The final scarf depicts a map to find Lesbian Land in the Outer Hebrides, Scotland, from an advertisement for a lesbian retreat in *Raging Dyke* zine. *Dyke Lands*, and *Women's lands* were, and still are an important place for women to retreat from patriarchy and create their own communities.

Artist Bio

Sarah-Joy Ford is an Artist and Post-Graduate Researcher at Manchester School of Art working with textiles to explore the archives. Her work embraces the entanglements of digital and traditional, using strategies of quilting, digital embroidery, digital print, applique, and hand embellishment. She is the recipient of an NWCDTP award for her PhD research examining quilting as a methodology for re-visioning British lesbian archive that explores quilt making as an affective methodology for making re-visioning lesbian archival material. Her work has been commissioned by the Superbia, The Pitt Rivers Museum, The Yorkshire Year of Textile and Processions (Artichoke). www.sarahjoyford.com

Works Available for Sale

All works in the exhibition are for sale, please contact visualart@homemcr.org for more information.

The silk scarves are priced at £150 each (3 x scarf designs in editions of 3)

A series of embroidered patches are also available to purchase at box office (priced at £15 each)

Special Thanks

The work in this exhibition is dedicated to the lesbians who organised, protested, published; who were brave and vulnerable, creating culture and community in the face of persecution.

Thank you to the wonderful women connected with LIAC, and Quim magazine and who took the time to share their thoughts, memories, and experiences with me. Thank you to Glasgow Women's Library for providing a home for these precious materials, and supporting my access over the last few years.

FUNDED BY



FOUNDING SUPPORTERS

