

Transcript

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The Bartlett Gender and Urban Equalities symposium:

Women Writing Architecture

Speakers :

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Anne Hultzsch, Architectural Researcher, ETH Zurich

Helen Thomas, Writer, Editor of Women Writing Architecture

SOL PEREZ MARTINEZ: Welcome, everyone who is joining us for this session on The Bartlett's gender equality symposium. I will share my screen in a minute and we will give it a start.

So, welcome everyone, this is a day of panel discussions organised by The Bartlett UCL's Faculty of the Built Environment on the International Women's Day 2023 in order to promote and champion gender equality in the built environment field. I'm Sol Perez Martinez, and I will be hosting this session on women writing architecture. In case you're just joining us, a little reminder, all sessions today are being captioned live by a professional human captioner. You can view the captions within Zoom by clicking 'show captions' at the bottom of your screen. If you wish to view the captions in a separate window, click the link in the chat. This event is also being recorded. The recording and transcript will be added to The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment YouTube channel after the event. We encourage you to submit a question for the speakers at any point during the session by clicking on the Q&A function at the bottom of the screen.

Now, to give a start. We organised this panel to celebrate the coincidence that in 2021, two women started at the same time two different projects with the same name, both related to ETH Zurich. This hour-long panel will have two presentations by the leaders of the projects Anne Hultzsch and Helen Thomas, followed by a conversation between the three of us. We will end with a Q&A, so post your questions in the chat box. If we don't have time to answer all of your questions during the session, no worries, we will answer them in our social media channels,

they will be noted at the end of the presentation. Before we start, let me introduce myself: I am Sol Perez-Martinez, as I said before, I'm a Chilean architect and researcher, I have a masters in architectural history from The Bartlett School of Architecture and a Ph.D. in architectural education from The Bartlett School of Architecture and the Institute of Education. For the last couple of years, I have been a module leader and lecturer at the master of learning environments at The Bartlett School of Sustainable Construction, however in the last year I moved to Zurich to become a postdoctoral fellow at ETH Zurich as part of WoWA.

During my time in Zurich, I have had the pleasure to work with the two inspiring women that we have on the panel today, Helen has rightly called our projects sister projects, which I like very much.

Firstly, I am part of WOWA, led by Anne, the leader of Women Writing Architecture, 1700-1900, which will be our first panelist. Anne Hultzsch is an architectural historian and leads the ERC-funded group women writing architecture, 1700 to 1900 at ETH Zurich, she did her Ph.D. at The Bartlett UCL and a postdoc at AHO Oslo. Her research focuses on architecture and gender, print cultures, perception and travel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Also, I contribute together with many other writers around the world in the women writing architecture platform co-edited by Helen Thomas, who is an architect, writer and publisher based in London and Zurich, she holds a Ph.D. in art history from the University of Essex, some of her recent publications include architecture in Islamic countries, the hybrid practitioner, women writer architecture, architecture through drawing, drawing architecture, and she is the editor with Women Writing Architecture.

So without further adieu, I want to give the space now to Anne Hultzsch, so she can present her project, Women Writing Architecture today. Over to you, Anne, I will now turn my camera off to give the floor to Anne.

ANNE HULTZSCH: Thank you so much, Sol. I think -- I'm sorry, I'm sharing my screen. There you go. Thank you so much, Sol for the introduction. And for putting this session together thank you also to The Bartlett events team and The Bartlett as a whole for the invitation and organisation of this great event.

It's great to be back at The Bartlett, if only virtually, as Sol said, I'm the leader of WOWA, women writer architecture, 1700 to 1900, which is a five-year project based here at the GTA, the Institute for theory and history of architecture at ETH Zurich. I'm now going to talk about the project setup and its aims and methods as well as our work so far. We have been two years

running it now.

So first things first, I'm not doing this project by myself. Sol has joined me almost to the day, a year ago as a postdoc, and it's been fantastic to develop WOWA with her help since.

Elena Rieger is the PhD in my group and as you might guess from our names we come from different backgrounds as well as disciplines speaking and researching in three different languages, English German and Spanish and linking experience in architectural practice with the histories of architecture and art.

The whole WOWA group and its work are funded by a grant from the ERC, the research council of the European Union these grants are meant to help groups doing as they call it 'groundbreaking research', or 'high risk, high gain research', which is a quote from the funding call, which takes place at the frontiers of knowledge. While I'm hesitating quite strongly to claim that our work will change the world, if only it could, I think it's important to acknowledge that what we do is only possible because there are funding scheme such as this one, which challenge researchers to build bold hypotheses, perhaps encouraging us to leave our comfort zones.

What is WOWA's hypothesis? We argue that that in the 18th and 19th centuries, long before architectural training was open to them, women had agency in the architectural world. The canon and most textbooks used in history of architecture courses might not refer to women for this period in most, you struggle to find one or two but we set out to find large numbers of those identifying as women between 1700 and 1900 who had something to say about the built environment.

As the title of the project suggests, we search for this female agency through the practice of writing. In our case, almost always published writing, as this indicated that the authors were read and thus had some degree of influence, and that's very central to our project. So our premise is that from the start, we regard the women we read as potential architectural agents, whether or not they had any say in the professional design of any spaces. What counts instead are the experiences and influencing powers, the ways in which, through their writing, they made space.

Two things have to change for this hypothesis to be fruitful: First, we must rethink the very concept of architectural agent. Who do we consider as architectural agent and thus as protagonists for the histories that we write? Do we really think that only architects and their official critics decided how a space was used, understood, how it acquired meaning to other people? Are we really certain that only those holding power determined how life was lived in

these spaces? If you agree, as I hope that this is not the case, we must listen to those doing otherwise.

Second, we have to give credit to these, let's call them 'other agents' to have had a voice, to have been listened to, to have been heard, to have had the agency and influence to shift meaning assigned to space, to have critiqued what others created and thus made space.

So we ask, who are we reading, who are you reading to understand spaces of the past, their users and constellations. We argue that histories of the built environment need to expand their evidence base, to stay relevant today in a world of planetary challenges, including increasing polarity and inequality.

This is not about doing away with what is commonly called the canon. That would be wasteful. It's also not about adding to it, or window dressing it. It's about differencing it to use Griselda Pollock's word, by means of, what she calls, an active rereading of its always-present structuring "other," we challenge the canon by bringing it into dialogue with other voices, decentering it, in order to open up spaces for those otherwise not seen and not heard.

The corpus we use for this is 18th and nineteenth century women's writing in English, Spanish and German from Europe and Latin America to test our methods in connected yet separate cultural spheres. Travel writing has featured highly on our reading list so far, because it was one of the genres most open to women for publication as opposed to those genres considered perhaps more serious, you see a few examples here. We're also looking at political writing, household, or gardening manuals, educational treatises, or histories, and scientific writing. We know that writing and publishing implies some degree of privilege in the period that we are considering yet it was far more open than practices of designing and building architectures. It probably still is today, I would say. So if we read more women in our case, one could, I hope, apply this to other marginalised groups as well. We will then read more eyewitnesses, we will read more dwellers and users of spaces, and more critiques, experts, scholars, and thinkers. If we start from this to rebuild our corpus as historians, we will, by necessity, write histories differently.

Essentially, we turn things upside down, rather than starting out from the premise that women had no agency, we assume that they did and in large numbers, we credit them with having had a voice, with their writing having had an impact, we hear them and know that others at their time listened as well. It is our job as historians to find appropriate methods to learn to listen, to read their texts and understand what they tell us about their environment, about buildings, gardens, cities, and other spaces so besides making visible the woman in their writings, which we deem

relevant to architectural histories, we also worked towards developing a reading method to read differently and this is what we have worked on, with the WOWA group and invited guests in a series of events over the past year from listening to her, reading her, situating her, or *escribir de ella*, we have invited distinguished researchers both early career and more senior to read with us, as well as present their own work on women writing architecture on to us. There isn't enough time to tell you now about each of the events or talks, but we have learned incredibly much, it's been a whirl wind, as I'm sure my team will agree and we have come far and built a network of scholars working on similar projects and developed our own approach, methods and corpus.

Our events have always been two part. First, the private reading workshop featuring Post-Its, and highlighters, centre stage in neon colours, as you see here, including loudspeakers, and active readers in front of the blownup texts, evidence of the performative reading modes we engaged with. In this manner, we have been collaboratively reading several texts by women from the 18th and 19th centuries, we explore this kind of reading with, as we call it, as a method to write inclusive histories, which incorporate the experiences of those previously sidelined by architectural cultures. The experience of those previously sidelined by architectural cultures. All speakers and respondents took part in this experiment, and we are grateful for their openness to it. We feel strongly that having read with each other and with her, the author, enabled a fuller, and more profound discussion in the public colloquia following the reading workshops. Most importantly, we have begun to build the WoWA network, because one thing is clear: We can't have too many people listening to women writing architecture, reading with them, and understanding how they saw the architecture of the past, connecting with researchers in this way has been one of the most inspiring, thought provoking and joyful parts of the project so far.

Now we want to go bigger. We are organising an international conference jointly with the Chair of ETH, it asks, who do we listen to, we invite researchers to reconstruct conversations, real, imagined or metaphorical ones taking place in the 18th and 19th centuries in any region in order to diversify the ways that we write histories of architecture. The call for papers will open on 18th March, so anyone interested get in touch, all information is on the website which will be shared later.

Here is the link to the website. This is our hub, where we post what we do. We also have a very active Instagram account, the handle is there, jointly researched by Sol, Elena and our brilliant research assistant Lucy De la Cost. Please. Do follow us and get in touch with any questions. Thank you so much.

SOL: Thank you so much Anne for your presentation. Now, I would like to give the opportunity for Helen to turn her camera on, and to also share her presentation. Over to you, Helen.

HELEN THOMAS: Hi. So, I loved Sol's idea of joining us together, Anne, herself and me, the sisters in women writing architecture in conversation, women writing architecture.org, and women writing architecture female experiences of the built 17th to 19th century, and this slide is from the very first presentation I gave about our project joining the two projects together in March 2021.

So, I'll continue where I left off.

What's in a name? There are lots of Helen Thomases in the world, and this google search shows us the most famous one. Helen Thomas is an anonymous name, and anonymity is a strategy. In my incarnation of the name Helen Thomas, I am an architect, the Ph.D. in art history in University of Essex who has worked in and learned from various institutions, this includes the Victoria and Albert museum, Phaidon Press and even The Bartlett, where I studied for a masters in modern architectural history. Now, I belong to no institution but occasionally manifest in some, including the department of architecture at ETH Zurich.

Although the ambition for exploiting the potential of the Internet to create an entangled creative realm that has existed in my imagination for several years was not until the autumn of 2020 that the project really began. In joining forces with Sara Handleman, [inaudible] the imagery started to take on a formal reality in the shape of a design brief. By December, we were ready to hand this over to Lizzie Malcolm at Rectangle who define themselves as designers of nonlinear narratives. In the six months between commissioning Rectangle and going live, we worked with the advisory board to contact as many people as possible to invite them to contribute to what was at that point still an abstract idea. We were lucky to be supported by Mary McCloud and Amal Androuss who connected us to people like Mary Norman Woods, Anne Marie Adams and Despoina Stratigakos and other revered historians and teachers, who made generous early contributions that formed the backbone of our list.

Our advisers also helped us to reflect on how to move outside our own realities, from our European location into the southern hemisphere, and looking eastwards as well as engage perspectives including those of transgender experience and decolonisation. This essential work carried out at present by myself and Emily as editors assisted by Jay, is ongoing and incomplete, perhaps providing us with our biggest challenge.

At the end of June 2021, [womenwritingarchitecture.org](https://www.womenwritingarchitecture.org) is an online open source annotated

bibliography of writing by women about architecture initially designed to serve as a resource for academics and teachers when creating booklists and searching for critics, for example, the intention was to make it easier to stretch and test the canon of architecture and its history, as it says on the about page of the website, this is a communal space and entangled matrix for gathering, publishing and sharing annotated lists of texts for encouragement, finding new writers, and for insight into what is happening in the vivid realm where people speak up for themselves. Each of the three terms in the name, women, writing, architecture, are under question as we ask, what is architecture when written about by women? Who defines themselves as a woman? After Paul B Preciado and even, What is writing in our supersensual mediated age. At first glance, the landing page of the website seems simple a list of texts which we call citations, with two columns, a blue one on the left called collections, the green one on the right named annotations but it could also be confusing.

Time must be taken, and patient must be wielded to see all the parts, to use the filters or embark on a search, to tentatively click the first plus sign and compile a personal collection, then e-mail it to people. To visit the forum and find out what we have been producing, to discover and browse through all the people and organisations who have already contributed to this communal venture, to participate, even.

Everyone is invited to participate in celebrating women writing architecture, even cis men, and on the right, you can see a short list of the some of the men who have contributed to the bibliography.

A different answer to the question, how does it work, in a practical sense, each citation is connected to at least one annotation or collection. In the image shown on the screen, an extract from the list of collections is shown on the left, with a blue background. We have a selection of filters to aid exploration, for example, bookshops, one of our projects is to feature architecture bookshops in cities around the world, showing publications by women that they have in their collections. On the right, is an image of and extract from the annotations list, which has a green background.

The collection is a group of citations drawn from syllabi, events, bookshops, personal interests, and many other inspirations. Mindy Seu, always a model for us, has been promoting her book *Cyberfeminism Index* over the last few months and contributed a collection.

An annotation is an individual's response to a citation, a text, but encompasses their thoughts, opinions, and research. It can be anything from a couple of sentences about why the text is important perhaps as what Sara Ahmed calls a companion text, an extensive, illustrated piece

of work arched the citation that develops through the editorial conversation.

This method of addition to the list means that the system works best when suggested texts are the work of others rather than by the authors themselves. In this way, the value of a text is created by the number of times it is meaningful to someone, chosen as part of a collection or collections, or annotated words, and many times. This approach is inspired by the long spoons, or long chopsticks allegory which takes a dining table as analogy for humanity. This image, shows a citation card for Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, one of the most popular and, therefore, valuable citations in the list.

Another way of answering the question, how does it work is to refer to an interpretation by Yagma Cultour, part of which is shown here. Her ongoing project to describe what the sight means to her, gives us in-depth feedback on how the site works so far.

The way that the women writing architecture website develops as an annotated bibliography, as a web-based resource, and as a project is responsiveness rather than planned. Themes arise, such as, translation, as we include more languages on the site. Emily, who is French, Jachee, who is Korean, and myself as a Briton explore the themes through the diversions in our mother tongues of the 11th century book, *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu, this was part of [inaudible] independent residency programme, and this collection by us, is one of the outcomes.

The issue of translation and multiple meanings is fundamental to the working of the website, which is expressed in the glossary, for example, where the possibility exists for multiple definitions of each term.

Most recently, it has inspired what we call the glossator, a user created bespoke bibliography designed to be useful for personal research and for sharing with colleagues and friends. This image comes from the process of development, the glossator, it's based on the talmbout where layers of interpretation are added in the margin for texts. It is also inspired by the medieval glosses immediate in the process of translation from the Latin into vernacular languages never before expressed in writing.

The glossator is a development of the personal collection, which is designed for users to make and share bespoke collections. This collection was made by curator Geraldine Tedder, for her exhibition *Space as Matrix* inspired by texts written by Suzanne Toro.

This is what happens when you press the annotate print button, in this glossator, Geraldine reflects on her use of text and the relationships between authors in her marginal annotations.

We are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of mechanisms such as the glossator for enacting the website in the real world, when we were invited to contribute a list of books for the kiosk at ETH, we said, but we are already a list. Instead, we used fluorescent bookmarks to highlight publications by women. This transformed into the Book I Love podcast series which you can find on the website. At the moment, we are setting up an association to encompass women writing architecture, this requires a formalisation of strategy that had previously been largely spontaneous.

So everyone is invited to participate, simply by e-mailing us, at our e-mail and initiating a dialogue with suggestions for citations perhaps, an idea that we haven't thought of yet or a proposal for a collaboration. We have various initiatives that invite participation. The podcast series, for example, or the glossator collection. It is also possible to send a citation which can be already on the list, or not yet there, either with an annotation, or as part of a collection via our participate page. We also produce a newsletter every now and then that can be signed up for on the about page. But that's it! For women writing architecture part two.

SOL: Thank you so much Helen for your presentation, I will ask Anne now to join us on the screen so we can have a little conversation with the audience today. Thank you for joining us, post your questions in the chat if you have any. Use the Q&A function below.

But just to start, it's so nice to be the three of us, celebrating both projects, and it's exciting to see what you are doing now, so first I wanted to ask Helen, I've seen the women writing architecture website grow and evolve, and more people joining, which has been really exciting but as you were saying, it's an ongoing project, and it's responsive, and it's really a nice way of framing it, if you can tell the audience a little bit about, now that the site is running, what is the current focus on current focus on women writing architecture, what are you working on now?

HELEN: We're setting up an association that involves a process of formalising what we have been doing which is interesting. I guess in a way it's what Anne had to do before she started her project. That brings to the fore the notion of what value is for us, on the site, you know, how objects or citations are given value, which I touched on briefly, so very much, it's about what something means for different people, and then also the notion of shared values and I'm sure that's something that you Anne discuss in WoWA, we come from different perspectives and bring different ideological beliefs with us, how, if you are working together, in a communal way, how do you respect and share values without them being monolithic? That's something also that is important to the website, but also actually becomes quite difficult when you start to formalise it. And I think also, inherent to what I said before is this notion, and I really respond to your idea

of, it will be the communal reading, how do you make something which is quite abstract like an online bibliography have meaning in the real world, so this notion of a website as a mechanism enabling social actions is something that we are interested in as well.

SOL: Thank you. Now, to ask you, Anne, you talked about this project WOWA is funded bit by ERC grant, and I know that these projects are supposed to be groundbreaking, so what's been surprising during these last two years of research for your project?

ANNE: Thanks Sol. The ERC makes a big thing out of, they want high risk projects, so it's not easy to think about risks in the humanities projects, and a historical project, I think. But looking back to when I first wrote the grant, Helen you made the point, the formalisation happened first, I can be more informal now than when I wrote the grant, I can change things now but when I did that, I think this kind of big framework and big challenge pushed me a bit to think outside of the box, maybe. And to make a point of not looking for a woman who designed buildings, not looking for women architects in some sense, or women designers, which is something that I still quite often have to explain when I am asked, what you do and work on women in architecture in the 18th and 19th century and they ask, so what architects have you found, we're not looking for architects but for women writing architecture, and the risk that I identified for the grant, you know, because we have to identify risks is that we don't find enough women writing architecture or saying something significant that somehow can be related to, what we call histories of architecture in a conventional sense, and the joyful surprise has been that that's not a problem. We don't look for exceptions, we really find large numbers, we identify texts, that we think have potential, and there have been only a few that on closer inspection, that they do not have potential and they do not say anything on built spaces or landscapes that we find relevant, and that we can relate and that we can expand in some way the ways that we think about these spaces of the past and howt hey were experienced. In some ways, that's overwhelming because there's no way that we can deal with all of this with our small team, we could keep working for another ten of years easily if we had the stamina and funding. But I think that's been one of the biggest surprises that that's really not a problem and the other surprising thing is that we have found a lot of other women working on women writing architecture but not framing it that way, and not looking at them collectively, and that's what we're bringing -- that's really new as well, and that's been surprising as well, that you can look at women writing architecture, women producing texts that did ascribe meaning to build space at the time, we can write histories of architecture from these texts that we can look that collectively and in large numbers, so that's been a very positive surprise as well.

SOL: Thank you. Just wanted to ask something to both of you: Why writing? Why did you choose writing? You mentioned that in your presentation, Helen, but it could be women acting,

speaking, drawing architecture? So maybe if you could go first, Helen, why writing?

HELEN: Good question. For both of us, writing is where the canon is defined, so if you want to challenge what architecture is, and who makes it, that's where you need to start but your question is really interesting because it says, why not performing, and why not drawing? And I was reflecting on that, as I have a lot to do with women drawing, this is one of my personas, women drawing architecture, you know, drawing is not where the canon is made, so that's quite clear but drawing in a way, I mean, it isn't a language we don't need to make any translation in drawing, whichever language you speak, you can gather around a drawing, and talk about it. And so, yeah. And also, what you have to do, with a text, you can enter into a woman's imagination into the way that she is thinking. With a drawing, it requires reading it in a different way and words to be applied to it. Bizarrely, even though it's more academic, writing is a much more direct passageway into a way of thinking or imagination.

And I also think that writing is more easily made social. Getting back to what we have all been talking about in this session, is -- and something that I'm going to be arguing this afternoon in a workshop, can writing be activism. I think it can't unless it's made into a social situation. And that's what both of us, and you, with your active reading, which is always done as a social thing, and the way that we are developing it in our work is this idea of making a social mechanism. So, yeah, I am totally interested in translation, so writing for me in states that it can move through is very, very interesting. But then when we were making the glossators that I showed briefly, we were testing them out, having a go at making some, and I did one called testing oral history, so I find that a really interesting learning experience, to think about the relationship between writing and speaking, and the limits and possibilities of this method of research, so I put in different search terms into women writing architecture. Things like journals, letters and diaries, which I know are fundamentally important to your research and, of course, you know, your annotations came up and the work of your students but I think, you know, they are a form of speaking to yourself as well as writing, so there's always implicit within the writing this idea of speaking, which is social and then also when I put in the work speak, we push the boundaries of the conventional definitions of [inaudible] 'can the monster speak', came up. Your question, why writing, and not performance, I think somehow they're embodied within the writing, but I do like the idea of women drawing architecture. That's quite nice.

SOL: Maybe for a future project.

HELEN: Exactly.

SOL: Thank you, Helen. I'm just going to encourage people in the audience who are with us

today, please, if you have any questions, please, remember to put them in the Q&A and we will be happy to help you join our conversation as well. So over to you, Anne. Why writing in your project?

ANNE: I think it's interesting, it's definitely good to have a project up your sleeve, Helen. I mean, it was really funny, when we found out that we had both come up with the same title, it's really a good title, I think, so that's clearly why we did. But for me, it was to a certain degree, almost naturally, that I chose writing. It evolved really from my previous work on language and perception in a historical context, and then more recently, I have researched architecture in the nineteenth century press. So in a sense, what I did with writing the grant proposal, again, thinking about doing something new, and doing something different, doing something that's somehow can be called groundbreaking whatever that might be really is that we use my previous experiences, skills and expertise that I built over the years to contribute to writing these more inclusive histories of architecture, to getting an angle on architectural histories that somehow changes something fundamentally, beyond, just building more corpus, and more materials, making them accessible. I've always argued that the ways in which we speak, or clearly, how people in the past have spoken about the spaces that they have experienced, that this language holds clues about the meanings of these spaces, the significance of these spaces, and how we understand these spaces, and Helen, you've just referred to exactly that at the end of your response.

I think -- it's clearly nothing new, canons are made by writing, all historians use written sources but if we take into account that language is neither historically nor socially stable, people from different periods, or with different social backgrounds express their experiences differently, then we can decode, and analyse this language or their writing, as the obvious medium and practice to investigate it's also quite important that what we look at is published writing, because it implies that someone else read it, and it was received, and had an influence and that's important and Helen's project is an editorial, publishing project as well, it's about spreading further, and also has the reading response in there, which is so fascinating, and so great, and I want to encourage everyone to look at it and put your own annotations in there, it's a conversation in a website, it's really nice.

And then there's also something else which links very closely with Helen's approach, that in some ways, in others not, but in some ways, writing is more inclusive practice than drawing. Definitely in a professional sense, of architectural drawing, and definitely than architectural design and practices, as such. A woman could be a professional writer, could earn a living by writing, translating, editing, long before she could become a professional architect or even a draftsman, anything to do with architectural practice. And still today I think that many female

architects tend to practices related to writing or editing to somehow surmount discriminations against their gender in architectural practice. This is clearly not to say that writing is in any way not exclusive and doesn't have problems with exclusion, it needs privilege, and especially in our period, we are generally looking at privileged woman, who had access to getting their writings published, although there is variety, there is diversity in the woman that we look at, but there is clearly, you know, there is always that as well. I think in comparison to architectural practice, it is a more open practice. In terms of the exclusionary aspect, that's something that projects like ours always work with, looking towards the future rather than the past especially Helen's project might do away with that.

SOL: Thank you, Anne, we have a question from professor Jane Rendell. Thank you for joining us. I'm going to read it out. It says, "thanks for sharing the wonderful work, it's really inspiring. It's great to see how these projects are diverse in conversations, they both connect with the website I've been curating, site reading writing quarterly, it's really important in the history of feminism, a big part of this was consciousness raising. Is this part of either of the projects?"

HELEN: I had a quick look at the question, and I was -- does Jane mean that the sight writing website, or the issue of collective practice, I guess we could answer in both ways.

Because I would love, I mean, I have come across obviously sight reading and writing, through people's sight writing who have come from Jane's website. And interestingly, some of it has been through another project that I'm involved in, called Tac, looking into the notion of tacit knowledge, which relates to the question that you were asking early, about writing being conventional, contributes to conventional knowledge structures, whereas drawing is much more about tacit knowledge. And as I was thinking about it, what Jane is doing, the sight writing project is almost a bridge between the tacit and the explicit, or the academic knowledge. So it would be great to have a representation of the sight reading, writing, quarterly on women writing architecture. So, yeah, if Jane wants to be in contact, we can make a collection, have annotations, there are some, there are some references already on the site, I think sight writing might be a theme, I'm not sure. But, yeah, collective practice.

SOL: And the other part of the question is more about consciousness raising. So, will either of the projects include an aspect of consciousness raising as a collective practice?

ANNE: Maybe I -- Helen --

HELEN: You go! [Laughter].

ANNE: I'll jump in. Yes, I mean, definitely, collective practice is clearly totally central to what we do, we develop our method collectively by these reading workshops, and it's really interesting how collaborative, collective reading, changes one's reading, so we've read texts, many of the times before, and then we do this collectively extracts, and read sentence by sentence and give different tasks, and read with other people and read through their minds, just by being in a space together, and reading [inaudible] together, you see new things just from myself, and then you hear what other people are thinking about. So this collaborative, collective reading is really very fascinating, and I think it's something how you can approach text that, where the canon doesn't tell you, these are relevant for the history, for your discipline, this is something that, you know, we have to make an argument, we have to find a way of explaining and justifying that they are relevant for our discipline.

And I think that that's linked to consciousness raising because it increases that consciousness of what are the sources that we can look at and generally if you ask about, textbooks on architectural histories, quote mostly men before 1900 or even after white men, privileged men, euro centric or western centric and the response, you can't quite get around that, there are no other architects and what can you do and all important projects were built by them but the way around it, that's increasing awareness, or increasing consciousness that you can get from that is that if you shift the focus not on the production of the important buildings but rather their reception and all of the other spaces as well and how they were lived in and experienced and how meaning was created for them then you get to that, and to raise that idea, to get that into people's minds, then it opens up the door to all sorts of histories. It's almost too big what you open up there, but that's another matter.

Thanks for that question, Jane.

SOL: Thank you, also we have been trying to integrate different modes, and different ways of relating to others, and sharing our content, and that's another way of consciousness raising, through our workshops, through the event that Helen does with her team, we're trying to find new ways of meeting people and creating content, and that idea of creating knowledge together has been something that both projects explore in depth and it's really nice to see that work.

So, we have another question now from Lorica who says, "thank you for your presentations, it's fascinating what you do. I wanted to ask if and what was the feedback and or engagement of men towards your projects. Thank you." That's a really good question. I think that Helen touched a little bit on it through her website.

HELEN: Yeah, we do invite men to join in. We want to hear men celebrating women, of course,

we want men to join in. So, yeah, they're intrigued but, of course, you speak only to the men who are already interested. I guess luckily, we haven't had any negative hate mail on the site or e-mails, and a lot of projects that promote women do have that. Maybe women writing architecture is a bit too niche for that to happen. But the men who have engaged, it's been more that they feel that they're not invited. We make so much effort to invite them and I'm sure that you do too. I've been in your collective reading and there's a good gender split. And, I guess, that's consciousness raising by having men involved. This consciousness-creating question is really fascinating and I think, whose consciousness do we want to raise? is the key question for me, like, there's speaking to the converted and then there are the people who aren't converted and the consciousness raising I guess has more value amongst the unconverted but how do you get in amongst that crowd, and then that would be the real test if you are in that crowd, then it would be tested on how men are responding to that project. So that's a provocation for sure.

ANNE: Yeah, it's a really important question, as you say, and we have always made a point of inviting, we had one woman-only event, but that was a different type of setting, but there is a space for that, for women-only events which I think is powerful and important but I think for our public events, we have always made a point of trying to have, you know, male voices there as well. Ideally men working on women -- there are so many women working on men, so why not the other way around? There's no reason for there to be an exclusively female space and for there to be a gender split. That's very important.

In terms of, I mean, it's interesting in terms of the teaching that I do if I teach classes on gender and architectural history, I do get a majority of female students, those identifying as female and I have tried to address that and make it clear that this is an open space, that this is not addressing only those identifying as female and it is starting maybe to change. I'm seeing greater diversity in that direction in classes but it's very slow. So maybe that's also a call to make it explicit. Maybe we need to be more inviting and explicit that we are not a female-only space, even though it is powerful and important to have female-only spaces. So that's, I think, my answer to this.

SOL: Yeah, I think that's a really important question that we discuss often, and I have seen at least a very positive response from colleagues, and an interest, you know, understanding that listening to these voices as historical sources which are highly interesting, very new, they give you new views into the architecture and built environment and the landscapes of this time. In my view, our colleagues are responding very positively, but as Helen and Anne point out, we also, as women writing architecture group, women is in the front, we have to build those bridges, and we have been working building those bridges to get more diversity as well of people talking about women's writing, women's work, because it's just as relevant as anyone else's.

ANNE: Can I add one thing, I actually had on that note in terms of positive response from colleagues, I mean, I have had several colleagues, and some who attended our reading workshops have remarked on that but I have also had specifically had remarks on how this opens doors on looking at other writing that's not sort of -- comes from the architectural sphere, the professional sphere, critics, architects and so on, there's other political writing done by men around the French Revolution that one could look at in that sense as well, and read with these methods, that's quite interesting as well, and that's really what I'm hoping, and I added as added value of the project, thinking again about the grant application on that, that it's not something, that's not a method that you can use exclusively for women, but also for other marginalized groups. So that's the key point to make here.

SOL: Thank you so much, thank you so much, Anne and Helen for being with us today, and thank you so much for the questions from the audience.