

I'm Looking for Barbara



Sarah Carne

This pamphlet introduces the search for Barbara,¹ an artist who was known to be active between 1970 and 1975² but who has subsequently slipped off the radar.

The search aims to access the knowledge and memory of other artists, curators, writers and similar who were themselves active then and who may remember artists who have since become less visible. It also calls on friends, families and colleagues and ultimately hopes that Barbara herself will step forward.

It marks the introduction at the National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL) of a new file, to be called the Barbara File, into the main Reading Room.

It proposes a campaign of direct action at F.E. McWilliam Gallery.

It announces the implementation and the inauguration of myself, Sarah Carne, as the Barbara Collector.

It calls for Barbara to be reinserted where she can be and highlight where she can't.

**I hereby propose a campaign for direct action to raise
awareness and visibility of aforesaid
Barbaras.**

Sarah Carne 2015

¹ The search was originally intended to be specifically for the artist Barbara A. Brine who has work in a national collection, but whose contact information has been lost over the course of time. No other evidence of her career has been found to date.

The search has since been extended to include all overlooked female artists of this period, with the name 'Barbara' being kept to represent those who fall into this category.

² The choice of Barbara A. Brine from a long list of many other missing artists was primarily owing to the dates she was recorded as being active, based on the presumption that an artist working during the years 1970–1975 could still be alive. It is hoped, therefore, that she might become aware of this search and choose her own participation.

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Endpiece

The BARBARA COLLECTOR, the (Barbara) ROLODEX and the BARBARA FILE

I am using this pamphlet as an opportunity to announce my self-awarded status as the BARBARA COLLECTOR, responsible for the collection of evidence (insubstantial or otherwise) of any woman artist who is currently unplaced in an archive, publicly available gallery record or similar, and who was active between, though not solely confined to, the years 1970–1975.

During the *Unfolding the Archive* exhibitions the (Barbara) ROLODEX will be available in the galleries for the addition of names. Subsequently names can be submitted directly to the Barbara Collector who will take responsibility for ensuring they are recorded in a substantial fashion.

The Barbara Collector will also endeavour to support the placing of any Barbara's material evidence in its most suitable public location.

Please note, the Barbara Collector's remit is determined by gender and activity during the requisite period regardless of location and whilst NIVAL is responsible for collecting information about artists specifically in Ireland, names of artists that extend beyond this geographically are very welcome to be submitted to the (Barbara) ROLODEX at any point during the exhibitions and after.

COLLECTORS:

The National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL) has 5 Regional Collectors who collect information on a weekly basis about artists who are active in their province, and submit it in prepaid envelopes to NIVAL.

Collectors fill in a weekly timesheet and are paid for their services. They make a note of the galleries visited, titles of exhibitions, artists' names, nature of the work and the materials collected.

The information might take the form of catalogues, private view invites, posters and even objects such as badges.

In return the Collector might leave evidence of their visit in the Visitors' book.

Although impossible to collect everything nothing relevant is vetoed and small local exhibitions by unknown artists are not to be ignored.

The Barbara File

According to current practice at NIVAL three substantial pieces of evidence are required in order to gain a file in the filing cabinets in the main Reading Room. These are divided into Artist Files, Artist Organisation Files, and Irish Gallery Files.¹

Currently artists with less than this amount are stored in the Miscellaneous Filing Cabinets, which are considered a holding space, in the entrance hallway.

I hereby announce the introduction of a new file, the **Barbara File**, to NIVAL. This file is ultimately to be held in the main Reading Room and is for the storage of all names and evidence that is submitted during the *Unfolding the Archives* exhibitions.

In addition to the **Barbara File** at NIVAL there will ensue an attempt to introduce the existence of a **Barbara File** into other archives.

¹ The collection at NIVAL consists of documentation, in all formats, on Irish art and design from 1900 onwards.

² There has been considerable debate as to whether the new file to be introduced to the Reading Room of filing cabinets at NIVAL should be called the Substantial File or the Insubstantial File, the latter suggested as an intention to reclaim the validity and right to be insubstantial but nevertheless present and recorded, as opposed to miscellaneous. The final decision to name this file the Barbara File has been made in order to prioritise the existence of the individual regardless of evidence insubstantial or otherwise. NB Artists will be filed using their correct names and visibly indexed as such.





Proposals for Direct Action

F.E. McWilliam

&

NIVAL

**Remove all gender specific titles
from catalogues.**

**Remove all references to 'his wife'
from catalogues.**

**If this process wearies the insertion
of 'her husband' may
be used as an alternative.**

Finding Aids (Online)

If someone carries out an online search for a woman artist within the dates 1.1.1970 to 31.12.1975 an alert will be activated and a (box?) will pop up informing them about the Barbara Collector and the Barbara File.

Pop up Barbara (Physical Manifestation)

If a file is opened and the contents relate to a woman artist active between 1970–1975 a pop up Barbara[†] emerges and cannot be folded back into the file.

[†]Scale of Barbara yet to be determined. Potentially causing a permanent obstruction to librarians, archivists and researchers movements around NIVAL. The intention is not in itself to be obstructive but to ensure ongoing visibility.

File Retrieval

When 5 files of male artists have been requested¹ in a row by an individual researcher, the 6th file produced must be by a woman artist active between 1970–1975. The Library Assistant will be responsible for the choice.

If a request for information is made for any point during the years 1970–1975 the Barbara File MUST be produced and submitted as part of the request.

¹ This proposal was prompted by the comment 'The unknown are rarely requested' made during an interview with a Collections Officer (anonymous).

Self-Insertion

This is for the Barbaras

This is for the Barbaras who are not in catalogues or survey texts.

This is for the Barbaras who are under the radar.

This is for the Barbaras who have insubstantial evidence.

This is for the Barbaras in miscellaneous filing cabinets.

This is for the Barbaras who are unnamed in the photographs.

This is for the Barbaras who couldn't get funding because of a recession.

This is for the Barbaras who were ineligible for the 'young artist' grants.

This is for the Barbaras who had money but were rubbish at networking.

This is for the Barbaras who were just not overly productive.

This is for the Barbaras who were emerging. And then went back under.

This is for the Barbaras who started late.

This is for the Barbaras who are bitter.

This is for the Barbaras who missed the zeitgeist.

This is for the Barbaras who got up at dawn.

This is for the Barbaras who did all the right things.

This isn't for Barbara Hepworth or Barbara Kruger. But it is for many of their peers.

This is for the Barbaras who self-define.

This is for the Barbaras I'll never find.

This is for the Barbaras who don't want to be found.

Subsequently to *Unfolding the Archive* any artist who was herself active between the required dates but has less than three substantial pieces of evidence can personally² request her information to be placed in the Barbara File in the main Reading Room.

Offsite Sticker direct action³

When the reader comes across a catalogue or similar text that refers to a woman artist active during the relevant years a **B** sticker⁴ should be applied to the book in question, thereby alerting future potential readers to its content.

² Artists who have not responded in person but are nominated by others are to be added to the Barbara File index. Material may be added as and when it becomes available.

³ This direct action takes Wendy Davis' Feminist Library Classification System sticker usage as its inspiration. Devised in 1978 it incorporates the use of variously coloured stickers to draw attention to that which might otherwise be overlooked.

⁴ Stickers marked clearly with the letter B.

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This pamphlet has been produced on the occasion of *Unfolding the Archive*, a Floating World exhibition in collaboration with the National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL) and the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio in partnership with the NCAD Gallery.

The content was devised by the author following research, site visits and interviews. She apologises for any errors concerning information about any organisation mentioned and would endeavour to correct these in future editions.

With particular thanks to:

Donna Romano The Librarian and Dr Riann Coulter
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All the staff at NIVAL

National Irish Visual Arts Library
The Clock Building
National College of Art & Design
100 Thomas Street
Dublin 8
Ireland

All the staff at F.E. McWilliam Gallery and Studio

F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio
200 Newry Road
Banbridge
County Down
BT32 3NB
Northern Ireland

The Feminist Library (founded in 1975)
5 Westminster Bridge Road
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SE1 7XW

Design: work-form

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