

Sylvia Pankhurst Memorial Lecture

Wortley Hall August 2014

Edited transcript of a talk by The Emily Davison Lodge

Philippa Clark: Every year we try and find a speaker who is linked to our movement but who will also broaden our vision because sometimes we can get so focused on our campaigning and specific objectives that we forget about the wider picture. Earlier this year I went to an exhibition at Tate Britain in London of Sylvia Pankhurst's paintings which made me remember that first and foremost Sylvia's training was in art and that her original mission had been to be an artist. At the exhibition I read that there had been two dynamic women who had lobbied the Tate in order to get the work on public display. Fortunately, the sisters all thought that it would be a good idea to have them deliver this year's lecture.

So, we're absolutely delighted that they can tell us in person about Sylvia Pankhurst the artist and why they lobbied for the exhibition. Hester and Olivia are multi-disciplinary artists who collaborate together under the umbrella of something called 'The Emily Davison Lodge' - that's Emily Wilding Davison, the suffragette who died trying to pin the flag on the king's horse. They research and make artworks to re-historicise - which I thought was a good word - the suffragettes, in particular looking at the artists involved in the campaign and the role of militancy. Hester is going to give the talk and Olivia is going to join her at the end to answer any questions.

Richard Pankhurst has written many books including one titled 'Sylvia Pankhurst - Artist and Crusader' in which there's a very specific chapter titled 'Artist or Social Reformer?' So, it's very exciting to have people who can talk about her artist side since many of us here are, for obvious reasons, more involved in the feminist side of her work. And so I am going to introduce Hester with a quotation that Richard includes in his book from Sylvia herself:

Mothers came to me with their wasted little ones. I saw starvation look at me from patient eyes. I knew then that I should never return to my art.

The Suffragette as a Militant Artist

Hester Reeve: Thank you so much for inviting the Emily Davison Lodge to speak here tonight.

I am going to talk through some images and around issues linked to 'the suffragette as a militant artist.' This turn of phrase comes from the title of a very small chapbook that Olivia and I produced as part of a commission for the Women's Library in London ('Out of The Archives' curated by Anna Collin, 2010). 'The Sylvia Pankhurst Display' at Tate Britain arose as a repercussion of one of those artworks.

Olivia and I first became friends through our shared interest in the suffragettes - I state this because friendship is a really powerful and creative force; it certainly was to many suffragettes and first wave feminists. But to be honest, for all our initial enthusiasm, we were quite confused about the time-line of events that lead to British women getting the vote. The few things I knew were a result of the typical stories and headlines I had been taught during my school days and those made for a very conservative and limited version of events. Such accounts had given the impression that it had just been a handful of female celebrities such as 'Emmeline Pankhurst' and 'Emily Wilding Davison' who had caused a bit of stir in their call for female enfranchisement. So we were both shocked by what we actually discovered when carrying out research at the Women's Library. It's both unsettling and fascinating to see how certain aspects of British history - often the radical and revolutionary ones - get almost completely erased from cultural memory or are reduced to a polite version of events. Even current suffragette-related celebrations where, for example, children or dignitaries dress up in Edwardian costume and don purple, white and green sashes unwittingly play into this institutionalised and consumer friendly version of history. Let it be said, a faction of the suffragettes were blowing up property and smashing shop windows, many were embarking on newly discovered same sex relationships, and, given theirs was an age when women were prohibited from speaking out in public or from taking any form of political responsibility, every single one of them was taking a huge personal risk in order to transform social reality. So, the work of the Emily Davison Lodge is not about re-enactment on any level, but re-historicisation. Re-historicisation calls one's own time and actions as an individual into question; suffragette actions under the call 'Dare to be free!' form a complicated aspect of British history as well as a continuing inspiration to new forms of responsible, creative citizenship.

I'd like to refer back to the Sylvia Pankhurst quotation that Pip introduced me with. This relationship between art and social change is a very slippery and sometimes contentious one. As artists, Olivia and I are deeply invested in this issue but we don't see artworks either as solutions to social problems or illustrative vehicles to relay historical facts. We acknowledge that artworks don't feed hungry bellies but, even so, an artwork can activate or reactivate concerns and social imagination and bring people into contact with that. Art projects can also bring people who wouldn't otherwise meet into contact with one another. So we've become very interested in the way that an artwork, particularly one that takes its source inspiration from suffragette activism, could be conceived as a platform for a form of agency in the world (i.e. causing something to happen in the world that isn't art necessarily) as well as simultaneously standing as a static thing in a gallery. This is nowhere better shown than by the letter we wrote to Tate Britain requesting that they accord Sylvia Pankhurst her place in British art history and which resulted in the exhibition at Tate Britain that Pip visited. We conceived the letter as an artwork, *Open letter to Tate Britain* as part of the 'Out of the Archives' exhibition. One copy hung on the Women's Library Gallery wall contextualising one of Sylvia's drawings whilst another copy was sent in the post to the head of British Collections at Tate Britain. Fortunately, the strategy worked and the director of Tate Britain, Penelope Curtis, contacted us personally and invited us to meet with her.



Fig. 1 *The Re-Inaugural Meeting of the Emily Davison Lodge 2010*

Photographer: Matthew Booth

Another of our commissions for the Women's Library Gallery can be seen above, *The Re-Inaugural Meeting of the Emily Davison Lodge*, 2010. Whilst my talk will mainly focus on the artistry of Sylvia Pankhurst and the militant suffragettes, I think the above image is a good way to introduce where Olivia and I are coming from in this research; it's quite important to us that we claim the position of artists rather than historians or campaigners. On one hand we are hungry for as many facts as possible about suffragette militancy and the artists involved but simultaneously Olivia and I are trying to work out just what it was about the movement that is addressing us as artists and which seems to hold something instructive for our contemporary situation.

For this image we've re-staged the basement store of the Women's Library archive as an artist's studio with the suggestion that an important meeting is underway (as the title suggests, the re-inauguration of the Emily Davison Lodge which had been established to honour the memory of one of the most militant suffragettes by "meeting the needs of the hour" and which ceased operating in the 1940's). Olivia and I can be seen plotting in front of shelf upon shelf of original suffragette propaganda. The teacups in our hands are from the china service Sylvia Pankhurst designed to raise campaign funds. For our purposes as artists, the surrounding archival boxes were not full of old relics but full of live fuses so to speak. We're challenging by suggesting an equivalence between an underground activist cell and the artist's studio: Has the suffragette social revolution been fulfilled? How far are we prepared to go with our radical ideas? This challenge is directed out to the contemporary viewer of today but it was inspired by the role certain artists' studios appear to have

played in the suffragette campaign. For example, during the height of suffragette militancy in 1913 police raided the studio of suffragette and artist Olive Hockin and found not paint brushes but:

Wire cutters

Fire-lighters

Hammers

Bottles of corrosive fluids

5 false motorcar plates

Strips of ribbon bearing the slogans: “No votes - No telegraph connections” &

“No security by post or wire until justice is done to women”

Olive Hockin, one of many artists active in the suffragette cause, studied at The Slade, one of the few higher education establishments that opened its doors to female students in the early 1900's. Here she is in her studio:



Fig. 2 Olive Hockin in her studio

And here she is again below (Fig. 3). She was photographed secretly by surveillance police whilst she was in Royal Holloway jail (the police later used these images to notify the authorities of which women were dangerous and to be looked out for), Olive is ‘number 2’:



Fig. 3 Surveillance photograph of imprisoned suffragettes

During the famous window smashing campaign of 1912 where shop fronts in London were smashed with cobbles wrapped in political slogans the studio of sculptor Edith Downing played a crucial role. Women would turn up as if for a tea and cake chat and leave with specially created bags full of cobblestones and flyers that could be hidden under their skirts.

Artists' studios have never just been places in which to paint, they are radically free spaces within which all manner of people meet and all manner of actions outside its walls are made possible. And in our own staged studio meeting at the Women's Library we're interested in asking – where are the free spaces today where people can meet and find a radically new political voice? Would our fellow artists in 2014 risk such militancy and if so, for what cause? Is it necessary to give up one's practice of art in order to be socially responsible?

And below is a photograph of Sylvia Pankhurst in her studio (Fig. 4), I believe from her Manchester Art School days, where she was awarded a scholarship to study between 1900 and 1902:



Fig. 4 Sylvia Pankhurst at art school

Well, as Pip's opening quotation announced, Sylvia Pankhurst did decide that she should give up her 'career as a painter' in order to be socially responsible. She is one of the few artists who have gone that far in the name of politics. It is clear that she could have gone on to become a recognised artist and possibly have earned a living from her work; whilst at the Manchester School of Art she was awarded the prize in 1901 for top female art student and she went on to win the only scholarship available for female artists at the Royal College of Art where she studied between 1904 and 1906. As she herself declares:

I gave up my work as an artist at twenty-seven years of age when I was just becoming efficient from the technical point of view.

Richard Pankhurst, 'Sylvia Pankhurst - Artist and Crusader' p. 218



Fig. 5 from *Three Portraits of Young Women* c. 1910

The above chalk drawing is from a series 'Three Portraits of Young Women' c.1910 and was included in the Tate exhibition, it's from Richard Pankhurst's personal collection. I'm showing this to demonstrate that Sylvia was right in claiming that she was technically proficient.

So, yes, Sylvia Pankhurst stopped work as an artist in the traditional, career sense of the word and devoted herself to the suffragette campaign, specifically the WSPU (Women's Political and Social Union). And from this point in time, if art is ever mentioned in association with Sylvia Pankhurst it is to comment that she gave it up. But this is just another conservative and simplistic reading of history because what we then go on to see – and the exhibition at Tate Britain aimed to make this explicit – is that Sylvia Pankhurst's political campaigning is infused with artistic labour and a belief in the visual power of images. Maybe such a view is only possible from today's vantage point where interdisciplinarity is sought after and where current discourse around socially engaged art practice sheds a new light on her achievements. Even so, her 'artworks' for the suffragette movement still escape the attention of art historians and the art world. It is stupefying.

Indeed, one of the striking things about the exhibition of her work at Tate Britain was in the contrast it set up with the artwork of the celebrated artists of her era. To get to the Sylvia Pankhurst Display, you had to walk through the standing 'British Collection,' rooms full of established career artists from

the early 1900's - all men of course. Now, those paintings are very fine but they are dripping with the ooze of the patriarchal vision of womanhood as passive femininity, a very idealised, symbolic representation, common to that period. They also obey the rule of 'art equals a visual picture' which though heralded at the time is extremely old fashioned to today's eyes. So it was quite a thing to walk from those rooms into the Sylvia Pankhurst Display where BANG, you get a completely 'other' version of artistic activity from the very same era. And again, the Emily Davison Lodge asks: Why is this work and its contribution to art discourse and social imagination still being over-looked? Sylvia Pankhurst's creations for the WSPU were as aesthetically exciting as they were useful for the purposes of propaganda and education.

In studying Sylvia Pankhurst in detail, it is clear to us that it is not art per se that she gave up but the relevance of artistic self-expression and skill development as an end in itself. We used the following quotation in our *Open Letter to Tate Britain* because it shows how considered and farsighted her thinking was in this regards:

[I asked Kier Hardy]...whether it was worthwhile to fight one's individual struggle, as fight one must, and that strenuously, to make one's way as an artist, to bring out of oneself the best possible, and to induce the world to accept one's creations, and give one in return ones' daily bread, when all the time the real struggles to better the world for humanity demand another service.

From Margot Oxford, *The Countess of Oxford and Asquith*, (ed.) 'Myself When Young; By famous Women of Today,' 1938, p. 284

Of course, we should not be surprised that Sylvia had a heightened political conscience. As a member of the Pankhurst family, she had grown up in the midst of political and ethical discussions. An early commission to decorate the walls of the newly built Pankhurst Memorial Hall, named after her father who had been an early campaigner for universal suffrage, and which was to be the meeting place of the Independent Labour Party, is relevant to mention here. Whilst working on her murals she found out that women were not to be allowed to join that branch of the socialist party. Richard Pankhurst explains that her mother, Emmeline Pankhurst, was so frustrated and angered by this that she decided to form a labour orientated women's movement and called a meeting of 10 women to her home. This was 1903 and marked the origins of the Women's Social and Political Union which was to become the most radical of the various groups fighting for votes for women. Now, it would be over romantic to claim that if it wasn't for Sylvia Pankhurst's art we wouldn't have had the WSPU but I mention this just to show that whilst a picture can't save the world, art and image making infiltrate and play a role at every level of whatever we do together as people, including our political struggles.



Fig. 6 *In a Glasgow Cotton Mill: Minding a Pair of Fine Frames*, 1907

The above painting is from a series of gouaches and charcoal drawings 'The Women Workers of England' shown as a group to the public for the first time via 'The Sylvia Pankhurst Display.' Sylvia had never made these images to be exhibited. Even before she had formally 'given up art for politics,' she carried out this self-appointed trip to use her artistic skills as a means to document the working conditions of female workers. So these very fine and very touching 'traditional' (i.e. representational) paintings are in fact invested with political agency. Here we see Sylvia, still quite a young person, travelling alone and making these works in situ in the harsh factory conditions. It is said that in one factory it was so hot and stuffy that she fainted. It makes you wonder about the health of the women who had to work there day in and day out. Speaking as an artist myself, I don't know how she managed to paint so well in those conditions. It wasn't like she could turn up, do a bit of sketching and then take a photograph to work from back in the comfort of a studio. What's also very savvy about this project is that, upon completing the tour, she wrote an article about the

working conditions she discovered, using her paintings as illustrations. “Women Workers of England” was published in ‘The London Magazine’ in 1908. So she was really ensuring an appropriate context for those images and making sure that they ‘went to work in the world’ so to speak. Her article detailed child labour, the exposure of workers to dangerous chemicals, the subjugation of women to inferior roles that serviced male workers and general factory conditions. Here are a few more examples from the series and the Tate information panels which incorporated quotations from her article:



Fig. 7 *On a Pot Bank: Scouring and Stamping the Maker's Name on Biscuit China* (1907)

“Scouring was a process where powdered flint dust was removed from the fired unglazed pottery, known as ‘the biscuit.’ The women told Pankhurst how the dust injured the lungs of the workers, who had no protection from inhaling it.”



Fig. 8 *Dipping and Drying on the Mangie*, (1907)

“[This work shows] the dipping shed where the pottery was glazed. Many factories as this date used lead glaze which severely affected the health of the workers resulting in lead poisoning, and many of the female workers giving birth to stillborn babies. Pankhurst fainted twice on her first morning there, but when she asked if it was necessary to use lead glaze she was horrified to hear that the reasons for its continued use were commercial and considered more important than the health of the workers.”

The suffragette campaigning with the WSPU and work for social change that Sylvia Pankhurst went on to conduct is well known and widely recognised as being exceptional. In Fig. 9 below you can see her being arrested in 1912 when she was on her way to address a crowd at Trafalgar Square.



Fig. 9 Sylvia Pankhurst at a suffrage rally in Trafalgar Square, 1912

Such photographs of public speeches and social enterprise are the ones most commonly associated with Sylvia Pankhurst's cultural legacy. It is this campaigning work which is so widely respected and written about and for good reason. Olivia and I also find this aspect of her career very inspiring but it is her creative intersectional approach to building inclusive platforms which delivered change in the midst of people's lives that interests us the most (by way of note, most of that work was carried out through the East London Federation of Suffragettes which Sylvia Pankhurst formed in October 1912).

For all of this, our research reveals that art never really leaves the frame of Sylvia Pankhurst's activities. Like other militant suffragettes, she was frequently imprisoned but even in prison she used her drawing skills to further understanding and galvanise campaign support. She drew the conditions fellow campaigners had to endure and got them published alongside an article in 'The Suffragette' newspaper and 'The Pall Mall Magazine' (see Fig. 10). We ask: Is this a giving up of art or a re-focusing of it?



Fig. 10 Prison drawings, *What it feels like to be in Prison*, *The Pall Mall Magazine*, 1907

More spectacularly, take a look at the huge murals that Sylvia designed for the 'Women's Exhibition' of 1909 organised by the WSPU at the Princes Skating Rink. This event was a large display of goods and wears, some suffrage related. Suffragettes all over the country had been making things so that they could be sold to raise funds for the movement:



Fig. 11 WSPU 'Women's Exhibition' at the Princes Skating Rink, 1909

The images are not crystal clear, but, if you look closely, the immense scale and beauty of the work can be detected. These banners are quite an achievement since they are hand drawn and painted (Sylvia Pankhurst had a few former fellow art students from the Royal College of Art helping her execute the task). We know that by this point in her life Sylvia had a problem with art for art's sake, but here we see art used to charge an atmosphere of inspiration for the visitors to the Women's

Exhibition. I am sure she must have loved carrying out this task since it allowed her to paint again but in good conscience. Her designs reflect the influence of Walter Crane, a key figure in the Arts and Craft Movement under whom she had studied at the Manchester School of Art. The motifs she used are very allegorical, reveal a slightly sentimentalised spiritualism and decorative elements based on natural everyday form. You can see here her 'angel of freedom' symbol that she incorporated into much of the suffragette propaganda produced for the WSPU.



Fig. 12 Various designs for WSPU campaign materials

Fig. 12 shows further examples of the 'angel of freedom' in Pankhurst's campaign materials. Here we see badges, necklaces and the banner she designed for the West Ham branch of the WSPU. It is said that the suffragettes were one of the first movements to really take advantage of logos and visual marketing to promote their cause, so here is yet another signpost to Sylvia Pankhurst's contribution to art history.

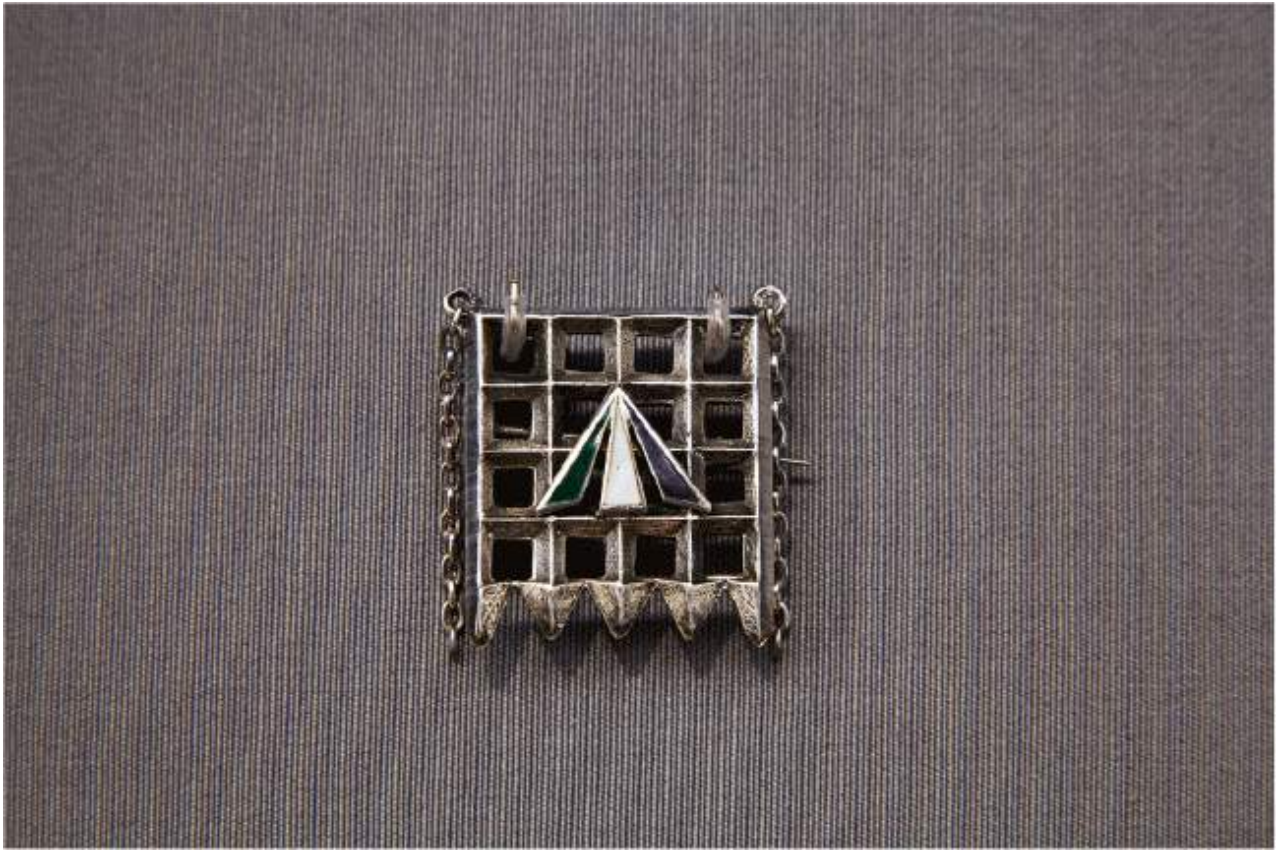


Fig. 13 The Holloway Pendant

Above is my favourite piece of Sylvia's artwork - the 'Holloway Pendant,' designed in 1907. It's incredibly tiny and was awarded to suffragettes who had undergone hunger strike whilst in prison, which usually would have been Royal Holloway in London. It was a medal of honour if you will and was accompanied by a certificate of gratitude signed by Emmeline Pankhurst that Sylvia also designed (Fig. 14). The pendant's design is based upon the portcullis of the prison gates. To give you an idea of the scale of suffragette activity and related imprisonment, the historian Brian Harrison claims that 240 suffragettes were jailed in 1912 alone. Suffragettes often served time in prison for their street actions or just because they spoke out (late in 1908 the government had passed the 'Public Meeting Act' which made it illegal to disturb a public meeting). When arrested for such acts, women were offered the choice between paying a fine or going to jail. And of course, according to their political conscience, they went to jail. Once there, finding themselves treated as common criminals rather than prisoners of conscience, they made a political statement by going on hunger strike. And in return they were treated appallingly, held down and force-fed with many sustaining permanent injuries. The accounts are very disturbing.

Below is one of the certificates of gratitude (they are officially termed an 'illuminated address' in archive collections). Again we see the influence of the arts and craft movement on Sylvia Pankhurst's style; the angel of freedom motif is repeated and the border is ornate and based upon natural motif.



“On behalf of all women who will win freedom by the bondage which you have endured for their sake, and dignity by the humiliation which you have gladly suffered for the uplifting of our sex, We the Members of the Women’s Social and Political Union, herewith Express our deep sense of admiration For your courage in enduring a long period of privation and solitary confinement in prison for the Votes for Women cause, also our thanks to you for the great service that you have hereby rendered to the Women’s Movement.

Inspired by your passion for freedom and right may we and the women who come after us be ever ready to follow your example of self-forgetfulness and self-conquest, ever ready to obey the call of duty and to answer the appeal of the oppressed.”

Fig. 14 Illuminated address awarded to Elsa Gye in 1909 after completing a six month prison sentence for attempting to petition the Prime Minister

In this case, the certificate is addressed to the suffragette Elsa Gye who herself had given up a promising career as a musician in order to campaign with the WSPU. With such items we can see a ‘behind the scenes’ use of art within the suffragette campaign. They have been created as a gift to honour an individual woman for her contribution and to confirm her value to the WSPU community. I think it is extremely noteworthy that such internally distributed objects are invested with all the craft and visual alacrity of the public processions and marches. Similarly, when suffragettes were released from jail they were often met literally at the prison gates with a small greeting party or procession. Such displays demonstrate a strong visual awareness and a care to foster collective identity in most suffragette activists. Returning to the prison release welcome parties - there would be drummers, bagpipes, carriages adorned with flowers and on one occasion Elsie Howie, a particularly fierce militant, lead a procession on horseback as Joan of Arc to meet key campaigner-leader Emily Pethick-Lawrence (see Fig 27). The released suffragettes would be marched through the streets of London to a breakfast banquet often held at the Savoy. And why not hard-core politics and top quality cakes? It’s the same with Wortley Hall, where we are tonight. Why not have a trade union movement based in an elegant, beautiful building - why can’t beauty and socialist politics go together?

Such an investment by the suffragettes into the micro level of interpersonal relationships links to the firm foundation of what I call ‘creative friendship’ that permeated so much of the ‘behind the scenes’ activity and which I think developed a sense of belonging and excitement which maintained the

momentum of the public campaign. In effect, the suffragettes were carrying out a double revolution; on one hand there was the establishing of a female political voice and the associated confrontation with established rules and powers to gain enfranchisement and, on the other, there was the creation of new forms of subjectivity, new creative frameworks that made possible completely new and previously unimaginable types of formative life experiences for individual women. The wider effects of such 'molecular level' transformation should not be underestimated and potentially point back to the role of art broadly and more philosophically conceived in social and political progress. And what of more broader, philosophical connections of beauty – the good life - in this light?

Interestingly, I can call in the words of Sylvia Pankhurst herself to corroborate this:

[T]he creation of a Michelangelo would have ranked low in the eyes of the W.S.P.U members besides a term served in Holloway.

Sylvia Pankhurst 'The Suffragette Movement,' 1932, p. 284

I do respect Michelangelo's art but I think I respect this quotation just as much, if not more. Its sentiment is certainly as culturally valuable. I'm not sure what demand such an understanding makes on me as an artist, but realising this in terms of artworks and life decisions seems a worthwhile challenge.

The quotation above is taken from 'The Suffragette Movement' which Sylvia Pankhurst wrote in 1931 and it's one of the key books documenting the campaign. Further quotation reveals the internal struggle between beauty recognised via an art object and the beauty of embodying virtue:

Always I was torn between the economic necessities of the immediate moment, the desire of further study to equip me for ambitious [art] works, the urging of conscience to assist in the movement. Like many another young woman of my period, I was distraught by my solidarity with that rage of militancy...Even in the calm haven of the Royal College of Art, lulled by the manifest duty of work and study to justify holding a scholarship, I asked Kier Hardy: "Are we brothers of the brush entitled to the luxury of release from utilitarian production? Is it just that we should be permitted to devote out entire lives to the creation of beauty, while others are meshed in monotonous drudgery?" Now, facing alone the hard struggle of life as an unknown artist, nervous, diffident and in poor health, came the frequent question: Why? As a speaker, a pamphlet-seller, a chalker of pavements, a canvasser on doorsteps, you are wanted; as an artist the world has no real use for you; in that capacity you must fight a purely egotistical struggle.

Sylvia Pankhurst, 'The Suffragette Movement,' 1931, p. 218

There are many references to art in this book's pages, it's as if she can't quite *not think about it* in relationship to documenting political campaigning. And telling in this light is that the frontispiece to the first run of 'The Suffragette,' which she published in 1911, is in fact a photograph of her in an artist smock. This is an image from 1909 when she is donning it as a militant suffragette and creating the banners for the Women's Exhibition at the Princes' Skating Rink exhibition (see Fig. 9):

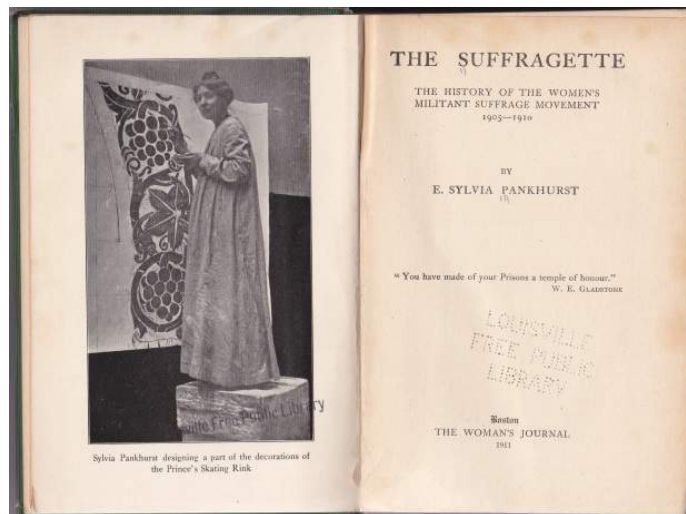


Fig. 15 Frontispiece 'The Suffragette,' Sturgis & Walton, 1911

I would suggest that Sylvia Pankhurst never quite drops her inner identity as an artist, somehow she needs that. From the perspective of the emerging avant-garde who were questioning art's relationship to everyday reality at that time and attempting to merge the two together, she is perhaps radically ahead of them.

Returning to the initial research Olivia and I carried out at the Women's Library in 2010, perhaps most unexpected was the discovery that Sylvia Pankhurst is not a lone example of the suffragette as a militant artist. Many of the active suffragettes in the WSPU were artists or had undergone art training. Sadly it has been hard to track down much information about these women's lives. To complicate things, many operated under an alias meaning that often their real names were unrecorded.

So, at this point, I want to change the focus of the talk from Sylvia Pankhurst and direct it to other suffragette militant artists and one lesser known feature of the WSPU campaign strategy which used art galleries and museum spaces as places of extreme activism in the cause for female suffrage.



Fig. 16 *The Rokeby Venus* or *The Toilet of Venus*, Diego Velázquez, 1647-51

Between 1903-4, militant suffragettes waged a systematic campaign of attacking artworks. Only very famous, valuable works of art were targeted, like the one above, the 'Rokeby Venus,' painted between 1647-51 by the Spanish master, Velázquez. The British Government had only recently acquired this in 1906 for £45,000 (that's the equivalent of £3,000,000 in today's terms) and it was on public display at the National Gallery. The British government had spent a huge amount of the nation's money on an artwork and there would have been a lot of attention on it in the popular press. There is some comment from the time that men gawped in front of it for hours and this, no doubt, also played a factor in its selection for sacrifice.

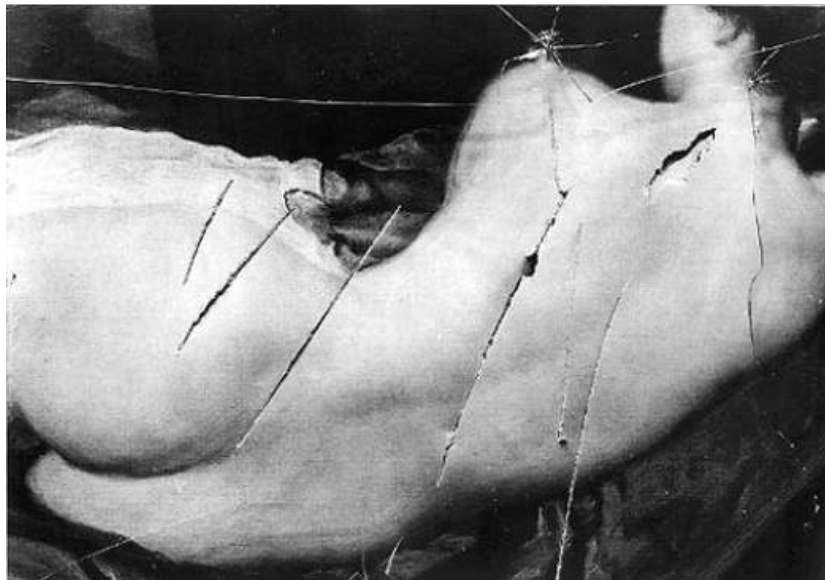


Fig 17. 'The Rokeby Venus' after the suffragette attack, 1914

The militant suffragette behind the attack in this case was artist Mary Richardson and she employed a butcher's cleaver to create her statement.



Fig. 18 Mary Richardson leaving court where she was sentenced to eighteen months and hard labour

Above is a picture of Mary Richardson leaving the courts after her arrest. It's a pen and ink copy I made from the original photograph and we used this in our chapbook, 'Suffragette as a Militant Artist.' It's a tactic Olivia and I use because we usually don't have funds to pay for the copyright on certain images. An added bonus is that the process allows you to pick up on the tinier details in the photograph that you might otherwise miss just because you will be staring into a picture for over 4 hours or so. I show this image because it seems very important with this research to put a face to these artists, to allow them to somehow address us.

In an interview conducted in her later life, Mary Richardson talks about hiding a butcher's chopper up her sleeve on a string of safety pins in readiness for the act. It was a very brave if violent thing to do. This is still the time of corsets and restrictions on female public expression. She admits to how terrified she was as she sat in the gallery sketching for over half an hour, waiting for the point when the guards would become blind to her presence and leave her alone in the room with the painting. As soon as the guards had left she took out the meat chopper and slashed the painting. It's certainly an act of brutalism and yet she's an artist and artists above all know the value and effort that pertains to paintings. So this is not senseless violence. Cleverly, Mary Richardson knew how such an artwork is not simply a thing of innocent beauty but is just as much a fetish of the burgeoning capitalist society. And it was this she was attacking. Her statement to the press amplified the effect of the action. At the time Emmeline Pankhurst was in prison, ill, weak from hunger strike and being kept in really cold, damp conditions. The movement feared she was about to die:

I have tried to destroy the picture of the most beautiful woman in mythological history as a protest against the Government for destroying Mrs Pankhurst who is the most beautiful character in modern history. Justice is an element of beauty as much as colour and outline on canvas. Mrs Pankhurst seeks to procure justice for womanhood, and for this she is being slowly murdered by a Government of Iscariot politicians. If there is an outcry against my deed, let every one remember that such an outcry is an hypocrisy so long as they allow the destruction of Mrs Pankhurst and other beautiful living women, and that until the public cease to countenance human destruction the stones cast against me for the destruction of this picture are each an evidence against them of artistic as well as moral and political humbug and hypocrisy.

'Miss Richardson's Statement' 'The Times, 11 March 1914

This is an extremely powerful statement. It interferes with the supposed neutrality and purity of the painting. Whilst 'The Rokeby Venus' is unarguably a highly skilled work of art, the painting is more than an object, an image on canvas. Artworks placed in such exalted positions function also as signifiers of the values and power relations of the era that honours them.



Fig. 19 'Sylvia Pankhurst - Imagined Photograph,' part of *The working Table of the Emily Davison Lodge 2010-3*, Olivia Plender & Hester Reeve

We discovered that one of the first attacks on an artwork was in fact by Sylvia Pankhurst herself. Generally speaking, it seems Sylvia Pankhurst was against acts of violence and destruction but she did throw a lump of concrete in St Stephens Hall, the Houses of Parliament, at the recently completed painting by Andrew Carrick Gow, 'Speaker Finch Being Held in the Chair.' This was in 1913 and she claimed that she was acting in anger at the Speaker of the House of Commons who had just refused to allow a women's suffrage amendment bill to be introduced despite promises to the contrary. The painting was chosen, she claimed, because it seemed uninteresting and was protected by glass. I made the above drawing as part of *The Working Table of the Emily Davison Lodge 2010-13* - the piece Olivia and I collaborated on for 'The Sylvia Pankhurst Display' at Tate Britain. In this case the image is not copied from an archival photograph but is an 'imagined photograph' - we have to remember that, unlike today where everyone has access to a camera on their mobile phone, some key suffragette actions in the early 1900's were not captured in photographs. Whilst the 'Display was all about foregrounding Sylvia Pankhurst's artistic legacy, we felt our contribution needed to provide the one direct reference to her campaigning work. So this is one of a series of five imagined photographs of actual actions – ones we felt were as creatively savvy as they were politically - carried out by Sylvia Pankhurst that we felt needed honouring. The protest actions that we chose to 'photograph,' from the perspective of our research were ones which really capture the imagination and hence still hold the potential to inspire change. Again, our intention was again to insist on an ambiguous line between her artistic and political labour.

Annie Briggs, Evelyn Manesta and Lillian Forrester attacked 13 paintings in Manchester City Gallery in 1913. They gave rousing speeches at their trial and in the end Briggs was acquitted, Lillian was sentenced to three months imprisonment and Evelyn to one month.

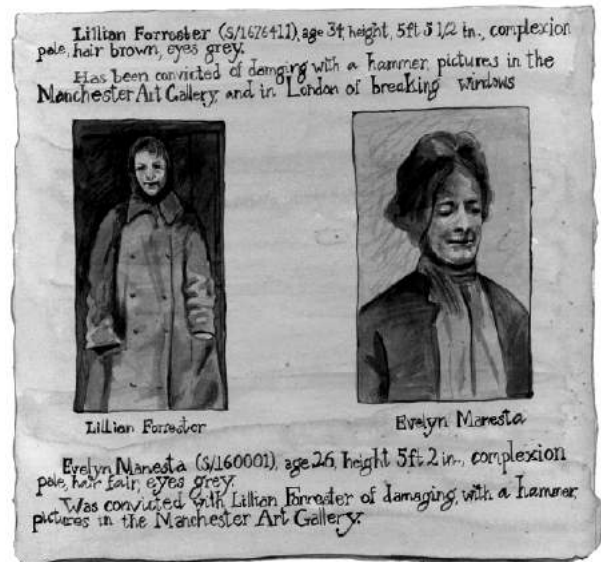


Fig. 20 Suffragettes Annie Briggs, Evelyn Manesta and Lillian Forrester

What I find particularly clever and creative is that the women left a hammer on the floor of the gallery with suffragette ribbons attached to it and a card which on one side had written:

“Parliament for dishonourable men, prison for honourable women”

And on the other:

“STOP FORCIBLE FEEDING”

I think today we have no problem seeing the ‘artistry’ in this ‘happening’ - which is not to aestheticise suffragette actions and rob them of their political power, but to honour the ingenuity of the act and to challenge where the moral power of art lay – in an object or a human action?

Beside their photograph is our copy of a Ministry of Defence poster published supposedly to deter further attacks. The authorities were clearly put on their guard. The museums and galleries of London held a large meeting to decide whether or not they should ban women from entering galleries altogether. In the end they decided against due to concerns over a potential loss in tourist trade, but notices were put up at museum entrances declaring ‘No women allowed with a muff’ because they might be hiding a butcher’s cleaver in there. Other notices stated that women were only allowed in on the arms of a man who could guarantee their good character. Their rationale is rather distasteful.



Fig. 21 Thomas Carlyle, John Everett Millais, 1877

Above is the vandalised portrait of Thomas Carlyle painted by John Everett Millais in 1877, a famous pre-Raphaelite artist at the time. The militant suffragette who carried out the attack was Margaret Gibb but she operated under the alias Annie Hunt. The painting hung in the National Portrait Gallery and her chosen implement was a butcher's cleaver. I love the pluck in the following statement made during her trial:

This picture will have an added value and be of great historical interest, because it has been honoured by the attention of a militant.

Margaret Gibb, 'The Suffragette,' 31 July 1914

These actions were doubly brave if we consider that many of these women were what was termed as a "mouse" at the time - that means they had been temporarily released from jail under the infamous 'Cat and Mouse Act' (official title the 'Prisoners Temporary Discharge for Health Act' of 1913) and would be in extremely weak health. At the point where a suffragette was almost dying due to hunger strike, she would be released on licence so the government wouldn't have her death on their hands. Once the suffragette had recovered strength, the authorities would place her back in jail (an insidious move by the Liberal government under Prime Minister Asquith).

Anyone interested in the suffragette attacks on artworks can take our chap book away with them or visit it online - it includes a list we compiled of all the attacks on artwork so far documented and where possible we've included the published statement that each suffragette made upon her arrest. It is not a conclusive list, but we have pooled as many existing sources as possible and hope to carry out further research into this area in the future:

Suffragette Attacks on Art

Suffragettes	Date	Location	Artwork	Tool
Solo Suffragette (possibly Ethel Cox, alias of Gwendoline Cook, who is on a M.O.D file held by the National Gallery archives as a suspected slasher and not mentioned in any other reported incidences)	1894	The Royal Academy	Stanhope Alexander Forbes' "The Quarry team"	Umbrella
Sylvia Pankhurst (artist and one of the WSPU leaders)	14/1/13	St Stephen's Hall, Parliament Buildings	"Speaker Finch being held in the chair"	Lump of concrete
A productive artist throughout the campaign, Sylvia Pankhurst nonetheless doubted, "...whether it was worthwhile to fight one's individual struggle...to make one's way as an artist, to bring out of oneself the best possible, and to induce the world to accept one's creations, and give one in return ones' daily bread, when all the time the real struggles to better the world for humanity demand another service."				
Evelyn Manesta, Lillian Forrester & one other (Sarah Jane/Jennie-Baines?) (Forrester had taken part in the 1911 window smashing)	3/4/13	Manchester Art Gallery	Smash glass of 13 paintings, damage: Frederick Leighton's "Captive & Andromache," Geroge Frederic Watts' "Paolo & Francesca" and "The Prayer," Arthur Hacker's "Syrinx"	Hammer
Mary Richardson aka "Slasher Mary" (artist, mouse, suspected arsonist & had taken part in the 1911 window smashing campaign)	10/3/14	National Gallery	Velázquez "Rokeby Venus" (The Toilet of Venus) The painting had been purchased in 1906 for £45,000.	Butcher's Chopper – 5 slashes across the nude's body. (Attached to chain of safety pins and hidden up her sleeve. She initially pretended to be sketching. This is the most famous art attack of the suffragette campaign)
<i>"I have tried to destroy the picture of the most beautiful woman in mythological history as a protest against the Government for destroying Mrs Pankhurst, who is the most beautiful character in modern history. Justice is an element of beauty as much as colour and outline on canvas. Mrs Pankhurst seeks to procure justice for womanhood, and for this she is being slowly murdered by a Government of Iscariot politicians."</i> Mary Richardson's statement via the WSPU.				
Mary Wood (alias of Mary Aldham)	4/5/14	The Royal Academy	John Singer Sargeant's "Henry James" (Henry James had spoken out against the vandalism of artworks)	Hatchet
<i>"I have tried to destroy a valuable picture because I wish to show the public that they have no security for their property nor for their art treasures until women are given political freedom."</i>				
Mary Ansell (also part of the 13/10/08 'rush' on the House of Commons, the 1911 window smashing campaign & a big animal rights campaigner)	12/5/14	The Royal Academy	Herbert von Herkomer's "The Duke of Wellington" (his grandfather had had his windows smashed by men fighting for the vote)	Chopper (In prison, Mary Ansell suffered force feeding 236 times)
In a statement to the WSPU Ansell claimed she was protesting against the privileged treatment in prison of the Ulster terrorists compared to suffragettes and against the sexual abuse of women.				

Suffragettes	Date	Location	Artwork	Tool
Freda Graham	22/5/14	National Gallery	5 x paintings by Giovanni Bellini	Loaded cane
<i>In court, Freda declared that she attacked the pictures, "as a protest against King George's illegal and unconstitutional action in refusing to receive a legal deputation of women...what are five pictures compared to 80,000 pictures which are shamefully defaced, damaged and degraded by men each night?" (The Day 26/5/14)</i>				
Mary Spencer	22/5/14	The Royal Academy	George Clausen's "Primavera" (A female nude)	Butcher's cleaver - cuts the painting in two
<i>The Day 26/5/14 reported that when in court, Spencer had declared to the judge that attacking property was the only option left for women to express their views since they respected life too much to even lay a finger on it.</i>				
Maude Edwards	23/5/14	The Scottish Academy, Edinburgh	James Lavery's portrait "George V" (This had been hung in the 'Great Room' surmounted by gold curtains and a crown. Two days earlier, Emmeline Pankhurst had attempted to lead a deputation to the king but had been repused)	Hatchet – slashing the king below the left breast
Ivy Bonn (mouse)	3/6/14	Doré Galleries	2 paintings in the Bartolozzi exhibition	Hatchet
<i>"The militants hold that they are at war with the British government, basing their right to rebel on the axioms that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that resistance to tyrants is obedience to God...Not even the extreme violence to which the suffragettes have gone is bad enough to justify the continued refusal of the vote. At least, I think this must be the opinion of the newspapers, for they seldom report even this kind of violence as it happened, but embroider on it. Take the case of Miss Ivy Bonn, who, on June 3, destroyed two valuable paintings in the Dore Galleries in Bond Street. According to some of the newspapers, she turned on the manager of the gallery and 'rained blows on him with a hatchet.' Of course, this is nonsense, for if she rained blows on a man with a hatchet, in a jiffy he would have been reduced to mince meat and she would have been tried for manslaughter." Mary Windsor, writing in Public Life (US), 1914.</i>				
Bertha Ryland (had taken part in the 1911 window smashing campaign)	10/6/14	Birmingham Museum of Art	Romney "Master Thornhill" (on loan and which had been deliberately hung high so only a man could reach it)	Butcher's cleaver
<i>"...I attack this work of art deliberately as a protest against the government's criminal injustice in denying women the vote, and also against the government's injustice in imprisoning, forcibly feeding, and drugging suffragist militants..."</i>				
Annie Hunt (alias of Margaret Gibb)	17/7/14	National Portrait Gallery	John Everett Millais' "Thomas Carlyle"	Butchers Cleaver
<i>At her trial Hunt claimed, "this picture will have an added value and be of great historical interest, because it has been honoured by the attention of a militant."</i>				
unknown	unknown	Wallace Collection	unknown	unknown
unknown	6/12/13	Liverpool exhibition	unknown	£2,000 worth of damage
unknown	6/12/13	Rusholme Exhibition	unknown	£15,000 worth of damage

*The term 'mouse' was a colloquial term for a suffragette who had been released from prison under 'The Cat and Mouse Act' (officially 'The Prisoners Temporary Release for Ill Health Act') passed in 1913. The government cruelly evaded responsibility for the deteriorating condition of suffragettes by making hunger striking legal; no longer force feeding the women who undertook such a protest in jail, the government released hunger striking suffragettes when they were on the point of collapse, only to re-arrest them once full health had been recovered. Emmeline Pankhurst, leader of the WSPU and who underwent at least 10 hunger strikes, famously gave speeches when a 'mouse' from a stretcher.

Figs. 22 & 23 Suffragette Attacks on Art, *The Suffragette as a Militant Artist*, The Emily Davison Lodge, 2010

There were many artist members of the WSPU and other groups involved in the suffragette campaign. This image below is from a piece written by the artist Edith Mason-Hinchley 'Why we Want the Vote: The Woman Artist:'

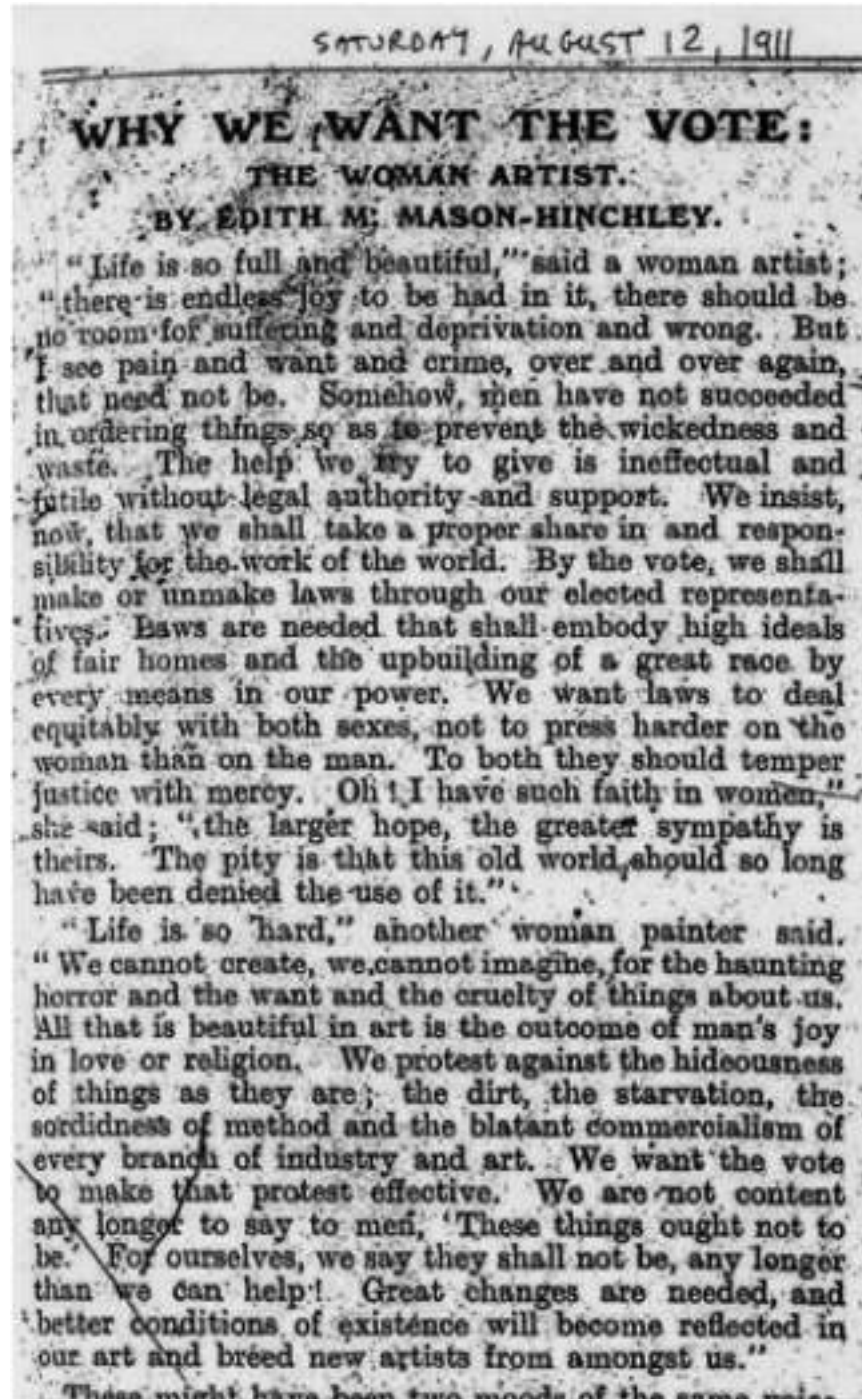


Fig. 24 'Why we Want the Vote: The Woman Artist,' Edith Mason-Hinchley, 'The Vote,' 12/8/1911

This demonstrates clearly that there was an inevitable affinity between attaining the identity of an artist as a woman in that time and an alignment with feminist values. As early as the late 1840's a women's art alliance had formed in London which was as committed to women's practice of art as it was to equality politics. Whilst the art world was run by men and for men, its quite surprising how many women were already becoming professional artists, many making an independent living despite the fact that the art school doors were not entirely fully open to them and that prices of artworks were devalued by gender.

With the rise of the female artist came a new model of female autonomy, many were wanting to lead a life outside of marriage. One such artist and suffragette was Marion Dunlop, you can see her below in the left side image:



"Women's Deputation. June 29th. Bill of rights – it is the right of the subjects to petition the King, and all commitments and and prosecutions for such petitionings are illegal"
Marion Dunlop, artist, on St Stephens wall, House of Commons



Coronation Procession 1911, costumes created in Brackenbury Studios



Fig. 25 Marion Dunlop, Marjorie Anne-Bryce as Joan of Arc, Suffragette banner making.

Marion Dunlop was a Scottish artist who came to live in London and managed to earn an independent living through the sales of her work. She was also a member of the WSPU and as part of the campaign she devised a method of placing political graffiti within the Houses of Parliament. In 1909, she constructed a custom made rubber stamp - that's the thing she's holding in the

photograph that looks like a large toilet plunger – and inked it up with purple ink (purple was one of the suffragette colours along with green and white). She stamped text from the Bill of Rights: "Women's Deputation. June 29th. Bill of Rights - It is the right of the subjects to petition the King, and all commitments of prosecutions for such petitions are illegal." Suffragettes had been petitioning the Liberal government to get an amendment for female suffrage added on to the Bill of Rights. As a result she was sent to jail and when Gladstone refused her request to be accorded the status of a political prisoner, she became the first suffragette to go on hunger strike.

The top right image in Fig. 25 shows a further example of the use of allegorical figures to publicise the suffragette cause. This is Marjorie Anne-Bryce leading the 1911 'Coronation Procession' as Joan of Arc. Here again we see militant artistry. Many of the suffragette processions took on the nature of pageants and were visually stunning. Here the suffragettes who were artists, Marion Dunlop key among them, had a big hand in designing visual impact and meaningful ceremonials. Props were made in the studios of the Brackenbury sisters both of whom had studied at the Slade School of Fine Art and were active members of the WSPU. Georgina's painting of Emmeline Pankhurst can be seen today in the National Portrait Gallery and Marie was a successful landscape painter.



Fig. 26 Coronation Procession, 1911

Just staying with the Coronation Procession for a moment - if you look at the above image you will notice that, aside from the pageant being a visually stunning achievement, there are a lot of processors and a multitude of onlookers. This was another shock for us when we first started researching the suffragettes - it was a mass movement. There were thousands and thousands of women all over the country (and some men of course) who signed up as members and they would all gather for the many processions that were organised. The Hyde Park Rally of June 1908 had an

assembly of 200-300 *thousand* suffragette participants! Apparently, department stores sold out of white dresses in advance of the event. People who weren't part of the movement would come in their thousands to watch and support the marches, so much so that newspaper shops would sell suffragette ribbons and napkins. Now we only produce such paraphernalia today for occasions like royal weddings, i.e. hugely popular events, so this fact gives an indication of just how prevalent and popular suffragette activity was within society at the time. Similarly, if you study the following image of Elsie Howie leading the procession to commemorate Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence's release from prison, you see the streets are lined with people coming out to watch. One female bystander, viewable behind the horse's head, looks like she is giving a salute:

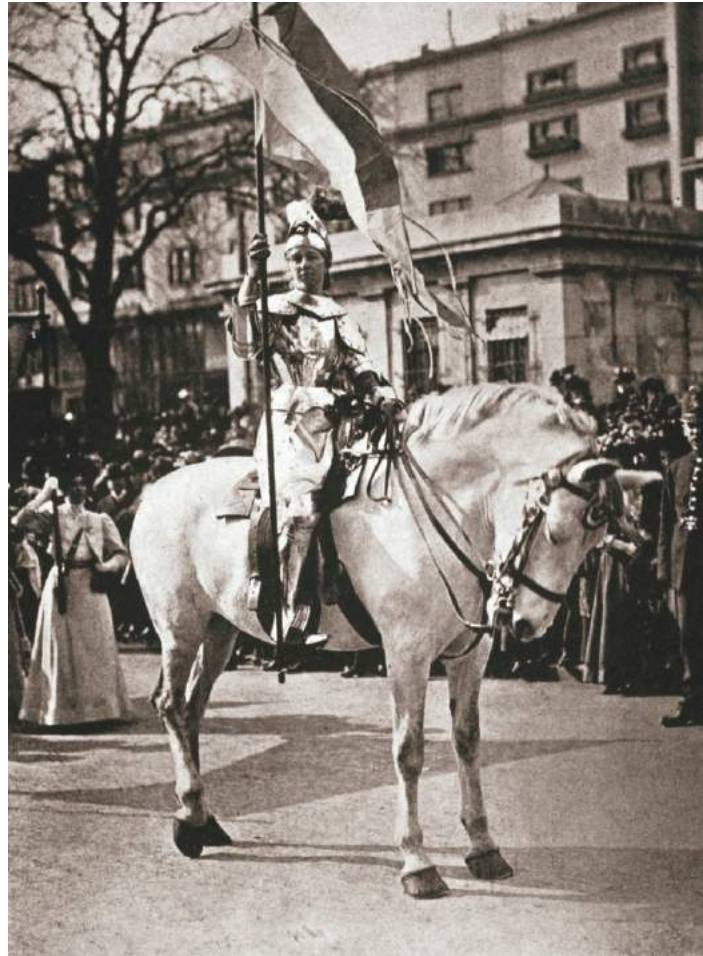


Fig. 27 Elsie Howie as Joan of Arc, procession to mark the release of Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence from jail, 1909

And yet none of this exists in historical memory today and in the scant cultural portrayals of suffragettes since then - which form contemporary impressions of the suffragette movement - we see not a rigorous and popular campaign but batty, eccentric elderly ladies such as the Mrs Winifred Bank's character in the film 'Mary Poppins.' All credit to Julian Fellowes who managed a far more realistic snippet of the suffragette campaign in its local and parochial form outside of London in background scenes of his popular TV series 'Downton Abbey.' Sylvia Pankhurst's name in relationship to socialist politics also gets a mention.

Another way that artistic flare was utilised in suffragette tactics was in chalking pavements to announce meetings and demonstrations - a very cheap and direct form of advertising. The Brackenbury sisters became very well known for such activities and suffragettes would often go out on 'chalking parades' armed with green, violet and white chalk.



Fig. 28 This image shows suffragette Emma Sproson aka 'Red Emma' chalking the streets, possibly in Wolverhampton where she was an active campaigner. Her activism was spawned by attending a political meeting at which she asked Lord Curzon a question but he refused to answer because the question had been asked by a woman.

I recently came across a cartoon by Marie Brackenbury titled 'History Up to Date and more so by a Suffragette Pavement Artist.'

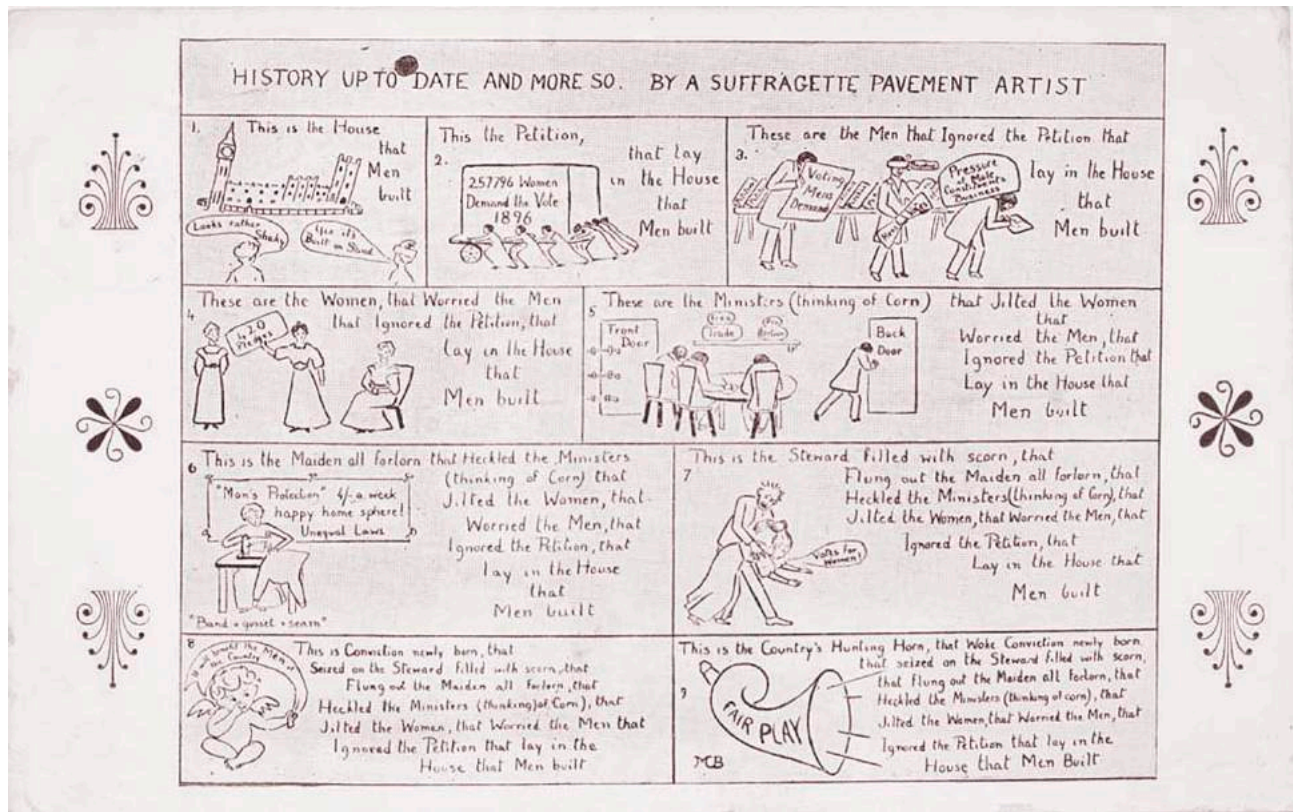


Fig. 29 History Up to Date and more so by a Suffragette Pavement Artist, Marie Brackenbury, 1908

And below we have a photograph of Georgina Brackenbury. This image was created to display at the 'The Women's Exhibition' (mentioned earlier) in order to remind the public that suffragettes were suffering in jail:



Fig. 30 Reconstructed image of a suffragette in prison, 1909

My interest here is again the role of art within the movement - the image is quite well known but less recognised is Georgina's role in restaging the event for camera. Was it her idea even?



Fig. 31 Banner of The Artists Suffrage League

Not all artists gave up art in order to work as suffragette campaigners. There were quite a few artist groups which formed specifically to contribute to the campaign. The banner of 'The Artists Suffrage League' (Fig. 31) which is held by the Museum of London is particularly impressive in terms of design and aesthetic sensibility. The 'League was formed in 1907 and its members were professional female artists. They contributed banners, posters, cards and helped with marches. Its founder, the stained glass artist Mary Lowndes, designed many of the banners we see in photographs.



Fig. 32 The Suffrage Atelier members with their palette banners, 1910

Above is one of my very favourite documents from the suffragette campaign, it captures members of the 'Suffrage Atelier' with their palette banners preparing to process in the 1910 WSPU rally in Hyde Park in support of the Women's Conciliation Bill which was being debated in parliament at the time. It speaks of artist militancy but in this instance we see paint brushes and palettes transformed into protest placards. The photograph was taken by 'Nurse Pine' who nursed a lot of the eminent suffragettes when they were temporarily released from jail due to hunger striking. What was very radical and farsighted about the Suffrage Atelier was that it encouraged and trained non artists in order to empower them to contribute artworks and propaganda illustrations and accorded them a percentage profit on any sold items. The 'Atelier was set up in 1909 in Shepherds Bush and one of the founders was the illustrator Clemence Housman, also a member of the WSPU. Their stated aim was 'to encourage Artists to forward the Women's Movement, and particularly the Enfranchisement of Women, by means of pictorial publications.' For example, they lead workshops to teach people how to make woodcuts. This method was favoured as it was a cheap and suitable medium for creating simple, bold designs. Sadly, Olivia and I haven't managed to track down any photographs documenting the members at work but we at least have the legacy of the posters created, many of which are unsigned. A very famous one is:



Fig. 34 Poster produced by the Suffrage Atelier c. 1912

Another notable artist who contributed to the suffragette campaign through artefacts was the enamellist Ernestine Mills who produced exquisite brooches and pendants reflecting campaign colours and imagery (in this case an angel of hope set before the prison gates):




Fig. 33 Pendant by Ernestine Mills, commissioned by the WSPU in 1909 and presented to Louise Eates, secretary of the Kensington branch of the WSPU on her release from jail for participating in a deputation to parliament.

Before I show images from the ‘Sylvia Pankhurst Display’ at Tate Britain, I do want to make a quick reference to one of the most famous suffragettes, Emily Wilding Davison, in relationship to looking at the tricky relationship between art and politics. An active militant of the WSPU, she wasn’t technically speaking an artist although Maureen Howes, arguably the world expert on her life, has advised me that she painted and would have described herself as a writer.

I am particularly interested in embodiments of creative agency, the blurring of the boundaries between art and an individual’s ethical ideas. Inevitably, this sort of ‘artistry’ does not lead to art objects or even images and often results in experimental actions within everyday life, an ultimate exercise of freedom and risk of self but as a social signifier rather than as a form of self-expression. But I don’t want to talk about Emily Davison’s derby day action here, it is one of her lesser known actions that I want to discuss. It is, for me, the suffragette equivalent of a Michael Angelo painting: On April 11, 1911, Emily Davison somehow managed to sneak into part of the Houses of Parliament that is off limits to visitors and hide herself in a broom cupboard just off to the side of the Chapel of St Mary. She stayed hidden over night and was duly discovered in the morning, admonished and allowed to leave. Why did she do this? Because a short time later the census was taken and when she was asked to state her place of residence for that date she could genuinely declare that she resided at the House of Commons, symbolically and literally proving she had the same rights as men. To my mind, this operates almost like a magic spell of possibility within the very fabric of everyday life and I want to speak of some sort of ‘art hood’ to this action.

CENSUS
of
ENGLAND AND WALES,
1911.


SCHEDULE.
Prepared pursuant to the Census (Great Britain) Act, 1910.

This space to be filled up by the Enumerator.

Number of Registration District.....	5
Number of Registration Sub-District.....	3
Number of Enumeration District.....	24
Name of Head of Family or Separate Occupier.)	Miss E. W. Davison
	found hiding in
Postal Address.....	Crypt of Westminster Hall
	WESTMINSTER

2/11/11
Miss E. W. Davison

Fig. 35 Record of Emily Davison’s 1911 place of residence as the Houses of Parliament

In the late 90's, the MP Tony Benn put a small plaque on the broom cupboard door to commemorate her act. What's very appropriate is that it's on the inside of the door so you have to actually shut yourself into the cupboard in order to view it. Apparently, Tony Benn used to take great pleasure in giving 'off the tourist route tours' to visiting foreign diplomats and dignitaries and then shutting them in the broom cupboard!

And, finally, a few over view images of the ' Sylvia Pankhurst Display' at Tate Britain for those who didn't visit the exhibition. Linked to the project of according Sylvia Pankhurst her place in British art history was a feminist prerogative to challenge the continued underrepresentation of women artists in galleries today. This was a concern of second wave feminism, is still a concern today and is something that the Emily Davison Lodge is keen to address. A reviewer of the show saw fit to remind the reader that:

...the Tate has included Sylvia into the Tate's collection. About time. According to Gemma Rolls-Bentley in research she did earlier this year, 83% of the artists on show in Tate Modern are male (no figs for Tate Britain). And did you know that of the 2,300 works of art in the National Gallery in London, only eleven of the artists are women? Eleven!

'Amanda,' *The Women's Room*, October 2013



Fig. 36 Sylvia Pankhurst Display, Tate Britain, 2013-4

Photographer Matthew Booth

Images from the 'Northern Worker's Tour' composed the majority of works on the wall, as you can see in the right-hand side image. The gallery itself had the top and bottom skirting painted with the suffragette colours, which was a very nice touch by Emma Chambers, the curator we worked with on the exhibition. Smaller works were under glass and the Holloway brooch is in the special wall case in the left-hand side image (as is our installation *The Working Table of the Emily Davison Lodge 2010-3*, just below the banner). In the centre of the room we showed items from the

suffragette tea service that Sylvia Pankhurst designed (using the angel of freedom motif within a green sphere):



Fig. 37 Sylvia Pankhurst Display, Tate Britain, 2013-4

Photograph: Matthew Booth

I would like to end this talk with a quotation from Sylvia Pankhurst because it is clear that in giving up a traditional art practice, she did not give up believing in art's value per se. Nor did she take the sacrifice lightly. When we met with Richard, her son, he said that she always carried her tin of watercolour paints with her, even when they moved to Ethiopia in the 1940's and even though she knew she would never actually use them:

...the idea of giving up the artist's life, surrendering the study of colour and form, laying aside the beloved pigments and brushes, to wear out one's life on the platform and the chair at the street corner was a prospect too tragically grey and barren to endure.

Margot Oxford, *The Countess of Oxford and Asquith*, (ed.) 'Myself When Young; By famous Women of To-day,' 1938, p. 285

Question and Answer Session:

Q: First of all, I went to see the exhibition at Tate Britain and I loved it so it was very special to be able to hear you talk about all the dimensions linked to what I saw there, thank you very much. A practical question - are you able to share the slides that you have shown this evening?

HR: Yes of course, the talk and slides will go up on the Sylvia Pankhurst Memorial Committee website.

Q: My names Tom Fleet (?), I come from Manchester and Sylvia Pankhurst was born there in Old Trafford and spent some of her time in Salford. I know we'll hear in a moment from Barbara Switzer about the status of the statue of Sylvia in front of the Houses of Parliament campaign and in the last months Manchester City Council has decided that its got too many statues of men and they will re-institute the old tradition of public subscription; they are going to raise five hundred thousand pounds to erect a statue to a woman. There will be a public consultation probably something like... (comment inaudible but causes a laugh). Needless to say, Emmeline is already on the list and although I don't want to undermine any of Emmeline's considerable contributions she did, of course, hand out white feathers during the First World War. She gave up. Unlike her daughter, who gave up art for politics, Emmeline gave up politics for war. But she might well win this award. I just want to draw your attention to the fact that the city council debate that was hand held earlier this month can be accessed online and there will in due course be some kind of referendum. So keep your eye on it and think about nominating Sylvia. Do vote and do what you can for Sylvia.

Q: I just wandered about the significance of the colours of women's suffrage in the gallery, whether or not it drew our attention to that fact that places like the Tate are long-term patriarchal institutions? Do we need to push our faces into these institutions or do we need to invent a new place where we can meet and work?

OP: That's a very good point and a tension that we've been discussing. It's also a tension that's been discussed a great deal by feminist art historians and artists for many years. My approach as an artist is that you need a two-pronged attack. On one hand, I think institutions like the Tate provide visibility and you get access to a huge audience through them. With this exhibition I'm continually being surprised by just how many people say they've seen it. And we wanted that for Sylvia Pankhurst's creative legacy to finally get the attention it deserves. Working with the Tate was a means of broadcasting an important message to a wide audience. As an artist I've always had the approach that you shouldn't totally abandon these institutions, but on the whole I work with public institutions, I'm not interested in private ones. But they are really in need of reform. At the same time it's also very important to make new kinds of institutions and think about new ways of working. So within the history of feminist art, there's been these debates for decades and a lot of feminist artists particularly in the 70s but also today have worked collectively as a solution. There is also a question around what it means to work as an individual artist which is to work in the very patriarchal tradition of the genius, the unique special person as the only source of creativity etc. This tradition of the solo artist is a very conservative one. I am invested in an ideal that recognizes everybody as being creative and that everybody should have access to creativity.

A feminist strategy means to rethink what an artist is within society, how an artist functions as well as critiquing institutions. But we shouldn't rule out using institutions altogether because they do hold a power to reach a huge audience.

HR: I suppose there's a sort of dichotomy within feminist art practice to look at here. Is feminism the subject of the work or is feminism a strategy activated via the work to reform? And of course these can overlap. Certainly with the 'Sylvia Pankhurst Display' we were operating subversively. We lobbied for the show from the outside (an artist at the seminar we held suggested that we had presented Tate Britain with a Trojan Horse), we insisted that we curate Pankhurst's work as the Emily Davison Lodge rather than as Hester Reeve and Olivia Plender because we knew that name would act as a friction and provoke visitors to think twice about the content of the show being simply of historical relevance. We really wanted the past to poke the present. And yet, perhaps ironically or perhaps radically, we were welcomed in by the director herself. In a way she was quite fully aware that what we were doing was largely subversive and she wanted that to happen, she seems to want an on-going discussion about this issue of feminist frameworks for curation and the under representation of women in Britain's large art institutions. She spent a long time discussing with us just how difficult it is to even start chipping away at such ingrained power structures and prejudices within the Tate. She had her own interests too – she is very keen to have artists activate former generations of artists' concerns, so that was at play too. We needed to work with someone like Emma Chambers who has extensive experience of designing shows and has access to all the insurance and handling issues necessary to gather and display the artefacts. But I suppose artistically I am really more interested in experimental structures and this brings us back to the Emily Davison Lodge.

Q: That was what I was thinking of - there needs to be resistance and there needs to be some kind of solidarity with institutions but it seems like they shouldn't define feminist creative initiatives.

HR: Yes, totally. I think an interesting problem linked to that is the assumption that the art institution always has to be somewhere that shows art objects. Look, I love making objects but that's only one part of the deal of being an artist. One of the things I love about the Emily Davison Lodge is that it's not a building, it's an idea that allows Olivia and I to refocus what we're looking at - so it makes space for new stuff to happen that might not happen without such a framework. It feels autonomous from institutional definition, and that's a good thing. It also allows people to see artistic activity differently, even just the name on its own has an effect, it sends out a message, causes some sort of ripple between today and the suffragette era. Obviously, the Emily Davison Lodge is not the answer to all the issues raised here but something about it is working for us. I mean, one could easily set up an alternative type of art gallery, I've seen my students do it on leaving college but, with all the will in the world, within a month they are already filling out forms, plagued with bureaucracy, too worried what people will think and audience figures. So they've lost what they were after almost before they started. So, for me, it's less about setting up alternative institutions but about setting up alternative frameworks for creative agency.

Q: I think the last question you raised ties in with what Pat was saying earlier. I'm very aware of the project that's going on in Manchester to make a monument to a woman and what worries me about that is that it kind of joins in with the established idea of erecting a statue to 'an individual.' Also, once that commission gets done it's that then written off as 'we've got a woman' etc. There's also a similar project going on in Rochdale which worries me, the leader of the council wants to raise the money to make a twice life size statue of Gracie Fields - does anybody know her? Both projects are very interesting because they raise the issue of what's appropriate? We do want to commemorate women and the under-acknowledged contribution they have made but what's appropriate in the contemporary setting? How can we creatively commemorate women in a way that isn't joining in the establishment? But if both of these councils do it really well, they could start debates up about this issue and about how we want little girls to see women [as role models].

Q: Given the time, the early 1900s, where there was much poverty and children were leaving school at 12, the art being destroyed effected the middle class if you like, the rich who went to art galleries whereas a large percentage of the population were too tired to do anything after a day's work. So I can't see in today's terms that it's the right thing to do, to destroy art. I think it's the wrong thing to do. So, therefore, there must have been a debate within the women's group at that time as to whether it was a right thing to do, whether it would be effective?

OP: Yes, there was. Sylvia herself was quite critical of destroying art, even though she was one of the first to attack one. The suffragettes followed a stipulation that if you harmed so much as a hair on a human head, you harmed the movement. So any act they carried out that entailed violence was extremely rigorously thought through. As you've rightly pointed out, the institutions of the art were for the middle and upper classes. But if we think back to the case of Mary Richardson, her articulation around her action of destroying the Velázquez painting is, I think, really interesting because she talks about the painting as the fetish of private property. So the attacks were very symbolic and directed, the suffragettes were destroying artworks because the museums that housed them were institutions of the state, and this was a patriarchal, capitalist state that valued private property over human life. I think this is what the gesture of attacking artworks was about - it was an outrage that operated in a symbolic realm, so it had an amplification effect. It was a way of getting the cause into the media and it really did work as propaganda.

Q: Thank you, we've come from Belfast, this is our second time here and it's fascinating. You think you know stuff about Sylvia Pankhurst, but I never knew anything about her artwork. I'd like to know how long is the exhibition going to stay in the Tate for and will it then go on tour? We do loads of work around the suffragette movement and in particular try to dispel the myth that it wasn't just middle class women who had tea and wrote letters to the government. They went on hunger strike, they did so much for the cause. To see Sylvia Pankhurst's artwork in Belfast would be really motivational for young women and especially young women who are coming to feminism. I'm blown away - is this going on tour?

OP: Unfortunately not, the exhibition closed in April and the works have gone back to the family who own most of them. We would have loved for it to be on tour. What we're discussing at the moment is how to bring together a community of interest around her artwork and its relevance. We held a seminar at the Tate where we brought together feminist art historians, feminist artists and feminist curators to start that off. And we're currently talking about doing some publications because at the moment the only publication about Sylvia Pankhurst's artworks is by Richard Pankhurst and that was published 30 or 50 years ago. I think her work really needs to be visible and accessible to the public. We want art historians writing about this work to get it out there in every way possible.

The other thing is that one of our original demands when we approached the Tate was that they should buy a Sylvia Pankhurst artwork so that it can hang on permanent display as part of their public collection. That's something that we are still hoping to broker since our project has built a relationship between the Pankhurst family and the Tate. We really want the project to have more life and to bring more people into it.