

Constance Markievicz | Anomalous Ferment

Maeve Collins and Julie Griffiths

Drawing on contemporary art research practices, the paper asks how chronologically disparate moments can speak to each other and offer fresh perspectives.

Since 2014, participatory art project, **Fold and Rise** has traced and mapped the artistic and political life of Constance Markievicz, who, following the enactment of the Representation of the People Act, was the first woman elected to parliament, of the seventeen female candidates who stood in 1918.

Markievicz remained, for many years, the only woman elected on the basis of her own endeavours, yet she is little acknowledged for the landmark change she embodied. A seminal figure in Irish history and the founding of the Irish State, Markievicz was incarcerated at the time of her election. Possibly enabled by the privilege of her early life, she prioritised nationalism ahead of feminism, and as an abstentionist, never took her seat at Westminster. She later became only the second woman in the world to take up a cabinet position, as Minister for Labour in the Irish Government.

This complex individual remains a potent, controversial and divisive figure, whose choices and actions remain uncomfortable and difficult to accommodate 100 years later. Frequently maligned, largely marginalised and ultimately forgotten, she suffers the same ambiguous and differential standards by which women are frequently still measured and constrained today.

Fold & Rise, was first delivered at Lissadell House, Sligo, the home of Countess Markievicz. In 2018, working with the National Women's Council of Ireland, it will be delivered to a caucus of women representatives, at the Oireachtas, looking for echoes of Markievicz in the lives of individual women TDs and their experiences .

How did her artistic education and practice, shape and inform her political career? How is it possible for this compelling and contentious figure to trouble us so strongly still, a century on? How is her legacy and influence felt and understood by her contemporary legislators today?

Artists/researchers Maeve Collins & Julie Griffiths began working together in 2014. They have delivered workshops and lectures at McGill University, Montreal; Brookes University, Oxford; University College London; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; National College of Art and Design, Dublin; and the National University of Ireland, Galway, amongst many others.

Their collaborative practice, **Fold & Rise**, first delivered at Lissadell House, Sligo, the home of Countess Markievicz, features in the forthcoming book: *Art as Social Action*, by Gregory Sholette. In 2018, they will deliver to a caucus of women representatives with the National Women's Council of Ireland, at the Oireachtas.

www.foldandrise.wixsite.com/fold-and-rise

Call for Papers

'A Century of Women MPs, 1918-2018'

London, 5-7 September 2018

A multidisciplinary conference hosted jointly by Parliament's UK Vote 100 Project, the History of Parliament Trust and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Westminster

This major international conference marks the centenary of the 1918 Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act, which allowed women in the United Kingdom to stand for election to Parliament. Passed a few months after the partial enfranchisement of women, the legislation marked a further pivotal moment in women's participation in the political process.

Over the course of two days, the conference will reflect on the experiences of women MPs and Parliamentary candidates over the last one hundred years, their contributions and the challenges they faced. Keynote speakers will include Professor Krista Cowman and Dr Jacqui Turner.

Proposals for individual papers of 20 minutes are invited, and panel proposals of three twenty-minute papers are also welcomed. Papers may relate to one or more of the following themes, though this is by no means an exhaustive list. We also encourage papers which offer comparisons with the UK context:

- Campaigns to allow women to stand as Parliamentary candidates and the passage of the Qualification of Women Act
- Individual women MPs and their experiences
- Women MPs and their parties
- Parliamentary campaigns by women candidates (whether successful or not)
- Reactions to women in Parliament
- The gendered culture and architecture of Parliament
- The issues of under-representation of women in Parliament
- Gender quotas, women-only shortlists and other strategies
- Women's lives after serving as MPs

It is anticipated that selected papers from the conference will form a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal. If you are interested in having your paper considered for this, please indicate this with the submission of your abstract.

Please send abstracts of c.250 words and biographies of not more than 100 words to Emma Peplow at EPeplow@histparl.ac.uk **by 31st January 2018**.