

University for the Creative Arts
Research Project Portfolios

Prison/Palace

By Sława Harasymowicz



Project Details

Name of Researcher:	Sława Harasymowicz
Name of Output:	<i>Prison/Palace</i>
UCARO link/s:	https://research.uca.ac.uk/5324/
Output Type:	M – Exhibition; solo exhibition and curation of group exhibition with associated publication
Year and mode of dissemination:	<p><i>Prison/Palace</i> solo exhibition, Margate Museum 2 February - 7 May 2018</p> <p><i>Waste Land</i> curated group exhibition, Margate Museum 2 February - 7 May 2018</p> <p><i>Promenade</i> publication, 2018</p> <p>Aligned with the <i>Journeys with the Waste Land</i> exhibition at Turner Contemporary, 3 February - 7 May 2018</p>
Key Words:	Site-responsive art, memory, archive, ‘The Waste Land’, counter narrative
Funding:	<p>In-kind support from Margate Museum for the exhibition</p> <p>Newspaper production (printing costs) funded by Thanet District Council and Margate Historical Society</p>

Synopsis

Prison/Palace is a research output by Sława Harasymowicz comprising a solo installation and the curation of a group exhibition, both held at Margate Museum on the theme of T.S. Eliot. This project formed part of a wider programme of events associated with the Turner Contemporary's *Journeys with the Waste Land* exhibition.

Harasymowicz's solo exhibition was supported by a residency at Margate Museum and produced in the context of the museum's collection and the Turner Contemporary exhibition. Her installation aimed to bring back the lost voice of T.S. Eliot's wife Vivienne. It consisted of print-, video- and text-based interventions sited both within a former prison cell and scattered within the museum's collection.

In addition to her own exhibition, Harasymowicz also curated a group exhibition at Margate Museum that sat alongside her own work. Harasymowicz selected a group of female

artists of non-British origin whose practices tackled the issues of the exhibition: violence, otherness, language and power. They created new interventions within the Museum's main space (The Court Room) responding to ideas from, or fragments of *The Waste Land*. The artists were Joanna Rajkowska, Alicja Rogalska, Justyna Scheuring, Eva Stenram and Cecilia Bonilla. The research stemmed from Harasymowicz's interest in the ways that contemporary critical art practice interrogates archive and document. The solo and curated exhibitions were accompanied by a publication, *Promenade*, which took the form of a broadsheet newspaper.

This portfolio of supporting contextual information includes evidence of the research aims, context and processes which led to new insights. It is illustrated with images of both the solo and group exhibitions. It is accompanied by a PDF of the *Promenade* publication.



Sława Harasymowicz, *Prison/
Palace*, solo installation in prison
cell, Margate Museum



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Context

Prison/Palace formed part of a wider programme of events associated with the Turner Contemporary's *Journeys with the Waste Land* exhibition. This explored T.S. Eliot's work in relation to Margate, where significant sections of the poem 'The Waste Land' (1922) were written. Harasymowicz was an active member of the Waste Land Research Group which was formed in 2015 through an open call issued by Turner Contemporary for the collective curation of the exhibition. The group developed their own methods for making decisions together and chose all of the artworks, designed the layout of the show, wrote the exhibition texts and devised the public programme. The exhibition foregrounds the multiple perspectives of those involved and in doing so mirrors the form of the poem, where Eliot juxtaposes many different voices and references. In this role Harasymowicz both consulted on and fed into the ideas for *Journeys with the Waste Land*, and the Waste Land Research Group prompted her to create the parallel exhibitions at the Margate Museum.

While the focus of the *Journeys with the Wasteland* project was T.S. Eliot himself, *Prison/Palace* reversed the hierarchy to highlight Vivienne Eliot, his first wife, who after their separation, eventually died in an asylum. It raises issues around the exclusion and marginalisation of the female voice in art historical narratives. Adapted from a line in 'The Waste Land', 'Prison and palace and reverberation', the exhibition title implies wider contexts of power and its imbalances as they connect to the biography of Vivienne Eliot. In the Margate Museum project, Vivienne functions as a central symbol and inspiration for a reflection on the mechanics of side-lining or 'confining' inconvenient presence and memory. Juxtaposing the biographical, the fictive and the Museum itself — formerly a town hall, a police station and magistrate's court — the work re-considers tensions between memory and absence.

Harasymowicz's site-responsive solo installation was concentrated in one area of the building; a prison cell utilised as a space of confinement, of memory and the location of a voice. The artwork employed print and moving image to intervene in the space and recall the forgotten voice of Vivienne, invoking tension and conflict, both personal and historical/public. Site-responsive practice and the exploration of ways to re-present 'archive' and 'memory' and the intersections between the personal and the public (document, voice, space) are central to Harasymowicz's practice. Her previous exhibitions include the solo show *Wolf Man* at the Freud Museum, London (2012); *Ersatz* at the Ethnographic Museum, Krakow, Poland (2014) and *The Spring to Come*, Poetry Library, Southbank Centre, London (2016-17, supported by ACE).

Harasymowicz's curation of the group exhibition within 'The Court Room' space of the Margate Museum was informed by the context of her involvement with the Waste Land Research Group. The overarching idea behind the *Journeys with the Waste Land* project was not only to highlight T.S. Eliot's connections to Margate, but to use the exhibition as a vehicle to explore curating as a collective endeavour that would not be limited to the Turner Contemporary. The way Harasymowicz's Museum residency grew into an exhibition and her curation of the work of others posed interesting questions in relation to artists working independently yet within a host institution.

KEY TEXTS

Gilbert, S. and Gubar, S. (1979) *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
Seymour-Jones, C. (2001) *Painted Shadow: A Life of Vivienne Eliot*. London: Constable.

Research Questions and Aims

Research questions:

How does the presence of Vivienne Eliot counter official narratives about T.S. Eliot?

How can poetic language be materialised?

What are the models for artists to work independently within established institutional frameworks?

Research aims:

To represent lost voices within archival collections through artistic intervention

To explore collaborative curatorial and publishing practices

To bring together a range of contemporary perspectives and voices

Research Methods and Process

Central to *Prison/Palace* was the development and commission of new artworks that test correlations between photography, drawing and printmaking. The research considered the materiality of these processes, and moving image projection, as part of an installation that proposed new narrations and layers of meaning, released through the juxtapositions between words, images, artefacts from the Museum's own collection and their placement. The work developed from an iterative period of experimentation during Harasymowicz's residency at Margate Museum. Although the initial purpose was for Harasymowicz to collaborate with the museum staff in producing a 're-presentation' or 'creative' display of local historical context relevant to 'The Waste Land', it quickly evolved into an independent artistic intervention of her own that explored the materiality of the poem's language.

The context of the Margate Museum prompted Harasymowicz to re-present archival content – imagery and text – through transformation across photography-drawing-printmaking and moving image. For example, the text-based artworks in the prison cell installation used phrases from 'The Waste Land' attributed to Vivienne. These were reordered to construct a form of address to the visitor that re-narrates the space. The manner in which the artworks were arranged in the cell demanded that the visitor fully enter the room and view the work (particularly the video) from the position of the 'insider' (and simultaneously outsider, placed in a prison cell). In addition, Harasymowicz used text and prints to recontextualise other parts of the collection offering intriguing and incongruous commentary on and through T.S. Eliot's words: lines from the poem as replacement labels in

museum cabinets; long, ghostly ribbons of text printed on silk; Vivienne's face printed on silver foil to fill one of the cabinets; and framed images to replace existing museum displays.

Harasymowicz's personal work at Margate Museum was complimented by her invitation to Joanna Rajkowska, Alicja Rogalska, Justyna Scheuring, Eva Stenram and Cecilia Bonilla to provide specific artworks or to create new interventions within the Museum's main space and to respond to ideas and specific fragments or aspects of 'The Waste Land'. Joanna Rajkowska's 'Two Men and a Mattress' offered a playful response to ideas around land, territory and place. Alicja Rogalska's work consisted of interviews with asylum seekers (all lawyers, unable to practice in the UK) filmed in disused courtrooms. Justyna Scheuring's performance work dealt with voice, translation and lack of understanding. Eva Stenram's photographic narrative responded to the figure of the typist. Cecilia Bonilla's collage explored ideas around time. The placement of these curated artworks in the main courtroom created a montage of voices 'speaking in court' at varying pitches and intensity.

Promenade, the newspaper, was initiated, art directed and overseen by Harasymowicz. UCA students were invited to design a newspaper which responded to the poem and the archival contexts through a contemporary lens. Acting as an intermediary between the student group and the Turner Contemporary, Harasymowicz facilitated meetings at the Turner Contemporary and the Margate Museum that were also attended by the students. Text contributions from other members of the Waste Land Research Group formed a significant part of the newspaper's contents.



Research process: intervening with display of archival objects



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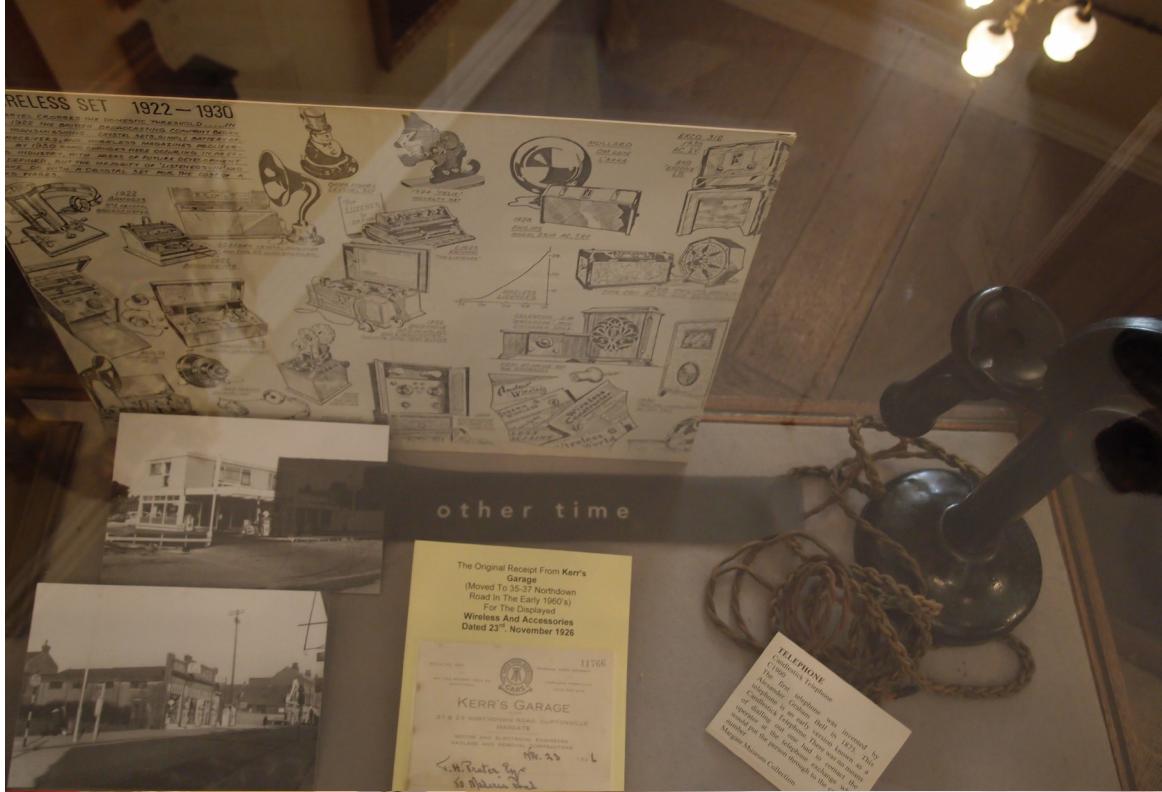
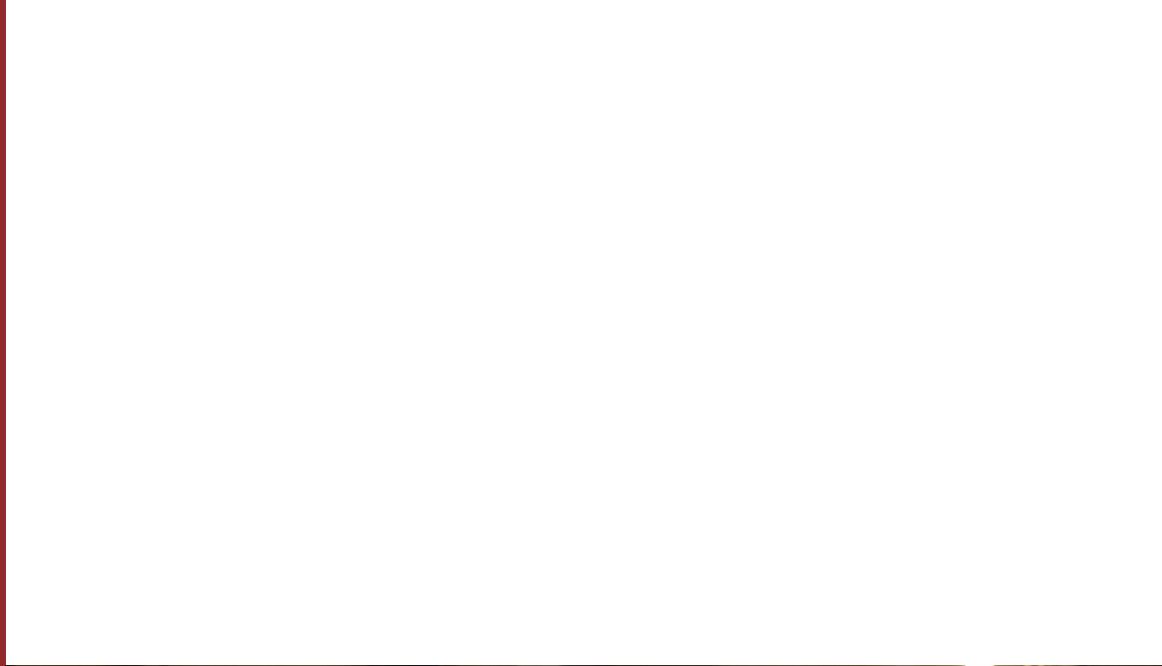
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Research process: intervening with display of archival objects



Research process: intervening with display of archival objects



Research process: intervening with display of archival objects

Research Contribution and Recognition

Insights and contribution:

Prison/Palace demonstrated the importance of testing different formats to articulate alternative histories and counter archives. This is a complex endeavour, as on first appraisal representing the under-represented as part of an ‘associated’ programme may seem to comply with the established and gendered hierarchy of remembering and celebration. In this instance, the life and work of T.S. Eliot as a major cultural figure is foregrounded while research into his wife Vivienne operates on the ‘side lines’. However, this approach offers a unique scope for criticality and artistic experimentation as well as opening up new questions, ideas and audiences.

Particularly important to the research was Harasymowicz’s focus on collaboration when approaching this particular theme. Here content and methodology were aligned in new ways, creating space for discussion and voices which might otherwise go unheard. The situation of *Prison/Palace* alongside the larger collaborative *Journeys with the Waste Land* project, Harasymowicz’s curation of fellow artists and the collaborative creation of the *Promenade* publication was thus an innovative and fitting treatment of a neglected figure.

Creative outcomes for Harasymowicz’s own personal and curatorial practice included new insights into artistic methods and processes of drawing, print, video, site-responsive installation and the relationships between words and images.

Research Contribution and Recognition

Further dissemination details:

The *Promenade* publication was published in the traditional broadsheet format and 10,000 copies were printed. It was made freely available to audiences at the Turner Contemporary for the duration of the *Journeys with the Waste Land* exhibition (February – May 2018). Copies were also available at local cafés, bookshops and tourist information points.

Follow-on activities:

PRESS

Harasymowicz gave a number of talks and interviews on the research, including an interview for Contemporary Lynx magazine:

<https://contemporarylynx.co.uk/i-dont-really-like-history-that-much-it-annoys-me>

A short film was made on the Waste Land Research Group:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRZ8QmTDDYM>

PROJECTS

New contacts with the curatorial team at Turner Contemporary led directly to Harasymowicz's *Dismal Sheets of Dust*, a solo exhibition at Crate, Margate, which was part of Margate NOW Festival (parallel to the Turner Prize 2019). Harasymowicz used new techniques in print to make mixed-media works on surfaces including sandpaper and moving image work mixing archives (found footage) with new photographic, video and drawing-based animations.



Curation of group exhibition in
'The Court Room'



Curation of group exhibition in
'The Court Room'

Margate Contemporary, University of the Creative Arts.

Donate £1 and take a paper away with you



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Graphic Design:

Studio Mothership

FRONT COVER

Foil print of Vivienne Eliot as
intervention in Margate Museum
collections

BACK COVER

Prison/Palace solo installation in
prison cell, Margate Museum

