

Nadia Hebson makes paintings, both figurative and abstract, objects and texts, which are intimately but indirectly linked to the conventions and histories of painting. Working obliquely with the legacy of women artists, her work has sought to comprehend the relationship between painting, biography, persona and clothing, most notably through a consideration of the work of artists Winifred Knights b.1899 d.1947 and Christina Ramberg b.1946 d.1995.

Hebson studied at Central St. Martins and Royal Academy Schools. Recent exhibitions and talks include 'We (Not I)', Artists Space, NYC; 'Smarginature', Lydgalleriet, Bergen; 'So', Mauve, Vienna; 'MODA WK', Lokaal 01, Antwerp; 'can you forgive her?' Drop City, Newcastle, (reviewed Frieze March 2015), 'Drop City Centre', Laing Gallery, Newcastle and 'Christina Ramberg', 42 Carlton Place, GI Festival, Glasgow. In 2015 she published with AND Public, London, 'MODA WK work made in response to the paintings, drawings, correspondence, clothing and interior design of British artist Winifred Knights, (an expanded legacy)'. Further critical writing has been published in the feminist journal PERSONA, Archive Books, Berlin; Foundations Magazine, USA; The Journal of Contemporary Painting; British Art Studies, Paul Mellon Centre and Cadavere Quotidiano, X-TRA, Los Angeles. Hebson has held a number of scholarships and residencies including The British School at Rome, Durham Cathedral Residency, AIR Antwerpen and Vytlacil Residency, NYC.

She has recently co-convoked the conference 'Making Women's Art Matter' at the Paul Mellon Centre, London, 9-10th February. In 2017 she will show in CHOREOGRAPHY at Arcade, London; M HKA, Antwerp, and will have a solo exhibition at Drop City, Newcastle.

Hebson is a lecturer at Newcastle University, UK and has recently taught at The School of the Art Institute Chicago. She is a member of the Tate British Art Network.

Nadia Hebson



Drop City,
◦ Newcastle ◦ Düsseldorf

Eleanor Wright &
Nadia Hebson
at ARCOmadrid

OPENING section
Booth 90P13

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drop-city.net

In developing a form of subjective biography Hebson has sought to ask how we undertake the recuperation of less considered artists' work. Drawing on feminist literary touchstones, including the work of Christa Wolf and Carla Lonzi as well as *écriture féminine*, Hebson employs both empathy and subjectivity to suggest new forms of comprehension and to explore the complexities of feminine experience through a consideration of Knights and Ramberg's 'expanded legacies'. Her paintings and constellations of objects are themselves an oblique form of scholarship and her writing moves parallel to the embodied forms of knowledge she produces. Close attention is paid to the relationship between making and research, with an emphasis on provisional and open-ended readings and deliberately shifting speaking positions, especially in relation to established historical narratives. Working against singular interpretations towards associative and speculative elucidation, it is the relationship between proximity and distance, between the constituent parts and their multiple registers that Hebson draws our attention to.

Hebson is concerned with how alternate perspectives could be configured that offer new readings of less considered artists' work and new insights into the historical moment from which they emerge. Singular art historical monologues are critiqued via multiple approaches: appropriation, translation, transposition and deliberate fabrication. Both Knights and Ramberg are in part conceived as fictional mentors. Although historically unrelated, both artists explore the complexities of feminine experience and its psychological co-ordinates through an exploration of dress. In their respective bodies of work, clothing, both as an extension of a constructed persona and as a more everyday expression, offer a site for the vicissitudes of subjective and objective experience, where the recondite relationship between apparel and agency can be atomised. Employing radically different iconography Knights and Ramberg share a formal precision in their handling of paint with a subtle attention to the possibilities of subdued colour

and low tone. Through this attention they approach an unparalleled articulation of women's cognisance, sexual desire, multiplicity and modes of navigation, where subjectivity, objectification and self-objectification are underscored.

In Hebson's most recent body of work, translation and fabrication are filtered through a purposefully subjective lens, in parallel with the radical feminist gestures of Wolf and Lonzi. In the on-going series *Ramberg/Turbeville*, Hebson allies doctored fashion images from the 1970's with sculptural objects, themselves reimaginings of existing formal elements within Christina Ramberg's paintings of the 1970's. Ramberg's paintings of this period often configure headless female torsos from scraps of clothing, dress patterns, armour and domestic utensils, emerging as potent and complex symbols of female agency which can both reconfigure and birth themselves. In the collision of presented fashion image and formal transposition, Hebson seeks to acknowledge the complex historical moment of second wave feminism from which Ramberg emerged. Ramberg herself sought to distance her work from a feminist reading and this narrative continues to define her practice. Hebson seeks to question the implications of Ramberg's gesture and by extension to call for a more scrupulous critique of women painters' work and its on-going resonance.

In the large-scale print a precisely dressed woman presents a Deborah Turbeville image for our inspection. Hebson frequently pictures within her work her own and others presence, through gestures of the hands. Working with both peers and former students, this visibility of female friendship configured through the process of looking is unravelled alongside the communicative possibilities of dress. In her on-going series of portraits, friends, friendship and the responsibility of the painter's gaze are considered through the process of painting; notably the portraits are characterised by their unfinished state.

As part of a forthcoming publication, Hebson recently interviewed many of those artists and educators associated with Christina Ramberg's creative circle, including: Rebecca Shore, Carol Becker, Sarah Canright and Diane Simpson. What was revealed from these conversations was the significance of creative female friendship in the development of their work. A call and response emerged which stretched back to an older generation of women painters, including Miyoko Ito and extended to subsequent generations of Chicago artists. This parallel lineage runs concurrent to the Chicago Imagist narrative but is as yet to be given real visibility. In working with this material through text and object Hebson has drawn on Carla Lonzi's book *Autoritratto* (Self Portrait, 1968) to realise her publication. In the book, Lonzi collides interviews with Arte Povera artists, poetry and autobiographical detail to create a subjective, non-linear prose. The work signals Lonzi's break from the conventions of art history and the conception of her radical dictum that women should strive to make visible their creative political subjectivity as unexpected subjects, outside of patriarchal or academic constraints.

At the time of her death Lonzi was working on a book in which she was 'in conversation' with a group of fifteenth century 'bluestockings'. This text foregrounds her notion of 'Resonance': Lonzi defined Resonance as a relationship that can be established between two or more women, who do not necessarily live in the same place or period of time, as a way of seeing one's own experience reflected in the experience of someone else, a form of mutual recognition.

Hebson's practice is characterised by the same impulse as Lonzi's 'Resonance', it also seeks to acknowledge and displace historicity through conversation, painterly intervention and contextual reframing. Exploring the on-going resonance of less considered artists in the present through radical, self-reflexive means.