



Edited by Jo Shaw
and Ben Fletcher-Watson

THE ART OF BEING DANGEROUS

EXPLORING WOMEN
AND DANGER
THROUGH CREATIVE
EXPRESSION

LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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OR
TRAIT
OF THE
ARTIST:

ON ARTISTS
AND
ART-MAKING

Rachel Roberts is an Australian illustrator who creates images using a combination of traditional and digital techniques. Rachel's illustrations are published in various print and online products, and her larger works on paper are exhibited in Australia. Her interests include art, culture, storytelling, politics and walking. Check out Rachel's work at www.pencilpusher.com.au or via Instagram [@pencilpusherpix](https://www.instagram.com/pencilpusherpix)

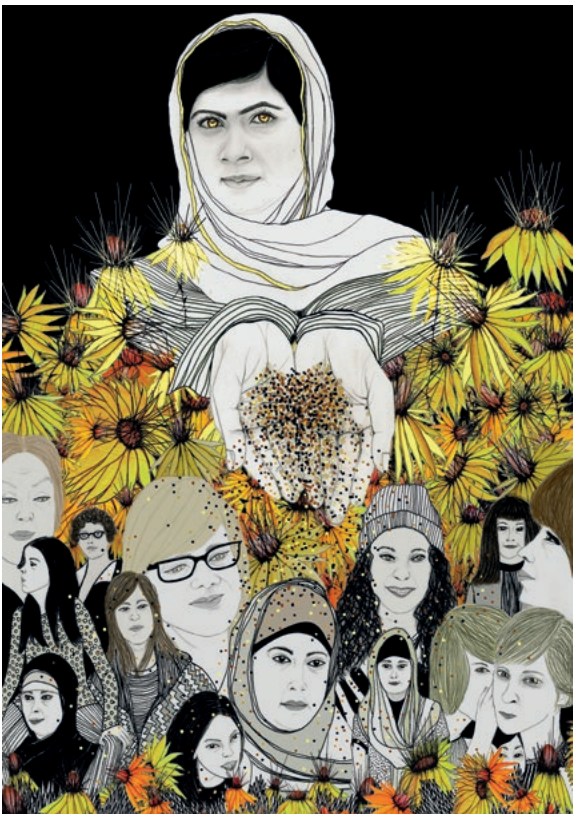
In some parts of the world, when a girl dares to speak up, she challenges those who benefit from her silence. She places herself in harm's way by daring to choose courage over fear. This is a choice that Malala Yousafzai made.

To a mother of school-age daughters, Malala's plight offers an awe-inspiring example of courage, perseverance and strength. True grit. At a time and place when it was dangerous to speak up, Malala advocated for her personal right – and the right of all girls and women – to an education. And, despite being shot in the head at point-blank range for doing so, she still stands up for the right to an education.

Malala is a recognisable champion for change. It is for this reason that she features in my illustration, 'Sowing dangerous seeds'. Here, she is calmly, resolutely pouring seeds that bear beautiful, but dangerous foliage.

The seeds represent Malala's 'dangerous' idea – that girls have a right to an education – and the foliage represents the dangerous environment that this idea can (and does) create.

Malala represents what it means to me to be a dangerous woman; a woman determined to realise a powerful and positive idea even in the face of danger.



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BODY
OF
WORK:
ON SEXUALITY
AND THE
BODY

THE PRAYING MANTIS

Rebecca Vedavathy is an award-winning poet and academic from Bangalore, India. She works as Assistant Professor, French at a prestigious college in Bangalore. She submitted a PhD on French Haitian-Canadian Women's Literature in 2020. She won the Poetry with Prakriti Contest (2016) awarded by the Prakriti Foundation. Her poems were shortlisted for both the Srinivas Rayaprol Poetry Prize (2018) and the Wordweaver's Poetry Contest (2017). Her work was recently shortlisted for the Glass House Poetry Contest (2020). She was also awarded the Shastri Indo-Canadian Fellowship for Doctoral Scholars in 2017 and worked as a Research Intern at l'Université du Québec à Montréal. She has been published by many national and international journals of repute. She has been invited to read her poetry at the Hyderabad Literary Festival, Nazariya International Women's Film Festival (Hyderabad), Centre for Indian Languages (Banaras), among others. She lives a quiet life with her cat and plants when not reading, writing or teaching. She has just completed her first manuscript of poems titled *the peepul tree girl*.

Her nail beds, the scent of onion peels neatly folded the clothesline into a sizeable pile of wearables. The clothes wore an air of wife-washed cleanliness. A blue nylon sari wrapped her gifted waist, sliding ever-so-gently off her shoulder, making her a piece of pop art gracing the household.

'Mayil', the bearded voice in the bedroom called out for one thing or the other that was most probably at arm's reach. She left the pile of clothes lusting after her as she traipsed into the bedroom to knot the tie or find the watch or untangle the laces from the previous night. 'The aftershave is over', the voice muttered as she found another bottle. Standing in front of the mirror, a wince curled up the pained lips when the lotion grazed a nick that the razor had made. She leaned in and made quick acquaintance with the aftershave face. The face held her neck with one hand like a butcher holds chicken before slaughter. Desire threw her sari off balance. The blue nylon made its way down her breasts to her navel. Her beautiful navel. They stood there pressed against each other to the sound of Illayaraja's *Kannae kalaimaanae kanni mayilenak kandaen unai naanae*. Curtains drawn – she checked. She ate the lips looking at her. Zips, hooks, buttons and *nādas* came undone. Love was made on wobbly knees, framed against a wooden door.

Kannae kalaimaanae played on loop as Mayil rearranged her pallu onto her tired shoulder. She lifted her legs onto the pile of pre-arranged pillows and devotedly left them hanging there, as the old wives' tale went. Her thoughts took a stroll with invisible baby hands. She pondered the lonely bed, the doorframe an excuse for luscious movement. Babies should be made in bed. Next time perhaps.

Mayil got back on her toes in front of the open window and inhaled the breath of the city that up until a moment ago protected the 'innocence' of children. She picked up a stray piece of paper lying on the dressing table.

When your belly doesn't protract proportionally to the number of months you've been married the ladies (the ones who live next door, the ones you are related to, the ones you buy your brinjals from) all of them begin to whisper about your uterus. They are loud enough so

ARCHETYPES HAVE NO PLACE HERE

Dr Maria Fusco is Professor of Interdisciplinary Writing at the University of Dundee.

She works across the registers of fiction, performance and theoretical writing, her texts are published internationally and translated into ten languages. Recent works include: *ECZEMA!* (2018), a touring performance commissioned by National Theatre Wales to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the NHS, *Give Up Art* (2018), a book of collected critical writings and *Legend of the Necessary Dreamer* (2017), an ambient novella described by Chris Kraus as ‘a new classic of female philosophical writing’. www.mariafusco.net

One persistently fiddles with the top button of her blouse, a little distressed perhaps, whilst another observes her with care and winks towards someone I can't quite see. A single-heeled black suede shoe droops from the hand of its owner, not needed. A polished silver pocket watch links a couple together briefly before resting from the chain. Two middle fingers touch slyly. An index finger breaks a circle to explore an open mouth. Too many hands touch too many faces for me to remember each one. Wrists are rubbed, squeezed or simply inspected. The right knee eases its way out of the thick grey tights, already too late to mend. Many white tissues are consumed, some with tears, most not. Two of the younger women sit on the edge of the kerb, gilding the gutter. What? What are they saying?



Stills from Jaki Irvine, *City of Women*

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ART OF THE
POSSIBLE:
ON POLITICS,
ACTIVISM
AND HUMAN
RIGHTS

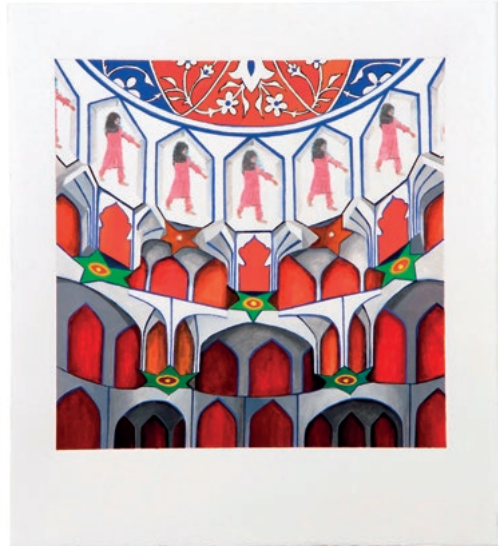
HIDE & SEEK

Zuhal Feraidon is an Afghan born artist. Her artistic interest explores social identity in relation to personal experience, dealing with representation in the arts. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Art at The Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design. She received her BA in Studio Arts from The University of Virginia and her MFA in Painting from The Rhode Island School of Design. She is a recipient of The Aunspaugh Fellowship from The McIntire Department of Art. Her work has been exhibited at Monya Rowe Gallery and Field Projects Gallery in NYC, The Glendale Central Library, The Rhode Island Convention Center, The Welcome Gallery, and IX Art Park among others. She was recently a speaker for Women Forward International in their collaborative effort with students from Georgetown University and Afghan Women's nonprofit organizations for a report that will be published by the United Nations (UNITAR). Her work can be viewed at www.zuhalferaidon.com

One middle-aged, benighted, Western man swears that he watched the TV say that my faith preaches hate and terrorism. Another prideful, old tribesman has come up with his own interpretation of the Quran that tells me, but not him, how to live. I exist between the opinions of one and the expectations of the other.

Opinions and expectations are illusory, but my existence is real. And the existence of other Afghan women is real. This existence is challenging, enduring, and, in a way, unseen because a lot of our women are hidden head to toe with a veil over their eyes. Still we prevail through everyday struggles to continue to exist.

A 2011 survey by Trustlaw, a project by Thomson Reuters Foundation, determined that targeted violence against women, poverty, and inaccessible healthcare caused Afghanistan to rank as the world's most dangerous country in which to be born a woman. And that is exactly where I was born. What better way to react to danger than to become more dangerous than the circumstances you were born into? Being dangerous can mean being aware of all the injustice and boldly acknowledging that no one deserves it.



THE TRIAL

Maria Stoian was born in Romania, raised in Canada, and now lives in Edinburgh. She has a BDes from the Alberta College of Art and Design and a MA in Illustration from the Edinburgh College of Art. She now works as a graphic designer and illustrator. In her spare time, she likes to cycle, make comics, and pretend she's not allergic to cats. Her first graphic novel, *Take It As A Compliment*, was published by Singing Dragon in 2015. www.mariastoian.com



MARTHA GRUENING: 'BRICK IN A SOFT HAT'

New York-based conceptual artist [susan c. desSEL](http://www.desselstudio.net)'s art considers the responsibility we each have to effect social change through our actions or inaction. desSEL (BFA Hunter College, City University of NY, 2003. MFA Brooklyn College, CUNY, 2006) has had her work exhibited in the US, London, Prague, and Yerevan, Armenia. In 2011 she was a Visiting Artist at the Umm el-Fahem Art Gallery (Umm el-Fahem, Israel) and since 2012 has served on the Board of the American Friends of the Umm el-Fahem Museum of Contemporary Art. desSEL has researched the life and work of Martha Gruening (1889–1937): suffragist and civil rights activist, and began creating a new body of work, text-based drawings, *Brick In A Soft Hat*. Additional information can be found on www.desselstudio.net.

'[Magistrate Scott] chastised the "impudent" Miss Gruening and told her that she had no business to watch the police and that it was only because of "trouble makers" of her kind that the strike was still unsettled.'

'Philadelphia Police Kicked Brick in the Hat When They Arrested Miss Martha Gruening.' *New York Call*. February 16, 1910, p.3.

As the first visual artist invited to participate as a Fellow at the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies, University of Michigan, I proposed to research Martha Gruening, an important but little-known activist and journalist, and make her life visible and accessible by restoring her voice. Gruening lived her values and spoke her mind at a time when such values were not in sync with those of society-at-large. As a dangerous woman she was committed to impact issues and change attitudes that continue to fester in twenty-first century America. I identified information suggestive of visual iconography to create portraiture highlighting Gruening's work and its ongoing relevance.

Martha Gruening (1889–1937) is an early, inspiring example of a woman who conceived of the intersection of gender, race, and class. She lived at the turn of the twentieth century during first-wave feminism associated with women's suffrage; undeterred that others perceived her as dangerous to the status quo, she did not shrink from public controversy.

Her life embodied her values and beliefs, and confidently and passionately she risked contempt, confronting widely held societal views without flinching. Arrested at age twenty-one, rather than seek bail Gruening spent the night in Philadelphia's notorious Moyamensing Prison. The arresting officer later described her as 'a brick in a soft hat', (*NY Call*, February 16, 1910, p.5), a hidden danger in plain sight.

The daughter of a renowned physician, Martha grew up in very comfortable circumstances. She spoke German at home and as a youngster lived abroad, learning French and being widely exposed to art and culture. In New York City, she attended Ethical Culture School, which reflected her parents' views of social justice, racial equality, and intellectual freedom. Atypically, Ethical did not have



'... I have an idea... having [African American] Mrs. Mary Church Terrell for one of the speakers? ... a good suffragist and a splendid speaker. ... showing how inclusive [the] movement was – ... She's a graduate of Oberlin. It would be so nice and 'national' and it would make our dear Kentucky hostesses so mad... It's a question we've got to have out with the Southern membership sooner or later ...'

Her suggestion of Terrell as a speaker was rejected. Nevertheless, in August 1911, Gruening sent the NAWSA Lexington, Kentucky Convention Resolutions Committee a Western Union Night Letter, resolving [that the women] '...express sympathy with the black men and women fighting for the same battle and recognize that it is as unjust and as undemocratic to disenfranchise human beings on the ground of color as on the ground of sex'. Her resolution was opposed, tabled in committee, and never brought to the convention floor.

One hundred and one years before the U.S. awoke to #BlackLivesMatter, Gruening asserted the connection of suffrage to Black civil rights in 'Two Suffrage

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ARS
LONGA,
VITA BREVIS:
ON FOLKLORE
AND
HISTORY

DANGEROUS AGENCIES: NORNS, GAMES AND AESTHETICS OF EMERGENCE

Tanya Krzywinska has written extensively on the Gothic and Horror across multiple platforms, focusing on magic and gender. She is an artist who works in traditional mediums as well as designing and researching augmented and virtual reality apps for museums and heritage context. Since 2012, she has been Editor-in-Chief of the peer-reviewed journal *Games and Culture* (Sage) and is a professor in Digital Economy at Falmouth University, Cornwall UK in the Games Academy.

*Þaðan koma meyjar
margs vitandi
þrjár ór þeim sæ,
er und þolli stendr;
Urð hétu eina,
aðra Verðandi,
– skáru á skíði, –
Skuld ina þriðju;
þær lög lögðu,
þær lífkuru
alda börnum,
örlög seggja.*

20. Thence come the maidens
mighty in wisdom,
Three from the dwelling
down 'neath the tree;
Urth is one named,
Verthandi the next, –
On the wood they scored, –
and Skuld the third.
Laws they made there,
and life allotted
To the sons of men,
and set their fates.

Extract from Poetic Edda, *Völuspá*

Among many other commentators on gender, Hélène Cixous (1989) has convincingly argued that femininity is aligned with and defined by passivity, evidenced through social roles and cultural representations. Masculinity is therefore placed on the side of activity and aligned with the power to act on the world. These are, of course, abstractions of lived gender. In the real practice of our everyday lives, power is not simply the preserve of masculinity, instead it is enacted in many different messy ways by both men and women. Nonetheless the abstractions still hold, affecting the way we regard ourselves through the lens of gender.

Seeking ways for disturbing simplified gender alignments, my artwork sets out to articulate a more complex take on gender and power. Motherhood is certainly one clear form of power, one that causes all kinds of trouble – perhaps the original trouble. Instead, my current work concentrates on power of a rather different kind. What I am interested in is Fate. In particular, the way in which Fate is embodied by the Norns of Norse of Mythology: the three women who appear to preside over the destiny of ‘men’. I propose that the Norns provide our own culture with a way of thinking about our own ability to make choices in a world full of contingency. As such, I’m calling on the figures of the Norns in my painting (and here in my writing) as a means of drawing into question how we think about our agency and power to act on our world. I’m calling onto the field of play those big metaphysical and existential questions that are so often

140 marginalised within the seductive immediacy of consumer culture. As such, it should be borne in mind that my repurposing of the Norse Norns is always an imaginative and hermeneutic engagement rather than a literary or historical one. I am putting us in danger – a necessary danger – of calling time on the ‘hero’ narrative that we often have about ourselves in order to remind us how alienated and subjugated we all are.

Sometimes represented as witches, as with *Macbeth*'s semi-comedic weird sisters, or as prophets or harbingers, sometimes as gods, the Norns are diversely represented. In the existing Norse Sagas and Eddas, they are figured as eternal and supernatural. They are, however, indisputably women (even if in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* they cause Banquo confusion about their being and gender [Act I, Sc iii]). While they might have an allegorical dimension, they are certainly embodied as women, sometimes of three distinctive ages, as is the case in the recent film of *Macbeth* (dir. Justin Kurzel, 2016). In whatever guise taken, the Norns are undoubtedly ‘dangerous’ women because they can be said to stand testimony to the folly of men's inflated sense of agency. As evidenced within the verses of the Edda cited above, they make the laws that govern the life of men: ‘Laws they made there, and life allocated to the sons of men, and set their fates’ (*Völuspá*). In another text we hear from hero Svipdag that, ‘No man can deny Urd’ (The Ballad of Svipdag published in Crossley-Holland, 1980, p.125). Of the three Norns, Urd embodies the principle of Fate, Skuld represents Being, Verdrandi Necessity. Unlike Shakespeare's weird sisters, and apart from these three allegorical designations, in Norse myth the Norns are also guardians who care for the tree ‘that suffers, that cares for all living creatures and ensures continuity’ (Crossley-Holland, p.xxiii). Power is therefore theirs in many different ways.

Within these various configurations, the Norns are often imagined as weavers of fate and circumstance, shaping thereby the narrative of human lives; certainly, this is the role of the Greek fates. In Norse myth they might not be quite so hands-on,



A SHORT HISTORY OF ENEMIES AND FRIENDS

Shirley Day is honoured to be counted as a Dangerous Woman. She is a writer, director and producer of film and theatre and prose. She has had eight feature films optioned in the last three years. Last year one of her features was selected for Raindance. She teaches screenwriting at Florida State University in London. After being selected for the Dangerous Women Project, Shirley went on to develop this short story into a theatre play. The play went to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and was shortlisted for the Stepladder award.

Sarah didn't bake cakes or hand out sausages at the Fireworks, and her face was notably absent when manning the school tuck-shop. She claimed she worked, but not one of the PTA had seen her leave the village during daylight hours. She school-dropped Barney, a scrawny Year Three, whose jumpers were too tight, and whose nails too long, then headed back over the common to her rented cottage by the deep pond.

'She says she's a journalist', announced Helen Stubbs, chair of the PTA, as she attached a strip of pink toile to a leotard for the annual school Carnival.

'Anyone can say they're a journalist', Evie Cummings (Minutes and Meetings) informed the gathering. Evie was a woman of the world, having moved up from London a couple of years back, and had proved a great asset to the quiz team. Who, in having the poetry and literature seat sorted, had managed to slaughter the men's bowls team and wipe the smug smiles from the WI.

Evie glued the cat's tail to the costume she was making for Jack Henderson, a boy nobody liked. The costume was certainly going to be a squeeze for a lad of his size, but Evie had no sympathy.

In contrast, the PTA had no fundamental problem with Sarah's Barney. Unlike Jack, Barney had managed to get most of his features in the right place. True – the women didn't approve of how he was turned out, but a child of Barney's age could not be held responsible for a parent's sins.

'I mean, for goodness sake! How long does it take to iron a jumper that size!', was all Event Coordinator Maude Kendal, had to offer on the subject.

It was a tight-knit community. You were either in or out, and being out had consequences; come Carnival, Barney would be wearing the evacuee costume, an item that should have been relegated to the Halloween box. The shorts were fine, the tank top still holding together. But the gas mask was a problem – a drooping dirty green cloth, melting into a collection of thick plastic tubes. It was far more akin to a decaying octopus than an article one might wear on the face.

Elloise Madget fainted the previous year when instructed to don the item. But then, as Helen Stubbs had said, 'When you can tell from a girl's perfume that her father owns a chip shop, fainting is only to be expected.'

There had been a terrible fuss from the Historical Society when their evacuee failed to materialize; every year since 1943, someone had worn the mask. The women of the PTA conferred and came up with the solution – this year that someone would be Barney.

Sarah, in her cottage on the green, knew nothing of the machinations brewing. Barney, however, had heard talk: the mask was haunted. Anyone wearing it would be

SUFFERING
FOR
YOUR ART:
ON STRENGTH,
CONFLICT AND
RESISTANCE

I close my eyes again. This time I go back to the last time I was ever free.

I was holding the phone in one hand and a hazy grey picture of my unborn baby in the other.

'I have the scan right here. I'm about eight weeks along.'

There was silence on the other end of the line.

'Andy, are you still there?', I asked.

'Yes, I'm here. I'll schedule an appointment for you tomorrow. Don't tell anyone about this.'

I was confused. What did he mean?

'An appointment for what?', I asked, feeling perturbed and very annoyed with him.

'For an abortion.'

My heart sank to my heels. He wanted me to abort our baby.

'I will NOT be having an abortion. Are you insane? I am going to tell your wife about us, and I think she needs to know about the baby as well.'

'There is no way in hell that my wife will find out about anything that happened between you and me! It's over!'

'So you are just going to leave me as if nothing happened?', I asked incredulously.

'If you don't tell your wife, then I will', I said defiantly, grateful that he could not see that I was trembling.

'Why does she need to know?', he asked. I could sense that he was scared too. At this point, neither of us knew what the other was capable of.

'I won't allow you to make me disappear into the shadows as if I never existed', I answered. 'I'm going to tell your wife today. She deserves to know.'

'What? No... Can't we talk about this first?'

'I can and I will.' I cringed at my own remark. It sounded like a line out of a movie, the last words spoken by a villain before pursuing an evil mission.

'Okay, I'm sorry.' I backtracked. 'We can talk.'

'I'm on my way.'

'But...' The line was already dead.

I spent the hours before his arrival pacing around the house, making small decisions that kept my mind off the issue at hand. Should I bathe? Should I call to make sure he parks at the garage?

I decided to take a bath. My internal argument that it was understandable for me to forego my daily cleansing ritual was dismissed as quickly as it had entered my brain. After getting dressed, I grabbed the keys and waited.

A wave of relief came over me when my phone rang.

On my way to the garage where he had parked his car, random thoughts went through my head. Maybe I shouldn't let him into the house in case he tries to hurt me. I was interrupted by his presence a few metres away from me. He was wearing an oversized Blue Bulls t-shirt and a pair of blue denim jeans. I kept looking at the t-shirt. Somehow it unnerved me.

'Hi', he said, his voice sounding strained. 'Let's go to the car, I'll drive you to where my wife works.'

'What? I thought we agreed to talk. I'm not going there with you.'

A DANGEROUS WOMAN

Joanie Conwell teaches college English and humanities. She lives in North Carolina. You can find her at www.joanieconwell.com.

A Dangerous Woman

Doesn't lighten the fuck up

or calm the fuck down

or chill the fuck out

She bears witness

Cruza la frontera

Lingers on the margins

Reads shadows like tea leaves

Dances on gravestones

Drinks wine from skullcups

Warms you with her blood

Has no country

She makes love, eats little

Goes out possessed

Sets fires, sees visions

Marches peasants to the capital

Where poetry can get you killed

7
|

LIVES OF
THE ARTISTS:
ON
BIOGRAPHY
AND
IDENTITY

CAMILLE CLAUDEL: THE DANGEROUS FRENCH SCULPTOR

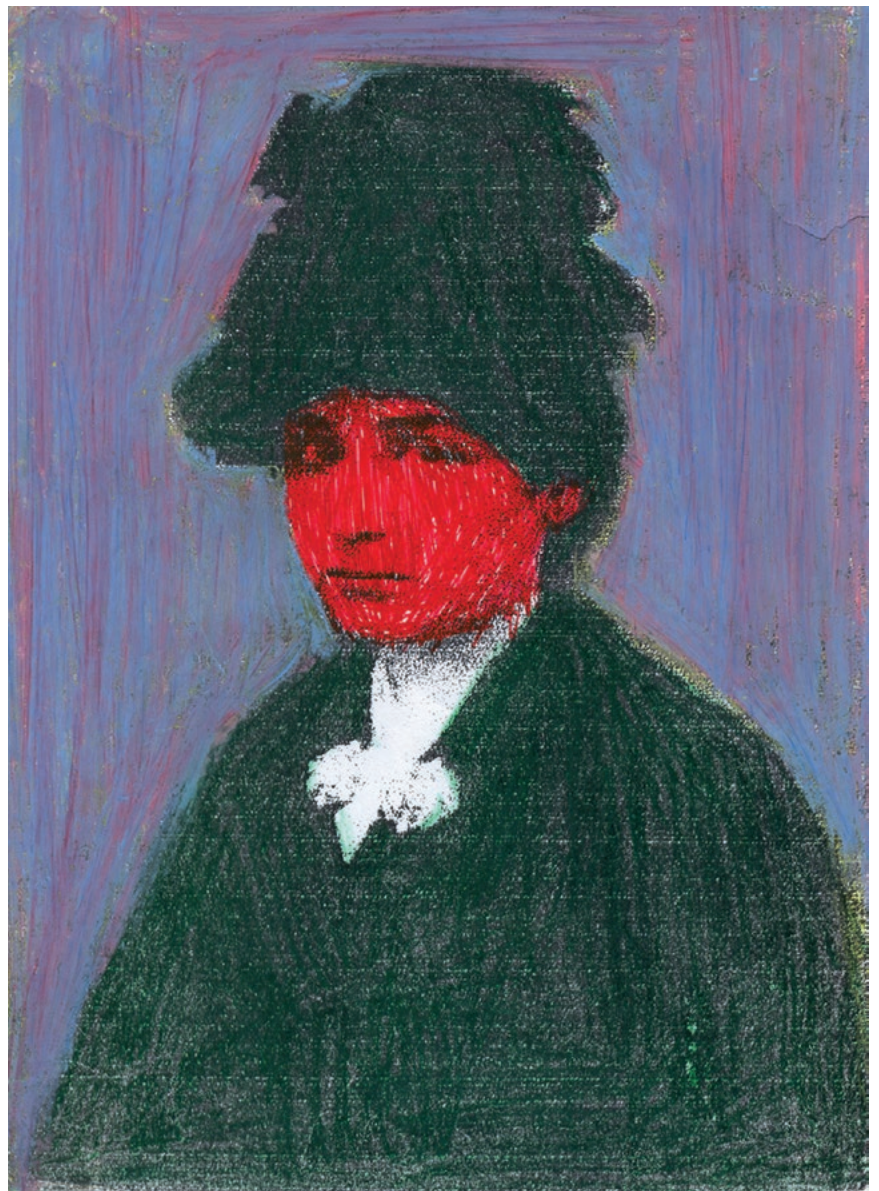
Elif Sezen is an Australian-Turkish multidisciplinary artist, researcher, literary translator, bilingual writer and poet. She received her PhD (Art & Design) from Monash University (2014); she lives and works in Melbourne. She received her Master of Arts in Sculpture in 2007 from Dokuz Eylül University, Institute of Fine Arts. Elif's interdisciplinary practice evolves through various media including painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, performance, print media, installation, digital media, artist books and poetry. In her work, she speculates upon reconceptualising memory traces emerging from familial, personal, collective trauma and loss. This leads her to a restorative and even a celebratory notion of self-construction, desire, longing and a sense of homecoming. Elif's works are exhibited widely, and her poetry has appeared in various journals and magazines nationally and internationally. Her collection of short stories titled *Gece Düşüşü* ('Fall. Night.') was published by Hayal Press in 2012 (in Turkish). Her translations of Ilya Kaminsky's collection of poems *Dancing in Odessa* was recently published in Turkish by Artshop Press. Her collection of poems *Universal Mother* was published by GloriasMH Press in 2016, and her most recent collection *A Little Book of Unspoken History* by Puncher & Wattmann in 2018. She also published a chapbook, *The Dervish with Wings* (2017). Her website: <https://www.elifsezen.com>.

Camille Claudel was born on December 8, 1864 in northern France. From a very early age, she was interested in working with soil and stone, and this fascination eventually led her to be a student at the Académie Colarossi, under the guidance of sculptor Alfred Boucher. When Camille met August Rodin, a passionate relationship started to flourish between them, as she became an important source of inspiration to him as a model, student, assistant, mistress and lover. Without a doubt, she had an enormous impact on Rodin's life on an artistic and intellectual level, but eventually problems that arose between them brought the relationship into turmoil and Claudel entered an exhaustion phase. When Rodin would not leave his wife for Claudel after a decade together with great erotic passion, she lost her balance and delved into fury. The tragic point about her was that she couldn't find any professional or personal support which could've helped her recover. Thus unfortunately she descended into madness and was institutionalized in 1913 where she remained until her death in 1943.

Claudel was a very dangerous female artist indeed. It was difficult for a woman to survive as an artist at that time (in particular a sculptor). It was also threatening to other artists when she incorporated multiple art genres, historical and contemporary influences, unexpected moments of daily life, enriching literary references into her work, and encouraged the audience to enter an unusual dimension of sculptural art. Indeed, she is one of the many female

artists in history who had previously been obliterated or concealed by their male counterparts. She was dangerous, yes, as she was brave and did whatever it took to be a great sculptor, in spite of the environment that didn't allow her to be herself. It is this dangerousness that encouraged me to speculate upon Claudel's image in my art and poetry to liberate her from a dark psychic blueprint: I wanted to welcome her back.

Since 2004, Claudel has become one of the key figures that appear in my art works as one of my constant metaphors. I repetitively used a silhouette of her in my projects to allow that self-image to become an archetypal persona that represents many women, to tie up the personal and the universal, and to bring about a notion of conceptual reintegration for those women who were disintegrated in similar situations in the past. For only when the necessary amount of light is shed on the wound and all the pain is surfaced can healing take place in the public mind. Thus it is crucial to keep the reciprocal relationship between forgetting and remembering fresh towards the path of wholeness.



From the series 'Our night afternoon'
Elif Sezen, 2011
18 × 14 cm
Mixed media on paper

ALISON SMITHSON

Kate Schneider is a PhD student at the University of Cambridge, where she is researching the relationship between experimental British writing and architecture in the 1950s and 60s. Her main interests are in austerity nostalgia, the writings of New Brutalism (particularly Alison and Peter Smithson), late and popular modernist form, and the domestic in the mid-century. She also works at Cambridge's English Faculty Library, where she recently curated the exhibition *Queer Experiments*. Her poetry has appeared in *Ambit*, *Hotel*, and at the White Review x Burley Fisher Poetry Salon.

Alison Smithson
Dangerous Woman

Alison Margaret Smithson (1929 - 1993) along with her husband Peter, she was among the leaders of the British mid-century movement/school, New Brutalism and was associated with Team X, a splinter group of C.I.A.M.



DANGER AHEAD!!!
researching the architect and writer Alison Smithson was a tricky task: she is embedded within a historically exclusionary context that is made worse by the way we talk about New Brutalism in contemporary popular culture.

i had to ignore a lot of danger signs many of these were snarky complaints about Alison Smithson as a person - the tired, clichéd suspicions that are so often aimed at opinionated, visible women.

she was whiny and shrill (like Thatcher)
she did not invite closeness



hmm... same old, same old (me working)

In the many recently published books I read about Brutalism

i found there was a peculiar maleness

a respect for Danger when it was associated with characteristically male traits and perspectives... but genuine discomfort and fear when it was associated with real women and feminine and female spaces.



e.g. Balfron Tower is praised for being **MUSCULAR** **MASCULINE** with no concession to an architecture of domesticity and inspiring a **DELICATE SENSE** + **TERROR**

nightmares are more memorable than dreams

For some critics, such as Jonathan Meades, Brutalism's familiar criticisms - its

- CONFRONTATIONAL UGLINESS
- cold sterility
- and gestures to TOTALITARIANISM
- are evidence of its greatness and SAVAGE SUBLIMITY

