#1 Fucking as Work

On Wednesday 10 May, the group met to discuss a selection of texts from the 1970s compiled by Laura Guy: Silvia Federici’s early writing found meaning within a constellation of work emerging internationally from a group connected with the Wages for Housework movement. Alongside Federici’s short essay ‘Sexuality is Work’ (1975), we will read ‘Fucking is Work’ (c. 1975) by the Wages Due Collective Toronto/ Ellen Agger et al and a selection of manifestos reflecting on sex work in the 1970s, including statements by San Francisco Wages for Housework; The English Collective of Prostitutes; Wages Due Lesbians, London and Toronto and an anonymous group of sex workers in Brooklyn, New York.

‘Sexuality as Work’ or ‘Why Sexuality Is Work’ (1975) was originally written by Federici as a presentation made to the second international Wages for Housework conference held in Toronto in January 1975. Wages Due Lesbians Toronto formed out of the Wages for Housework Campaign in Canada in the early 1970s. Concerned with connecting the material struggles surrounding lesbian and heterosexual women’s lives, the group organised around a range of connected issues including housework, wage, the family and child custody, and sexuality. Wages Due Lesbians had close links with sex workers aligned with the Wages for Housework struggle, linking experiences of lesbian-identity and prostitution through harassment, the necessity of financial independence and the way in which both revealed fucking as work.

Texts


Selection of manifestos relating to sex work, c. 1970s.

Additional background on Wages Due Lesbians


#2 Reform and Revolution

Harry Weeks selected texts that address the question of ‘reform or revolution’, which was raised during the group Fucking as Work in relation to the dual discourse of rights and structural critique occurring in the work of Wages Due Lesbians.

In Rosa Luxemburg’s 1908 book Social Reform or Revolution she states: “At first view the title of this work may be found surprising. Can the Social-Democracy be against reforms? Can we contrapose the social revolution, the transformation of the existing order, our final goal, to social reforms? Certainly not. The daily struggle for reforms, for the amelioration of the condition of the workers within the framework of the existing social order, and for democratic institutions, offers to the Social-Democracy an indissoluble tie. The struggle for reforms is its means; the social revolution, its aim.”
Whilst Luxemburg was speaking very specifically about the Marxism of the Social Democratic Party in Germany around the turn of the 19th/20th centuries, the question is equally significant to feminism, and particularly the issue of social reproduction. Wages for Housework, for instance, was a reformist demand with a revolutionary underpinning. Rather than set Luxemburg’s text, however, Harry Weeks elected two texts which raise the question of reform and revolution in feminist contexts.

Texts


Additional Reading


#3 Black Macho

Michelle Wallace’s book Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman selected by James Bell to be read alongside Audre Lorde’s ‘Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference’.

From the 1990 introduction, Michele Wallace says: “When I first re-read the book in preparation for writing this, my immediate gut response was to destroy the book so that no one would ever read it again. How many black women writers, in the twentieth, nineteenth, or even eighteenth centuries have thought and done precisely this?

I wanted to destroy the book because my desire for something more from life than my marginal status as a black woman writer could ever offer was so palpable in its pages. In obsessively repeating the stereotypes of black women and black men, I wanted to burst free of them forever. However, this has only been slightly more possible for me than it was for Harriet Wilson, Harriet Jacobs, and Charlotte Forten. But perhaps if we can begin to claim our own words and our own feelings within the public sphere, we will seize the means of reproducing our own history, and freedom will become a possibility in a sense that it never has been before.”

Texts


#4 Cultural Reproduction

Kirsten Lloyd selected Marina Vishmidt’s contribution to the special issue of Third Text titled ‘The Two Reproduction in (Feminist) Art and Theory since the 1970s’ (2017): “In her contribution to this special issue, Marina Vishmidt, whose work in connecting art and social reproduction has been foundational, calls attention to distinct paths by which ‘social reproduction’ becomes relevant to an analysis of the art field overall. Discussing both the thematisation of reproductive labour in art and the institution of art as a form of reproduction, she points to the contemporary re-

Texts


#5 Endless Work

In solidarity with members of the reading group and higher education workers taking part in the UCU pensions strike, we read ‘Pension and Social Reproduction' written by Serap Saritas Oran from Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression.

The strike began in Edinburgh on Monday 26 February with picketing all across the UK following the largest vote for industrial action seen in higher education to date. The action is centred on a dispute on ‘UUK’s proposals to end the defined benefit element of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension scheme. UCU says this would leave a typical lecturer almost £10,000 a year worse off in retirement than under the current set-up. In the recent strike ballot UCU members overwhelmingly backed industrial action. Overall, 88% of members who voted backed strike action and 93% backed action short of a strike. The turnout was 58%. A full breakdown of the results by institution is available here.’

Text


#6 Ageing and the Menopause

We found locating materials on menopause and art difficult and wanted to address this lack in the discussion. Jennie Temple chose two texts on ageing and generational dialogue: Lynn Segal’s ‘Generational Warfare’ and Linda Nochlin on Louise Bourgeois ‘Old Age Style’.

Texts


#7 Menstruation

Camilla Rosvik selected three texts on menstruation and pharmaceuticals. The first was a short text written by Katherine Dalton that investigates a proposed relationship between menstruation and crime from the 1961 *British Medical Journal*. The second text looks at pharmaceuticals and advertising for ‘Seasonale’, a ‘feminist’ menstrual product. A third reading came from Paul B. Preciado’s *Testo Junkie*.

**Texts**


#8 Many Many Women

In conjunction with the Eve Fowler exhibition *what a sight. what a sound. what a universal shudder*, we hosted an open reading session at Dundee Contemporary Arts on Tuesday 12 June with texts selected by Catherine Spencer. As well as watching a short extract from Fowler’s film *with it which it as it if it is to be* (2018), we read and discussed the following texts.

**Texts**


#9 Automation at Work

On 10 July the group met at Chapter Thirteen at The Pearce Institute to discuss a selection of material related to automation and work compiled by artist Shona MacNaughton.

The first reading is ‘New Technology and Domestic Labour’ by Ursula Huws from *The Making of a Cybertariat: Virtual Work in a Real World* (2003) that looks at the rise of new technologies in the workplace and home, its impact on employment, modes of organisation and new divisions of race and gender that are created as part of this process. The second is, ‘On Automation and Free Time by Yuk Hui’ in *e-flux*, March 2018. The third is an online artwork by Elisa Giardina Papa titled *Technologies of Care* which “presents portraits of online workers on the front page of rhizome.org in a 26MB ZIP file that explores gender, empathy, digital labour, and new dynamics of care and service on the network. Each portrait in the ZIP is its own folder, activated by an HTML file marked ‘play_it.’” A further suggested reading was ‘The Crisis of Social Reproduction and the End of Work’ by Helen Hester and Nick Srnicek.
#10 Gentrification

For this session, Kirsten Lloyd selected two texts relating to the housing questions of the 21st century. Our discussion took place in an Airbnb apartment, booked for the occasion. Much of the material the group has previously read on gentrification looks at early examples from the 1980s and 90s, although the term itself is now around 50 years old. Both written by sociologists, the selected readings bring gentrification debates up to date by respectively centring working class and women’s everyday experiences. The texts also link with Shona Macnaughton’s performance Progressive (2018), which was played during the meeting. Kirsteen Paton’s chapter is taken from her 2014 book which takes Glasgow as a case study, supported by Westgap. Winifred Curren’s is the text ventures into less familiar territory – Chicago – to consider parenting, schools, community organising and public housekeeping. Together, these texts consider gender, class and stigmatisation.

Texts
