

**RUTH  
BARKER**

**HANNAH  
LEIGHTON-BOYCE**

*Featuring poetry by*

**JACKIE KAY**

---

Ruth Barker & Hannah Leighton-Boyce  
Glasgow Women's Library

1 FEBRUARY - 23 MARCH 2019

A Castlefield Gallery and University of Salford Art Collection Tour



Hannah Leighton-Boyce, *More energy than object, more force than form* (2018)  
Image courtesy of Denika Samuels.

# INTRODUCTION

---

This exhibition does not have a specific title, however if it did it would likely be *Affinity*, the title of three wonderful new poems written by Professor Jackie Kay in response to the work on display.

I am delighted that in addition to being Scottish Makar, Jackie Kay is Chancellor and Writer in Residence at the University of Salford, and as such has already written new poems in response to individual artworks in the University's Art Collection. This special exhibition, co-commissioned by Castlefield Gallery and the University of Salford Art Collection in partnership with Glasgow Women's Library, to mark the 100 year anniversary of the Representation of the People Act 1918, presented a perfect opportunity to invite Jackie to respond for the first time to an entire exhibition.

What I didn't predict was Jackie's profound understanding of, and empathy with, the complex issues and nuanced layers of meaning in both Ruth and Hannah's work, leading her to write three very different poems. I shouldn't have been surprised as a number of affinities have emerged during the two-year lifetime of the project: between the artists themselves; the individuals and collectives they encountered during their residencies; between ancient history and current politics; mortality, fragility of the body and sacredness of life

and rebirth; and the staff teams at Castlefield Gallery, University of Salford and Glasgow Women's Library. Jackie's poems *Affinity I, II* and *III*, premiered at the Glasgow launch, are represented within the exhibition, as well as in this booklet and are also available online.

The University of Salford is actively co-commissioning new work for the Art Collection that 'tells a story of now'. This is through working in close partnership with pioneering organisations such as Castlefield Gallery and Glasgow Women's Library, and visionary artists who can take very personal experiences and make artworks that tell us more about the world we live in. It is a privilege to announce that a number of these commissioned artworks have been acquired into the University Collection. They will sit alongside Jackie's stunning new poems - providing a permanent legacy of this fantastic project.

The extended time frame between the exhibitions in Manchester and Glasgow has enabled the work to breathe, for Ruth, Hannah and Jackie to reflect, and for us all to really consider what has, and what hasn't changed since the 1918 Act. As we enter 2019 amongst immense political and social upheaval, perhaps we need to be actively seeking out our affinities, rather than our differences?

**LINDSAY TAYLOR**

*Curator, University of Salford Art Collection*

# RUTH BARKER & HANNAH LEIGHTON-BOYCE

---

During 2017 and 2018 artists Ruth Barker (Glasgow) and Hannah Leighton-Boyce (Manchester) undertook research and production residencies at the University of Salford (Barker) and Glasgow Women's Library (Leighton-Boyce), supported by Castlefield Gallery (Manchester) and the University of Salford Art Collection.

Barker and Leighton-Boyce exchanged many ideas, thoughts and stories, in particular through conversation and letters, their residencies directly shaping two bodies of new work.

In March 2018 a selection of the new works were exhibited at Castlefield Gallery, the presentation forming part of the city's Wonder Women Festival 2018 and designed to mark the 100th anniversary of The Representation of the People's Act, a law passed in 1918 that reformed the electoral system in Great Britain. The Act gave the vote to all men over the age of 21 and women over 30 who met a minimum property qualification, a significant moment in the journey towards women's suffrage. The exhibition launch was on International Women's Day 2018, at which Barker premiered a new performance work *If this is the last thing that I say* (2018).

We are now pleased to be able to tour a selection of Barker and Leighton-Boyce's works to Glasgow Women's Library, some not having been on public display before.

Ruth Barker primarily works in performance and

performative-writing, and has an on-going engagement with the 'voice', however the exhibition houses a constellation of related pieces that include loomed works, audio, sculpture, costume, installation, and photography, composed at the junction of several new and existing works.

A paper body-cast and tufted rug act as stand in for Barker, the ambiguous figure perhaps suggesting the artist's own mortality and her fear of voicelessness. Motherhood, illness, and the economic conditions of contemporary Britain, Barker feels, are rapidly coalescing to render her publicly mute. If this were the last time that you could make your voice heard, she wonders, what would you use it to say? The tufted rug work, *Her face* (2018), depicts a child's drawing of Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar, a deity of love, beauty, sex, desire, fertility, war, combat, and political power.

Barker's photographic works in the exhibition include a bold self-portrait of the artist breast-feeding her infant, entitled *Speech* (2018), and as well as other items – part of her costume and script, and documentary photography of her Manchester performance *If this is the last thing that I say* (2018). Key to the selection of works for Glasgow Women's Library is an audio piece developed by Barker with school children from Clarendon Road Primary School, in Salford. *What sound should we make* (2018), includes a monologue by the artist herself, alongside recordings made in the University's anechoic chamber (a room designed to completely absorb the reflections or echoes

of sound) during a sonic meditation workshop with the children, led by Barker, and inspired by the pioneer of deep listening, Pauline Oliveros. Barker's wall-based fabric works, produced whilst in residency in Salford, *Thought forms* (2018), are the visual resonances of particular oral tones.

Hannah Leighton-Boyce explores historical narratives through site-specific actions, sculpture, drawing, sound and installation. Her recent works reference museum archives and found objects associated with the politics of labour and industrial legacy. During her residency with Glasgow Women's Library she focused on the relationship between the archive and the body through collective expressions of persistence, support, vulnerability and strength.

Leighton-Boyce's research process led her to engage with the everyday domestic mineral salt, as a metaphor for preservation, the archive and the residue of the emotional and physical body. Her new series of works are inspired by and made with salt, drawing on its inherent properties of division, healing and energy, and in particular the charge of 'coming together' she encountered at Glasgow Women's Library. Leighton-Boyce explores how salt can sympathise with the body in its different forms and formlessness, being strong and crystalline yet simultaneously fragile and vulnerable. Her process and work makes use of salt and how it dissolves, and through the process of evaporation can then reform anew.

In developing her work, Leighton-Boyce entwined ideas and materials, echoing the physical imprints and human presence, the traces of labour that touched her, when working with the archived documents of events, political campaigns and movements housed at Glasgow Women's Library.

*In more energy than object, more force than form* (2018) a series of saltwater batteries are arranged in concentric circles reminiscent of an ancient monument. The multiple bodies of cells make specific use of the particularities and behaviours of salt, the energy of separation and attraction that occur when salt is suspended in water, to power a

light. The circular nature of the work is important. During her residency at Glasgow Women's Library, Leighton-Boyce was especially struck by the welcoming embrace of the library, and her new works take inspiration from the large circular table centrally placed in the library, used for meetings, tea, lunch breaks and conversation. For Leighton-Boyce the table was reminiscent of the round table in the house of Emmeline Pankhurst (now the Pankhurst Centre, Manchester), the leader of the British suffragette movement, which was the birthplace of the Women's Social and Political Union; and The Table of Sentiments, a domestic parlour table used by American suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton to draft The Declaration of Women's Rights at Seneca Falls in 1848.

As with Barker, historical narratives have informed Leighton-Boyce's work, in particular the story of Lot's (unnamed) wife who was turned to a pillar of salt when she defied the angels and turned to look back on the burning cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:26). For her presentation in Manchester the cylindrical forms of cast salt in her work *Persistent bodies* (2018) lay across the gallery floor like fragments of a collapsed column, or something reminiscent of a broken length of spinal bone, posing questions about what we uphold and why. In opposition to the intention of this biblical story, Leighton-Boyce infers in this work the subversive potential of bearing witness, the importance of looking back, and of the archives of somewhere like Glasgow Women's Library. This piece was unbelievably cast from salt, and a series of smaller salt cast works, 'artefacts' from Leighton-Boyce's casting process, as well as photographs, echo *Persistent bodies* (2018) in Glasgow.

For further information on the Ruth Barker & Hannah Leighton-Boyce exhibition that took place at Castlefield Gallery, resources for download and media coverage, and now also a downloadable version of this booklet and Jackie Kay's poems *Affinity I, II and III*, see: <https://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/event/ruth-barker-hannah-leighton-boyce/>

**HELEN WEWIORA**  
*Director, Castlefield Gallery*



Jackie Kay at Castlefield Gallery with Hannah Leighton-Boyce's *Persistent bodies* (2018)  
Image courtesy of Castlefield Gallery.

# AFFINITY I

It wiz because I wiz

High

Yesterday

That I had tae come

Doon

The day

That's the way o' it.

Wan minute yer all smiley

Killing yourself, next yer killin yersel

Greeting

like a big bairn

Salty

Tears pourin

Doon

Yer cheeks in the rain

Yer sinking.

And ye try an say

Ying

n

yang

You try an say

It's no that

black

n

white

It is a' the in

between

But at night ye coorie

Doon

N

Wait

fir

the mawrning

Bit it doesnie come

ony time soon,

Bit wan thing:

ye're no alane, ken

lthers hae the same thing in the swing-swing.

# AFFINITY II

I'll not go when I have gone away,  
When my ashes have turned to dust,  
When my brain has died, or  
my heart beats in someone else's body.

I'll not leave when my lungs  
Stop taking in the winter air,  
And my eyes don't see the wood from the trees;  
I'll be here, I promise, here:

As close as breath on your sallow cheeks,  
Or dancing with your long shadow;  
Here - in the wee small hours,  
In the salt marshes, when trees turn;

On a harvest moon, when the sky is dark  
Or amber, when rains batter and winds moan,  
When dark descends; here, when ice thaws,  
Around the tight bends, here.

And here in the morning light, shy dawn.  
I am siren and I am silence.  
I am suffragette and legend;  
I am kith and kin - and your trusty friend.

Don't fear me, beloved.  
Meet me where the river meets its roar,  
Where the sax plays to the moon,  
Where the horse gallops on the shore.

Take my hand in laughter or sorrow,  
When you're playing left field or in limbo,  
by the old road, or by the fallow fields.  
Today, dear one and all tomorrows.



# AFFINITY III

Then you turned your faces away  
From the wall, at last, even though  
It had gone already, the summer  
And winter was coming for us all.

You turned, as if deciding on a cold day  
You would get out of bed after all,  
You turned to life and to hope -  
After the long haul.

And when the sun came and the salt ice thawed  
You showed your faces in the small park  
And the Horse Chestnuts had turned copper  
And you'd taken your zinc and been to the Doctor...

And now there was nothing to fear at all,  
Nothing to knock you both over, nothing for sure,  
Nothing at all, except the keen wind - affinity -  
Blow-drying your dark-dark curly hair.



Ruth Barker, *If this is the last thing that I say* (2018), performance  
Image courtesy of Drew Forsyth.

# RUTH BARKER

---

Ruth Barker (b. 1979, Leeds) lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland. On first examination Barker's work foregrounds her own daily experiences and the quotidian narratives of her day to day life, however it equally suggests echoes of the larger, longer stories of our own mortality, our sense of self, and our internalisation of ancient myth. Her words are layered in structure and intensity, yet have unexpected moments of humour.

In 2017 she completed a PhD in Fine Art Practice at Newcastle University. She graduated from the MFA (Master of Fine Art) at Glasgow School of Art in 2004 after also completing the BA (Hons) at Glasgow School of Art in 2001.

In 2013 Barker was nominated for the Canonsgate' Future Forty. Recent projects include *Mega Hammer* in collaboration with Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, Glasgow International, (Glasgow); performance - *The Foot Exerts*

*a Pressure On The Surface Of The Glass*, and commission *Glass, Blinded To The Room*, for wewioraprojects' Tall Tales at Freud Museum, London; *The Space Beneath My Skin Is Closed To My Reason Today for: A Goddess for a Beauty Centre*, online performance with Yeo Chee Kiong, curated by Yen Peng, NAFA Singapore; *Uprising 1870*, ATLAS Arts, Isle of Skye and Strange Attractor, at theAgency London, with Man Ray, Ulla von Brandenburg and Dominique Koch a./o., curated by Bea Gassmann de Sousa; new work for CCA (Glasgow), Siobhan Davies Dance (London), Radiophrenia (Glasgow), Resonance FM (London), Camden Arts Centre (London), Sils Projects (Rotterdam), Glasgow International festival of Visual Art; Cartel Gallery, (London) and Machon Hamayim (Tel Aviv). Ruth Barker is represented by theAgency, London.

[ruthbarker.com](http://ruthbarker.com)



Ruth Barker  
Image courtesy of Drew Forsyth.

# HANNAH LEIGHTON-BOYCE

---

Hannah Leighton-Boyce (b. 1980, Stroud) lives and works in Manchester, England. Recent projects include solo exhibition, *Dreaming of Dead Fish* (2018), Warrington Museum and Art Gallery, commissioned by Warrington Arts Festival; a collaborative live sculpture made with residents of Helmshore, Lancashire (2014), set within the context of the area's industrial heritage; and a sound installation at Touchstones Rochdale (2016) funded by a New Opportunities Award [New Expressions3], which explored ideas of disembodiment and labour through the resonant properties and work history of objects within the museum's collection. Recent group exhibitions include: *Excuse Me While I am Changing*, Rogue Projects Space, Manchester; *New Work*, The Manchester Contemporary 2016; *Women Artists from 1861 - 2015*, Touchstones

Art Gallery, Rochdale; *For Posterity*, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester (2015); *People and Process: A history of Salts Mill*, Salts Mill, Saltaire.

She graduated with a BA (Hons) in Textiles from Winchester School of Art in 2005 and completed the MA in Textiles at Manchester School of Art at Manchester Metropolitan University in 2012.

She has works in private and public collections including: Touchstones Art Gallery, Rochdale; Salts Mill, West Yorkshire; Ackworth Quaker School, West Yorkshire.

[hannahleightonboyce.com](http://hannahleightonboyce.com)



Hannah Leighton-Boyce (2018)  
Image courtesy of Paul Green.

# JACKIE KAY



Jackie Kay (2016)  
Image courtesy of Nick Harrison.

Jackie Kay (born 1961, Edinburgh). Kay is the third modern Makar, the Scottish poet laureate. A poet, novelist and writer of short stories, she has enjoyed great acclaim for her work for both adults and children. Her first novel *Trumpet* won the Authors' Club First Novel Award and the Guardian Fiction Prize. She is also the author of three collections of stories with Picador, *Why Don't You Stop Talking*, *Wish I Was Here*, and *Reality, Reality*; and her memoir, *Red Dust Road*. Jackie Kay has also written several collections of poetry, amongst them *The Adoption Papers*, *Fiere* and, most recently, *Bantam*. She is Professor of Creative Writing at Newcastle University, and divides her time between Glasgow and Manchester, where she is currently Chancellor of the University of Salford and Writer in Residence.

Her previous poems in response to the University of Salford Art Collection are: *Books, Wings* (2015) in response to Annie Lai Kuen Wan's *Lost in Biliterate and Trilingual*, and *Thinker*, (2017) in response to Jai Redman's *Engels' Beard*.

# ALENA DONELY



Alena Donely (2018)  
Image courtesy of Paul Green.

Alena Donely (b. 1996, Blackpool). Donely graduated with first class honours in Visual Arts from the University of Salford in 2018 after which she was awarded a University of Salford Art Collection and School of Arts and Media Graduate Scholarship. She currently has a studio at Islington Mill. In 2018 she worked with Ruth Barker and produced the tufted rug *Her Face* (2018).

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

---

We wish to extend our deepest appreciation to the artists Ruth Barker, Hannah Leighton-Boyce and Jackie Kay, and assistant artist Alena Donely. You have all been inspiring to work with and we are so very grateful for your commitment and participation.

Thanks must also go to the many individuals and organisations who shared ideas, provided support or advice: Bea Gassmann De Sousa (theAgency); Artwork Atelier; Paul Green; Islington Mill; Patricia Ragazzon (Keele University); Patricia Fleming (Patricia Fleming Projects); Ian Rawlinson; Steven Charnock (Scartworks); Clare Stuart; Prof Trevor Cox, Sue Debney, Jo Garbutt, Sam Ingleson, Elle Kalavsky, Paul Mitchell, Abby Ragazzon-Smith and Jazmine Linklater, (University of Salford); WASPS (Glasgow).

A big thank you to Clarendon Road Primary School, Eccles, Salford, especially Head Teacher Emma Ford.

And last, but never least, our sincere thanks to the highly skilled and dedicated teams at Castlefield Gallery, University of Salford Art Collection and Glasgow Women's Library, including all the staff, technicians, and volunteers, particularly, Jennifer Dean, Stephanie Fletcher, Jennifer Iddon, Adele Patrick, Matthew Pendergast, Katie Reid and Hannah Wright.

With special thanks to Castlefield Gallery Commissioning Patron, James Mycock, without whom this exhibition tour would not have been possible.

Lindsay Taylor, Curator, University of Salford Art Collection and Helen Wewiora, Director, Castlefield Gallery.

**[artcollection.salford.ac.uk](http://artcollection.salford.ac.uk)**  
**[castlefieldgallery.co.uk](http://castlefieldgallery.co.uk)**  
**[womenslibrary.org.uk](http://womenslibrary.org.uk)**

# EXHIBITION PARTNERS:

---



University of  
**Salford**  
MANCHESTER



**GLASGOW  
WOMEN'S  
LIBRARY**

## CASTLEFIELD GALLERY FUNDERS & SUPPORTERS:



**MANCHESTER  
CITY COUNCIL**

**CASTLEFIELD GALLERY**  
**UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD ART COLLECTION**  
**GLASGOW WOMEN'S LIBRARY**

---