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Walking (to) Greenham, Again

Activating feminist heritage

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Feminist heritage presents particular challenges to artists and curators. It demands approaches that sidestep the conservative, often colonial, pitfalls of sculptural monuments and that are better suited to feminism's aspiration for activation, rather than mere commemoration. In this article, I discuss examples of art practices that (re)activate feminism's past as feminist sustenance and for feminist sustainability, by mobilizing performance and performativity in different ways, including through singing and recitation, through their curatorial framing and by approaching walking as an ordinary action and artistic medium with activist resonance. Here, the object of (re)activation is one most vividly defined through the actions that it planned and delivered: the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp was celebrated for its ingenious and impactful visual activism, which informs the ways in which it is remembered and reactivated in artistic practice.

Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp was a network of protest camps set up on the periphery of the United States Air Force (USAF) base in rural Berkshire, protesting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) 1979 decision to keep cruise nuclear missiles on previously common land. It began in 1981, when a group of women, together with a few children and men, marched from Cardiff to Greenham in protest. They called themselves Women for Life on Earth, a name that, according to Ann Pettitt, was supplemented by the 'explanatory subtitle "Women's Action for Disarmament", to avoid being mistaken for a right-wing anti-abortion initiative (2006: 42–3). Although the first Greenham camp emerged from this organized walk, it is crucial to underline the radical heterogeneity of the peace camp's membership over its duration:

> Locating the origin of a major social movement in the thoughts and actions of less than half a dozen women [the small group that organized 'Women for Life on Earth'] wrenches the movement from its wider social, political, and cultural context. (Roseneil 1995: 32)

The camp was sustained by a diverse and fluctuating membership who joined for a variety of reasons. It became women-only within a few months of its establishment and remained so throughout its nineteen-year span, in acknowledgement of 'the gender politics of militarism and its support from the state' (Roseneil 1995: 40). Beyond a specifically feminist resistance to militarism in its nuclear mutation, the peace camp thrived thanks to its refusal of any coherent identity or agenda. According to writers and activists Barbara Harford and Sarah Hopkinson (1984: 2), Greenham 'became a place where ideas, fears, dreams, philosophies and skills came together to be worked through', and initiated a series of actions of exceptional creative ingenuity and political efficacy. Although its significance in revitalizing the movement for nuclear disarmament cannot be overstated, the peace camp deployed the single issue of nuclear disarmament towards something yet more ambitious and wide-ranging, whose manifestations and significance are still in the process of being appreciated and worked through: it became a safe haven for women fleeing violence, homophobia and oppressive living situations, a hub for protesting, resisting and undoing the mutual implication of patriarchy and militarism in their nuclear mutation (Roseneil 1995, 2000), and a lab for reimagining gender (Withers 2019). In this sense, the peace camp served to activate a range of intersecting feminist concerns through performative actions and everyday practices.[{note}]1

Peace camp women designed and delivered a range of visual and performative actions and famously transformed the perimeter fence of the airbase into an impromptu gallery of art and visual activism. They deployed visual and performative strategies knowingly, regularly and with widely recognized impact, leaving behind a rich archive of documentation. Strangely, however, monuments to the peace camp commissioned during and after its closure, on and off site, stand in contrast to the thoroughly post-/anti-modernist, experimental, participatory and often ephemeral aesthetics of the camp's actions themselves. These monuments include a mother-and-child life-size statue by Anton Agius, installed in Cardiff City Hall in 2003, and *Broken Symmetry* by Michael Kenny, an abstract large-scale sculpture of

two forms of different sizes, installed in 2000 in the New Greenham Park. Executed by established male sculptors, these sculptural twosomes promote the alleged maternalism of pacifist movements while downplaying the alternative kinships and queer intimacies of the camp, as well as the processual and ephemeral aesthetics of its visual activism.

In this contribution, I argue that including live and performance art in commemoration practices, as well as the practice of walking, offer an alternative to the impasses of public sculpture that resonate with Greenham's feminist aesthetics and politics. Such alternatives prove particularly adept to the celebration and (re-)activation of women's movements and feminist activism. I focus on practices that seek to disentangle the collective work of activist transmission from the compromised habit of memorialization, showcasing specific performative alternatives to the commissioning of sculptural monuments. Such alternatives operate in a queer time of collectivity and gather momentum through ritual repetition, where remembrance vibrates with the energy of an embodied commitment to continue and expand the work of our chosen feminist foremothers.

Feminist monuments? Durational performativity against a contradiction in terms

How do we collectively commemorate intersectional feminist movements when the aesthetic and material practices of remembrance are steeped in the workings of racism and heteropatriarchy? First, events make for more straightforward commemorative referents than movements do, which are, by definition, processual and resistant to containment in symbols or iconographies. Leaders and heroes are obvious referents for statues compared to groups with loose and fluid memberships, and opaque constellations of actors, allies and supporters. More importantly, movements tend to have a greater investment in their own sustainability or re-activation instead of commemoration, and therefore repertories of commemorative strategies do not always suit their objectives. Feminist scholars including Jenna Ashton (2020), Red Chidgey (2018) and D-M Withers (2016) have explored the specificities of feminist heritage, including particularly its attachment to activation rather than commemoration. In their study of the dance group Rubicon (1978–98), Astrid von Rosen, Monica Sand and Marsha Meskimmon (2018) present feminist

heritage as an embodied, nomadic and materialist practice invested in activation and learning, rather than safeguarding and preservation. My approach to Greenham and its reactivations is informed and inspired by this body of scholarly activist work, to which it also contributes.[{note}]2

Second, one quarter into the twenty-first century, monuments and the discourses of monumentality have reached an undeniable impasse: while public statues are subject to scrutiny and re-assessment often followed by ‘spontaneous or managed removal’, the ‘inherently unstable … discursive space’ of monumentality is targeted by social movements not only for its support of oppression and supremacy, but also for its inadequacy to preserve their own legacies (Coomasaru 2023). After all, societies that commission monuments, especially in the shape of statues (in honour) of their great and good, have no qualms about reinforcing their power through the colonization of public space, creating a semblance of consensus that only upholds the status quo. In the words of Frantz Fanon (1963: 52), a world of statues is ‘a world which is sure of itself’, where power structures are as intransigent as conventional carving and casting materials, stone and steel. ‘Every statue, … all these conquistadors perched on colonial soil do not cease from proclaiming one and the same thing: "We are here by the force of bayonets ..."’ (84). The logic and violence of coloniality spreads beyond the colonies, in the squares and administrative buildings of global metropoles, where we are coerced into regimes of commemoration that continue to colonize public space as well as history.

Models of durational performativity for the (re)activation of feminist activist heritage are here proposed as alternatives to the commissioning of monuments for its preservation. As a feminist art historian, I turn my attention to contemporary art practice, rather than museums or heritage organizations. I subscribe to the view that any feminist heritage practice worthy of the name is by definition activist (Ashton 2020; Chidgey 2018; Withers 2016), and consider art practices informed by and committed to intersectional feminism as ideal agents of intergenerational transmission. Art practice operates within and across symbolism, semiosis, aesthetics, affect and politics, creating spaces for meaningful encounters between different people(s) and communities while drawing relationships of convergence, divergence and tension between different moments in time.

The art practices under consideration in this article include but are not limited to performance or live art, and all engage in a durational performativity that unfolds

through time and space: they weave between different stories, histories and biographies; they retrace actions and events through bodies and places; they reclaim space and time by nominating sites, sounds and objects of feminist resonance; and they continue to set bodies in motion, thereby activating prior movements. They are examples – or even exemplary cases – of feminist activation in so far as they conjure up 'another time *in* the body' (Grant 2022: 16), and hold the promise of transformation for artists, participants and audiences by treading the thin line between performance and performativity. While, according to Peggy Phelan, performance/live art contains the potential of transformation for both artist and audience, performativity 'contest[s] the construct of self as stable or separable from context' (Gibb 2021: 90). The durational performativity of the practices under consideration harness the transformative potential of feminist history in its documents, actions and sites through embodied stories, memories and desires of artists, audiences and participants, making the most of the flux of identification, its conditionality, contextuality and becoming. Durational performativity draws and riffs on Amelia Jones's definition of queer feminist durationality. Jones defines durationality as 'the introduction of the beat of desire, of time and its embodied relations, into the art situation and particularly into the interrelational moment'. Durationality therefore holds considerable potential for action-oriented recollection towards feminist futures (Jones 2012: 173). Departing from Jones, my main interest does not lie in the act of interpretation of artworks; instead, I want to explore how artworks activate feminist intergenerational transmission while unsettling historical and generational divisions, as well as those between art, life and politics.[{note}]3

'We are history', or are we? Troubling anniversaries

To nominate oneself as 'history' is an ambiguous gesture. On the one hand, it claims impact for one's past actions; on the other, and in its more common, colloquial meaning, it admits to a decrease in or loss of actual importance, relevance or currency. Jill Truman is a former Greenham woman and playwright whose work includes the play *The Web* (1991; also performed under the title *Common Women*). The play draws on Truman's direct experiences of the peace camp to dramatize the political and ethical tensions that the peace camp's establishment threw up for

protestors, local residents and different authorities, from the perspective of a local teenage girl. In a 2019 blog post for London CND, Truman (2019) reflects on her visit to a transformed Greenham Common nineteen years after its closure, to see an exhibition by Wendy Carrig in the former military base's Control Tower. The Control Tower had re-opened the previous year as a community and heritage building with a dog café, a permanent display on the site's history and an exhibition space. Truman praises both Carrig's exhibition and the revamped Control Tower, while remaining ambiguous and somewhat ambivalent. Despite its melancholically subtitle, 'a postscript', Truman's 2019 blog underlines the continuing relevance of Greenham's protests and frames events such as Carrig's exhibitions as opportunities for feminist transmission: 'I was accompanied by a grand-daughter, who had never heard of the Greenham Common peace camps until breakfast-time that morning. Like it or not, we are history now' (Truman 2019).

Professional photographer Carrig, whose work continues to focus on women's protests, among other things, spent time at the Blue Gate of the peace camp as a photography student in 1985, documenting life at Greenham. She photographed protest actions, the aftermath of evictions, which were a regular occurrence with the aim of breaking the women's resolve, and day-to-day life, including cooking on an open fire and finding shelter from the cold in tents and broken-down cars. The focus of Truman's 2019 blog encompasses but isn't exhausted by Carrig's exhibition. Accompanied by an unattributed photograph of a reunion with her Bristol sisters around a campfire, the text reflects on the physical and political changes on the Greenham Common landscape, friendlier now, with the perimeter fences removed and with its heathland partly rewilded, designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and restored to common use by an act of Parliament, the Greenham and Crookham Commons Act 2002.[{note}]4

While highlighting the distance between her earlier involvement in the peace camp and her return nearly forty years later, Truman's photograph documents a recreation of the peace camp's daily rituals by the same, now older, women, and ends by emphasizing the need for continued vigilance against nuclear threats. Despite its brevity and informality, Truman's text captures the transition from collective memory to shared heritage, which the peace camp had already been undergoing, and that was consolidated two years later with the fortieth anniversary celebrations of its establishment in 1981.

September 2021 was marked by a series of new events addressing and engaging with the peace camp's history and its emergent status as feminist legacy. These events included the exhibition *Peace Camp* by Jemima Brown, discussed in the next section, talks and workshops by Greenham women, and a re-enactment of the march of the group Women for Life on Earth from Cardiff to Greenham Common, from 26 August to3 September 2021, organized by Greenham Women Everywhere (2021).

Remembering Greenham could never be a merely symbolic, intellectual or aesthetic activity. Artist and sociologist Nina Wakeford combines a celebratory and critical approach to feminist heritage, framing it as rhizomes of stories, histories, questions and demands that cannot be put to bed. She focuses on the unfinished business of past social movements and taps into their rhythms, energies and resonance through live recitation and song. In the same year of Truman's visit to the Control Tower for Carrig's photographic exhibition, Wakeford delivered an iteration of her durational performance with film entitled *an apprenticeship in queer I believe it was* (2016–) on the roof of the Control Tower, a commission for the artistic programme *(Un)Commoning Voices & (Non)Communal Bodies*, curated by Maayan Sheleff and Sarah Spies for Reading International 2019. In their project, the curators explore 'the voice and the body in and as a collective' and the ways in which their 'relational assemblages' resist uniformity while nurturing group work (Spies 2021: 83). Wakeford converses with existing memorializations of the peace camp, the scholarship of Sasha Roseneil, Greenham woman and sociologist, and Greenham's archives. The film includes thousands of images, archival photographs of the camp and new ones 'of forget-me-nots from the nearby memorial Peace Garden'. Spies describes Wakeford's performance as an intersection of past and present that directly involves the audience without using the conventions of participation (85).

As I sat among fellow spectators of every age and gender, I could detect reactions of delighted recognition mixed with the surprise of new discoveries, and was reminded of sociologist Carly Guest's (2016) research into the ways in which the sharing of Greenham images, stories and songs continues to recruit new people to feminist causes. Everyone at the Control Tower on the day of the performance, which included an optional walk to the Blue Gate led by the two curators, became an actor in the reclamation of the Control Tower and its surroundings from regimes of surveillance and persecution to which Greenham women would have been

subjected. At the performance, Wakeford stood on the roof, while three sides of the windowed top of the Control Tower were transformed into screens. The artist's presence in that building, which is also symbolically enveloped in the peace camp's queer counter-cultures, recalls and reactivates specific incidents when Greenham women broke into and temporarily occupied the sentry box of the air base and, on at least one occasion, the control tower itself. The work was originally commissioned by the British Film Institute (BFI) in collaboration with Welcome for a LGBTQIA+ film festival exploring 'queer notions of love, affection, and community' (BFI 2023). Wakeford's photographs of the forget-me-nots from the Peace Garden act as evidence – in so far as they are indexical signs – of time spent there, in a space of commemoration. The medium by which they were captured is also significant: they were photographed on 16 mm film, a historically crucial format for non-fiction genres, both amateur and professional. The introduction of 16 mm revolutionized not only filming but the ways in which moving image was distributed, making projections outside of dedicated screening venues possible and thereby becoming linked with activist organizing and information-sharing (Russell *et al.* 2023). Many iconic Greenham films, both documentary and fictional, including Caroline Goldie's *Greenham Granny* (1986), Lis Rhodes and Joanna Davis's 1-minute films for *Hang on a Minute*, and *Gamma* (1999/2023), by Jane and Louise Wilson, were all originally shot on 16 mm.

It is no coincidence that Greenham should be celebrated in song. Tracking Greenham's sonic dimension falls outside the scope of this text. Nevertheless, Greenham's famous sounds (laughter, ululations, feminist and anti-war songs both original or adopted and adapted, and the haunting noise of the perimeter fence being shaken) form a big part of its heritage and pose their own difficulties and opportunities for transmission. Next to the use of sounds, Wakeford combines singing with speech of a markedly different rhythm: she recites lists, such as Appendix 1 from Roseneil's (1995) *Disarming Patriarchy*, which captures a variety of data from her Greenham women interviewees, including crucially sexual identification before and after engaging with the peace camp. Tabloid press hysteria about the conversion of straight women to lesbianism is here rendered as sociological data, feminist legacy and a moving celebration. Wakeford's attachment to the 'unfinished business' of feminist movements should be understood not as a

reminder of how much work is still required to undo patriarchy, but as a recognition of the quality of feminist struggle as fundamentally unfinishable.

The section subtitle of ‘troubling anniversaries’ has been chosen for its double meaning here. First, unlike mainstream culture, anniversaries of social movements tend to not be sanitized into opportunities for uncritical celebration but retain instead some of the tensions of the moment of their creation, while the historical distance between the moment of the original experience and the moment of recollection brings up further issues to work through. In this way, anniversaries stay with the trouble that the activists brought forward, which is why anniversaries themselves activate activism. For example, although the anniversary of the establishment of the peace camp commemorates a positive event (unlike anniversaries of violence and funerals, which are common in the collective life of social movements and wider societies), for activists, September 2021 became an opportunity to reflect on ongoing struggles and new threats. Remembering Greenham thus activates a renewed commitment to protest against Britain’s continuing investment in nuclear weapons and to stem accelerated climate change and environmental destruction.

In the second meaning of ‘troubling anniversaries’, ‘troubling’ is a gerund as opposed to an adjective. While the fortieth anniversary weekend at the Greenham Common Control Tower and beyond included celebrations that are conventionally associated with such events, its re-creation of the walk from Cardiff to Greenham Common takes on a different meaning when one accounts for the significance of walking to and around the peace camp. This troubling refers to the re-activation of the site of the now restored common through the medium of walking. The next section focuses on walking as an activist and artistic medium that activates the peace camp beyond the site of Greenham Common and past its end in 2000.

Walking (to) Greenham

Ann Pettitt was one of the four women who organized the walk from Cardiff to Greenham and remained active at the Yellow Gate for the first few years of the camp. She was also among the group to make contact with – and eventually a visit to – Soviet anti-nuclear activists in Moscow in 1982. The title of Ann Pettitt’s memoir *Walking to Greenham* (2006) is significant for a number of reasons. By the time of its publication in 2006, accounts of Greenham tended to focus away from its foundation

and on the first few years after the decision to make it women-only. Yet, as Pettitt points out, walking remained instrumental to the peace camp beyond its beginnings and outside of practicalities, both deliberately and intuitively activating its uses in social movements as shows of solidarity and strength and a claim to public space by those often marginalized within it. Specifically on the 100-mile road from Cardiff to Greenham, the walk was crucial to the bonding of the group, allowing for important conversations to emerge along the way. In terms of tactics, the walk demonstrated its ludic difference from the solemnity of earlier and contemporary pacifist marches and anti-nuclear protests. Examples include the crossing of the old Severn bridge by doing cartwheels, as artist and activist Thalia Campbell recalls, the colourful accessories worn by participants and the striking banners made in Campbell's designs. The walk helped build a network of support across the route, where the marchers stopped for food and shelter. Later on, once the peace camp was established, public transport users relied on walking to get to the peace camp from local train and bus stations and to maintain communications between peace camp gates. Organized walks continued to be a regular occurrence into London and other cities, for actions and events, with the first one to London taking place within the first few weeks of the peace camp's establishment, in October 1981 (Pettitt 2006: 136–7). As Greenham is revisited and recollected in the present, those walks activate its legacies in re-using its methods as embodied research with the potential of becoming militant: 'Walking means being present, bearing witness, putting one's body into the research process and into the world' (Twemlow 2020). Reactivations of more or less organized walks within, around and from the site of the peace camp awaken the dead metaphor of walking in another's footsteps.

To this day, public transport does not go all the way to where the main gate of the base would have been, and most of the common is accessible either by private car or on foot. In an oral history interview conducted by June Hughes for Greenham Women Everywhere, friends Elspeth Owen, Julia Ball and Gerd Browne, who belonged to the Cambridge Women's Peace Collective and went to Greenham together, were asked to consider what would be the 'one visual symbol' of Greenham. Their answers are significant, if only because two of them are artists, Owen, a renowned ceramicist, and Ball, an abstract landscape painter. They give two answers: one is of an action photographed by Raissa Paige and Pam Isherwood (the latter's serving as reference for a See Red screenprint) of women having broken

into USAF Greenham Common to dance on the silos inside the USAF Greenham Common, late on New Year's Eve 1982 and New Year's Day 1983. Their dark silhouettes, holding hands under the floodlights, are starkly contrasted with the white concrete of the silos, with police cars and rolls of razor wire at the forefront, looking hostile but already somehow defeated. The other answer is a less imposing scene but so regularly repeated in the peace camp's archives that it can be understood as a visual refrain in photographs taken on the hoof, if not exactly a symbol: 'it's the backs of the women in front of me, going on forever' (Owen *et al.* 2019).

For Owen at least, walking to Greenham proved to be a catalyst, both artistically and personally/politically, gradually turning walking and sleeping outside into a key component of her artistic practice as much as her everyday life. Greenham, she explains, helped her shed her fear of sleeping outside and transformed her into a new kind of person, unafraid of using her body as a mode of transportation, and an artist for whom walking became a medium. In Owen's practice, discussed below, walking revisits and re-activates the revolutionary turning point that Greenham marked for her, as it did for so many others: an exodus, on foot, from a prison of assumptions about the place of women, literally and metaphorically, and a collective coming out into the great outdoors. Walking transformed Owen's practice, which originated in and continued to involve ceramics, by allowing her to develop and reframe it in the expanded field, as durational installation and participatory experience.

How Do Women Walk? (1992), an installation using photography, text and music, was the first work she produced drawing on the experience of walking and sleeping outside. In this installation, fourty-four doubled slides were projected to create eleven foot high images of a giant woman in built and natural landscapes, shown in a large darkened space. Extracts from *The Expedition to the Baobab Tree* by Wilma Stockenström in J. M. Coetzee's translation (1983) could be read only while walking very close to the walls of the space; the installation included an audiotape of the percussion sections from *Sarah is ninety years old* by Estonian composer Aarvo Pärt. By referencing Stockenström and Pärt, the artist maps moments of liberatory transitions and begins to build a network of brave and unconventional women. Pärt's composition references the biblical story of Sarah, who miraculously falls pregnant at the age of 90, while also marking a turning point in the composer's career, who was then on the cusp of inventing a new musical

style.[{note}]5 In Stockenström's novel, a young enslaved woman who is taken by her enslaver on an expedition to Africa, takes the opportunity to break free when her party loses their way. The woman takes shelter in the hollow of a baobab tree, to which she narrates her life story, thus turning displacement into empowerment and liberation.

Owen (2015) eventually developed the persona *Material Woman* (2003–), cementing her departure from making work for sale to developing installation and performance. In this period, objects are activated through story-telling, while some of her ceramic work is repurposed, as in *All You Need* (n.d), which involved tiny ceramic pieces attached to pins or pieces of driftwood. *Material Woman* was named after the donations of free pieces of fabric that Owen requested for her residency/exhibition in Kirsten Lavers' Taxi Gallery, which consisted of a black cab, for which Owen needed to make curtains so that she could sleep in it. Evoking also a mature version of Madonna's 'Material Girl', *Material Woman* encompasses a diverse body of work where Owen works with, relies on or supports others. Owen's collaborators included American visual anthropologist Anna Grimshaw, with whom she explored the space between art and anthropology and the material and ethical dimensions of making do. As *Material Woman*, Owen (n.d.) performed *looselink* in the summer of 2005, during which she spent 100 days walking to present personal messages to people known and unknown, all over England and Wales. Purposefully slowing down transport and communications, Owen's 'political walking', as she terms it, activates Greenham's legacies of non-violent direct action and the reclamation of common land as durational de-domestication, a personal rewilding with feminist resonance.

For Owen, walking and being outside, at the peace camp and ever since, acquired a specific and powerfully transformative character. Similarly, Anne Robinson's film *Walking Greenham/Common Ground* (2022) suggests that 'walking Greenham' does not merely designate the walk's location but a particular inflection of walking [{figure1}]. Robinson, artist, curator, writer and Greenham woman from the Blue Gate, explores queer time and hidden histories across her interdisciplinary practice. *Walking Greenham/Common Ground* premiered at the online event 'Walking to Greenham', The Culture Capital Exchange, 25 March 2022, and was subsequently shown during the series of events 'Peace Camp: The imaginary of Greenham Common' at Beaconsfield, London, in collaboration with the Feminist

Library, in August 2022, as part of the extended forty-first anniversary celebrations of the establishment of the peace camp.

Walking Greenham/Common Ground opens with a handheld tracking shot over disused, rusty tracks. We are taken on a spring walk through Greenham Common, with a voice over rhythmically reciting thoughts, memories and hostile framings of the peace camp (casting the women as Soviet spies and layabouts), as if the act of walking at the time of filming conjures up previous walks on that land. The walk begins with Greenham memories but soon jumps to other contexts and locations, first only through words, then in sound and image too. *WG/CG* becomes a site of multiple intersections between the artist's time at Greenham, her embodied memory of it and continued commitment to the fight against militarized patriarchy, and an inventory of her own work on war and peace. She uses, for example, excerpts and outtakes from *Wakeful* (2018), a live score installation including a film based on a memory fragment and fictional re-enactment of an undeclared war in 1918 involving the artist's father. Although thematically distinct, *Wakeful* and *WG/CG* complement each other in their critical exploration of hot and cold war respectively, both sources of personal and collective trauma. Another intersection occurs with excerpts from *Royal Fellowship* (1984), a super 8 film that Robinson made as a student and Greenham woman at the peace camp and the Cenotaph at Whitehall, London. These works are spliced together with new footage from Greenham in 2022, looking different but feeling strangely familiar. In Robinson's work, Greenham becomes a kaleidoscopic but persistent framework for her practice, politics and memory. The camera's vicarious walk transports her and the viewer from Greenham now to Greenham then, to 1984 London where she walks among 'dead men on plinths', to the deserted Estonian island of Naissaar, where she is led by her father's confession and her own subsequent archival research about the shooting of Soviet soldiers even after 'peace' had been declared. Walking Greenham is threaded through the common ground of these works in their probing of the evanescent line between war and peace and a renewed refusal to allow the Cold War's hidden histories to remain out of sight.

Walking is re-activated in yet another way in Jemima Brown's exhibition *Peace Camp* (2021), installed at the Greenham Control Tower, the West Berkshire Museum and across different locations in Newbury, the closest town to Greenham

Common.[{note}]6 As writer and curator Ken Pratt (2022: 7) notes, ‘this celebratory anniversary project appears to have covered almost as much ground in Berkshire as the original camps themselves’. Brown’s installation consists of small sculptures presented in groups or individually, with purpose-made backgrounds and props or embedded in existing environments. Her part-found part-made peace figures, mostly women and some ‘boyfriends and husbands’, each look individual and discreet and are given first names. Their features stem from the artist’s cast of casts, collected over time from the faces of fellow artists, friends and the artist’s own. The hands are detailed and delicate and seem out of place against bodies fashioned out of repurposed camping gear; all the women’s are modelled after the artist’s own hands and the men’s after her male partner’s. The making of the figures’ made parts and their installation environments is lavishly labour-intensive. Their colourful clothes are nicely fitted, sown by the artist and her mother out of worn but carefully chosen clothes and off cuts. The backdrops for some of the installations are hand-painted landscapes based on photographs of Greenham Common taken by Brown herself. The badges on the figures are all original Greenham badges, carefully researched and sourced online from digital archives, scaled accurately, colour-printed, glazed and sown onto backing for extra thickness, to give them an authentic look. The care with which the faces, hands and badges of these little women and a few men have been made prompts the viewer to also give the found materials that make up their bodies due consideration. They are often old worn thermoses and lanterns, the kind of stuff you would expect to find at the back of a shed, as the artist explained on a studio visit in July 2021. Looking at the tired found objects that Brown chose for her figures, I imagined women rummaging through their sheds and in the back of cupboards for equipment and supplies in preparation for going to the peace camp.

In the 2021 exhibition *Peace Camp* to coincide with the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the camp, many of the figures were installed in unlikely places, such as the already crowded vitrines of the West Berkshire Museum. Installed alongside peace camp memorabilia, their placement is not thematically jarring but interrupts historical edification with an imaginative and politically ambitious desire for re-activation. Brown’s practice carves out portals between learning about the peace camp, beginning to reimagine it and taking steps to honour its legacies. Elsewhere in the museum, a figure is found sleeping peacefully under a massive prehistoric tusk, unimpressed and undisturbed by its comically oversized, disintegrating phallic

shape. Others are installed inside the observation room on the top floor of the Control Tower, as if protestors broke in through the perimeter fence and made it all the way inside the nerve centre of the military base, as often happened at the time of the peace camp. Another is found inside a fuse box, in defiance of a brand new 'Do Not Touch' sign. Here, scale creates enchanting incongruities: also in the Control Tower, a sleeping figure is placed in a vitrine under a cross-stitch sampler with the embroidered words 'You Can't Kill the Spirit/ Halloween Party/ 1983'. In the scale of Brown's figures, the sampler, which is part of the exhibition *Both Sides of the Fence* organized by the Control Tower to celebrate the peace camp's fortieth anniversary, and whose history is unknown, is similar in size to a banner. The illusion of this scaled-down Greenham world is simultaneously intensified and broken by the presence of yet another object, a pair of chipped blue bolt-cutters with a piece of the perimeter fence still caught in them, on loan from Greenham woman Lynette Edwell. Well within the figure's reach if not sized for her tiny hands, the bolt cutters look like they could be picked up again and used to breach the divide between Jemima Brown's small world and ours, and between the time of the peace camp and its commemoration in the present.

Following the trail of the figures installed around Newbury remaps the town from the perspective of Greenham women and their allies, at times even retracing their steps [{figure2}].The artist informed me that the *Empire Café*, unprepossessing in name and appearance, where several figures are placed more or less conspicuously, welcomed women from the peace camp and even granted them access to an upstairs bath [{figure3}] [{figure4}]. Brown's figures line the windows of the Corn Exchange. They are tucked behind the librarian's desk in the public library. They lurk and loiter. They rest and recharge. They mingle with each other and among the local museum's collections. They're history but they're also here. '[T]he quotidian', black feminist theorist Tina Campt explains, 'must be understood as a practice rather than an act/ion' (2017: 4). These are not action figures and their installations do not seek to capture the peace camp's iconic actions but something quieter and more pervasive: habits of resistance and 'revolutionary routines' (Pedwell 2021).

Taking up space, claiming time

Imagine walking into Cardiff City Hall: you expect to see Cardiff's famous figures from Welsh history, which can be found in Marble Hall, nearly all male. But before you get there, in an alcove in the foyer, you encounter Anton Agius's young woman in broken chains, with a toddler on her hip who holds a peace dove, and a bouquet of wild plants in the other. The adjacent plaque confirms its links to a women's anti-nuclear peace campaign though it doesn't mention Greenham nor does it explain its carefully planned references to real-life events. The first women who arrived at Greenham Common presented US forces with bouquets of brambles, thistles and nettles, a Trojan horse of a gift, in which the clueless uniformed recipient is reported to have stuck his nose (Pettitt 2006: xx). The chains and ribbons in the statue's hair are allusions to suffragette symbols and actions: four of the women chained themselves to the perimeter fence of the airbase, just as the suffragettes had done inside the House of Commons and at 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister's residence. However closely or knowledgeably this woman statue is interpreted, it/she does more than break the monotony of the male marble figures: she takes up space in the architectural manifestation of contemporary Welsh identity and claims a place in it. Even Marble Hall has ceased to be a place of fixity and defensive certainty: Cardiff council voted to remove enslaver Thomas Picton's statue in July 2020, motivated by the Black Lives Matter movement and protests that year. Picton was celebrated as a war hero fallen at the Battle of Waterloo, but was also known for his brutality as Governor of Trinidad even in his own time and was convicted for the torture of a 14-year-old-girl black girl (Cardiff Council Councillors and Meetings 2020). Statues are thankfully not immune to the churn of change.

I do not mean to undermine the thesis of this article in its conclusion, but rather end by further de-emphasizing ontology (what constitutes feminist commemoration? What are the art practices that perform it 'best'?) in favour of the performative and relational dimension of feminist heritage in all its forms. The work of Jemima Brown, Elspeth Owen, Anne Robinson and Nina Wakeford selectively deploys performance across its making and delivery, but mostly (re-)activates a kind of performativity that can never be exhausted in the act of passive spectatorship but demands sustained purchase. At a time when monuments are being toppled, ephemeral interventions prove strangely resilient and efficacious in their responsiveness and their capacity for embodied transmission, across the generations and geographies of feminism. The practice of these artists proposes

models of heritage-as-activation and transforms the audience into fellow actors, and even activists.

Notes

1 The Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp sustained itself through its expansive networks of supporters, often symbolized by a spiderweb. Greenham women included regular and occasional visitors as well as 'stayers', for any period of time. Mass actions on and off site, such as Embrace the Base, 12 December 1982, which involved tens of thousands of protesters holding hands across the 9-mile perimeter fence of the base, invited press attention and helped grow the Greenham 'web'.

2 My critical engagement with the art and visual activisms of Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp has specifically focused on its legacies in contemporary art, which often mobilize its potential for reactivation (Kokoli 2023a, 2023b).

3 I am indebted to the theoretical framework and practice of the curatorial team If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want to Be Part of Your Revolution (n.d.) for their linking of performance and performativity, and for their view of feminist performance as a site in which politics, art and life appear as intertwined as they actually are.

4 See Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (n.d.) and House of Commons (2001). he latter gives a brief history of the land since the Second World War, and although there is no mention of the women's peace camp, it mentions the bylaws (namely local authority regulations) passed by the Council and ratified by Parliament in 1983. Further bylaws were pushed through by the Council and the Ministry of Defence in the next few years. Greenham bylaws included the prohibition of posting bills on the perimeter fence of the military base, entering it without permission and destruction of military property, all of which were regularly performed by Greenham women. They bylaws were introduced to specifically target Greenham women and resulted in dozens of arrests, before being declared illegal in the early 1990s. Satirical coverage of the bylaws was extensive in Greenham newsletters, collections of which can be found in multiple archives, including the MayDay Rooms,

London, and the Women's Library, London School of Economics, with transcribed selections accessible online (Mujer Palabra 2001-2013)..

5 I do not know whether Owen chose Pärt's work due to its special significance in the development of the composer's original tintinnabuli technique; on *Sarah Was 90 years Old*, see Aarvo Pärt Centre (n.d.).

6 I discuss Jemima Brown's work in greater detail in Kokoli (2022).

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Captions

Figure 1. Anne Robinson, *Walking Greenham/Common Ground*, 2022, single-channel video, 12 minutes, stills. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 2. Jemima Brown, hand-drawn map of Newbury, marking the exhibition locations of *Peace Camp*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 3. Jemima Brown, *Peace Camp* figures installed at the Empire Café, Newbury, 2021. Photograph by Alexandra Kokoli.

Figure 4. Jemima Brown, ‘Alice’ (figure), *Peace Camp*, installed at the Empire Café, Newbury, 2021. Photograph by Caron Geary. Courtesy of the artist and the photographer.