



Looking Back at the Life Room

A project by Naomi Salaman

27 January – 11 June 2010

This installation looks back at an academic model of art education that centred on drawing the male model in classical poses. In the tradition of the visual essay, artist Naomi Salaman puts together photographs of spaces where drawing is still taught alongside historic prints and photocopies from her research archive. Revisiting the academic art curriculum, she explores the process of looking at, making and reading images in relation to institutional forms of knowledge and the technologies of image reproduction.

Drawing a nude model *after the antique* was the apex of an hierarchical course which began with copying from copies of old master prints and plaster casts and lessons in anatomy. This curriculum served as the basis of art education in Europe from the 1600s. In the 1960s art schools in this country moved away from mandatory exams in these subjects.

Charting the remnants of a pedagogical system now suspended, Salaman identifies a 'curved space of observation' that builds up through a montage of historic life rooms and dissection theatres. Her research path begins with the much-cited painting of *The Royal Academicians* (1772) by Johann Zoffany and its reproductions in feminist art history texts two hundred years later. Zoffany's group portrait in the life room was contentious as it illustrated the exclusion of women artists from the life room, and therefore from professional advancement. Looking back at this painting, through feminist critiques, to the early ambitions of the life room, Salaman reconsiders the academy life room as a theoretical apparatus that marked the distinction between fine art as an intellectual pursuit and the workshop practices of the guild.

Naomi Salaman is a London-based artist and a lecturer at the University of Brighton. Her research-based practice is rooted in the politics of representation and combines photography, installation, curated exhibitions and publications.

The Strang Print Room, home to UCL Art Collections, is a space for teaching, research and exhibition. Founded in 1847 with the Denman gift of John Flaxman's plaster models, the collections now hold more than 10,000 paintings, drawings, prints and sculptures dating from the 1490s to the present day.

Co-curated by Nina Pearlman and Naomi Salaman, this exhibition is supported by Arts Council England and the University of Brighton. It draws on research supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and is accompanied by a limited edition artist's print.

The conference, *Art Schools: Inventions, Invective and Radical Possibilities*, will be held on 11 & 12 June 2010

For more information about the exhibition, talks, events & conference please visit

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums/uclart/exhibitions/liferoom/> . Contact Nina Pearlman college.art@ucl.ac.uk
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Further Information

Naomi Salaman, biography, Centre for Research & Development, University of Brighton
<http://artsresearch.brighton.ac.uk/research/academic/salaman/biography>

Naomi Salaman PhD Goldsmith's College 2008 <http://eprints-gro.gold.ac.uk/2299/>