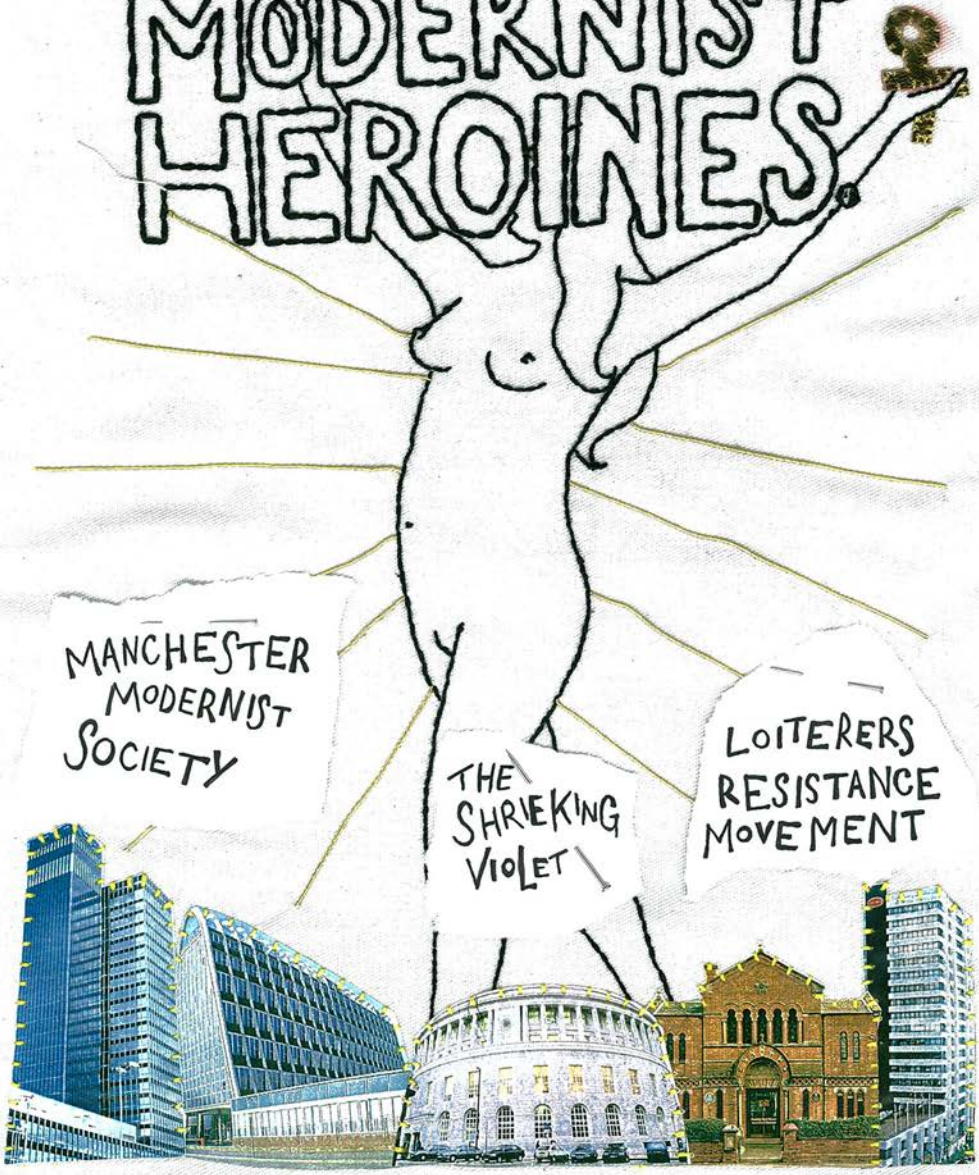
MANCHESTER'S MODERNIST HEROINES



1 Manchester's Modernist Heroines

A true collaboration from start to finish, this project sprang from an ongoing conversation here in the MMS office about the peculiar position of women in Modernism – you know, those 'girls' in the Bauhaus, forbidden to take architecture and relegated to more suitable positions in the weaving room – and the ones who occasionally broke into the men's room such as Charlotte Perriand and Eileen Gray.

Women like these were pivotal to the Modern Movement but exotically international and far from Manchester. Nearer to home were women influencing the twentieth century city or taking the lead in design, architecture and planning? Manchester was certainly at the epicentre of the women's movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth century and their tales of bravery, struggle and daring-do are the stuff of legend. But what happened next?

A facebook call-out yielded responses but not nearly as many from the post Edwardian period as we'd have liked and not nearly enough from traditionally 'unfeminine' paths. In the new century Manchester was at the forefront of science, engineering and physics, leading the world in aeronautics, atomic science and computing – our universities combined have produced 25 Nobel Laureates – surely a sector ripe for bright young women eager to look under the test tube or take up the theodolite? Or were they hearing what Corbusier reputedly said to Perriand when he dismissed her initial application with a terse 'we don't embroider cushions here'...?

After the Pankhursts, the suffragettes and the heady Votes for Women era, how were women really progressing? IWD's centenary celebrations seemed the perfect opportunity to find out just what the next generation of women got up to in our own back yard. We asked The LRM (Loiterers Resistance Movement) and The Shrieking Violet to help us put something interesting together and invited women* to get involved.

This special edition of the Shrieking Violet fanzine is the result or rather the start; a collection of essays, interviews, artworks and events which aim to commemorate the achievements of just ten North West women spanning the fields of invention, aviation, media, science, design and architecture throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty first.

It is, we admit, a ridiculously short list, not definitive – at least we hope not! Rather it is a primer, a provocation, a protest, and an invitation for addition, discussion and debate. Your task, should you choose to accept it, is to uncover many more, and who knows – inspire the heroines of tomorrow!

Finally a Big Thank You to all our contributors without whose imaginative and enthusiastic responses we could not have created this small tribute.

Maureen Ward, Manchester Modernist Society.

*One man was so inspired by a heroine that he submitted a piece of work anyway. In the spirit of nineteenth century novelists, who felt compelled to assume men's names, we have asked him to adopt a pseudonym. Anyone who identifies the man and emails **info@manchestermodernistsociety.org** will win a prize.

The LRM will be curating a walk around Manchester exploring the myriad narratives of Manchester's women and inspired by the work of Doreen Massey, leaving from outside the town hall at 3pm on Sunday 6 March. The walk will last no more than two hours.

About our cover

Our cover was embroidered and collaged by **Rosa Martyn**, who is studying for a degree in Hand Embroidery at the Royal School of Needlework. Rosa is a feminist, ideologist, deficit denying, cardigan wearing member of the loony left. **http://mylittlestitches.wordpress.com**

1. **Marie Stopes** (1880-1958) was a noted palaeobotanist, campaigner for women's rights and pioneer in the field of family planning. She was the first woman member of faculty at Manchester University.

2. **Olive Shapley** (1910-1999) was a British radio producer and broadcaster. In 1934 she began her career with the BBC as *Children's Hour* organiser with the responsibility of producing five hour-long programmes every week. These included at least two full-length live plays a week. After the war she became the third presenter of *Woman's Hour*, a programme with which she was associated for over twenty years, producing the programme between 1949 and 1953. Meanwhile, she began to develop a career as a presenter in the new television medium. In the mid-1960s her Manchester home became a refuge (as a charitable trust) for single mothers and later, in the late 1970s, for Vietnamese boat people.

3. **Mitzi Solomon Cunliffe** (1918-2006) was an American sculptor who was a long resident of Didsbury. She was most famous for designing the golden trophy in the shape of a theatrical mask that would go on to represent the British Academy of Film and Television Arts and be presented as the BAFTA award. She also designed the mural on the Heaton Park Pumping Station.

4. **Winifred Brown**, Salfordian Flyer and, in her early 20s, winner of the Kings Cup (air race) in 1930.

5. **Mary Stott** (1907-2002) was a British feminist and journalist, and the long-serving editor of the Guardian women's page. One of the great campaigning journalists of the 20th century, in her 15-year tenure from 1957 to 1972 she invented a platform for women's voices and concerns and used it to further their causes.

6. **Professor Rosalie David** is the world's leading expert on Egyptian mummies. She is Director of the Centre for Biomedical and Forensic Egyptology at the University of Manchester and has directed the Manchester Egyptian Mummy Research Project since 1973. This project has pioneered the 'Manchester Method' — the use of medical and scientific techniques to investigate ancient Egyptian mummies to detect evidence of disease and information about everyday life in ancient Egypt. She was the first woman professor in Egyptology in Britain, and the first to receive an OBE in recognition of her services in Egyptology.

7. **Rachel Haugh** co-established the architectural practice Ian Simpson Associates. She was born and brought up in Manchester and studied at Bath University School of Architecture. She is a founding partner and co-director of Ian Simpson Architects, a design-led architectural practice which was established in 1987 and employs around 50 people in offices in Manchester and London.

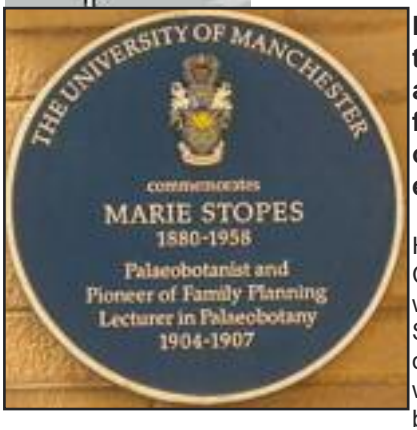
8. **Professor Doreen Massey** is a Manchester born contemporary British social scientist and geographer. She has devoted her life to the subject, speaking passionately about the significance of geography and the 'politics of place' in a globalised world. Her work has had a profound influence on theorising around space and place and has taken the study of geography into new inter-disciplinary directions.

9. **Susan Sutherland Isaacs** (1885-1948) was a Bolton born educational psychologist and psychoanalyst. Educated at Manchester and Cambridge Universities, she published pioneer studies on the intellectual and social development of children and promoted the nursery school movement. For Isaacs developing a child's independence, which is best achieved through play, was the best way for children to learn and the role of adults and early educators was to guide children's play. She was awarded a CBE in 1948.

10. **Linder Sterling** studied Graphic Design at the Manchester School of Art from 1974-77 and played a vital part in the 1970s punk scene in Manchester, designing graphics for the Buzzcocks, Magazine and Factory Records. She remains a pivotal visual artist, performance artist and musician, whose work has been selected for the Tate Triennial.

3 Marie Stopes

by **Jean Bailo**



Hear the name Marie Stopes and you're more than likely to think of the many birth control advisory clinics around the country, but there is far more to the woman who changed our views on the prickly subject of birth control and sex education.

Born in 1880 in Edinburgh, Marie was the daughter of Henry Stopes, respected scientist and Charlotte Carmichael, herself an authority on Shakespeare and who had the distinction of being the first woman in Scotland to gain a University certificate. Charlotte studied on the same courses as her male counterparts but as a woman was denied the Degree on completion simply for being female. This awakened in her a strong sense of injustice and ensured that she became a champion of women's rights, ideas and convictions, which she passed on to her daughter Marie.

Marie and her sister Winnie were schooled at home in London by parents who were both socially progressive thinkers and staunch Scottish Presbyterians. Charlotte in particular used the Bible to reinforce her teaching, at the same time supporting women's suffrage and free thought. Marie grew up imbued with these ideas and, as a result of constant interaction with her father's scientist friends, also became fascinated by science, in particular the works of Charles Darwin, which led to her later interest and writings on Eugenics.

Marie returned to London and, after gaining a science Scholarship, entered University College in 1900, emerging only two years later with the Gold Medal for Botany and a BsC in Botany and Geology. During her time at University College Marie studied under Francis Oliver who was conducting research to establish a link between advanced plants and ferns; fired by enthusiasm Marie took this study to the next level and enrolled at the University of Munich where she delved into the reproductive process in cycads, a type of primitive seed plant. The culmination of this research was a PhD in Paleobotany.

By now with an international reputation, Dr Stopes would be a valuable asset to any university and the University of Manchester was first to realise this and make moves to acquire the services of the celebrated scientist, only trying to rescind their offer when it transpired that Dr Stopes was in fact a woman. Not to be denied her appointment, Marie called upon some of her influential friends and her job was confirmed. Dr Stopes joined Manchester University in October 1904.

While at Manchester her studies focused on coal, often sending her down coal mines where, as well as studying the composition of coal, she collected fossils of million year old plants, aiding her in her research on the history of angiosperms.

In 1905 she had the honour of becoming the youngest Briton, man or woman, to earn a DSc from University College London.

Following this work the Royal Society awarded her a grant enabling her to travel to Japan with the purpose of solving problems posed by Charles Darwin over fifty years earlier on the evolutionary origins of flowers, another first for a woman and giving Marie a certain amount of celebrity. As she had already embarked on an affair with the Japanese botanist Kenjiro Fujii while in Munich we could ask ourselves if research was her only reason for going. She travelled

to the northern island of Hokkaido and true to form made the monumental discovery on one of her expeditions of fossils proving to be of the oldest flowers.

Marie stayed a year and a half at the University of Tokyo and returned to Manchester without Kenjiro.

Foreign travel beckoned again when Marie was enlisted by the Canadian Government to resolve a dispute about the age of rocks in New Brunswick, which research had far reaching implications and led to a more efficient way of converting coal to energy.

It was while working back at the British Museum on the many fossils she had recovered that she came across the contents of a previously locked cupboard and discovered a number of books on human sexuality.

"She broke many taboos by conducting interviews with a large cross section of women from all levels of society about their hopes, expectations and experiences from the sexual side of marriage."

In 1911 Marie had married scientist Reginald Ruggles Gates and all was not well between them; before marrying she had apparently enjoyed romantic affairs and only now realised that her husband was impotent. At the time Reginald maintained a dignified silence while his wife had the marriage annulled on the grounds of non-consummation; years later he said that Marie was 'super sexual to a degree that was almost pathological'.

Around the time of the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914 Marie was busy writing about her findings on coal and also finding time to work on her book *Married Love*.

She said her own experiences formed the basis for the book and she broke many taboos by conducting interviews with a large cross section of women from all levels of society about their hopes, expectations and experiences from the sexual side of marriage. This work was extremely controversial and unsurprisingly was condemned by Church and Establishment alike. Once completed in 1916, then began the search for a publisher, Blackie's refusing on the grounds that 'they didn't like the theme'. Around this time Marie had met and formed an attachment to Humphrey Verdon Roe, wealthy brother of Allot Roe of aircraft fame and, following their marriage in 1916, Humphrey published *Married Love* in 1918. An instant success, it led to Marie receiving letters asking for advice on all aspects of married life. In the first two weeks after publication the book sold 2,000 copies and was set to be published in America but banned when the courts declared it to be obscene.

Marie had met Margaret Sanger, a campaigner for Birth Control while on a trip to America and her next book *Wise Parenthood* was a guide to contraception after the ideas of Ms Sanger. *Radiant Motherhood* followed on and in 1919 Marie gave birth to her first child, a son, sadly stillborn. This possibly accounted for her lifelong distrust of doctors.

A prolific writer, by 1920 she had revisited her interest in Eugenics and in *The Control of Parenthood* advocated many radical ideas; in later years she became a fan of Hitler and wrote many letters to him. Her belief in Eugenics influenced her attitude to those around her and later caused her estrangement from her son Henry, when he married the myopic daughter of Barnes- Wallace. She was horrified at the thought of her grandchildren wearing glasses.

1921 saw the opening of the first of the Marie Stopes Advisory Clinics in Holloway North London, clinics which rapidly became part of modern life.

Marie spent the rest of her life campaigning for causes she believed in, her scientific work somewhat overshadowed by her pioneering approach to sex and birth control.
She died in 1958 from breast cancer, perhaps prematurely due to her mistrust of the medical profession and refusal to admit she was ill.

Jean Bailo is a Blue Badge Tourist Guide of Manchester and the North West. She takes groups of visitors, both local and from oversees, around our radical City and with her colleagues leads a regular walk about the women who made Manchester what it is today.
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5 Marie Stopes

by **Persephone Parton**

I am a feminist, I like having sex and I believe passionately every woman has the right to control her body, to feel unashamed about her sexuality and to access information, contraception, abortion and other sexual health services. I should thank Marie Stopes for her pioneering work and the eponymous clinics which are her legacy.
BUT I don't want to celebrate her, I don't want to see her face on a stamp or her name on a building. She makes me feel sick. The hatred is mutual; she would like me dead or better still never born just because I am disabled.

Marie Stopes was dedicated to the eugenics movement; a disgusting philosophy whose pernicious influence lingers on today. She was not motivated by women's rights but by a desire to control society and create it according to her twisted ideals; she wanted to suppress difference and pursue fascist ideals.

In *Radiant Motherhood* she demanded "the sterilisation of those totally unfit for parenthood be made an immediate possibility, indeed made compulsory". This must be challenged on so many levels. Which of us is perfect? And who decides? Marie Stopes excommunicated her son because he fell in love with a woman who wore glasses!

Eugenics does not value biodiversity or individual experience. It wants to exterminate the 'weak', ill and different. It hates disabled people and follows the medical model which sees us as nothing more that biology. Actually: "It is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from participation in society." (UPIAS 1975). It depresses me this social model of disability is not universally recognised, and we still see sick people as a problem which needs to be fixed. Just to reiterate: The disabled do not exist as a coherent group. Indeed they do not exist at all. Disability is a social construct; systematic barriers, negative attitudes, normative values and fucking steep stairs exclude people. Impairment is caused by physical, sensory or physiological variations in individuals. This should not be undervalued, not least because the impact on that individual can be profound, but we should focus on creating a society that values biodiversity, individual difference, social care and equality. I fear the main argument against compassion is economic; the idea that the weak are a burden, a drain, a waste of money. This is self evidence bollocks. Life is about more than money, and how can you measure the value of a person in such a callous way? This is question is even more crucial now in these times of cruel ConDem cuts; they talk of scroungers,the deserving poor, destroying the welfare

state. Fucking scary stuff. One small example: cutting mobility allowance directly affects individuals' quality of life, increases isolation (which is a big killer) and ignores the question of why public transport is inaccessible to many.

Dominant discourse at the moment attaches blame to disabled people, frequently suggesting that positive thought, charity and submission to medical experts can solve all problems. This is a rant for another time but it is worth thinking for a moment about the relative scarcity of disabled people in public life. Generally we are portrayed as victims, heros or monsters, always as something other and remarkable. But we are everywhere and so are people we love and are loved by. Worth remembering too that anyone can get sick or have an accident and need support – and we are all interdependent in so many ways. Plus, who decides normal? And isn't perfection boring?

Please note by focusing on disability I am not ignoring eugenics repulsive racist and anti-Semitic traits. I am merely limited by space and a hope the idiocy of any notion of racial purity is self evident. Class adds another dimension too; Stopes was scared of a proletariat plague; her clinics were in poor areas and she disliked legislation preventing child labour. She was very nasty indeed and an enemy to many. I take all this very personally and I am really bloody angry. I think I am a valid person with a right to life. Why do so many people disagree? It does not seem fair something as banal as a recessive gene should be my defining feature. Eugenics may not be fashionable as it was in the 1920s but it has not gone away, merely mutated into something more subtle. As a child my parents had to fight to keep me out of a 'special' school (obviously problems walking equated with problems thinking) and over the years I've been heckled, abused, objectified patronised and fetishized because of my body (not so different from every other woman).

"We need to separate her achievements (which were considerable) from the person. I can't applaud anyone with repulsive views just because of their chromosomes or gender."

A couple of years ago the NHS invited me to see a genetic counsellor. They told me in no uncertain terms it would be irresponsible and wrong of me to reproduce. On my street (the one with pavements a wheelchair struggles on) I see appeal posters that raise billions of pounds of money to erase sick genes even as welfare budgets are massacred.

Biotechnology is the new name for social engineering. Designer babies, euthanasia and forced sterilisation have all been on the news in the last week, debated in terms that chilled my heart. Robert Edwards, test tube baby pioneer, says: "Soon it will be a sin of parents to have a child that carries the heavy burden of genetic disease. We are entering a world where we have to consider the quality of our children." This is the modern face of eugenics.

No, I won't celebrate Marie Stopes. We need to separate her achievements (which were considerable) from the person. I can't applaud anyone with repulsive views just because of their chromosomes or gender. I don't want to be her sister. That is as stupid as hating someone for their genes.

Persephone Parton should have died several times over. Doctors have described her as 'tenacious' 'a fighter' 'a miracle' and 'bloody annoying' however she thinks her body is only the 97th most interesting thing about her. SAVES (Spazes against vivisection and eugenics scum) can be found on facebook but she will probably be down the pub.

7 Memories of Olive Shapley

by **Janey Preger**

Before I even saw Olive, I heard her laughter. A loud and exuberant laugh which made me wonder who our visitor could be. I dumped my school satchel in the hall and went into the sitting room of our house in Didsbury and my mother said: “This is our friend, Olive.” She was very tall and although I did not know the word then...charismatic. She was wearing a black velvet hat with a jaunty brim, a grey suit and a wisp of a scarf. I was used to elegance...my mother had been a model...and although Olive was not conventionally beautiful she had “presence” which did not come from her hat or her scarf. She patted the seat next to her and I sat down. Feeling tongue-tied I stared at my Mum and mouthed *“Who?”* but she just smiled and poured the tea. But Olive could put anyone at their ease. I was hoping she would not ask me the usual boring questions about school or which subjects I liked..and to her credit, she did not. Instead she handed me the biscuits and said: “Now. If you had to choose...and let us hope you never have to...would you rather be blind or deaf?”

I was so surprised I could not think how to answer.

“Well...” said Olive, “You must have a preference. I would choose to be deaf...imagine not being able to see the world. How terrible that would be.”

“But...what if you could never hear music...or talk to anyone.” I said, intrigued by this idea which had never occurred to me before.

“That is the cruel dilemma,” Olive said with a toothy smile...drinking her tea. Thus began my affection and admiration for this brave, innovative, amazing woman.

She was born in London in 1910 and her mother named her Olive after Olive Schreiner, the author of *Story Of An African Farm*. She went to St Hugh’s College Oxford where she met her best friend, Barbara Betts, later The Rt Hon Barbara Castle and eventually Baroness Castle of Blackburn.

Barbara was from Yorkshire, outspoken and ambitious. She was the one who, appalled at her college friends’ ignorance about sex, (including Olive’s) collected a shilling each from them and sent off for an illustrated book called *Planned Parenthood* and carefully went through it with them.

In 1934, after college and a stint at the Rachel McMillan Training College, Olive abandoned the idea of teaching. She applied for a job with the BBC in Manchester on the much loved *Children’s Hour*. She introduced plays for children and went out and about talking to anyone she thought it would be interesting for them to listen to. One of the most popular features was *Out With Romany* in which the Reverend E Bramwell Evens, purporting to be a Romany, roamed the countryside with his dog Raq and told nature tales. Olive also held talent contests which covered anything from spoon playing to poetry and tap dancing. She discovered the amazing voice of Pat Kirkwood who sang “Peter’s Pop Keeps A Lollipop Shop” on the talent show and later became a Hollywood star and friend of Prince Philip. So *Children’s Hour* was lifted out of its rather dull dross by the brilliance of *Auntie Olive*, who went on to challenge radio’s lofty Reithian assumptions about what the British public wanted.

She was instrumental in bringing the voices of “ordinary” people with regional accents into the parlours and drawing rooms of the nation. She was fascinated by the nuts and bolts of everyday lives and opened people’s eyes to the problems and stresses...as well as the joys of their existence.

Once she rode for ten hours on an eight-ton lorry carrying fourteen tons of chemicals, and slept in a wet ditch all night so she could catch the first rumble of the fish lorries as they came down from Scotland. She spoke to monks and miners’ wives, homeless people and hotel

workers in her quest to get their authentic experiences of life on record. The documentaries she made from 1934 and into the 1970s were each of them lit with her eagle-eye for a good story but always told with compassion and understanding, especially her war-time programmes. She spent part of the war in America where her husband John Salt was made deputy North American Director for the BBC, then Director. They lived in Alastair Cooke's apartment in New York. Her work during the war included: *American Boys Calling Home*, *Children in Wartime*, *Eye-Witness New York At War*, *Women in Europe*, *Women in Wartime*, *We Have Been Evacuated* and *Wartime Thanksgiving Day*. She also became friendly with Eleanor Roosevelt, Paul Robeson, Burl Ives, Pete Seeger and Leadbelly. She was able to broadcast the music of Woody Guthrie, Sonny Terry, Josh White and a very young Pete Seeger to appreciative British audiences.

She also produced *Woman's Hour*, *The Shapley File*, *Something to Read* and many other programmes. However, the documentary she is probably most remembered and feted for is *The Classic Soil*. This programme was made in 1939 with Joan Littlewood, the innovative genius who began Theatre Workshop in Manchester. *The Classic Soil* compared the social conditions of the day with those observed a century earlier by Friedrich Engels, who in 1844 had described Manchester as "...the classic soil...where capitalism flourished". The aim of the documentary was to prove that nothing much had changed since Engels' time.

"She was fascinated by the nuts and bolts of everyday lives and opened people's eyes to the problems and stresses... as well as the joys of their existence."

Olive Shapley and my father once made some Christmas radio recordings with the children of Broome House in Didsbury, a beautiful pale pink Georgian residence which had been converted into a children's home. It had a Grand Ballroom which the children used for ball games but nobody danced the gavotte there any more. There did not seem to be anything that Olive was not interested in, or that she could not make interesting. And even though her voice was what these Northern kids would have called "dead posh", she got right on their level, showed them the recording equipment, let them play with it (to a degree) and "interview" each other with mad, competitive hilarity .

Her personal life had tragedy as well as pleasure. She was widowed twice and left to bring up three young children alone. In her earlier years she had an abortion (which in those days was illegal) and she had two miscarriages and a breakdown.

She was so admirable. She lived in a beautiful Victorian villa called Rose Hill in Didsbury, complete with an orchard and stables. Yet when the children had grown up she turned it into a home for unsupported mothers and babies, and then she housed Vietnamese boat people there.

However, the main word I would use to describe her character is enthusiastic. I never remember her being or sounding bored. She made you feel that life was an adventure and she was happy to take anyone along for the ride, however mad, bad or riotous it might be. Radio still needs women like Olive. Bless her and her microphone for bringing the whole world into our homes.

A street named after Olive Shapley in Didsbury

Janey Preger was born in Manchester and still lives there. She is a writer and her work includes: *Coronation Street*, *Casualty*, *The Archers*, *Play for Today*, *Not the Nine O'Clock News*, Comedy for BBC TV and Radio 4 and articles for The Guardian. She is currently writing a novel set in Manchester about women's lives in the 1920s.

9 Mitzi Cunliffe

by **EP Niblock**

Her best known work might well be gracing the mantelpieces of Colin Firth, Natalie Portman and David Fincher but this modernist sculptor's favourite commission was created not for the RADA or Hollywood elite but the hungry shoppers grabbing a bite in Liverpool Lewis' Dept Store cafe, the largest pierced bronze screen in the world.

For this fact alone Mitzi Solomon Cunliffe has captured our hearts and earned our admiration. If we were the sort to award blue plaques or lobby for a Hollywood-style Walk of fame scheme in our own city, Mitzi would top the bill. She epitomises the spirit of an exuberant, utopian partnership between planners, architects, artists and sculptors dedicated to rejuvenating the public realm after the chaos of the blitz; functional yet accessible, experimental yet egalitarian, international yet rooted in everyday surroundings. Just like Mitzi herself....

"She epitomises the spirit of an exuberant, utopian partnership between planners, architects, artists and sculptors dedicated to rejuvenating the public realm after the chaos of the blitz."

A native New Yorker, Mitzi Solomon studied Fine Art at Columbia University before moving to Paris' progressive Académie Colarossi, famous for accepting female students such as Camille Claudel. It was here, upon viewing the Chartres Cathedral statuary, that she became inspired to be an architectural sculptor. Back in New York she began stone-carving, fairly traditional ones by all accounts (though admired by Corbusier himself who she met in 1946) until her marriage to the English historian Marcus Cunliffe suddenly brought her to Manchester in 1949, and a leap in direction.

Like many artists of this period, her break came with two large scale commissions for the Festival of Britain exhibition on London's South Bank in 1951. Planned as a celebration of Britain's history, achievements and culture the festival was a 'tonic to the nation', aiming to help put the trauma of war behind it and kick start reconstruction of morale and built environment. Modern architecture was at the forefront of the whole enterprise – the Royal Festival Hall was one of Britain's earliest post-war public buildings, a showcase for contemporary art, engineering and design, and still admired today. Mitzi created 'Root Bodied Forth' which showed figures emerging from a tree displayed at the entrance of the Festival, whilst a pair of bronze handles in the form of hands adorned the Regatta Restaurant. Significantly she was commissioned by Misha Black, Director of the Design Research Unit, who would later design the interiors for Manchester's CIS and CWS towers.

Post war Manchester was also embracing the new, with bold projects such as Piccadilly Plaza, UMIST campus and the CIS all underway. This was an era that aspired to bring art directly to the people and the building boom created more opportunities for a new breed of sculptor/muralist, as modern architecture with its tower blocks and expanses of raw surfaces was literally a blank canvas for experimentation. And experiment they did – with new materials, styles, techniques, and increasingly with abstraction, a result of the demands of working in such huge scale and grappling with new materials like concrete ushering in an era dominated by organic, abstract and textural patterns.

This was Mitzi's Manchester and she was passionate that her work be 'used, rained on, leaned against, taken for granted', declaring that her 'life-long dream is a world where sculpture is produced by the yard in factories and used in buildings as casually as bricks'. Based in the garage of her Didsbury home, Mitzi took on a stream of large scale commissions, producing

some of the North West's most influential public artworks. Her decorative relief panel for the Pumping Station at Heaton Park bringing water from the Lake District is the only post-1945 building to be listed entirely for its sculpture. Other surviving pieces include 'Man and Technic', recently given pride of place at the new Manchester Health Academy but originally commissioned for Brookway High School in Wythenshawe, and 'Cosmos I', a fibreglass relief at the base of Owens Park Student Tower.

Like her contemporaries she was prolific, designing jewellery, textiles for Tootal Broadhurst and ceramics and tiles for Pilkington's, her meticulous qualities as much sought after in these media as for her monumental work. She continued sculpting for large buildings throughout the 1960s and her final large-scale architectural commission consisted of four carved stone panels for the Scottish Life House at Poultry, London, in 1970.

Mitzi lived to the ripe old age of 88, though her later years were marred by ill health – first arthritis then later Alzheimer's took its toll – but she continued to teach, inspire and write for many years. Now, as the post war landscape she so laboriously carved begins to fade away, its buildings making way for the new, much of her magnificent work, like that of so many of her contemporaries, is disappearing forever.

"She was passionate that her work be 'used, rained on, leaned against, taken for granted', declaring that her 'life-long dream is a world where sculpture is produced by the yard in factories and used in buildings as casually as bricks'."

Mitzi might have been born in New York but her soul belongs firmly in the North West of England and her Didsbury garage – the Heaton Park Pumping Station might be a far cry from the glitzy backdrop of the BAFTA ceremony but it's no less deserving of our Modernist Heroines Wall of Fame.

The artwork at Heaton Park Pumping Station. Photo: Creative Commons

EP Niblock is an Edwardian bluestocking and flaneur unexpectedly transported into the present day. Her **diaryofabluestocking.blogspot.com** details her explorations and small adventures into the 21st century city. She is also a founder member of the Manchester Modernist Society, whose monthly features she co-writes and researches – **www.manchestermodernistsociety.org**.

11 Thoroughly Modern Winnie

by **Hayley Flynn**

At just 22, Winifred Brown became the only woman to win the King's Cup yet articles relating to this are little more than a sentence tacked on to the end of another pilot's list of achievements. Overnight, Winifred became world famous, and crowds of adoring fans turned out to see her when she appeared at the 1930 Buile Hill Park pageant, yet aside from race statistics there's very little in the way of written material such a pioneering young woman.

In 1943 the BBC planned a series of transmissions under the title *In Honour of Russia*. The night was to celebrate and thank our Russian counterparts for joining allegiance during WWII. During the three hours of broadcast we meet Winifred, albeit briefly, as she's interviewed whilst working in an aircraft factory making planes for Russia. The script (all that remains of the feature) paints Brown as a warm and positive woman...

Commentator – "Women too have worked to get the Target Machine up to this piece in the line. Here is Winifred Brown."

Winifred – "Yes, we have – hundreds of us here – we can't let the men have all the credit. I've been here over two years, and I'm now fitting the remote control that governs the petrol supply. We're proud to be working on those machines, knowing that they're helping the Russians to beat our common enemy."

The interview moves on and Winifred is once again just a passage in someone else's story.

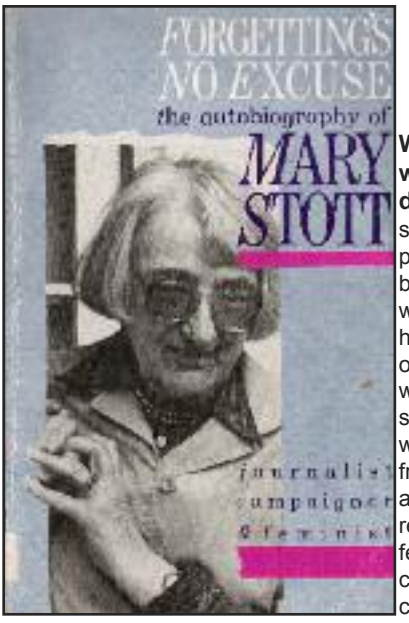
Shrouded in further mystery is Brown's early career. It would seem as well as mucking in with the war efforts, she had in fact began to work much earlier in her life than this; very much against the norms of the time. Two years prior to her King's Cup victory Brown was piloting a light aircraft to deliver a film reel to the New Princes Cinema in Stalybridge. The aircraft crashed at Hunters Tower and in amongst several injured a young boy was killed. The flight itself, and the fatality, was in vain as the whole job that Brown was commissioned with had been a publicity stunt to promote the cinema – there had been no film in the canister, just a decorative, empty shell; the film itself had been delivered by hand earlier. A fraught flight by all accounts as the brains behind the stunt, Mr Browning of Woodford Aerodrome, wrestled Brown for turns at the controls. Failing to land the craft successfully Brown resumed control and glided above the excitable spectators. Down on the ground the turnout was as grand as they could have hoped but sadly it was down to this success that the accident occurred. The crowd had surged forward over the perimeters of the landing field and, as Brown touched down, the area where she had hoped to swing the aircraft around to avoid collision with the border walls was now swallowed up by a hub of excited bodies. Brown, at the last minute, launched the aircraft off the ground but collided with the wall and, tragically, with the boy sat upon it. The cinema itself has been a moot point with the locals ever since, having a reputation for housing the ghost of the boy and, many years later, catching fire from the inside whilst disconnected from all services and totally sealed up.

The fact that Brown not only continued to fly after this but that she went on push herself to speeds that were noted as 'courting disaster' is almost impossible to believe.

There was nothing that Brown couldn't turn her hand to and, in a woefully under-documented shift of passions, she next won her water wings by sailing from Wales to the Norwegian archipelago before going on to serve for the marines. In amongst the mayhem of her less than ordinary life she found the time and want to secretly marry, announcing the news after the birth of her son, Anthony Adams (who grew up to pursue a career in the arts and is most well known as playing Adam Chance in Crossroads).

Winifred Brown has been captured on film only a handful of times and the British Pathe site has some lovely footage illustrating what a coy, happy woman she was; whilst accepting her King's Cup award she stands awkwardly, wringing her hands, averting her eyes but suppressing a beaming smile all the while. Brown is a true enigma and a marvel, the Ellen MacArthur of her day and still the only women to have won the King's Cup.

Hayley Flynn is a copywriter, online editor and blogger. She most enjoys writing about the letters and postcards that have accidentally found their way into her life, exploring the beautiful buildings of the city and dancing to The National in gloomy nightclubs. **http://hayleyflynn.tumblr.com/**



Mary Stott

by **Natalie Bradbury**

When Mary Stott was given a job editing the woman's page of the Leicester Mail at 19 she didn't as you might expect, celebrate. Instead, she put her head in her hands and cried. Newspapers were inextricably linked with Stott's family, both of her parents being journalists, and she felt that a woman's page was secondary to the jobs allocated to men – hard news reporting or sub-editing. As she explains in volume one of her inspiring autobiography, *Forgetting's No Excuse* (in which she writes frankly about everything from the newspaper industry and the act of writing to socialism, sexuality, widowhood and reconciling her love of being a wife and mother with her feminism): "It was a heartbreak, for I thought my chance of becoming a 'real journalist' was finished." Despite being a so-called 'flapper voter' – one of the first women allowed to vote on the same terms as men at 21 – this was a problem that was to recur throughout her career as she was passed over for promotion in favour of men at the Co-operative News in Manchester, where she was told she would have become editor had she 'worn trousers', and then at the Manchester Evening News where she lost out on being appointed chief sub-editor to protect the male line of succession.

"I didn't want to be a woman journalist – I wanted to be a journalist."

Stott was recently the subject of the *Great Lives* series on Radio 4, which included extracts of her speaking on *Desert Island Discs*. As she explained: "I didn't want to be a woman journalist – I wanted to be a journalist. I wanted to write anything, to report anything, to sub anything. Men don't have men's pages. They aren't confined to sport or anything. I wanted to be on the same terms as men."

Yet Stott became renowned as a woman's editor, best known for her long-standing tenure at the Guardian (when she started, in 1957, it was still based in Manchester), where her achievement was to change the dynamic between the paper and its audience, turning the Mainly for Women page into a 'community of interest with the readers…a sort of club to many of them' – she opened up and democratised the women's pages by ensuring they were a forum for women's issues, inviting dialogue through the postbag, accepting readers' manuscripts and reflecting what ordinary women wanted to read about. In *Forgetting's No Excuse* she explains that this 'exchange of ideas between writers and readers' covered: "Woman as wives, mothers, widows, workers…the whole human condition, the way we live now, the way our children will live; about relationships, morals and manners, about education and the social services and gaps in the welfare state." The women's page acted as a 'midwife' for campaigns and support groups such as the Disablement Incomes Group, the Housewives Register, the Pre-School Playgroups Association and the National Association for the Single Woman and her Dependents. As Stott notes at the start of her autobiography: "I have not been the kind of journalist who travels the world, covers wars, disasters and events of high importance and who therefore may write books of reminiscence which are a contribution to history. Most of my life has been spent among the sort of unfamous but intelligent and concerned people who are my readers."

The women's pages grew into what was assessed in *Great Lives* as a 'collective cultural phenomenon', bringing together a team of influential writers that included Polly Toynbee and Jill Tweedie. Speaking about her impact in the *Great Lives* programme, journalist Liz Forgan, who worked with Stott, explained: "She was the mother of the feminisation of Fleet Street. She really changed the whole way that women's journalism was regarded and changed perceptions that women are like X or Y."

Stott described editing the woman's page as the "best job in the world for a feminist', and her legacy has been celebrated by the Guardian through the Mary Stott prize for journalists.

Natalie Bradbury holds an (almost) life-long, and as yet unfulfilled, ambition to be a local newspaper reporter. She has written for Manchester Confidential, City Life, Big Issue in the North, The Mule and Creative Tourist, among others, and edits The Shrieking Violet, a free, alternative guide to Manchester. **www.theshriekingviolets.blogspot.com**

TROUPE
℅ Amanda Griffkin
http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Mighty-TROUPE/45607772343

Friday 28th January 2011

Dear Manchester Modernist Society, The Shrieking Violet and the Loiterers Resistance Movement,

I am writing on behalf of Troupe to apply to take part in the Modernist Heroines event in March. Troupe are an all-female, Manchester-based dance and performance company, specialising in short 'pop' performances that crop up in unexpected places.

For this event we would like to stage a live performance to music in Manchester Museum, in honour of Professor Rosalie David. Taking Mummies and the Manchester Method as our starting point we would like to create a short performance piece (3 to 5 minutes) that could occur and re-occur in various intervals throughout the museum.

As a few of our former members now live abroad, and because the event celebrates International Women's Day, we would like to explore the possible of tandem happenings taking place elsewhere and streamed back to Manchester via the internet.

We hope you like our idea and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Griffkin & Troupe

Sadly this event has been pushed back to after International Women's Week but will happen sometime in the future...

Villanelle for an Egyptologist

By **Birdie (aka Claire Robinson)**

Professor David with an Egyptian mummy

I step softly, my bandages untied,
My salty heart creaking amongst
packed straw.
A hook in my nose, a knife in my side.

Stately, erect, not decomposed but dried
And dignified, over the parquet floor
I softly step, my bandages untied.

Washed clean in palm wine and with spices dried,
Left propped and salted forty days or more-
A hook in my nose, a knife in my side.

The slit is sealed, an amulet applied
For protection, from what I am unsure,
As I step softly, my bandages untied.

Now violent sounds stretch my yellow hawks eyes wide!
Damn! This has happened many times before.
A hook in my nose, a knife in my side.

I'll never make the gift shop. Ever denied.
Rosie leads me back fondly by the claw.
I step in softly, my bandages now tied,
A hook in my nose, a knife in my side.

Claire Robinson: "I first became aware of Troupe way back in 2000. They were three girls dancing at the Green Room in pyjamas and fluffy slippers. I loved them instantly. I totally identified with what they were doing and longed to be a part of it. I thought this would be impossible due to my innate lack of rhythm. Fortunately this didn't matter at all – the main considerations were sisterly solidarity, punk attitude, green eyeshadow and a catchy pseudonym to write across your back in sequins. So I became Birdie or "hapless Troupe", champion of missed cues and bad timing. Then I flew south. I now live in Spain and teach English (in a rather wonky way) to children under six."

15 Rachel Haugh

interviewed by **Joan Davies**

Both Urbis with its curves and slope and the Beetham Tower, its height blending into the sky along its occasionally noisy blade, are iconic contemporary Manchester buildings: dramatic, unique impacts on the city's skyline. Visitors to Manchester take home distinctive photographs. Manchester residents take a pride in these buildings, generally loving Urbis, and displaying divided opinions about the tower. Rachel Haugh, native of Manchester, is one of the architects responsible for these edgy glass edifices striding the North-South axis of the city.

Rachel and fellow architect Ian Simpson founded their Manchester-based practice, Ian Simpson Architects Ltd., in 1987. Their work has changed our skyline and altered the way we live in and around our city.

Public knowledge about how architects work is rather limited, so I start my interview with Rachel by asking about the role of teamwork and individualism within architectural practice. There is no standard architectural model; both are vital. The process from drawing to construction is long and complex and the work is "very much about a team". While a large project such as the Beetham Tower would involve 12-15 architects at any one time, the individual is also essential, providing "the spark of creativity which drives the project". "That driver, the concept, is the key thing." ISA is very concept driven: "The idea is formed at an early stage in response to context and site, and is then constantly tested and interrogated; it's a very iterative process." The strength of the concept is what is vital. "Retaining the vision is part of the mantra."

Early errands to the local library to collect architecture books for her mother, who was not an architect, introduced Rachel to the work of Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe. Also Rachel drew for hours, though rather unusually for a girl drew machinery and sketches analysing what made machinery work. She drew the insides of washing machines. Architecture was an obvious career choice, and the lack of encouragement from careers advisers only increased her determination. Rachel became one of just three women on a Manchester university course of fifty students.

Nowadays, with the high profile generated by programmes such as Grand Designs and with different careers advice, university architecture courses run close to a 50:50 gender split. So why are there still so few women in the profession, and why has the recent wave of redundancies hit women particularly? The question has long exercised RIBA. Rachel is concerned and well-versed in the debate but, despite viewing architecture as "a fantastic profession for a woman to be in", sees no easy solutions. Some practices, including her own, are willing and able to "work to make it work", managing to offer flexibility in a profession where long hours and working into the evening are the norm. But it will not be a quick fix.

In 1987 the fledgling practice decided to use Ian Simpson's name: he was more experienced and more widely known. It's common for architectural practices to use a single name; one architect will thrive in the limelight while other partners prefer a quieter, more private role. This suited Rachel personally, but she does admit to some regret that an opportunity has been missed to advance the image of women architects as successful drivers in a high-profile practice. There are plans to change the business name, but a world credit-crunch is the wrong time to do it.

Visitors to Manchester often comment favourably on the proximity and scale of old and new buildings. Rather than allow the inheritance of the Victorian warehouses and civic buildings to influence the choice of materials, Rachel and her colleagues carry forward the earlier period's sense of ambition into today's structures. Detail is subordinate to the overall strength of form. Manchester's size means that "an architect can make a difference here", and the partnership of private and public sector working, supported by a consistency of leadership from Manchester City Council, makes a noticeable difference to Manchester's success in drawing inward investment. Occasional use of open competition for the design of public buildings, notably the Victorian Manchester Town Hall and the contemporary Urbis, can also encourage a bold approach.

"Architecture was an obvious career choice, and the lack of encouragement from careers advisers only increased her determination. Rachel became one of just three women on a Manchester University course of fifty students."

Commissions for public buildings allow scope for innovation: Rachel knows that 'pushing the boundaries' is easier when managing a single-client relationship, but believes that private sector building can still allow dramatic innovation. No 1 Deansgate, which took city centre living to the heart of the retail space, was ground-breaking in its time, particularly in its use of glass and a cantilever to increase residential space, yet still achieved the highest values outside London for residential space. It's easy to agree with her view. The Beetham Tower, housing the Hilton Hotel below the highest residential property in Europe, is a statement piece, forcing visitors to stand and stare and providing a landmark for Mancunians journeying home. Rachel does not believe that Manchester will become a city of glass towers, as some have predicted, but the practice is strongly committed to its urban focus, believing that the cities needs to become more densely occupied, developing brownfield sites, and allowing the countryside to remain countryside.

Both personally and professionally Rachel is a strong supporter of the arts. She is a 'MIF Pioneer' supporting Manchester International Festival. She talks enthusiastically about Manchester Camerata's 'Urban Symphony' where primary school children work with musicians on a project inspired by the city's architecture — appropriately Ian Simpson Architects are among the sponsors, and is fascinated by the diversity of Manchester Art Gallery's collection. Again she is aware of the heritage, the private-sector support for Manchester's Art Treasures Exhibition over 150 years ago, and the crucial role the arts play in the wider and future life of the city.

During the interview Rachel has been generous with her time and her ideas. She exudes a quiet, articulate confidence as she explains her ideas about team work, partnership development, and using architecture to make statements about confidence in the future. There's no hint of arrogance, and she's surprisingly pleased when I tell her how much the many teenagers I know admire the Urbis building. Perhaps that's something to do with being a woman in what is still a predominantly man's world, or perhaps not. She's clearly proud of her work, but it doesn't strike me as the sort of pride which comes before a fall.

Joan Davies has been a Manc since the mid-70s and a feminist since hearing her mother's first words. She teaches Economics to A level students, is a Theatre Reviewer for Manchester Confidential and a regular volunteer with Manchester International Festival and Manchester Jazz Festival. She is also one of the city's Green Badge Guides, specialising in introductions to Manchester, Economic and Political History, Theatre and Arts in Manchester and City Centre Living. Last summer she particularly enjoyed beating the Brazilian Maracatu rhythm along Deansgate, playing with Juba do Leão as part of the Manchester Day Parade.
www.inandaroundmanchester.co.uk

17 Doreen Massey

by **Morag Rose**

Doreen Massey is Professor of Geography at The Open University and has been awarded the Victoria Medal of the Royal Geographical Society and the Prix Vautrin Lud (the Nobel de Geographie). She was born in Manchester and I whooped with delight when I realised this meant I could celebrate her as part of this project.

I can't remember the exact moment I realised I was in love with geography, but I do know it was around the time I became aware of Massey's work. I love the energy that pours from her writing. It is eloquent and profound and her books are full of little epiphanies for me.

Doreen Massey sees places not as static but as dynamic and fluid. “Space is always under construction...It is never finished, never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far.”

We stand in the middle of multiple narratives which change over time. It thrills me to think about that flow; even mountains are not indigenous or static (this of course is a brilliant argument against homogeneity and racism and the notion of a sanitised, suffocating heritage; everything is always moving).

This does not mean we can not love the place we live; we can “have affection and attachment to a place without being reactionary...what makes somewhere special is not its internalised history...but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus...it is a sense of place, an understanding of 'its character' which can only be constructed by linking that place to places beyond”.

Economic, cultural and political threads link us all. This computer I write on was (perhaps) designed in Japan and made in China, I use it to email friends in America and Stockport whilst drinking coffee from Mexico and eating curry. Actions that we take have resonances across the globe because none of us operate in isolation. Massey raises questions of social responsibility and ethics provoked by the global inequalities these generate.

Space matters when we think about power. Poverty, welfare and gender are all intrinsically linked to where we are and how we can move. Massey questions the linear narrative of progress, development and modernisation and reminds us not only history but space is open. Boundaries drawn on a map are only an attempt to impose order on a more fluid and flexible reality; they are not how individuals conceptualise space. The outside is part of the inside just as the global is part of the local. However time and space may seem to compress (eg through the internet and air travel), “the world is not getting so small that there is room for only one story”.

We must be mindful whose story we privilege. Contrary to hegemonic beliefs, “the story of the world cannot be told (not its geography elaborated) as the story of 'the west' alone nor as the story of, for instance, that classic figure (ironically frequently itself essentialised) of the white, heterosexual male; (these are) particular stories amongst many”.

Gender is a key theme in much of Massey’s work because “survey after survey has shown how women's mobility, for instance, is restricted – in a thousand different ways, from physical violence to being ogled at or made to feel quite simply 'out of place' – not by capital but by men”. It feels to me geography is still a male dominated discipline and feminist voices are often marginalised; this is another reason why Massey was so important to me on a personal level.

People who have read my work about public space have often assumed I am a man and been visibly shocked to learn otherwise (I tend to use The LRM as a pseudonym but it is so transparent now as to be almost worthless as a disguise!). I assume this is because of the impossibility of a flaneusse (which Massey addresses in “Flexible Sexisms”) and a general perception still of public space as a male domain. I'll put a link to other feminist geographers on my website as I don't want to insert a tokenistic or partial list here but neither do I want to exclude them.

If these concepts of progressive places sound high faluting it is my fault for trying to condense them. Massey's work is hugely readable. When I was trying to decide whether to go back to school it

encouraged me greatly to realise it was possible to write an academic paper that talks about “imagination...delight...a continuing amazement at the contemporaneous heterogeneity of the planet...an urge towards 'outwardlookingness', towards a positivity and aliveness to the world beyond one’s own turf”. She illustrates theory with tangible examples, such as, most famously, a walk down Kilburn High Road.

Space is a sensual thing and social geography is a multi sensory, multi disciplinary, subjective experience. Rather than try to compress all these concepts into 800 words I'd rather show you. Personally I always learn best by doing, feeling, walking and that feels like a more appropriate tribute to my modernist heroine.

Therefore, the LRM will be curating a walk around Manchester inspired by the work of Doreen Massey. We will focus on flow, energy, gender and why we love exploring space. The wander will uncover some of the hidden histories and power relationships which have shaped our city and are absent from official narratives.

This walk will also reference work from Manchester Women's Design Group who have been collecting stories for a womens' emotion map and looking critically at the quality of design and the impact it has on women's lives. If you read this after the event and want to find out more and join us on a future event please do get in touch.

Recommended reading:Doreen Massey: *Space, Place and Gender* (1994), *For Space* (2005), *World City* (2007)

Morag Rose does stuff and likes making mischief with The LRM (Loiterers Resistance Movement). The LRM is an open collective interested in psychogeography, public space, urban exploration and discovering the magick in the Mancunian rain. They meet on the first Sunday of every month for a wander and create miscellaneous other walks, talks and random shenanigans. For details please see **www.nowhere-fest.blogspot.com**, email **loiter@hepzombie.co.uk** or call **07974929589**.

“If time is the dimension of change, then space is the dimension of simultaneity”.

Doreen Massey, 2006

Manchester-based artist **Olivia Glasser** will carry out a series of actions in front of a video camera in Manchester, England, whilst **Georgie Dixon**, a Mancunian artist will carry out the same actions simultaneously in real time in Sydney, Australia, where she is currently based. The two video documents will be screened in their respective countries at the exact same moment at a later date. If you would like to see this screening please follow Olivia's blog at **www.ohglasser.blogspot.com** to be kept up to date.

19 Alice Bradshaw interviews Linder Sterling

AB: How did the collaboration on* The Secret Public *with Jon Savage come about?
LS: When Jon and I met, in 1976, we were both making photomontages, they were our way of making sense of the world we saw around us. Photomontage was also a way of creating a commentary on aspects of the world that didn't fit with our lived experience. With the help of the manager of Buzzcocks, Richard Boon, we managed to publish our own fanzine, *The Secret Public*. It was usually sold under the counter — we used pornographic imagery in some of the images — and some left wing bookshops refused to sell the fanzine because of that. At the time, I was disappointed that those bookshops couldn't see the critique behind the exposed flesh, a lot of my work is similar to homeopathy ie using like to cure like. The ICA held an exhibition in 2007 titled *The Secret Public: The last days of the British Underground*, it was the first survey show of a loosely knit group of British artists for whom dressing up in the bedroom, and making work on the kitchen table, was more important than being able to eat. None of us thought in terms of galleries or funding, travelling to the moon would have been easier.

AB: How do you see the relationship between your visual art and the music you've written/recorded/performed?
LS: The common denominator of all that I do can be neatly summed up in one word — collage. Whether it's a song or a photomontage, I use the principles of collage to create something greater than the sum of its constitutional parts. Music and art both reside cosily in the right side of the brain, so whether it's a melodic or drawn line, the impulse to communicate is always the same. Whether one succeeds or not, is a different matter.

AB: How do you think the depiction of women in the media has changed since the 70s?
LS: I still cut up and collage magazines that were printed in the 70s. The stereotyping then was more obvious, the various roles for men and women were more clearly defined. Nowadays everything is generally more pumped up — bodies, breasts, lips, cupcakes, sofas — and there's more of a sheen, everything has been plucked, shaved, groomed and retouched within an inch of its life. The gap between what we see in the mirror and what we see on a magazine page is as vast as ever.

AB: What memories do you have of the Manchester Polytechnic and your tutors there?
LS: I had fantastic tutors at Manchester Polytechnic, they were incredibly encouraging and caring. I seemed to slip between all the categories of what a student should be but they picked me up whenever I fell, and gave me an A for trying. The Graphic Design studios overlooked Piccadilly Gardens, there's a hotel there now. In 1975, nearby Chelsea Girl was as much an inspiration as Max Miedinger

AB: What's your favourite place to be in Manchester, old or new?
LS: I loved every inch of Central Library when I was a young woman. I used to meet Morrissey there, in the basement cafe, and then we'd walk through the city. I listened to Sylvia Plath and Gertrude Stein's voices on vinyl, in the English library. I went to see Quentin Crisp at the Library Theatre in 1977, he was giving a talk on how to become a virgin, I made copious notes.

AB: What advice would you give art students in Manchester today?
LS: To get out, go in deep.

Alice Bradshaw is an artist, curator and co-founding member of the Manchester artist collective Contents May Vary. **www.alicebradshaw.co.uk**

Chapel Street in Colours inspired by

Susan Sutherland Isaacs

Alison Benwick is an artist living in Manchester who uses poetry, drawing, sound and performance to explore ideas of spontaneity, improvisation and accident. Finding inspiration in the everyday and in the urban environment she often uses walking or journeys as a starting point and sees each artwork as a post-card in which she attempts to capture these brief and ephemeral moments.

21 Your modernist heroines

Since we started the project we have been asked why we left out...

Annie Horniman (1860-1937): Theatre founder, director, occultist, prolific smoker and scandalous trouser wearer. The Gaiety Theatre on Peter Street was the first regional repertory theatre in Britain, bought with £25,000 of the Horniman family's packet tea fortune. Annie's decision to replicate the repertory system of some of the London theatres by assembling a resident company of actors enabled her to provide a rotating programme of classics, contemporary hits and new plays by Manchester writers

Hannah Mitchell (1872-1956): Suffragette, pacifist, writer who fought for libraries and contraception: how can we not love her? One of six children raised on a remote farm in Derbyshire, she had just two weeks of formal schooling in her whole life. In 1924 Hannah was elected for Labour to Manchester City Council and remained a member until 1935. She was an active member and particularly enjoyed being on the Libraries Committee because of her love of reading.

Shena Dorothy Simon (1883-1972): A politician and educational reformer who founded the 'Women Citizens' Association' in Manchester, a local branch of the National Women Citizens' Association. Her husband was Lord Mayor of Manchester from 1921 to 1922. As Lady Mayoress, Shena caused a stir by refusing to attend a function at St Mary's Hospital for Women because there were no women on the Board or among the medical staff. She was a member of the Manchester City Council from 1924 to 1933, when she was voted out by the Conservatives. A member of the Manchester Estate Council from 1931 to 1933, Shena and her husband were heavily involved in the creation of the Wythenshawe housing estate and donated the Park to the city of Manchester for use of the people living on the estate.

Alison Uttley (1884-1976): She might now be best known for a series of tales about animals, including *Little Grey Rabbit*, but Alison Uttley has a forgotten role in Manchester's science story. In 1906 she was the only the second woman to graduate in physics at Manchester University and was also one of the pioneer boarders at Ashburne Hall, founded six years before as an all female residence, with just 25 boarders in total. Following her teacher training at Cambridge she took up the post of Physics teacher at the Fulham Secondary School for Girls in 1908. By 1911, she had married and had a son but her husband's mental health never recovered from his service in the First World War. Stuck at home with a baby and traumatised husband to care for she turned to her student talent for writing. Her children's books unexpectedly took off, and physics (and Manchester) lost a female pioneer.

Ellen Wilkinson (1891-1947): Born to a poor family in Ardwick, she got herself an education by scholarship, eventually getting an MA in History from Manchester University. She took up politics and became the first female Minister of Education in the 1945 Labour government. In 1946 she passed the Schools Milk Act to provide free milk for schoolchildren. The milk was taken away by another woman but not a Mancunian.

Kathleen Drew Baker (1901-1957): Born in Leigh, she studied botany at Manchester University, specialising in the life cycle of edible seaweeds. Although she had to leave the university when she married another lecturer, she continued her studies privately and worked out what the life-cycle of a type of seaweed. This was taken up by Nori farmers in Japan who used her findings to greatly improve their output. She became the Woman Who Saved Sushi.

Sunny Lowry (1911-2008): At 22, Sunny Lowry became one of the first British women to swim the channel, preparing by embarking on a 40 egg a week diet. Controversially, though practically, she wore a (then revolutionary) two piece swimming costume. Sunny, from nearby Longsight, was a regular swimmer at Levenshulme Baths and Victoria Baths, and was a vocal campaigner for the restoration of Victoria Baths. She also taught swimming and lifesaving in Warrington.

Kathleen Ollerenshaw (1912-): Born Kathleen Timpson of the shoe family in 1912, the mathematician and politician will be 99 this year! She was deaf from age eight and got her first effective hearing aid aged 37 but never allowed the handicap to restrict her. She was Manchester's last Tory Lord Mayor in 1975 and a prime mover in founding the RNCM. Aged 85, she wrote an important book solving a difficult maths problem (paradiagonal magic squares).

Joan Littlewood (1914-2002): Although she was born in London's Stockwell, innovative theatre director and genius Joan Littlewood spent a great deal of time in Manchester where she began her world famous Theatre Workshop. Originally called Red Megaphone, then Theatre of Action, the troupe toured Europe bringing flair and creativity to all their productions under Joan's fierce and brilliant eye. She was awarded the Grand Prix for *Oh, What A Lovely War*. As Kenneth Tynan wrote "she made the ordinary fascinating". There should be a blue plaque on Oxford Place, All Saints, where it all began.

Shelagh Delaney (1939-): Salford playwright Shelagh Delaney's debut play *Taste of Honey* premiered in 1958, when she was just 19, and its by turns bleak and brave view of life in Salford has gone on to resonate through popular culture, its words referenced by bands and singers such as the Smiths and Morrissey. More than fifty years later, the groundbreaking tale of interracial love, poverty, homosexuality and nascent sexuality is still relevant and inspiring.

Carol Batton (1951-): Manchester's prolific 'samizdat poet' has been handing out her photo-copied works around the city centre for decades. Sometimes funny, sometimes sad, often beautiful, they hone in on life's little overlooked details.

Carol Ann Duffy (1955-): In May 2009, Carol Ann Duffy became the first Scottish, openly bi-sexual and female poet laureate. West Didsbury based Duffy is Professor of Contemporary Poetry at Manchester Metropolitan University and her poems, which include a series reimagining the lives of famous men throughout history, are enjoyed by children in the nation's schools and adults alike.

Thanks to Anne Beswick, Eddy Rhead, Julie Campbell, Janey Preger and Sarah Shepherd.
Send us your suggestions at **info@manchestermodernistsociety.org**.

You can find out more about these women and more on a regular tour by Manchester Tourguides called 'The Women Who Made Manchester'. The next one starts at 1pm at the People's History Museum on Tuesday 8 March to coincide with International Women's Day.

Manchester resources

These are just a few of our friends doing amazing work:

Greater Manchester Against Domestic Abuse
http://endthefear.co.uk

24 hr National Domestic Violence Helpline
0808 2000 247

Greater Manchester Women's Domestic Abuse Helpline
0161 636 7525

The Lesbian Community Project
www.lesbiancommunityproject.co.uk

Manchester Anarcha Feminist Kolektiv
www.af-north.org

Manchester Rape Crisis
www.manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk

Manchester Women's Design Group
http://womensdesign.blogspot.com/

MASH (Manchester Action on Street Health)
www.mash.org.uk

The Pankhurst Centre
www.thepankhurstcentre.org.uk

The Riveters (Manchester University Womens Rights Group)
www.umsu.manchester.ac.uk/women/the_riveters

Wai Yin Chinese Women Society
www.waiyin.org.uk

WAST (Women Asylum Seekers Together) Manchester
0161 833 8835 www.wast.org.uk

And a couple of generally interesting websites about why feminism still matters:

UK Feminista **www.ukfeminista.org.uk**
The F Word **www.thefword.org.uk**