

Millenium City Gallery

5th - 9th March 2018

Where do we sit at work and at home? Behind the desk, on the sofa, the garden chair, at the kitchen table, in bed, the train. Do you have a chair of your own in which to read? Does this place change or stay the same?

A seat in which to read is a pop-up exhibition and reading event centered around sharing writing authored by women and the physical spaces reading occupies. Stories, poems, theoretical and research texts have been selected by students and staff across the University, along with a chair of their own - making visible the absence and presence of women and their place in the world.

During the exhibition, visitors are welcome to sit and read the selected texts. And explore the resonances and rationale underpinning their choices.

Have A Seat

Thursday 8th March, 1.00 - 2.30pm
Coinciding with International Women's day we will host a reading event in the exhibition space in which contributors to the exhibition will read fragments and excerpts from their chosen texts.

We hope to open up informal conversations about making space for ourselves and others in education, how we acknowledge and share what we learn from other women and the intergenerational narratives that emerge through this.

Curated by Laura Onions & Maggie Ayliffe.
Fine Art, Wolverhampton School of Art.



Read in which to read

You are nothing
without me

Angela Morgan

selected by Marion Sheffield, lecturer
in Social Care in the Institute of
Community and Society

My first meeting with Angela was when she was conducting this research; she visited a service I was managing to speak to women who had experienced domestic abuse. This was the first time I had met someone who was conducting research in an area that I cared deeply about. I was intrigued and excited to find out that research was not just the domain of men in suits, as I had initially perceived.

Angela probably didn't realise at the time what impact she had on me. She became a role model, someone I aspired to be. I returned to studying at the University of Wolverhampton and continued in my own education. I managed to gain a full time lecturing post in 2015. I now use Angela's research to help explain to trainee teachers how important education can be and the impact we can have as educators in women's lives. Whenever I read this article the powerful words of the survivors remind me of their strength and how fortunate I am to walk alongside people on their journeys. I feel that my own journey has circled back on itself, ten years later Angela has agreed to support me through my PhD journey.

Big Magic

Elizabeth Gilbert

selected by Emily Mantell, course leader
for Animation, wife and mother of two
young children.

I completely love Elizabeth's thoughts on where ideas come from; which she outlines in the section 'Enchantment: An Idea Arrives'. She is unapologetic and absorbed in the concept. I particularly enjoy her reading of it, her voice comforts me, she is calm and reassuring and if I can't sleep I put this book on to remind me that there is more to life than the 'facts'. Elizabeth is a woman I admire because she trusts herself and her ability, she is connected to the universe in a way that baffles me and makes me want to be a better person.

Still I Rise

Maya Angelou

selected by Charmaine Host,
Fine Art Student

I came across a collection of poetry by Maya Angelou – 'And still I rise' at a particularly difficult time in my life (circa 1992). I was a curate (an apprentice vicar) in the Church of England and was experiencing life in a very male dominated institution as very difficult. I was feeling bullied. One day I just ranted at God – why had he led me to this place, what was I to do? I opened the bible and found the book of Job and used Job's words to pour out my complaints. I had the feeling that if I could read some poetry it would help. It was my first introduction to poetry and Maya Angelou. How does it help my practice now? I'm glad to be reminded of other times of hitting the depths and realising it wasn't the final word. It's good to remember other women who have struggled and come through and their struggles expressed in poetry.

Ruby Chadwick

Anna King

selected by Ria Hill, Law GTA and
mother undertaking an LLM in
International Human Rights

I first read this book when I was 11, I was on holiday and had read all of the books I had taken with me so I borrowed this from my mom. It is set at the start of the 20th century and is about a how a young girl overcomes the consequences of a tragic accident. I fell in love, the book took me away completely from my life – the way the author described the details of the setting painted a really vivid picture in my mind. I sat on the floor with a cushion for hours, just reading – I couldn't put the book down as I had to know what happened next. For the first time I actually felt as though I cared about the character and I needed to know that she would be OK!

As I have got older reading is still my way of escaping from everyday life – if I am having a bad day a book is what I will always turn to. When I am particularly stressed I will re-read books I have already read (or whole series of books as I'm doing at the moment!) because it is comforting, I know what is going to happen and there won't be any surprises in store (unlike real life).

The Joys of
Motherhood

Mwende Katwiwa

selected by Elsie Gayle, practicing
midwife, activist and researcher.

This poem explores the experience of Black mothers in America. The prose brings insight to the hidden aspect of some womens' lives in the UK; where fear and lack of knowledge and understanding are huge factors. To make a difference, we have to acknowledge the problem before we can move forward with solutions.

Women and Power
Mary Beard

Selected by Maggie Ayliffe, artist and
Head of Visual Arts

I have chosen Mary Beard, Women and Power. It is a very recent publication by a women but it seems to be asking us some very important questions. I like Mary Beard, I like how she reflects the male and media gaze, and, however uncomfortable, allows the inevitable 'infuriation' this reflection causes to sit as evidence of the unswaying power of the patriarchal gaze. It's a short book – two lectures – but however much, I engage with the history and evidence put forward – it is Beards questioning of power and the feminine as a potentially subversive question in re-thinking how we do things that I find most compelling and important at this time. These are questions that need to affect how I make paintings, how I approach my job and how on a daily basis I make decisions and interact with the world.

The Lottery

Shirley Jackson

selected by Louise Palfreyman,
Faculty of Arts Writer-in-residence.

When it was published in 1948, Americans weren't ready to be confronted with such an uncompromising view of the dangers of conformity so soon after the Second World War. A depiction of ritual killing, coming as it did after genocide and mass trauma, proved too much for many. But The New Yorker published it, and Shirley Jackson's story of the horrors concealed in the depths of the human psyche has inspired writers ever since. Jackson's mastery of the short story form and her willingness to examine uncomfortable truths make her a writer worthy of a wide and enduring readership. She is one of a handful of writers who provide me with regular, unflinching inspiration, each time I read them.

How to kill a

Mockingbird

Harper Lee

selected by Natasha
Bloomfield, Faculty of Arts
administrator and Creative

I can identify greatly with the main character of the book Scout, a total tomboy who knew she could do everything that boys could do and she was fearless, well almost, she also hated having to wear a dress to church on Sundays. I've been told the character of Scout is very much like me as a child, which is why I think I identify so closely with her. Of course the book has a far deeper meaning than Scout being a tomboy and her adventures climbing trees; it deals with the issues of race and class in the Deep South of America in the 1930's, which is witnessed through Scouts eyes as a 10 year old.

The Hearing

Trumpet

Leonora Carrington

Selected by Laura Onions, artist/
educator in Fine Art

I have selected *The Hearing Trumpet* by Leonora Carrington as it is a joy to read - a book I have passed around to many of my friends. Carrington was a painter, novelist and activist for Women's Liberations Movements. She became familiar with surrealism in the 1930s and many of her works and novels are a subversive retort to the male surrealists' view of women. At the centre of the book is Marion Leatherby, a 92 year old woman with a 'gallant beard' who gets put into an institution by her family and subsequently gathers the women together to rise up against their oppressors. Through a dry wit and sense of humour Carrington portrays these women not as dotty old ladies, but as astute, adventurous and wise.

Harvest for Hope

Jane Goodall

selected by Annie Dickson, Fine Art
student and animal welfare activist.

A woman who has been a constant inspiration to me throughout my life is Jane Goodall. Goodall is an anthropologist and primatologist researching mainly into primates, their behaviour, their sensitivities and their similarities to human kind, her work has led to many changes in the welfare of primates and their use within laboratory research. She has always believed that being female had an advantage to her work as she was given more access to primates in the wild in Tanzania during the early 1960's due to the countries newly found independent status after colonisation. Her gender struggle returned when delivering her findings to peers in the USA and throughout Europe.

Silences

Tillie Olsen

selected by Julie Hughes, Head of
Department for Post Compulsory
Education

I found Olsen as a mature undergraduate student studying English and American Studies. She wasn't on the curriculum and I chanced upon her in my second year. Her writing, both novels and essays, spoke to me in a profound and life-changing way. At this time in my life I had no place of my own to write, to think, to dream and Tillie's narratives resonated for me then and indeed now.

Now I am in the privileged position of having a kitchen table cleared of enough clutter to write and a desk in a study with a view onto the garden. Even now, twenty-five years later, with adult children still at home I have to 'share' my writing and thinking spaces.

Being able to write about Tillie Olsen as well as other working class female writers as an undergraduate was a liberating experience and I feel very lucky that my course permitted me to stray from conventional texts and essay questions. This rhizomatic journeying and ability to negotiate my own 'outcomes' influenced my desire to continue to study and to teach.

Tillie's work is a powerful reminder of the creative struggle that many women, and men, face as, "the simplest circumstances for creation did not exist. Nevertheless writing, *the hope of it*, was "the air that I breathed." (Italics mine) Tillie's cumulative discoveries remind me of the need to constantly consider the multiple causes and effects of 'silences' in my own writing, that of my colleagues and my students.

#6 Other Female

Marsha C.

Galicia-Monroe

Selected by Sarah Byrne, GTA Fine
Art & Foundation, studying MA by
Research in Fine Art.

I came across this text in an anthology called Troubling Borders – a book in which all contributions of art and literature are by Southeast Asian Women. Finding this book came at a time when I was reflecting on my own experiences being the daughter of a Filipino immigrant, and my reluctance as a child to engage with my mother's Asian heritage – something I have only recently acknowledged. I was beginning to unpick the stories in my own life, growing up in England as a British girl with an Asian mother, and trying to realise and recall the events, exchanges and associations which have contributed to a separation in my two national identities.

'#6 – Other Female' lives in a chapter within the book titled 'Asians in America'. There's a great deal which I recognise in the storytelling of a young Asian girl growing up around intrigued White people, flitting between two nationalities and not ever feeling whole in either. These memories can often feel tainted with anger or regret. This narrative feels like a response to these thoughts, and is fixed with a confidence and empowerment that I wish I could have read 10 years ago.

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