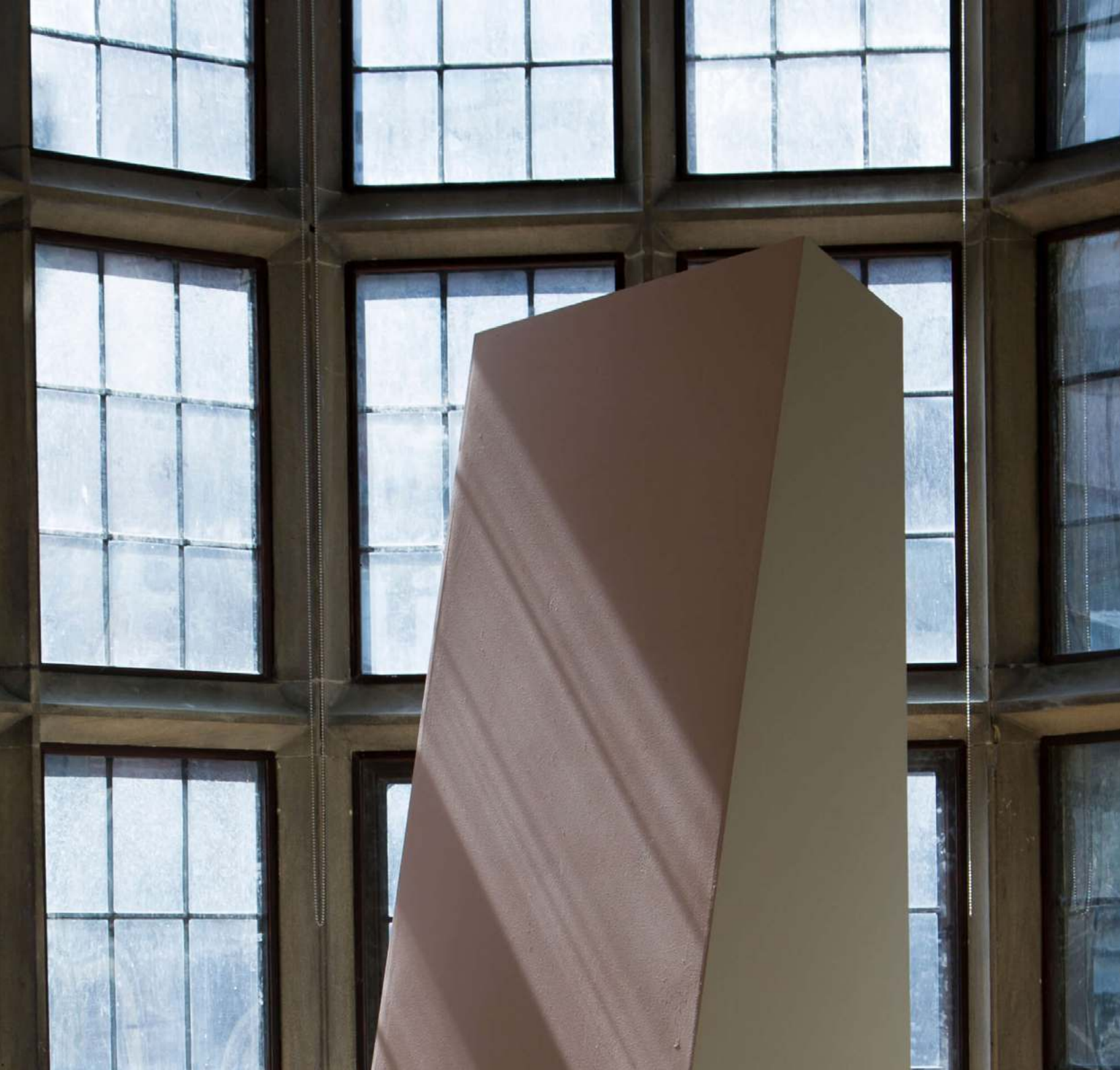


FEEL AFTER THE NEW SEE





Type of output:
Exhibition

by
Kate Liston

Front cover image and left:
Installation view of *Feel After the
New See* at Hatton Gallery. MDF,
timber, paint, speaker cloth, HD
video, black tea & pomegranate
reed diffuser.

Photo credit: Kate Liston

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SUMMARY

Feel After the New See was developed through archival research in the collections of Hatton Gallery, Newcastle and Sprengel Museum, Hanover. The result was a new site-responsive installation and event programme engaging with, and reassessing, the importance of the practice of twentieth century artist Ella Bergmann-Michel. It ran at the Hatton Gallery from 17th February to 19th May 2018.

The research asked: how can contemporary art bring new narratives to the surface when responding to historically significant archives and collections? And how can practice-based research disrupt and intervene in traditional art historical or curatorial methods when assessing work of historical importance?

The research responds to Hatton Gallery's history of fostering internationally significant innovations in installation, exhibition design and display structures, and to a specific work by Bergmann-Michel, *Collagestudie:horizontal* (1926), identified by Liston from its collection. Through its response, the project embodied Bergmann-Michel's artistic role as a mediator (Luke, 2017) and the function of her works as scores. The holistic treatment of Bergmann-Michel's practice, and the practice-led methods used, offered an alternative to art historical and curatorial strategies.

Making links across the diagrammatic painting, biomorphic drawing and documentary film strands of Bergmann-Michel's work, Liston's installation activated these various practices within the exhibition design. The resulting sculptures, wall paintings and film used a schematic visual language and spatial illusion to present works as speculative forms. It presented these within an iterative methodology: framing the exhibition as a site of active research used to generate a new film – *Film for EBM*.

Liston's research in the Hatton Archive and Collection was enabled through Heritage Lottery Funding. The project culminated in the exhibition *Feel After the New See* and associated public events. One sculpture was subsequently acquisitioned into Hatton Gallery's collection. Liston's associated research at The Sprengel reactivated interest in Bergmann-Michel's 1920 drawings, leading the authorship of *Polytheatre* (c.1918) to be reassigned to Ella Bergmann-Michel from her husband Robert Michel.

INTRODUCTION

“The facets of [Charm] are painted in varying muted colours. This both accentuates and diminishes the perspective depth of the structure. Liston’s clever use of colour makes the shadows appear darker whilst simultaneously creating the illusion of flatness.”

Becky Gee, curator at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums.

“...[Charm]’s illusion of shadow and perspective ties into a particular strength of the [Hatton Gallery] collection, so much so that it will be included in the forthcoming exhibition, Louisa Hodgson: A New Perspective.”

Julie Milne, chief curator at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums

Below left:

Installation view of *Feel After the New See* at Hatton Gallery. MDF, timber, paint, speaker cloth, HD video, black tea & pomegranate reed diffuser.

Photo credit: Kate Liston



Below right:

Charm in *Feel After the New See*.

Photo credit: Kate Liston



TIMELINE

2017	2017- 2018	2018 MAR	2018 APR	2018 MAY	2018 AUG
<p>AUGUST 2017 Liston commissioned by Madeleine Kennedy, curator at Hatton Gallery.</p> <p>NOVEMBER 2017 £7500 funding secured from Heritage Lottery Fund.</p> <p>DECEMBER 2017 Liston commissions Sarah Jury to produce a Live Action Role Play with Hamish MacPherson in response to the exhibition and Liston's research into Bergmann-Michel's practice.</p>	<p>NOVEMBER 2017- JANUARY 2018 Filming on location at the 'Flying Saucer' toilet, Bigg Market, Newcastle and other locations.</p> <p>DECEMBER 2017- FEBRUARY 2018 Collaboration with musician Dan Wilde to work on music for the film and Live Action Role Play.</p>	<p>Liston commissions coach Leon Robotham to devise a group CrossFit workout in response to <i>Feel After the New See</i>, to be filmed for <i>Film for EBM</i>.</p>	<p>Archive visit to The Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany to research works by Ella Bergmann Michel. Liston met with Karin Orchard.</p> <p><i>Rotation Process</i> expanded screening event held within <i>Feel After the New See</i>.</p> <p><i>Feeling After Structure</i>, Live Action Role Play devised and delivered by Sarah Jury with consultation from Hamish MacPherson.</p> <p>Filming for <i>Film for EBM</i> takes place at CrossFit North East England and Hatton Gallery.</p>	<p>Liston leads role-play workshop in <i>Feel After the New See</i> with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museum staff.</p> <p><i>Film for EBM</i> added to <i>Feel After the New See</i>.</p> <p>Late Shows screening of <i>Film for EBM</i> and exhibition close.</p>	<p>Kate Liston, Tess Denman-Cleaver & Holly Argent: <i>Living Organism</i>. Film screening event at Tyneside Cinema including <i>Where the Old People Live</i>, (1931) by Ella Bergmann-Michel.</p>

RESEARCH CHALLENGE

The project's investigative questions were examined in the context of Hatton Gallery, which is remarkable for hosting *Man, Machine, Motion* (Hamilton, 1955) and *an Exhibit* (Hamilton, Pasmore and Alloway 1957), both pioneering in the field of installation and exhibition design. The research aimed to create new forms of participation with the gallery's history through making material from its collection accessible and legible in new narratives.

Feel After the New See was framed as an active site for ongoing research that evolved as the exhibition went on through public events and Liston's research visit to The Sprengel Museum. Liston produced a new work, *Film for EBM*, informed by this research which was added in the exhibition's final week.

Below:
Stills from
2. Idea-design for a film after EBM
shown within *Feel After the New See*.
Photo credit: Kate Liston



CONTEXT

Hatton curator Madeleine Kennedy selected Liston for the inaugural commission in a series of site-responsive exhibitions at the gallery. Liston's research was significant in paving the way for subsequent projects by creating an iterative methodology of exhibition making - a model for artists working with the gallery's archive and collection. This created an important point of reference for future commissions, including Nadia Hebson's *Gravidity & Parity &* (2018).

The project shed new light on Ella Bergmann-Michel's practice, whose significance within the Hatton Gallery's history has hitherto been overlooked despite growing international attention to the artist. A retrospective exhibition took place at The Sprengel Museum in summer 2018 jointly fanning her practice with that of her husband, Robert Michel, following a common curatorial strategy. Singular attention has been given to Bergmann-Michel's practice, notably through the work of curator Madeleine Bernstorff and academic Megan R. Luke, however their focus has predominantly been on Bergmann-Michel's filmmaking. *Feel After the New See* refers only to Bergmann-Michel, avoiding framing her practice through male peers such as her husband.

Of international significance is the project's practice-led, creative response which is innovative in its use of space and its treatment of Bergmann-Michel's practice; bringing distinct strands together in an original holistic response.

For her film, Liston gained access to the closed Victorian 'Flying Saucer' men's toilets in Newcastle's Bigg Market. Including footage of this abandoned architecture, and juxtaposing it with the film's other material, which included models referencing the toilets, increased the visibility of this architecturally and culturally important site.

The project contributes to contemporary discourses on site-responsive installation and artists' engagement with historically significant archives and collections (e.g. Caldarola 2020, Cooper 2015, Morra 2017). Liston's research activates the role of artist-curator as one of mediator between audience and host space, encompassing both the immediate architecture and the surrounding institutional and discursive framework.

Below:
Digital collage including Google
SketchUp models and film stills to
map out elements of the exhibition.



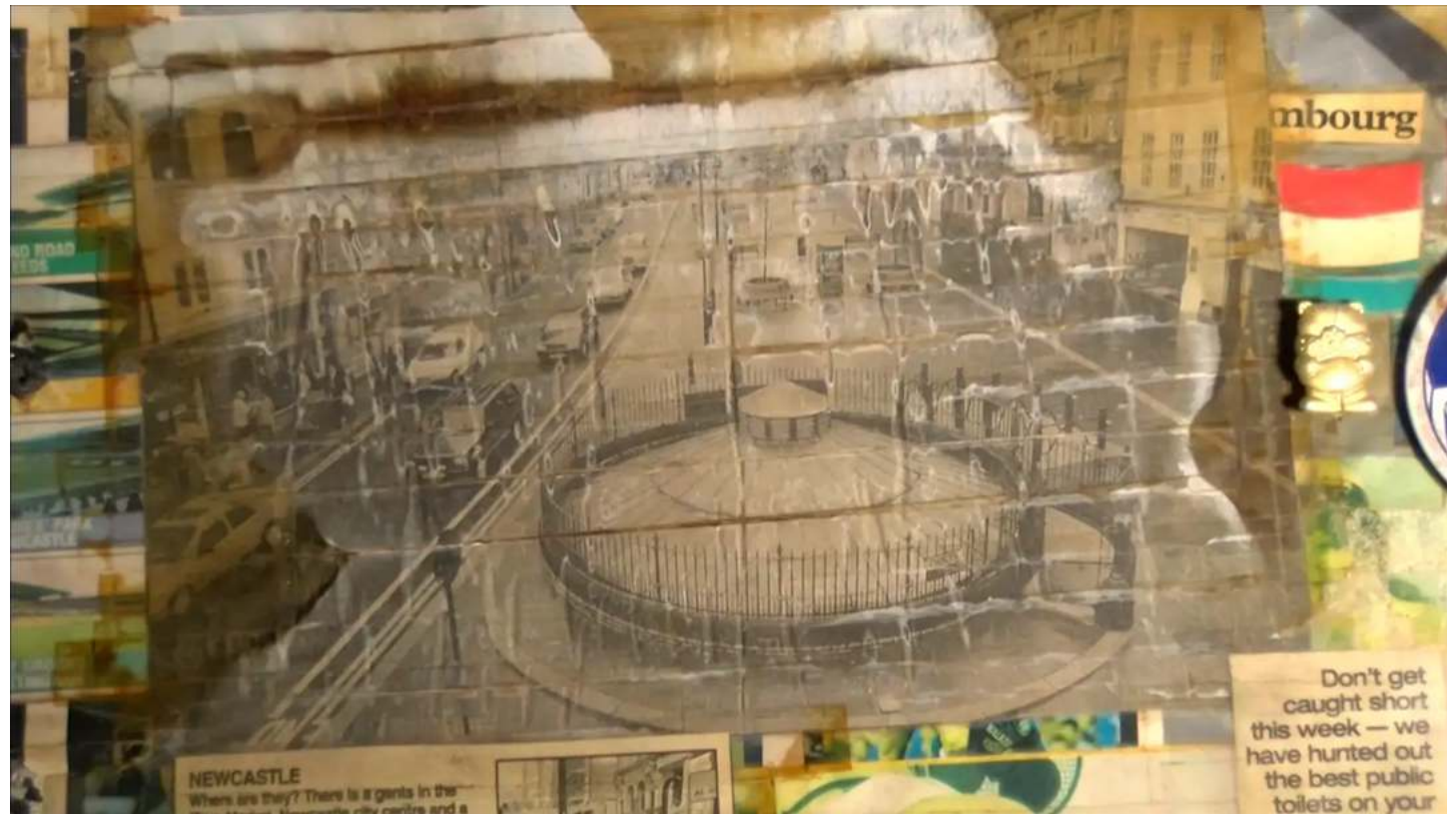
Link to 1. Collage-Study for a film for EBM:

<https://vimeo.com/261621567/deec7a317b>

Below:

Still from 1. Collage-Study for a film for EBM shown within *Feel After the New See*.

Photo credit: Kate Liston



METHODS AND PROCESSES

The project was concerned with visibility and access. Through a rigorous set of strategies it drew attention to what could and couldn't be seen in respect of the Hatton's history, questioning the stability of dominant narratives of it. *Feel After the New See* brought Bergmann-Michel's practice to the surface of the institution's history by responding to the artist's diagrammatic paintings, biomorphic drawings and documentary films holistically. The project formed new links across these different elements of her work and thereby revised the accepted, partial view of Bergmann-Michel prevalent within current histories.

The exhibition's innovation was to use an iterative methodology that allowed a range of responses to Bergmann-Michel's practice to collide and generate new meanings. Liston's installation hosted and was importantly activated by live events. These showcased work by other artists including new work commissioned by Liston. By framing the exhibition as in-progress, Liston employed a meta-critical device in addition to visual cues to activate the space as speculative in its orientation. With *Film for EBM*, generated over the course of the exhibition, and informed by the events and Liston's archival research, the installation became a "score" for these further activities.

This approach encouraged multiple modes of audience engagement with and participation in the archive, which kept the exhibition alive and evolving throughout its run. This practice-led approach made the project internationally distinct in approaching the "study" of Ella Bergmann-Michel's work.

Liston built on spatial methods from previous projects to develop a new focus on optics and illusion. Sculptures were painted in opposing colours to imply shadow and to distort a simple reading of their forms. The wall paintings provided a speculative dimension through rudimentary spatial representations.

The ambitious curatorial scope of the project, including its invited participants and commissions marks a shift in Liston's practice towards the role of artist-curator and mediator between audience and institution. This widened scope of activity formed an important part of the project's rigour.

Below:

Audience at *Rotation Process* event drawing in response to Fiona Larkin's film *My Dearie Dearie*.

Photo credit: Jack Cornish



Below:

Installation view of *Feel After the New See* at Hatton Gallery. MDF, timber, paint, speaker cloth, HD video, black tea & pomegranate reed diffuser.

Photo credit: Kate Liston



DISSEMINATION

Seven sculptures and two films were exhibited for three months in *Feel After the New See* at Hatton Gallery, Newcastle (see Timeline for dates and for all entries below).

Liston also curated *Rotation Process*, an expanded screening event held within the exhibition and invited artists Liz Pavey and Fiona Larkin to present work there alongside films by Amber Films and Ella Bergmann-Michel. Liston commissioned Sarah Jury and Hamish Macpherson to devise *Feeling After Structure*, a Live Action Role Play, which took place within the installation outside of gallery hours, and new performance writing from artist Tess Denman Cleaver.

Following *Feel After the New See*, Hatton Gallery acquired Liston's sculpture *Charm* from the exhibition for the collection using funds from Friends of Hatton. Exhibitions Officer Becky Gee selected *Charm* for inclusion in the Hatton Gallery's *Louisa Hodgson: A New Perspective*, 30th June – 11th August 2018, contributing to her curatorial research and expanding the dissemination of Liston's work.

After seeing *Feel After the New See*, Holly Argent, director of Women Artists of the North East Library invited Liston to participate in the library's exhibition at Workplace Foundation as part of *Great Exhibition of the North* – a major survey exhibition and the most significant cultural event of its kind to take place the region, 22nd June – 9th September 2018. Liston's methods of archival response significantly contributed to Argent's approach to making the library public for the first time.

Liston's research at the *Ella Bergmann-Michel Archive*, and the paper collection at The Sprengel Museum, provided an unexpected outcome. Liston's interest in *Neuron-People: Idea-Design for a Film or Theatre Mechanism* led Karin Orchard, Curator of Print and Drawing, to reassign authorship of *Polytheatre* (c.1918) to Ella Bergmann-Michel, having originally been assigned to Robert Michel. This revelation was significant to the retrospective exhibition *Ella Bergmann-Michel and Robert Michel: A Modernist Couple*, which took place at the museum after this research visit.

Liston developed research from the project with Argent and Denman-Cleaver for *A Living Organism*, a screening at Tyneside Cinema, 30th August 2018.

Liston exposed new audiences to the research and gained critical feedback when she presented the project at Engage – the National Association for Gallery Education at Hatton Gallery, February 2018.

Below:

Screenshot of Lesley Guy's review of *Feel After the New See* for Corridor 8 online platform including image of *Charm*.

In another sequence a hamster and then a guinea pig navigate around miniature versions of the installation, these little animals are aesthetic test pilots feeling their way around. Various dramatic tensions are formed and released by the music (composed by Dan Wilde) which accompanies their/our investigations.



Kate Liston 'Feel After the New See' (2018). Photo courtesy of the artist.

The most prominent of the wall paintings, a large blue shape is a beautiful illusion suggestive of a field, a track or a runway out of the room into another dimension. Like the Bergmann-Michel drawing it is just shapes on a surface, but shapes that take us on a journey.

Below:

Still from *Film for EBM*.

Link to film: <https://vimeo.com/269936880>

Photo credit: Kate Liston



REFERENCES

Articles

Caldarola, E. (2020), 'On Experiencing Installation Art.' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 78: 339-344. doi:10.1111/jaac.12734.

Cooper, A. (2015), 'The Problem of the Overlooked Female Artist: An Argument for Enlivening a Stale Model of Discussion.' *Hyperallergenic*. (<https://hyperallergic.com/173963/the-problem-of-the-overlooked-female-artist-an-argument-for-enlivening-a-stale-model-of-discussion/>) (accessed 30.10.20).

Luke, M. R., 2017. 'Our Life Together: Collective Homemaking in the Films of Ella Bergmann-Michel.' *Oxford Art Journal*. 40(1), pp 27-48.

Morra, J. (2017). *Inside the Freud Museums: History, Memory and Site-Responsive Art Practice*. I.B Taurus.

Film Screening Programme

Bernstorff, M., 2019. *The Woman with the Kinamo: Ella Bergmann-Michel* (accessed at <http://www.madeleinebernstorff.de/seiten/bergmann-michel.html> 28/10/20).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Collage-study for a film for EBM / Idea-design for a film after EBM, 2018,
HD video:

<https://vimeo.com/261621567/deec7a317b>

Film for EBM, 2018, HD video:

<https://vimeo.com/269936880/1cb2c9213f>

Corridor 8 Review of *Feel After the New See* by Lesley Guy:

<http://www.corridor8.co.uk/article/hatton-gallery-kate-liston/>

Women Artists of the North East Library exhibition at
Workplace Gallery, Gateshead:

<https://getnorth2018.com/previous-events/women-artists-of-the-north-east-library/>

Megan Luke 'Our Life Together: Collective Homemaking in the films of
Ella Bergmann-Michel' 2017:

<https://academic.oup.com/oaj/article-abstract/40/1/27/3813324?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

A Living Organism, Projections programme, Tyneside Cinema:

<http://projections.org.uk/event/kate-liston-holly-argent-tess-denman-clever-living-organism>

Right:

Feel After the New See poster image.

Photo credit: Kate Liston



Northumbria University, Newcastle.
Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory.

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