

## Biographies

### Fiona Jack

Fiona Jack is an artist based in Auckland, New Zealand. Within her projects there are aspects of participation, consultation and/ or collaboration with people and groups. Through observation, dialogue, collecting and digressive historical research she pieces together a fabric of references that inform the development of each body of work. Within this aggregation of people, groups and ideas her projects reflect upon contemporary situations, and the systems, ideologies and forms of resistance used to shape and reshape them. Fiona has an MFA from CalArts Los Angeles and is a Senior Lecturer at the Elam School of Fine Art at The University of Auckland.

### Sue Bradford

Sue Bradford has spent much of her life as a front line street activist and community organiser, particularly with unemployed workers’ and beneficiaries’ organisations. For ten years she was a Green MP (1999 -2009) before going on to complete a PhD in public policy with Marilyn Waring at AUT in 2014. She currently works as Education Coordinator for Kotare Research and Education for Social Change in Aotearoa Trust and was the subject of Jenny Chamberlain’s recent biography *Constant Radical*.

## Contributors

Sue Abel, Sahnay Abplanalp Ellis, Franke-Su Ahkit, Tosh Ahkit, Geneva Alexander-Marsters, Quentin Allan, Edith Amituanai, Rachel Ashby, Arapeta Ashton, Kathryn Aucamp, Elle Loui August, Dianne Baron, Wendelien Bakker, Adam Ben-Dror, Bella Berman, Sue Berman, Olivia Blyth, Sue Bradford, Megan Brady-Clark, Emma Chalmers, Janita Craw, Elliot Crossan, Judy Darragh, Karen Davis, Hannah Davis-Gray, Charli de Koning, Remco De Blaaij, Catherine Delahunty, Lianne Divine, Suzy Dunser, Juliana Durán, Kim Ellis, Tane Feary, Sylvia Frain, Amber French, Lois Hannah, Josh Harris Harding, Geraldine Hay, Anya Henis, Rebecca Hobbs, Olyvia Hong, Tim Howard, Charlotte Huddleston, Fiona Jack, Dieneke Jansen, Quentin Jukes, Hyder Khondaker, Julia Kim, Felixe Laing, Melissa Laing, Peter Lange, Gabi Lardies, Laida Lertxundi, Ada Leung, Keiller Macduff, Charlotte Maguire, Finn McCahon Jones, Emma McIntyre, Karamia Muller, Robin Murphy, Richard Orjis, David Parker, Minnie Parker, Hannah Pawley, Carol Peters, Monique Redmond, Rebecca Richards, Bridget Riggir-Cuddy, Caroline Robinson, Linda Roche, Milvia Romici, Cheyenne Rose, Karen Rubado, Deborah Rundle, Lea Schlatter, Balamohan Shingade, Rachel Simon-Kumar, Hayley Starhail, Jaimee Stockman Young, Taarati Taiaroa, Katy Turner, Hannah Valentine, Tash van Schaardenburg, Alyssa Venning- Thomas, Selwyn Vercoe, Sophie Wagener, Shannon Walsh, Rhonda Whitehead, Briana Wooliams

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## Riverbed

16 November 2018 - March 02 2019

In February 2018 Fiona Jack opened the exhibition *Our Red Aunt* at the Glasgow Women’s Library in Scotland. Centered around the artist’s Great Grand Aunt, the Scottish suffragette and radical communist Helen Crawford (1877–1954), *Our Red Aunt* employed collaborative artistic strategies to create a shared re-engagement with Crawford’s life work.

*Riverbed* continues the reflection on shared political narratives established in *Our Red Aunt*, while embedding the development of the *Riverbed* project within a network of communities here in Aotearoa. Fiona Jack views activist and social justice advocate Sue Bradford as a contemporary counterpart of Helen Crawford, and has developed the *Riverbed* project in close conversation with her.

Since 1999 Bradford has been working as a member of the education-based social justice collective Kotare Trust, based in Wellsford. The Trust provides a physical space and the pedagogical resources for reflective, collaborative learning and aims to assist others to ‘regard the world with clear vision, speak with a strong voice and act with a bold heart’. Kotare Trust works to proactively support the wairua of those working at the coalface of social transformation.

Fiona Jack and Sue Bradford have facilitated a series of workshops at Artspace NZ and Kotare over the winter months of 2018. During each workshop participants have been invited to shape rocks from a variety of clays while engaging in facilitated group discussion around a topical issue. Emerging out of these dialogues among many hands and voices, each rock included in this exhibition could be considered to carry an echo of collective thought within its vibrant matter.

## Fiona Jack with Sue Bradford

### and contributors

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Through the dialogic nature of this process, Fiona Jack and Sue Bradford prioritise our political present as one in which listening and action are both embodied and intersubjective, where the experiences we each draw on can find shared value. By working in this way they place emphasis on listening, engagement and the exchange of knowledge as being at the heart of any true potential for social and political transformation.

Fiona Jack cites artist and former teacher Michael Asher (1943-2012) as a key influence in the development of her own artistic methods. The extended and polyvocal critical praxis he developed while teaching at the California Institute of the Arts reverberates in the ethos of *Riverbed*. Fiona Jack herself is now a teacher at the Elam School of Fine Arts, and many of her past and present students have also been actively involved in the *Riverbed* project. The Auckland Studio Potters Society where Fiona Jack has been a pottery student for six years is another community connected to the exhibition. At the society’s Onehunga teaching centre each of the rocks made by workshop participants has gone through a 15 hour-long wood firing.

Bringing the pedagogical praxis of Sue Bradford and Michael Asher together through the contexts of The Glasgow Women’s Library, Auckland Studio Potters Society, and Artspace NZ, Fiona Jack gestures to an open field of learning. As such, *Riverbed* is an imaginative provocation that connects artistic, pedagogical and political concerns, asking how we might use our hands to organise, and to enable our kōrero to shape our world, together.

## Rooms

[1] *Riverbed, 2018*

**Wood fired ceramic rocks made by workshop participants.**

The numerous rock-forms found in this room do not easily yield the hours and labours they have been shaped by. Together, the more than 3000 rocks embody a process of collective social labour, facilitated by an artistic practice that seeks to recognise and organise an intersection of knowledges. The rocks are not strictly 'outcomes' of the workshops, nor are they simply metaphors. Instead, they bring together an 'organisation of knowledge', and observe how hands and minds function in so many different ways.

In 1913, during the same era that Fiona Jack’s Great Aunt Helen Crawford cast rocks through the windows of the Ministry of Education (*see In the Hands of the Proletariat*), the Bolshevik scientist, science fiction writer, and philosopher Alexander Bogdanov began writing *Tektology: Universal Organisation Science*. Proposing a 'systems theory' of culture, tektology, developed from the idea that academic disciplines are not a set of discrete practices or isolated knowledges. Rather, they are a set of intersecting systems with the ability to inform and shape one another. Bogdanov’s theory became central to the proletkult movement, which worked to produce a working-class aesthetic; asserting that the making of culture belongs in the hands of the people.

Positioned at an intersection of other knowledges and practices, in *Riverbed* artistic production is put to use and made accessible. This is where Bogdanov, Crawford and Jack align, where boundaries seemingly fixed can begin to dissolve, to enable rapid social and political transformation to take place.

Once wet clay, each of these naturally glazed ceramic objects has been fired multiple times; a preliminary bisque firing at Elam School of Fine Arts followed by a 15 hour wood firing at the Auckland Studio Potters society in Onehunga. Avoiding direct authorship—as the objects, publications, group notes and banners do in the other rooms—they embody many makers. In this way, they accommodate social production and its value in ongoing political progress, thinking, and action.

Each piece then exists as an object of glazed earth, yet together these materials might be seen to 'make a worldview'. As Fiona Jack has prompted us, perhaps they could be considered to carry an echo of the discussions that have taken place during the workshops, together taking the shape of a 'socially formed lithosphere.'

*How do we create groups that will last?*

[2] **Workshop Space**

Further workshops are held throughout the course of the exhibition. An archive of events that happened can be seen below and future programme will be announced on our website, social media and printed under 'public programmes'

**Friday 6 July 2018**  
*Considering Elam library protest placards as artworks*  
Workshop led by Fiona Jack at Elam School of Fine Arts

**Wednesday 15 August 2018**  
*Kōrero tuku iho with Ngarimu Blair*  
Workshop in the main gallery at Artspace NZ

**Tuesday 28 August 2018**  
*How do we create groups that will last?*  
Workshop led by Sue Bradford at Artspace NZ

**Wednesday 19 September 2018**  
*Women challenging power and making change*  
– *a participatory celebration of Women's Suffrage Day*  
Workshop led by Sue Bradford and Fiona Jack at Artspace NZ

**Friday 28 – Saturday 29 September 2018**  
*Speaking out in challenging times*  
Two day workshop led by Sue Bradford, Catherine Delahunty, Tim Howard and Fiona Jack at Kotare Trust Education Centre near Wellsford

**Tuesday 9 October 2018**  
*Reform vs. Revolution*  
Workshop led by Sue Bradford and Tim Howard at Artspace NZ

*How do we create groups that will last?*

[3] **Traces**

This collection of artworks, research material and objects trace the threads within Riverbed. Some of the pieces are from the exhibition Our Red Aunt in Scotland that took place at the Glasgow Women’s Library in February 2018.

*Clockwise around room*

***Mum, Helen and I***  
**Fiona Jack, 2018**  
Artist book, hardcover, limited edition

***Work in progress***  
**Fiona Jack, 2018**  
Visitors to the exhibition *Our Red Aunt* at the Glasgow Women’s Library (February 2018) were invited to edit/correct/annotate this transcription of Helen Crawford’s autobiography before it is published for the first time in 2019 by Fiona Jack in collaboration with the Marx Memorial Library and the Glasgow Women’s Library. Artist book, paperback, limited edition

***Journey to Russia***  
**Fiona Jack with Susan Haddow, 2017**  
Glazed stoneware plate

***The promised land is much nearer for the world’s workers. The enemy trembles***  
**Fiona Jack, 2018**  
Embroidery on ribbon, from page 368 in Helen Crawford’s original manuscript

***Govan***  
**Fiona Jack with the ‘Strong Women of the Clydeside’ project team, 2017**  
Glazed stoneware bottle

***If Christ could be militant so could I***  
**Fiona Jack with Lesley Orr, 2017**  
Glazed stoneware vase

***Militant suffragette***  
**Fiona Jack with Jeanie Black, 2017**  
Glazed stoneware tea cup and saucer

***Organise***  
**Fiona Jack, 2017**  
Embroidery on velvet

***SHALL WE NOT SPEAK FOR OURSELVES?***  
**Fiona Jack, 2017**  
Embroidery on cotton  
Letter to the editor, Crawford, H. Forward, June 16 1917 (emphasis in original)

***Bowl***  
**Fiona Jack, 2017**  
Glazed stoneware bowl

***Constant Radical: The Life and Times of Sue Bradford***  
Biography by Jenny Chamberlain, 2017

***It was a woeful spectacle***  
**Fiona Jack, 2017**  
Embroidery on linen, from page 262 in Helen Crawford’s original manuscript

***The world is ours. Let us go in and possess it***  
**Fiona Jack, 2017**  
Embroidery on ribbon, from page 403 in Helen Crawford’s original manuscript

***There can be no safety, no security, while capitalism continues***  
**Fiona Jack, 2017**  
Embroidery on satin ribbon, from page 310 in Helen Crawford’s original manuscript

***Cones, 2018***  
All the rocks in *Riverbed* have been fired twice. Their first bisque firing was in the electric kilns at the Elam School of Fine Arts where Jack works. Their second firing was in a Bourry box kiln at the Auckland Studio Potters Society studies in Onehunga where Jack has been a member and student for five years. Two wood firings, two weeks apart, were undertaken for this project. The Bourry box kiln is fired for approximately 15 hours, using the energy of a significant volume of untreated waste wood as it burns in the firebox of the kiln. The rocks have not been glazed, but rather their colour and surface texture is achieved by a combination of forces - reactions within the atmosphere of the kiln and the clay body, ash and direct heat from the wood fire, salt which is added to the atmosphere of the kiln in the later stages of firing, and reactive clay slips. The cones displayed here are made of a ceramic compound designed to melt at a certain temperature. Small peepholes are accessible throughout the firing to allow visibility of the cones and determine temperature within the kiln

***For God’s sake stop jazzing and get to work***  
**Fiona Jack, 2017**  
Embroidery on cotton, The Jazz Period, Crawford H. The Communist, October 8, 1921

***Through our land the women gather, overcoming trial and stress, great the task we gladly further, on to peace we proudly press. Courage springs from facing danger, strong in love of life’s delight: In our midst no-one’s a stranger, in our hands the future’s bright.***  
**Fiona Jack, 2018**  
1350 x 60, embroidery on linen, from a poem/song by Helen Crawford, Song for Women, date unknown

***Workers’ International Relief***  
**Fiona Jack with Audrey Canning, 2017**  
Glazed stoneware jug

**Glasgow Women’s Library February – May 2018 Programme**

***What a debt we owe these women!***  
**Fiona Jack, 2017**  
Embroidery on cotton, from page 73 in Helen Crawford’s original manuscript

***Could insanity reach a higher level?***  
**Fiona Jack, 2017**  
Embroidery on linen, from page 324 in Helen Crawford’s original manuscript

***Shall we remain silent any longer?***  
**Fiona Jack, 2017**  
Embroidery on linen, in a letter to the editor, Labour Leader, June 21, 1917

***First woman Councillor of Dunoon***  
**Fiona Jack with Jim Jack, 2017**  
Glazed stoneware jug

***Feminist***  
**Fiona Jack with Adele Patrick, 2017**  
Glazed stoneware pitcher

***In the hands of the proletariat***  
**Fiona Jack, 2018**  
Black angel polished cobbles, individually laser engraved by Alice at Flux Laser Studio, Whisky Bond, Glasgow. One tonne of these engraved rocks were installed at the Glasgow Women’s Library for visitors to take away. In chapter 10 of the autobiography of Fiona Jack’s Great Grand Aunt Helen Crawford she talks about her first militant action as suffragette in 1912 when she broke the windows of the Minister for Education: "I took the two stones given me, got a taxi early in the morning to Piccadilly and quietly made my way to Harvard Street. The two stones had messages attached, with a demand for the enfranchisement of women, etc. I felt rather proud of the fact that I broke both windows and that my aim was good." The work *In the hands of the proletariat* explored a connection between the bold actions of Jack’s Great Aunt, their shared interest in Marxist thought, and a contemplation of radical action today

***A conversation between Adele Patrick and Fiona Jack: Our Red Aunt***  
February 2nd - March 17th, 2018  
Glasgow Women’s Library

***This we refused***  
**Fiona Jack, 2018**  
Embroidery on wool, from page 156 in Helen Crawford’s original manuscript

***I asked lots of questions***  
**Fiona Jack, 2018**  
Embroidery on wool, from page 210 in Helen Crawford’s original manuscript

***Lunch in Dunoon***  
**Fiona Jack with Norman Jack**  
2017  
Glazed stoneware cup