**New Approaches to Curation and Research**

ANN: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Ann Compton and welcome to this afternoon's session on new approaches to curation and research. I am a member of the Art UK advisory board, and I write about 19th and 20th century sculpture. Before we get into the meat of this afternoon's session, I have to run through a few housekeeping matters. First of all, although the chat function is enabled, please put your questions for speakers into the Q&A function, which is a button at the bottom of the screen. This is important because questions entered into the chat may get overlooked. I will be putting a selection of your questions to the speakers at the end of the session. Next, there are closed captions available, thanks to MyClearText through Stagetext, to enable the live captions you need to click on the 'CC' closed caption button also at the bottom of the screen and a transcript will be available at the end of the conference on request. Finally, the session is being recorded and the video will be made available on Art UK's YouTube channel in due course. I was keen to chair this session on curation and research because it has been so interesting, as a member of the board, to see how the records and images created by Art UK have been opening up new conversations about sculpture and are also making it possible for us to see a whole range of new connections between works in the UK's museums and galleries. Today's three papers offer a sample of these new dialogues. They also happen to be topical to women's history month as they look at the work of women sculptors, the changing professional status of women, and also representations of the female form. We open with Louise Weller's talk on Cathie Pilkington, and her recent project at Pallant House Gallery. That's followed by Rosamund Lily West on pioneering women at the Royal Society of Sculptures and we round up with Julia Carver's exploration of the sculpture of Reg Butler in relation to desire and agency. So, first of all, I will introduce you to Louise Weller. Louise is head of exhibitions at Pallant House Gallery where she has worked since 2015 and among the many shows she has curated are Pop: Art in a Changing Britain, that was 2018, and another one on dance, movement and modernism, also 2018, and Jan Howarth, close-up, 2019, and most recently Cathie Pilkington, Working From Home, the subject of today's talk. So I'll now hand us over to Louise - welcome.

LOUISE: Thank you. It's wonderful to be here. So I'm Louise Weller, I'm head of exhibitions at Pallant House Gallery in Chichester and I will just start sharing my screen. OK, one moment, sorry. Sorry about this. Sorry, I'll try again.

ANN: Hello, Louise, are you trying to get the PowerPoint to show...

LOUISE: Yes, it's because I've got the tool bar above it.

ANN: If you go to the bottom, there is a little icon which will allow you to go straight in, it's the sort of one furthest to the right - yes, I think you've done it.

LOUISE: Thank you, sorry about that! I thought I had it all sorted. So Pallant House Gallery is in Chichester and as I say I'm delighted to be talking today about Cathie Pilkington's recent exhibition installation, which was called Working From Home. It was at Pallant House Gallery for about six months between 2018 and 2019. For those of you who may not know us our home is a 18th century townhouse with a modern extension and through our collection and exhibition programme, we focus on modern British art from about 1900 to now. So our founding collection was gifted to Chichester District Council but Walter Hussey who had been Dean of the Chichester Cathedral and through his support of the arts he had developed a personal art collection that included the works of Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Graham Sutherland and Paul Nash and it was Hussey's belief that you could show modern art in a historic building, so over a course of years the 18th century townhouse was converted into a gallery, which was opened in the early 1980s, and we're soon to celebrate our 40th anniversary. This dissolving of boundaries between the area of display and the work itself is something that's a central theme in Cathie Pilkington's exhibition, which we'll investigate further. So really just to give you a brief introduction to Cathie, she is an artist who engages critically with the history of figurative sculpture and she crosses borders of traditional modern and contemporary expression. Her work combines intensely modelled and painted sculptures with immersive installations. Her site-responsive installations are balanced ambivalently between chaos and precision, and that's something you will see as we go through today's paper. She has been a member of the Royal Academy since 2014 and she was appointed the first female professor sculptor at the Royal Academy Schools in 2016 where she is currently Keeper. So the project was titled Working From Home and while this has a particular resonance to the current moment, the domestic has always been a strong theme running through her work. Cathie is intrigued by the idea that as a child the home is your universe and you create these strong emotional connections to the objects and spaces that surround you. So following discussions with her, the project took the form of an immersive site-specific installation that extended across the top four galleries of the 18th century townhouse. Each of the four rooms were conceived both as a complete work in themselves and as part of the total installation. In this slide, you can see the upper landing, where this sculpture, called Twinkle, stands, and she acts as both sort of a guardian and a guide into the exhibition. And Neil Walton who wrote an essay on the exhibition describes the scene as, "Ascending the wide and well-lit wooden staircases of Pallant House Gallery's historic townhouse you encounter the figure of a dreaming girl. This is Twinkle, one of Cathie Pilkington's characteristically doll-like sculptures. With her eyes closed, she seems self-absorbed, concentrating like a young clairvoyant, collecting to some invisible domain or unconscious fantasy. A psychopomp, a conductor of spirits, a border-crosser guiding us into the exhibition". Now, the realisation of the exhibition at Pallant House Gallery can be seen as part of a series of projects that Cathie had been engaged in over a number of years that questioned the spaces in which female artists produced and displayed their work. So in 2017 she worked on a project called Life Room: Anatomy of a Doll in which she took over the Life Room at the Royal Academy Schools. This is a room that's steeped in history and tradition, and quite a male-oriented history. And in this slide, you can see this collection of cast busts, from which students would learn the skills of observation and anatomical drawing and while the curved seats can trace their history back to William Hogarth's Academy on St Martin's Lane in the 17030s the history of this room is fascinating and has changed over time and for Cathie to engage in its history was central to the work but it is a space that's quite disruptive as it introduces elements that confound and, say, disrupt the conventional understanding and often she brings in these sort of gatherings of sculptural dolls and surreal blankets that are hand painted and often uses what she terms as low-grade display prints often made out of a material like pegboard. These sculptures were called Dagarth dolls and they were constructed from separate parts, sort of mixing together heads and limbs. She would often start with maybe a collection of heads and a collection of different limbs and sort of create them in plaster limbs that she would then manipulate and combine together before building a traditional sort of armature with which the wet clay would then support all of these elements together. There was a surreal coming-together of found elements, found objects, to create a whole. But it was sort of a time-consuming process and Cathie has spoken of the technical difficulty of creating her work is something that is part of it that slows down her thinking about what it is that she's doing, especially around the figurative form. She says, "I have to feel my way through the form. It has to be believable, but strange enough to be interesting. I want the figure to have a kind of impossible anatomy," and then only when she is happy with the clay form are they cast into bronze and then often painted, or adorned with materials and clothing as well. So in the summer of 2018, Cathie occupied the studios gallery and the domestic apartment of Dorich House, and Dorich House museum is part of Kingston University and it is at the centre that supports creative women's practice in the spirit of Dora Gordine who commissioned the striking 1936 house where she lived but more importantly created this amazing studio within which to work and display her own work. So Cathie was invited to undertake the inaugural residency, working in the studio and sort of inhabiting her space, taking on that working and living space, and really collaborating with the various - with the existing collection, as well, of sculpture and sort of inserting her work into the spaces. So this was sort of a move on from the Life Room, which is a purely sort of art space, into one that combines both the domestic and the studio. So when Cathie was invited to work with us at Pallant House Gallery, it was both the gallery's collection of modern British art and the domestic scale and history of the galleries in the townhouse that caught her imagination. Unlike the previous two locations, these were not studio spaces or domestic spaces in which work had been produced, but rather it had been historically a building that's function had changed over time from since it was first built as one of the finest homes in Chichester in about 1712, but the scale of the galleries had retained their domestic origins. So Cathie has stated that being able to approach such a rich collection of works in the intimacy of domestic architecture is one of the things that first drew her to Pallant House Gallery, and she writes, “I am convinced work made on an intimate scale involving the work in close proximity has as much power to deal with the big subjects as any matching museum scale art”.

So because this is only a short paper, I will focus on just one of the rooms, although at the end I will share a few installations of the other four rooms. So on her first visit, Cathy was enthralled by an 18th century George Hepplewhite four poster bed that used to be on display. I apologise for the quality of the photograph. As you can see, it was a bit of a mix of styles with a satin peach canopy valance and drapes and the historical dates of those elements didn't match. As with much of Cathie's work, she seems to dissemble any conventional understanding and to make visible the internal structures behind a traditional facade so this bed and all the associations that come with it caught her imagination. And so she both metaphorically deconstructed the idea of the bed as a complex space connected with the ideas of memory of desire and display, but she also literally took it apart. Turning it from a functional object of furniture into more of a framing device in which to display her objects. We can see our art technicians working with Cathie slowly removing layer by layer the extraneous elements to the valances, the pillows, the mattress went and during the installation when we weren't thinking it was quite right we took the silk canopy off the roof. And so Cathy also hand‑painted and stitched lengths of fabric which were then remade the bed and in this way it shifts within categories between a bed scape, a painting as well and also a sculpture, or even a stage. The whole work was titled Good Bed Bad Bed. And an outcome of the exhibition is that we were funded to secure the fact that Cathie could then, so these figures are made in plaster, and she was able to cast them into bronze and the whole piece has now been acquired into the gallery's permanent collection which is fantastic, and we hope to represent it. It is interesting to think it could be represented in other locations and those history would then inform the work. So while Good Bed Bad Bed was the focal point, it was also only one element of what was a multi‑layer installation. As in this room Cathie also brought together works including on the left here a piece, the stretcher, which forms part of Good Bed Bad Bed, it was meant to be situated at the end of the bed, but through the installation process we have moved it across to the fireplace. And also by the window, dummies in a landscape, which is all of these elements together. And it was interesting while assisting Cathie in the installation of this particular piece, so we spent a whole evening folding blankets, quite precisely together and layering them up making those layers, and we were in this dream‑like room and we fell into conversation about other things and one of them was our childhood memories of constantly moving furniture around in our bedrooms. And this shifting conversation between art historical discourses to more personal memories underline much of Cathie's work. So through her work she challenges this idea of the single defined correct understanding or interpretation, which she terms quite a patriarchal idea, that a unified sculpture sits on a plinth and knows exactly what it's about, and where she seeks to create art where there's value in ambiguity, doubt and speculation. And Cathie relates this to a feminine thinking, one that has historically had to negotiate around inflexible structures to find a space in which to function and flourish. Also, across the room, there are art works, she had access to the whole of our collection of paintings, drawings, prints and works on paper, and the selection that she made really accent waits the notion of this domestic habitation and creates a real feeling of intimacy within the room, and for those who experienced the exhibition, there was also a slightly disquieting sense of trespass, that you were entering a space where you weren't quite meant to be, or there was something that was being revealed to you. And so in this slide you can also see works by artist Nana Shiomi, Susan Valadon and Edgar Degas as well as works by Cathie herself. As the whole room was conceived as a total work of art, rather than a display of individual works, we took the decision to not include individual labels, which made the work a whole space and also allowed the viewer to bring their own interpretations and memories and thoughts to the piece as well. Though we did provide a list of works for those visitors who wanted to have that information. And central working philosophy of Cathie's is the breaking down of these hierarchies. This relates to ideas about appropriateness or acceptability material value, concealment and display. And this crossing of boundaries was playfully realised when she co-opted two cupboards in the room. One had been closed for years and the other, while it had been used to display a wall placed piece, never invited you in to enter and so Cathie really opened up to these cupboards, revealing, revelling in entering these spaces and highlighting the divide between the private and the public storage and display, which is also a part of the life of a gallery as well. There is many works that aren't on display that are hidden away behind the scenes and she is playing with that division that goes on around display and presentation. It was also in these cupboard spaces that Cathie crammed a lot of work into a small space, for she feels that all materials have a value and a connection to her work. They have a residue that finds its way back into a work, or a new work could be picked up by the next one. She also sees this as a tactic of flattening out again another sort of notion of hierarchy between the value of materials. So in this slide, you can see a gathering of materials, so there's peg boards, lining paper, a fluorescent tape which I always associate with her now, blankets, mixed fabrics, a drawing by Victor willing from the collection and one of our Degas dolls, reintroducing work from a previous project and recycling it into another project. These are just the other three rooms then. So there's one that was called Strange Coast, that dealt with the British surrealism and the imaginative landscape on which the site figurative works, so that relates back to the sculptures of the landscape within the gallery and there was a room called Playing Dead, in which she looked at the ideas around vulnerability and protection and played on this nurturing and ambivalent associations with the mother and child relationship. And then in the room, a room called Skill Life that brought together her thinking around our thinking with objects that we surround ourselves with. On the one side she had an oppressive living room space with mirrors and paintings and on the other side of the room she had a much more studio space, a working space filled with found objects, half-finished works, and again all her work, you can see this idea of a collage of works, almost like a structural painting and often of differing and conflicting ideas and memories through which we construct our own sense of identity. Thank you very much.

ANN: Thank you very much. That work is extraordinary, and I look forward to us being able to talk some more about it at the end. So second paper this afternoon is by Rosamund Lily West, who is the Paul Mellon research curator at the Royal Society of Sculptors. She is researching pioneering women at the heart of the Royal Society of Sculptors. She's also a documentary curator at the London Transport Museum and is writing up a PhD on housing and public sculpture of post‑war London County Council at Kingston University. So without further ado, I will hand over to Rosamund.

ROSAMUND: Thank you Ann. I will just share my screen. Good afternoon. Thank you very much for inviting me to speak at this conference. It's been a really great day. First of all, I shall introduce the Royal Society of sculptors and the project pioneering women. Then I will discuss the early days of the society and the admittance of women and what the archive reveals about the women featured in the project and finally just what the project outcomes have been. I hope you will bear with me, as this is very much ongoing research and archival practice, not the presentation of finished outcomes especially as the current COVID situation has made the archive inaccessible for some time and I know that's something that we will all share in at the moment. For those of who not heard of the society, it is an artist led membership organisation established in 1905, and the aim was the promotion and advancement in the UK of Great Britain and Ireland its colonies and dependencies of the art of sculpture and the maintenance and protection of the interests of sculptors and elevation of the status of the profession of sculpture. It was really an off shoot of the Royal Academy, sculptors felt their interests were not adequately served by the Royal Academy, feeling that sculpture was distinct enough from two-dimensional art to warrant its own society. The first slide I showed, showed the society's headquarters, Dora House in South Kensington and that's where the archive is housed currently. Containing over 1,000 member files as well as council minutes dating from the first meeting in 1905 and annual reports dating from 1919, the archive is a unique and fascinating resource on sculpture in the 20th and 21st centuries. The project pioneering women at the heart of the Royal Society of sculptors, began in 2019, and is funded by the Paul Mellon centre for studies in British art. The aim of the project was to use the uncatalogued archive of the Royal Society of Sculptors to research female sculptors who are practising in the early to mid‑20th century. I was presented with a list of ten women written into the funding application and then I identified a further 15. Locating women in the archive was a challenge as the archive is completely uncatalogued. I began by physically looking through the membership files, looking for women's names, which bore little fruit. I then looked to the annual reports as these had lists of members in the back, associate members, fellows, honoury retired members and also deceased members. The women I have researched all have their gender and their profession in common, but they are quite a wide‑ranging group of women. The oldest in the project Lady Feodora Gleichen was born in 1861 and the most recent women have only died in the last few years. There's a countess related to Queen Victoria, a Holocaust survivor, librarian and the odd OBE. The 25 women featured are Lady Feodora Gleichen, Dora Gordean, Christine Gregory, Rose Gwyneth Halt. Lady Kathleen Scott, Barbara Tribe. Josephina Cancellos. Constance Ann Parker. Constance Freedman, Elizabeth Costa, Enid Mitchell, Ella, Gertrude Williams, Judith Black. Kathleen Parbury, Margaret Wrightson, Marion Willis Stanfield, Marjory Bell and Sheila Mary Mitchell. I had intended for as a diverse a group as possible when I picked these women to focus on for the project. However of the women I picked for this project from the Royal Society of Sculptors membership, there are no women of colour, there are no transwomen, there is one LGBTQ+ woman Julian Phelps Allen known as Eva Dorothy Allen. She changed her name around 1929. I picked these women out of a pool using an early catalogue archive and even finding the women's names was a challenge. To be a female sculptor in the early to mid-20th century was very difficult. These women on the whole come from a certain level of privilege, plus they had to get through the gatekeeping process of a Royal Society led and populated by men. Women of colour, disabled women and LGBTQ+ women suffered an extra layer of prejudice which effectively excluded them from the Royal Society of Sculptors in those early years. For decades the mechanisms of the sculptors remained very male and referred to women as 'lady sculptors'. They issued forms with 'he' as the only pronoun and members referred to each other as "Brother sculptor" in meetings. A woman would have had to have been recognised by her peers as a professional, someone making their living from sculpture, and with a body of work behind them. In the early days of the society, membership was certainly not about supporting emerging artists. Members, and certainly fellows, were established artists with established careers. Then, as now, a sculptor had to be recognised as a professional, although members often had another way of earning an income - commonly teaching. Once a certain amount of women were elected to the society after 1922, at first you only see women nominating other women on very rare occasions - probably due to their small numbers. For instance, none of the early women in the research project nominated any of the other women - they were all nominated by men. The Society of Sculptors, as it was then, first met on 10 January 1905. Present were Sir Thomas Brock, Sir George Frampton, Sir Charles Lawes-Wittewronge, David McGill, Sir William Reynolds-Stephens and Franklin Jenkins. At the first meeting, the form of nomination and application for membership was read out and there was a list of 28 sculptors who were asked to join the society as original members without the formality of proposal or seconding. The letter of invitation is pasted into the minute book and explains, "In fulfilment of the trust imposed upon us by a meeting of sculptors to establish a society, having for its object the protection of the interests of British sculptors and the consolidation in Great Britain of the profession of sculpture, we now have the pleasure to announce to you the conclusion of our task". At the second meeting, on 10 March, 1905, it is asked whether a report should be given explaining the formation of the society and the answer given, "Every sculptor of any standing would have been communicated with in one way or another, it was not necessary to issue such a report and that no communication be therefore made". This demonstrates that, upon its establishment, the society was not an open, transparent society - it was closed to all but a certain section of artistic society - most importantly, men. Access to the society at this point relied upon a small group of men with similar backgrounds, education and social circles - precisely the kind of network that women were, on the whole, excluded from, or at least found harder to access. In addition to this, sculpting was seen as a very masculine art form. Women were often seen as incapable of such creativity and physically too weak to practice sculpture. Barbara Hepworth famously often suffered from what she termed the "Little woman" problem, because men would comment upon how amazing it was that such a small woman could manipulate and carve such large pieces. Women also faced accusations of amateurism, as well as facing huge societal pressure to fulfil the role of wife and mother and to put their artistic practice aside. The quote, "Every sculptor of any standing" is interesting, as they do not mean women. The seven men present at the first meeting - Sir Thomas Brock, Sir George Frampton, Francis Derwent Wood, Sir Charles Lawes-Wittewronge, William McGill, Sir Reynold Stephens and Franklin Jenkins - held positions of society in the early years. Brock was president in 1905-1908, then from 1913 to 1914. Frampton was President from 1911-191. And Reynold Stephens was president from 1921 to '33. The description of any sculptor of any standing reads like an old boy's club - which it really was. So this project asked where were the women? From the founding of the society in 1905, women becoming members was not encouraged as they were not even actually eligible for membership. It is briefly discussed in the minutes and then rebuffed that they might be allowed as honorary members, which was the same status as non-British citizens. Remarkably at the second ever council meeting on 2 March 1905, Sir Charles Lawes-Wittewronge founding member and President recommended to the general meeting that ladies be eligible for membership. The idea of female members is raised on quite a few occasions over the years but it is not until 1909 that women are allowed to become a member on the same footing as a man, coming into effect in 1910, notably under the presidency of Lawes-Wittewronge, who first suggested female membership in 1905 and not Brock. Interestingly the first women were not admitted until 1922 and they were Lady Feodora Gleichen, Flora Kendrick and Christine Gregory. To put that date into context the Society of Women's Artists predates this as does the Women's Arts Guild. However, women-only organisations they would not have had the same influence or perceived importance as a male organisation. It is not until 1936 that Dame Laura Knight was the first woman to be elected a full member of the Royal Academy, so a woman could be elected on the same footing as a man into the Royal Society of Sculptors before they could at the Royal Academy. After these initial three women were elected in 1922, you can see from this slide that on 5 February 1923, Mr Pomeroy suggested that members might approach some lady sculptors about standing ability in order to forward the interests of the society and the names of Miss Windsor, Miss Steel and Miss Acheson were mentioned as desirable candidates. Sadly I could never find what happened about Miss Steel and Miss Windsor, presumably they were approached, but Anne Crawford Acheson became an associate member in 1923 and went on to be the first woman elected to the Society of Sculptors in 1938. The archive of the Royal Society of Sculptors as I mentioned contains over 1,000 membership files relating to individual sculptors whose membership files can contain photographs, slides, press cuttings, exhibition catalogues, and correspondence. Sadly, many of these early women have no membership file, or had no membership file. Anne Acheson, despite her success and importance to the society, only had about three pieces of paper in her member file which related to a recent BBC filming inquiry. I think we can agree that women's role in art and their profession as artists, in this case sculptor, is often side-lined, erasing them from the art historical cannon, but in this case the society's institutional history also plays a part. Many male members, even some presidents, have no membership file. The archive originated through the society encouraging members to deposit material for the society's archive. Members would be asked to submit slides and photographs of work for the purposes of awards, publications and external inquiries from bodies such as the Royal Institute of British Architects. There was a very fluid retention of this material over the years due to there being no professional archivist on board and also because of the society floated between different premises before coming to our current and only headquarters, Dora House, bequeathed to the society by a sculptor upon his death in 1976. At points in the society's history, members were also asked to look after library and archive material, thus the earlier sculptors are subject to glaring omissions. However, that said, they are very much present in our minute books and annual reports such as here in this slide, where we have mention of Julian Phelps Allan, who I mentioned earlier as the only LGBTQ+ woman in the project, as well as one or two other names that may be familiar. This records her election, Allan's election, to the society as an associate member. She was nominated by Charles Wheeler and Alfred Hardiman, Allan is interesting as she also had no member file even though her most famous work is the gravestone of Emmeline Pankhurst. There was a series of talks entitled "Reintroducing our pioneering women" which involved guest speakers, the last of which was on Dora Gordine, delivered by Professor Fran Lloyd. I also organised a Pioneering Women conference with Dr Melanie Veasy and Natalie Rudd held yesterday, with eight papers on female sculptors from both within and outside the project. A key part of the Pioneering Women project was to connect with those that may have known these women, be they family members, friends, or perhaps were taught by these women. A consequence of this was to increase the archival presence of these women in the society's archive, thus scholarship and attention to their lives and histories and careers will increase over time, slowly rebalancing the art historical narrative. This has involved recording talks and oral histories from people who knew these women. A common thread that emerged from these conversations is how important membership of the Royal Society of Sculptors was to these women - the mark of a professional. In the Reintroducing Our Pioneering Women talks at the Society, I recorded an 'in conversation' event with sculptor Anne Acheson's great-niece at the society's headquarters. We discussed her work and hearing her speak about Acheson is really fascinating. Having that connection with someone who knew Acheson was really wonderful and Virginia even told us how she spoke. Such details would otherwise be lost to time. Louisa Young, granddaughter of Lady Kathleen Scott, an author of the biography, A Great Task of Happiness: The Life of Kathleen Scott, also did a Reintroducing Our Pioneering Women talk. She brought fascinating family insights and brought along a maquette and a dress belonging to Scott. The recording of the event as well as photographs of the objects Louisa Young brought along have been added to the archive. Amazingly, despite being quite well-known, Kathleen Scott had no membership file before this project. Another aim of the project was to promote the archive through the society's social media, as well as in the society's monthly newsletter, Shape and Form, with articles from the archive about the pioneering women. The society's Twitter account has included tweets from the archive, including #ArchiveThursday. I've also written many blog post articles including a 'From The Archives' series on the society's blog. The project has produced content for the society's Instagram account and this month being Women's History Month the society is celebrating one of the pioneering women on its social media every day in March, so please do take a look. This project has proved not an end point, and not a finished conclusion at all, but a step forward in increasing archival presence, research and crucially attention on these women who were truly pioneers in their field in a very male-dominated field. By generating archival content about these women - some, as I mentioned earlier, have no member file at all - it asserts that they did exist, they did have a professional career as a sculptor and that they are important and worthy of study. Slowly, the balance of art history will tip in their favour. Thank you for listening.

Ann: Thank you very much, that was an excellent paper Rosamund, a great introduction to the Royal Society of British Sculptors and the challenges of documenting the careers of women sculptors particularly at the beginning of the last century. Thank you very much indeed. So now we're going to move towards our final paper. I'm going to introduce Julia Carver, who has worked at Bristol Museums and Art Gallery since 2005. Her many exhibitions and other curatorial projects include New York City apartments Bristol, which was in 2015 and no borders contemporary art in a globalised world 2012. That gives you a flavour of her range of her work, very broad. Most recently Julia has curated Being Human an exhibition of modern sculpture, which I think is or would be ongoing if we were allowed to get into the gallery and that is what provides the starting point for her talk. I will hand over now, thank you.

JULIA: Thanks to Rosamund and Louise for such fantastic presentations, I feel really honoured to be part of this session. I'm going to share my screen now.   
 I will start with this slide. In 2019, as Ann mentioned, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery opened Being Human. Curated from the collection it was a show of mostly figurative sculpture. The so‑called Geometry of Fear artists were the centre piece. But I included some contemporary pieces I hope offered a dialogue with the 1950s work especially by Reg Butler. I want to talk about Reg Butler today and some of the issues his work raises. During my research for being human, I became fascinated by his highly sexualised and sometimes disturbing images of women. I want to try to try to reflect on this ambivalence in the post‑war and Cold War context of when the work was made. What makes it compelling to me, I'm interested in feminist art history, criticism and art practice, all of which followed the period when Butler's career was at its peak. I want to use this framework to consider where Butler's work fits in today if at all. I will also talk about Butler's wife, rosemary Young, Elizabeth Frink and I will conclude if I have time with some examples of contemporary work that I think shares some of Butler's sensibility. Reg Butler had an unusual childhood, but one with Dickensian echoes of the previous century. He grew up in the workhouse with his parents in Hertfordshire. In his own words he said middle class parents, I was a son of the master and around him revolved a whole community in every single respect. Birth, life, life difficulties and death. This inspired the narrative in Butler's art throughout his life which he interpreted for a framework of Freudian psychoanalysis. Butler's first career was an architect and he sculpted in his free time. During the war he was a conscientious objector, somehow avoiding jail and working as a blacksmith. The work fed into his invention as a sculptor which he focussed on full‑time after the war ended. Sorry about the slide here, it's really hard to find images of this exhibition. It's from 1952, Butler was invited by Robert Adam, Kenneth Armitage, William Turnbull and others to represent Britain. This was the sculpture exhibition that launched the group on to the world stage and earned them the collective name geometry of fear. From Herbert Reid's catalogue introduction. Phillip Hendy described Butler's iron works as a kind of line drawing in three dimensions. An ability to enclose space without filling it. Flesh seemed to have been picked away from these cell toll figures which may have been Butler's response to the death camps of the Holocaust. He spoke about Bielson, and also Nagasaki were constant pre‑occupations. Butler would return to flesh later. He was interested in Freud and anthropology. After the high modernism of the 30s the 40s and 50s saw a renewed interest in world art. In 1948 the newly opened Institute of Contemporary Art mounted a show called 40,000 years of modern art. It featured among other ancient and world sculptures the figure of the Venus Lespugue. The archetypal themes of sexuality, violence and death evident in the work in this exhibition were the raw material of Butler's art practice. He is the ancient and global sculpture forms to explore and axe press theories of human behaviour. Girl at Bristol made in 1953 balances barefoot on a rung, clearly a posture of discomfort. By this point, Butler had moved away from the line sculptures to shell casting, a technique he pioneered to make bronze cast can a bit more affordable. John Burger described the girl as a sculpture of two halves. Quite tender and sensuous, almost to the point of sentimentality, as in the flower‑like face, looking up and away and below the naked pudendum, brutal to the point of disgust. It's precisely this kind of ambivalence I find compelling, it encapsulates the double standard of mainstream representations of women. The adolescent appearance of Girl is obviously disturbing. In a TV show on his work, Butler announced that one of the most exciting things in the world is a girl, even then this was provocative but it's hard to imagine saying something like this now. I think they might say young woman instead of girl and I do think that this sculpture, although it's called Girl, is a young woman. In the context of the 50s I do wonder if this sculpture was her provocative undressing and her nakedness can be seen as striving for a kind of agency the female needs in art rarely possess. A depiction of the genitals as opposed to the usual discreet and decorative triangle, acknowledges the female sexuality long denied in the western cannon. It's comparable to Lawrence in its intensity. And it sets the context to remind ourselves that the obscenity trial around Lady Chatterley was still seven years away in 1960.

I am showing you the Willendorf Venus as a figure of comparison and also Nancy Spero's work that she made in the 80s, well, an example of a whole body of work she made. Freud's model of the unconscious and repressed sexual desire was common currency at this time. The theory of unconscious desires, repressed during childhood as part of socialisation was commonly seen as a metaphor for the conformity of post‑war society. The liberation of the unconscious was a goal of radical psychoanalysts such as R D Lang. Archaeology and anthropology provided the West with a conduit to repress desires through these ritual objects. The interest in these artefacts enabled European artists in the 20th century to create radically naked forms projecting the potent sexuality they found outside of mainstream western culture on to their work. This could be objectifying and not only of women. Today we would also ask questions about exoticism and appropriation. That's even before we consider in the case of non‑western art how such objects happen to be in our museums at all. Nevertheless in the context of the time, the intention to liberate sexuality from the academic tradition of the nude can be seen a radical in that it imbues the female figure with a degree of agency. She is desiring as well as desired. In Butler's last lecture which he call the Venus of la Puig and other naked ladies he was explicit about the erotic possibilities of sculpture. The lectures are revealing in all sorts of ways. It sounds like he was only speaking to men for starters. But if we read alongside the archaic and chauvinist language, I think it's possible to trace the development of an ambitious art practice. Butler was open about how he wanted to expand his art to enable the expression of sexual desire and the doubts that besieged him. He said sculpture as I designed it is of itself an erotic experience, virtually independent of specific subject matter. He also spoke of his enduring fascination with the Willendorf Venus, which he first encountered in Reid's show at the ICA. He passed around a copy he made of the Venus Lespugue for students to handle. He must have been highly conscious of the figures' function as a fertility idle. He spoke of his frustration with his own female figures. Looking back at the works made in my spoke filled workshop, lit not by daylight but by the flames of the forge and the ultraviolet of the welder, many look preoccupied with death, today with death so much nearer to me personally, I would find them impossible to make. Looking back at the metal figures, he had begun to find these figures lifeless and the eyes unseeing. At the same time, he was becoming interested in the use of colour in sculpture from baroque, poly chrome wood to Dwayne Hanson. He was fascinated by the appearance of flesh in Renaissance paintings and lighted on the strange erotic substance of Cranach's women. Between 1968 and 72 Butler made four painted bronzes. With their exaggerated hips and stretching spasmodic poses, they possess an aggressive sense of self. In appearance they are distinct from the black metal figures. They are sinewy‑like Cranach's Venuses with similarly smooth flesh and hostile facial expressions. Butler was keen to distinguish between eroticism and pornography. He said pornography is another matter, pornography attacks human identity, it's a destruction of individuality and a thought on the only thing we possess. Clearly he wanted to avoid the charge of pornography. I think this is visible in Girl. But I'm not sure the painted bronzes work as erotic anyway. They are too tortured for that. I see them as a continuation of the geometry of fear. I don't think Butler ever really left his pre‑ occupation with death behind. If psychoanalysis had opened people to the idea of the unconscious, then existentialism with its focus on individual freedom and focus placed the individual in a precariously balanced situation, veering between responsibility on the one hand and impotence on the other. This was exacerbated by the feeling of collective guilt in the wake of the atrocities of World War II, which Herbert Reid expressed in the Geometry of Fear. If by the 1980s this all seemed well in the past, then the dread of the nuclear Holocaust was still very much present. Butler made this explicit in his lecture. The two most powerful elements in us are relate today sex and violence, or life and death. If you look around today you will see how great our tolerance of violence in art is. This is for the same reasons I believe that we tolerate living surrounded by nuclear overkill. The ambition to move beyond the boundaries of culture convention to express repressed desire is of its time. But what it frees up in Butler is closer to despair than desire. Richard Calvocoressi has noted the similarity to Francis bacon. You can even see the same forms of the faces funnelled upwards in both artists' work in the Tate displayed one of the painted bronzes with Bacon's paintings. Ambivalence is evidence in the wok of both artists even as they spoke about the subject with candour, sex remained closely tied to the forbidden and to violence. Butler's drawings around the time of the painted bronzes so women tied or with their legs splayed. Later mannequins go further. Limbs and heads are screwed the wrong way on to bodies that contort disturbingly. Which Butler claimed in his lecture to find abhorrent. Throughout his career, Butler worked with his second wife Rosemary Young, a sculpture graduate and one of his students. She assisted with all the major works. In fact it's likely she co‑cast a girl using a technique Butler devised. She helped him with painting the later bronzing and threaded the real hair. In another life Young could have had a career of her own. She exhibited with Butler in the other Geometry of Fear artists at the ICA in 1952. They both entered the competition for the unknown political prisoner, which Butler won.

Young was key to Butler and according to Butler he believed that for a woman to become a sculptor you had to be a very, very extraordinary person. Young's contemporary Elisabeth Frink was probably the artist Butler meant. It was focused on virile masculinity and she retained an independence in the often-macho world of sculpture. Her delight in powerful male bodies manifests an alternative expression of desire, but there is a cost to this strength as evidenced in her thuggish soldier and Goggle Heads, with her tribute heads arguably the victims of such power. Frink's practice can be seen as a response to the violence of war while also rejecting the emphasis on women's bodies of her male contemporaries. In 1980, she even featured in an exhibition of contemporary art focused on women's images of men at the ICA. Meanwhile, Young abandoned her own sculpture practice to support Butler's. She explained that, "It was almost as if, not through any fault of his own, Reg sucked it away, he drew out all your energy, away from creativity, into being part of the partnership". Young spoke of the great hopes her mother had had for her as a kind of Frink herself. She had had to persuade her family to allow her to study art in the first place. Her mother's view was that it was only because Rosemary had met Reg that she had lost out on a great career of her own. After Butler's sudden death just a year after his Slade Lecture, Young organised his retrospective at Tate, including casting new works. It was only after this dedication to her husband's career, that she returned to her own work, and Girl Drying Her Foot appears in a show that's touring this year - Breaking The Mould. Young's own favourite works of Butler's were The Girl and the painted bronzes but she acknowledged the difficulty. “I mean, those painted bronzes were just amazing. When it was first done, I was at first dubious about it and bothered about what people would say and you know, Reg never bothered what people would say, ever - that was the thing about Reg, he moved. He was making. From the very beginning he was on a journey and it was the most exciting adventure”. The painted bronzes bear a passing resemblance to the work of another British artist, the Chair, Table and Hatstand women of the pop artist Allen Jones. These fetishised women were famously castigated by Laura Mulvey in her famous article, You Don't Know What's Happening, Do You, Mr Jones? She noted the phallic depiction of the women in Jones's portrayal, arguing that they represented male castration anxiety. Jones claimed they were about a tough response to abstract expressionism. I don't know if he responded to Mulvey. The difference between Jones and Butler, I think, is Butler's passionate belief that his desires and his art were really closely interconnected. He said the very trade of sculpture is a manipulation of bodily substance, the spiritual, the metaphysical, call it what you like, it cannot manifest itself independently. The agency of Butler's needs makes them compelling, it implies a space for something reciprocal. If they fail, they are at least revealing about Butler's desire and ambivalence. I also think it's possible to see a continuation of this ambivalence in art from Butler's time to now, including and especially women, his art follows the starker side of masculinity and sexuality, Jenny Holzer, Cindy Sherman, Sarah Lucas.

Returning to Being Human one approach to the curation of the majority of the works in the collection being by men was to include work by women that could offer commentary on these work such as the Tribute Head by Frink that I included earlier but I also offered contemporary work by women on the bored. Translated Vase by the Korean artist Yeesookyung is a body that creates a visceral and even abject quality. Its bricolage also borrows European modernisms, borrowing from world cultures.

ANN: Julia, I'm sorry to interrupt, I'm negligent here, it's actually just after 20 past, so if you could wrap up as quickly as possible, that would be great, thank you.

JULIA: Sorry about that! Thanks for the reminder. Well, finally, this isn't really a sculpture, but we were showing works on paper with the exhibition, and Zanele Muholi's self-pour at a time is a reference to mid-century African studio portraiture of dandyish males but here Zanele has placed themselves in the role as a gesture of non-binary visibility. And lastly we featured a moving image piece by Mary Reid Kelley, "This Is Offal" in which the artist performs the role of a corpse during her autopsy, reflecting on death and images of the female body. So just to wrap up, I wanted to explore the unsettling ambiguities of Reg Butler's work and I don't think I reached any conclusions particularly - it's still a journey - but I do think that through feminist and queer art history and art practice, we can imagine a successful erotic visual art and it is artists like Butler who sort of helped get started along the way. Yes, so thank you, everyone, for listening.

ANN: Hi, thank you very much indeed, Julia, that was another fantastic paper and wraps up our presentations. I think there are some really fascinating correspondences in the topics between the papers and we have got a number of conversations and questions coming through, because, of course, there's a lot of interest. I wonder whether I could use my privilege as chair just to ask, I did wonder whether there was, as it were, something that Louise would have to say to Julia about Butler's treatment of women and sort of vice versa. I mean, if nothing else, because they both use his views - that painted bronze which certainly in the Butler case, I personally find extremely hard to look at, even though they both make disturbing images, it is a very different perspective, so I would be very interested to hear your thoughts.

JULIA: Do you want to go first, Louise?

LOUISE: OK, well, what I was going to say was I think what would be really fascinating to continue the conversation is with Cathie's idea - and I think it comes through in Reg Butler's work and your response to his work, is this question that there isn't a defined statement, it is not one thing, there is this sense of ambiguity and sort of to those figurative forms, I think that's exactly what Cathie was trying to achieve in her work, is that you're not sure quite how to respond to them. Whereas Reg Butler's was a singular work, Cathie sort of then explodes that idea into the whole room and when you're there, you have very mixed feelings about - they're all connected with memory and, as you say, sort of, desire and looking and it's a really interesting experience to sort of to go through and really raise those questions and not to come to an answer at the end of it, but to generate that thinking and I think that's probably quite an interesting connection to Julia's work and work at the moment.

JULIA: Yes, when you were showing Cathie's room, sort of Interventions, Butler wanted to put those painted bronzes into a room but I don't think he ever - it might be that he died, or he just gave up on the idea, but Cathie's work seems to pick up from that and perhaps more successfully, as well, I don't know.

LOUISE: It is interesting because Cathie came to sculpture sort of through the art - she didn't train as a sculptor, she trained in - as a jeweller, or sort of the applied arts, and I think that sort of manipulation of materials that she felt free - slightly more freely to explore outside of the traditional - so a bit with Rosamund's talk, that sort of conventional traditional sculptural history, she has come away from that and I think that sort of feeds into her work as well so it's being able to sort of sit outside some of these conventions to approach those historical ideas which she really engages with, it is not that she wants to jettison all of those overboard, she wants to unpick them and unpack them and re-present.

ANN: Great. I would like to bring in Rosamund here. There has been a very good response to your paper as well. You talk very interestingly, engagingly, about the sort of problems of the archive and also the research that so many of us have faced during the last year, but I wonder whether, behind that, you had been able to make some sort of progress and whether, actually, you were beginning to be able to track some of the changes in the sort of status of women as sculptors across a century, because the artists you have picked, I think, are, you know, do - their careers span the last century. So I wondered whether you've got anything on that?

ROSAMUND: Yes, the women I was looking at were practising in the early to mid-20th century and at first I think I mentioned there weren't many women, especially who were elected from 1922 onwards, there aren't many women so you don't see them electing many other women but as the female population in the society increases, you see more women nominating other women and you see more of the women sitting on the council, for instance, as well. So their presence in the archive kind of increases and their roles increase. But in terms of - it's difficult, because the archive is completely uncatalogued, so to find anything out in the archive - for instance to look through the minute books, which are fascinating, you just have to sit down and read them for ages until you find that one little thing you're looking for, if you find it, and the earlier minute books particularly are just pages and pages of writing. It's only later and sort of into the war period that they helpfully start putting little things in the margin like, I don't know, "Crystal Palace fire," or, "Festival of Britain" and things like that, so you can scan them a bit quicker, so that is a challenge not just in terms of what you are trying to find out for research but also in terms of when you get inquiries in and someone wants to know a very specific thing about a sculptor at a certain time or about how the society interacted with a certain exhibition or event or gallery. You just have to sit and read and read and read and so that is a huge challenge. But in terms of the women who did have member files, I did list what was in each of their member files, so at least then if someone inquires about them, someone doesn't have to go and physically handle that archival material again - there is now a list of what's in each file. But yes, it is quite a big task.

ANN: Yes, it sounds like it! So there have been a couple of questions for - one for you, Louise, about Cathie - did she spend a long time in each room of the house considering? I mean, how long did she have to plan the project, I suppose?

LOUISE: Well, there was the planning stage beforehand, so she would come and visit and make site visits to the gallery, and we would correspond and send her sort of images from the collection that she could select from. Obviously she's based in London and we were down in Chichester, so there was a number of visits and then pre-planning, and it was interesting that when we started the installation, which was about three weeks long, actually the rooms came together as she had conceived them to be, and it was quite interesting - they can look quite chaotic but actually they were quite well-conceived beforehand, but actually somehow they also conformed to that idea and it came together incredibly well. Although some of the elements were only devised through the process - it was a bit like sculpting the rooms, she came with all her material and it was wonderful - she often calls herself a sculptural bag lady in that she literally just turns up with all the stuff in a van and then you start working and placing and combining and it is a fascinating process and I was so privileged to be a part of that. So she sort of builds on it. So they can look chaotic but there is actually quite precise and considered judgements made for each placement of work. There are judgements made for each placement of work.

It was three weeks, quite intense but added to the whole process of the project, because they emerged from these realised spaces that hadn't existed before. Ann: Sounds wonderful. There's a question for you Julia from someone called John, which I will read out. It's been recognised that all of the Venice eight were confronted by something of a crisis, but it seems to have hit Butler more dramatically than any of the others. Do you think reflects just how much they were dependent on the early 50s?

JULIA: I think there were all sorts of reasons. They had huge success and then they were kind of eclipsed by the new generation sculptors who really hated what they were doing, hated all that reference to the war, thought that it was literal and pure isle and then the new generation were eclipsed as well. It's a bad name really, isn't it. But I'm being facetious. It was really difficult for all of them actually because they did, Butler won public sculpture competitions but then a lot of his work was vandalised, the maquette for the political prisoner was damaged at Tate and it was never made anyway and then there was one at Harlow I think, was it Harlow, but he withdrew a lot from making that kind of work and that might explain the obsessive nature of some of his ‑ I'm being a bit too psych co analytical but might explain some of the obsessive nature of his focus on the female nude. Lynn Chadwick had a lot of success with public sculpture but it was quite difficult for Kenneth Armitage and Elizabeth Frink were very successful but they kind of lost their avant‑garde reputations or credibility really, and I think now we're quite lucky that we are in a moment art historically where things seem a bit less, there seems to be less intergenerational competition, rivalry in the way that during the 20th century the isms seemed to compete with the parent generation if you like and I don't know if that's really true, but it looks to me like contemporary artists look over a wider span of art to inform their own work. And also we're in the lucky position with research like Rosamund's, that opens up other avenues for people to look at. That's a really rambling answer to that question! But I have been thinking a lot about the withdrawal of that generation.

ANN: Yes, I think you raise a good point which we haven't got time to get into, but about that sort of interchange between criticism, practice and art history, those broad trends can shape and obviously they do and certainly at that time there was this sense of these discreet moments and movements wasn't there. I think we have time for one very quick last question for you Rosamund. From Dawn, it overlaps with what we were talking about before, whether any interesting women artists you discovered later in the project that you wish you could have included?

ROSAMUND: Yes, one in particular. I am really annoyed a missed her, was a lady, she's dead now, like most of the women in the project, a Czech sculpture called Irenia Sedlecka and she died last year and did a well‑known Freddie Mercury bronze, so she's quite well‑known for that, but she was also married to Fanta Belsky, she had a really interesting life, really interesting career and I wish I had included her as well because I'm quite interested in emigre sculptures and the Royal Society of sculptors and they used to be the Royal Society of British sculptors and a lot of the Royal Society of sculptor members who were all British citizens had a lot of, were quite worried about the influx of emigre sculptors. I missed her out and I had fixed to the 25 by then so it was a shame.

ANN: I think we need to wind up. We have been lucky to be able to go over for five minutes, because there's a bit of a pause. But I would like to thank you to the three speakers for your really excellent papers and to all the attendees for the rich meta discussion in the chat and the questions which makes it all a very rich experience. So thank you everybody. A couple of bits of information for anybody who has missed these, the public statues and sculpture association have a current series of talks on women sculptors which are every Tuesday at 5.30, if you search for their site, you will find the links to that. I have been reminded to suggest that Dorwich House will be another place for everybody to go and visit. So with that, I would like to wind up and thank flora and everybody else at Art UK who has helped support the panel. And look forward to more exciting papers later. Bye.