

Many Maids Make Much Noise

What is School?

Rise Early, Be Industrious

Information, Education, Entertainment

The Medium and Daybreak

Artefacts

Printed Matter

I am an artist based in Stockholm and London. My work often starts with research into social movements and their histories, because what we think we know about the past inevitably shapes what we believe is possible in the future. I am interested in the relationships between gender, power and authority – who claims the right to speak in public and how the ‘rational’ is defined. I attempt to listen to voices that usually go unheard. Recently I have, for instance, been collaborating with grassroots women’s organisations on a project about the East London Federation of the Suffragettes, who aimed to establish a model for a new socialist feminist society in one of the poorest areas of the UK. In the resulting artworks, I explore what we can learn today from this early twentieth-century political and educational experiment and some of the problems with how that history has been written.

At the beginning of 2013 I lost my voice, as the result of a virus, and was unable to speak louder than a whisper for a year. This experience profoundly changed my relationship to the act of speaking and led me to collaborate with a voice therapist on a sound piece titled *Learning to Speak Sense* (2016), which is now in the collection of the Tate Gallery in the UK. A book on my work, titled *Rise Early, Be Industrious*, was published by Sternberg Press in 2016. It followed a solo show with the same title that toured to MK Gallery in Milton Keynes, Arnolfini in Bristol and CCA in Glasgow, UK. I have also published numerous artist’s books and comics. My drawings, installations, videos and performances have been shown internationally in museums, exhibition spaces and as part of biennales, in addition to which I also work in the field of public art. As many of my projects relate to the theme of education, I consider teaching to be an important part of my practice as an artist. I have lectured and run workshops at art schools, universities and community spaces in many different countries. I was awarded a PhD from Lund University, Sweden in 2024. I am represented by Maureen Paley, London.

This is the exhibition's strength: how it portrays the ways in which society is based on an acceptance that some bodies should have the opportunity to move forward more unimpeded than others. —Milou Allerholm on ‘Chronos: health, access and intimacy’, Dagens Nyheter, 8 May 2024

In the grim context of our present moment, Plender’s research into feminist histories fit to be celebrated and calls to self-organise feel shockingly radical and urgent. —Hettie Judah, Frieze, September 2022

‘Rethinking History’, Olivia Plender interviewed by Laura Guy, Art Monthly No. 460, October 2022

Plender’s practice is consistently questioning, sensitive, and politically vital.
—Tom Jeffreys, e-flux Criticism, November 2022

(CV)
(Portrait)
(Instagram)

FRIENDS & RESOURCES:

CROSSROADS WOMEN'S CENTRE

FOCUS E15

EAST END WOMEN'S MUSEUM

THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY

GLASGOW WOMEN'S LIBRARY

MANUAL LABOURS

K. Ö. K

CINÉ NOVA

LONDON COMMUNITY VIDEO ARCHIVE

PEOPLE MAKE VIDEOS

RADICAL EDUCATION WORKBOOK

UNFINISHED HISTORIES

BISHOPSGATE INSTITUTE ARCHIVES

SUFFRAGETTO

THE SYLVIA PANKHURST MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

ANTI-AIR WAR MEMORIAL

NEW LANARK

THE SPIRITUALIST ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN

Many Maids Make Much Noise
A series of projects related to feminist history



Chronos: health, access and intimacy



Hag Nag Harpy Hen



Our Bodies are Not the Problem





Hold Hold Fire, 2019
video, 11 min. 36 sec., still

Tags: Common, Greenham, Consciousness-Raising, Feminism, Markievicz, Constance, Pankhurst, Sylvia, People's Army, Revolution, Self-Defence, Sisters, Strike, Suffragette Movement, Suffragettes, East London Federation of, Women's Liberation

Hold Hold Fire, 2019

video installation, 'Though it's dark, still I sing': 34th Bienal de São Paulo, 2021, curated by Jacopo Crivelli Visconti, Paulo Miyada, Carla Zaccagnini, Francesco Stocchi, Ruth Estévez

The camera follows the actions of a group of contemporary women as they engage in a self-defence workshop. The video dwells on the bodily and collective tactics women can learn to resist everyday violence as well as police aggression, and how they can take ownership of the situation. The two-channel film, focuses on some of the sophisticated techniques of self-defence, care, and collaborative methods of feminist pedagogy that have been developed and practiced by feminist groups, especially in women's spaces and activist organisations. We see the women engage in a learning process in which they struggle to overcome the taboos surrounding female aggression and anger. As they rehearse movements and practise Jiu-Jitsu throws, the participants build up to a recreation of an archival photograph of The People's Army – a self-defence group that was part of the East London Federation of the Suffragettes (ELFS) – posing with guns in Victoria Park, London, around 1914. The video's ultimate image is something like a *tableaux vivant*, or a moving history painting, which takes place in front of a painted theatrical backdrop of the park.

Today the history of the suffragette movement is celebrated in the UK, but what is often left out is that in their time they were considered to be terrorists by the British state.

Abolitio
Alchem
Anchor
Animal
Anti-Air
Art and
Arts and
Ashwoo
Astrolog
Austerit
Bader G
Banking
Beehive
Blake, V
Bohemi
Boston
Bouvard et Pécuchet
British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)
British Empire Exhibition
Burton Pynsent Monument
Canaan, Tawfik
Canary Wharf
Carson, Anne
Catalogue
Cat's Castle Besieged by Rats
Cat's Cradle
Chance and Choice
Chickens
Colman Smith, Pamela
Colonialism
Common, Greenham
Commons Enclosure
Commonweal
Communes
Communism
Community Arts Movement
Consciousness-Raising
Cooperation
Corruption
Critical Pedagogy
Cross-Dressing



Ectoplasm
Emily Davison Lodge
Encyclopaedia
Enlightenment, The
Fables
Factory
Fahlström, Öyvind
(Feminism)

[see Consciousness-Raising, Suffragette Movement, Women's Liberation]

Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.

—bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984)

A Stellar Key to the Summerland
A Stellar Key to the Summerland
Boom
Chronos: health, access and intimacy
Disobedient Women
Hag Nag Harpy Hen
Hold Hold Fire
Learning to Speak Sense
Many Maids Make Much Noise
Memorial for Sylvia Pankhurst
Neither Strivers Nor Skivers, They Will Not Define Us
Neither Strivers Nor Skivers, They Will Not Define Us
Olivia Plender: Rise Early, Be Industrious
Olivia Plender: Rise Early, Be Industrious
Open Forum
Open Forum
Our Bodies are Not the Problem, The Problem is Power
Our Bodies are Not the Problem
Practising Politics: The Fogelstad Women's Citizenship School 1925-1954
Practising Politics: The Fogelstad Women's Citizenship School 1925-1954
Rise Early, Be Industrious
Sylvia Pankhurst
The Emily Davison Lodge
The History of Animal Kingdom
The Medium and Daybreak

Feudalism
Fogelstad Women's Citizenship School
Ford, Henry
Fourier, Charles
Fox, Kate & Maggie (the Fox sisters)
Free Love
Free Market
Free School
Freemasonry
Fröbel, Friedrich
Games

New Times and Ethiopia News
New Towns
Our Bodies Ourselves
Owen, Robert
Pankhurst, Sylvia
People's Army
Pethick Lawrence, Emmeline
Pilgrim's Progress, The
Political Satire
Post-Fordism
Postal System
Price, Harry
Printing
Prophecies
Quakerism
Quilts
Recipes
Regeneration
Republic of Children
Revolution
Richardson, Mary
Romanticism
Roper, Esther
Russell, Ken
Sandals
Sappho
Self-Defence
Sha'arawi, Huda
Silicon Valley
Sisters
Social Credit
Spare, Austin Osman
Specula Principum (Mirrors for Princes)
Strike
Suffrage Atelier
Suffragette Movement
Suffragettes, East London Federation of
Suga, Kanno
Summerland
Surrealism
Swedenborg, Emanuel