

A black and white photograph of a group of women in a gymnasium, each holding a large hula hoop high above their heads with both arms. They are wearing light-colored short-sleeved shirts and dark skirts. The gymnasium has a high ceiling with exposed wooden beams and ropes hanging from it. Large arched windows in the background let in natural light. The word 'CARE' is overlaid in large blue letters, and the subtitle 'FROM PERIPHERY TO CENTRE' is in white below it.

CARE

FROM PERIPHERY TO CENTRE

Elena Cogni

in collaboration with Homerton College, University of
Cambridge

This publication can be found in digital format, and printed in a limited edition of 100.
This is n. of 100, including the print *RELATIONS of CARE* by Elena Cogni

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On the cover: detail of still from 'THE NEW SCHOOL' FILM, 1944. One of several surviving stills from a Crown Film Unit short information film shot at Homerton in 1944.

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CARE: FROM PERIPHERY TO CENTRE

Elena Cologni's artistic research looks at undervalued practices of care in society through people's experiences of place. For this project, she collaborated with the 250 Archive Working Group in 2018 to respond to domestic, social and political dimensions of care in the work of Maud Clouesley Brereton and Leah Manning, while researching the College's archive and its architecture. The research was underpinned care ethics principles and a conversation with renowned care ethicist Virginia Held. A more intimate dimension is revealed through the selection of students' items, as a snapshot of everyday life in an early 20th-century women's College. This research unearths the College's historic concern with, and contribution to, health, well-being and education.

ELENA COLOGNI

The exhibits resonate with Cologni's aesthetic sensibility for their tactile and visual qualities, and underpin the artist's sculptural installation designed in response to the 1914 Ibberson Gymnasium, and echoed in the Queen's Wing veranda and lawn. The newly rehoused archive, and installation art as a medium for conveying its contents, are key developments in the College's anniversary year. Responding to Homerton 250 themes of free-thinking and change, the installation shows how archives embody the past, but by critically informing the present can help shape the future, too. Elena Cologni has a PhD in Fine Art from the University of the Arts, Central Saint Martin's College, London. She has an in(ter)disciplinary research approach and collaborates with academics from fields including psychology, philosophy, and cognitive science. Her work has previously been exhibited elsewhere across University of Cambridge departments and Colleges, as well as at prestigious national and international venues such as Tate Modern, Whitechapel Gallery, Museo d'Arte Moderna, Bologna, Karsi Sanat, Istanbul, and Oslo Kunstforening. She is currently a recipient of the Artist International Development Fund (British Council/ Arts Council England, 2018-19), and the Artist-Newsletter Bursary Award (2018).

THE 250 ARCHIVE WORKING GROUP

Peter Cunningham (educationalist and social historian) Melanie Keene (historian of science) Svetlana Paterson (archivist)

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University College London Library; Cambridge University Library; The Harlow Art Trust: Gibberd Gallery, Harlow. The project is part of Cambridge Festival of Ideas, was commissioned by Homerton College, and is kindly supported by the Moleskine Foundation. Curator Gabi Scardi and care ethicist Virginia Held.

A special thanks to Homerton College Principal Geoff Ward for his involvement and continuous support in the project.

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RESEARCH AND ART INTERVENTION

CARE, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN BODY AND SPACE

Ibberson Building (1914) Herbert Ibberson Arts and Crafts with eclectic references, arched windows, decorative lion frieze. Created to accommodate expanding arts curriculum, studios, theatre and gymnasium, opening on to lawns for outdoor sport and dance.



The arrangement of the display was inspired by archival photographs of the room, whose architectural design was punctuated by wooden panels corresponding to the areas in between the curved windows. On view are reproductions of the original items kept in the College Archive, as well as selected sport equipment, and a documentary footage of the research material from the College Archive. The newly produced rope sculptures refer back to the time when the space was used as a gym, as also do part of the exhibits.

An Introduction to Hockey.

Scene—Homerton College.

Time—1.30 p.m., immediately after dinner.

DASH upstairs to dress for the game. Cleaning day!!! Boots nowhere to be found. Rummage every possible corner. Grow desperate. Joy! one reposing on window-sill. Get into it. Reflect—one not much use without the other. Again a frantic search. Finally discover it concealed in counterpane. Drag it on, rejoicing. Alas! boot lace breaks. Wildly turn drawers upside down for another. No success. Use language * * * * Eureka! a piece of string. Snatch up hockey stick and make precipitous descent down fire staircase. Find everyone waiting with singular unappreciativeness of my dispatch. Vigorously thrust into place by energetic player. Whistle blows. Something curious happens in the centre. Wild rush down the field. Decide to follow. Am met by returning stream. Ball comes my way. Make a dash for it. Miss it. Another attempt. Foot slips. Contemplate the azure beauties of the sky. Rise once more—no bones broken. Look for ball. Other end of field. Just in time to meet it. Unfortunately hits me and not the stick. Stampedes and breathless excursions up and down the field for next half-hour, in which my feet seem to be commonly mistaken for the ball. Whistle blows at last. Breathless and in a hot limp condition return to my room. Relieved to find myself almost intact—only minus a few inches of skin. This deficit is made up in bruises and blisters.

Scene II.—Bed.

Time—7.15 a.m.

(Painfully trying to stretch myself.) "And they talk of the pleasures of Hockey."

X. Y.



EXTRACT FROM *THE HOMERTONIAN*, NOVEMBER 1906. An evocative description from the College magazine of sporting life in the College.

LEAVING THE *IBBERSON BUILDING* FOR A *HOCKEY GAME*, 1920s. Atmospheric photograph of students off to play in the College grounds, whatever the weather.



GROUP PHOTO IN THE IBBERSON BUILDING, SHOWING GYM ROPES, AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS



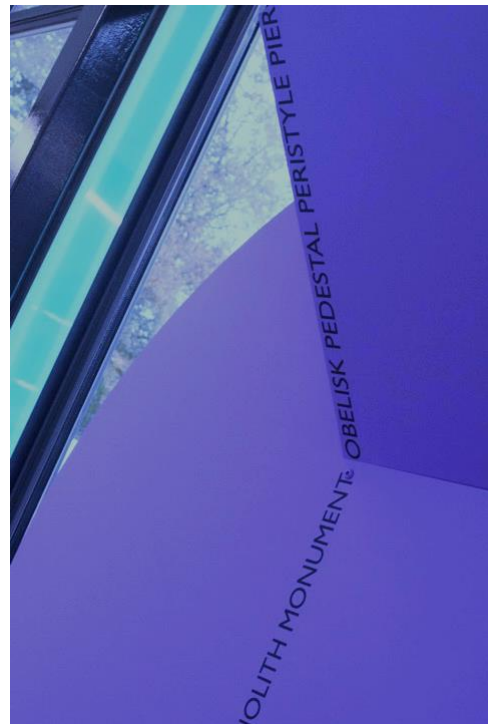
STILL FROM 'THE NEW SCHOOL' FILM, 1944.

LINES AND CIRCLES

Queen's Wing (1957), Seely and Paget, Modernist with classical features, arch and heraldic sculpture. Built as student residence, refurbished 2017 by Martindales to include gym and dance studio, offices and college archive.

The Verandah includes Cologni's installation of what could be regarded as a contemporary frieze titled *LINES AND CIRCLES (SUPPORT)*, (steel, aluminium, vinyl, 2.50x20 meters)

The text printed on the sculptures as well as on the large windows alludes to the term care as support, and support is referred to in architectural terms, including: column, pilaster, stand...





LINES AND CIRCLES (SUPPORT), (steel, aluminium, vinyl, 2.50x20 meters, detail)

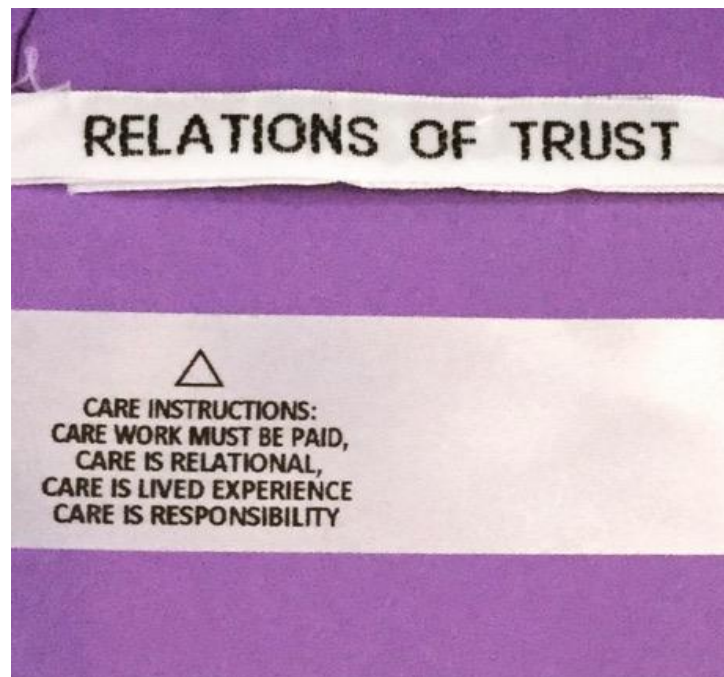
Two of the sculptures designed for the frieze 'pollinated' across gardens and lawn, along the marked axis to the Ibberson Building, form the installation titled *LINES AND CIRCLES (PROXIMITIES)*



CARE, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN STUDENT LIFE AND WORK

Principal's entrance (1880s), Giles, Gough and Trollope

High Victorian style with pointed arch and doubled doors, leading to grand staircase for Principal's residence as head of the community. Wall displays record two eminent Homertonians and their national contributions to health and care. The display includes documents from the archive recording aspects of care, health and wellbeing in student life, and Cologni's artistic response



CARE IS RELATIONAL, AND CARE INSTRUCTIONS, ELENA COLOGNI (2018), 2 FROM SERIES OF WOVEN LABELS. (the first of which is inspired by Virginia Held's writings, and the latter by Maud Brereton's revolutionary position at the beginning of the 20th century, when she sustained that domestic labour should be paid)



INDOOR GYMNASTICS (1944/5). Three photographs of scenes from Homerton's past, showing students participating in gymnastics classes. Learning about health and moving the body was an important part of historical curricula. Visit the Ibberson building for a further display of pictures and objects related to the former gymnasium (now Combination Room).

TRAFFORD SOAP BAR (1930S/40S). Used for washing clothes and scrubbing floors, the aroma of Trafford soap pervaded the College. Students were trained in basic hygiene to apply when teaching in schools. This care extended to social work, volunteering in vacations at settlements for poor children.

SOUVENIR OR MEMOIR ALBUM (1880). Example of an album commemorating students' names and experiences while at Homerton.

OPEN-AIR GYMNASTICS (1950). Four photographs of gym apparatus being taken out to the College grounds in the summer.



SOUVENIR OR MEMOIR ALBUM (1912). Many of these student albums of memories and tokens survive, and several are gathered in this exhibition. Students handed their often very elaborate albums round amongst their friends, each inscribing a page to celebrate friendships, an insight into the close-knit life of the College.

SEALED SECRET (C. 1860). An embossed envelope, sealed with the message: "Yes, but ask True Love". Includes a coloured floral design on the reverse.

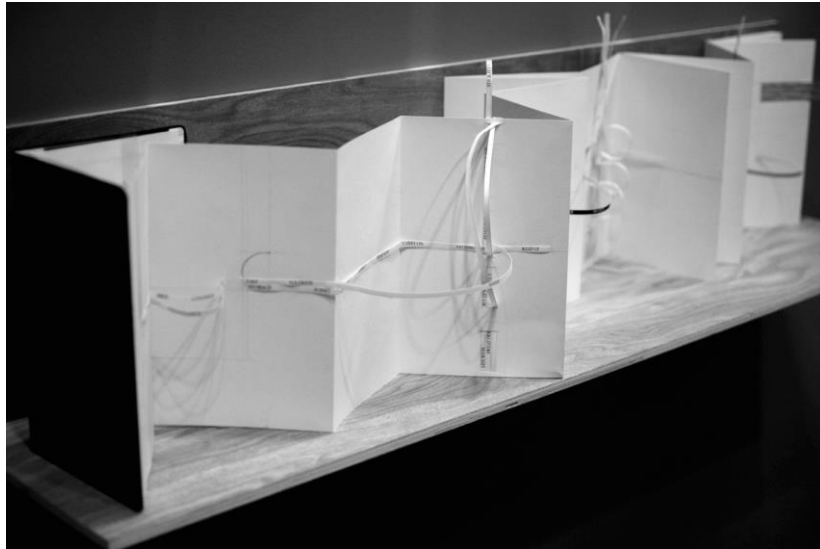
SOUVENIR OR MEMOIR ALBUM (1900). Depicts kindness in serving friends food at table and providing cocoa for them at bedtime. "Things by which I shall remember Katie".

CONTENTS OF A NEEDLEWORK BOX (1861-2). Bought for 12s 6d, this box belonged to Emma Hunter, a student at Homerton College in the early 1860s, next to **EMMA HUNTER, PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT (1861-2).**

STUDENT HANDWORK BOOK (1917). A book in which students made patterns for dressmaking. Dressmaking was an important skill for students in their adult lives, and in preparing a younger generation of girls at school for home-making and motherhood.



MOTHER'S TOOLS, ELENA COLOGNI (2018, Composition Of 4: wood, steel, custom-made fabric labels, printing tools from the artist's mother's embroidery kit, 20cmx20cm each, the artist's collection). The labels read: CARE AS SUPPORT, RESPONSIVENESS TO NEED, PERSONS ARE RELATIONAL, UBUNTU.



NOTES ON CARE, ELENA COLOGNI (2018, graphite prints from the tools in previous artwork, pencil, laser print paper on moleskine japanese album, with inserts of fabric designs from the *Architectural Review Magazine*, June 1936, 21cm x 120 cm, Homerton Archive Collection). Another version of the same is now in the Moleskine Art Collection.

LEAH MANNING AND MAUD CLOUDESLEY BRERETON'S POLITICS OF DOMESTICITY: CARE, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



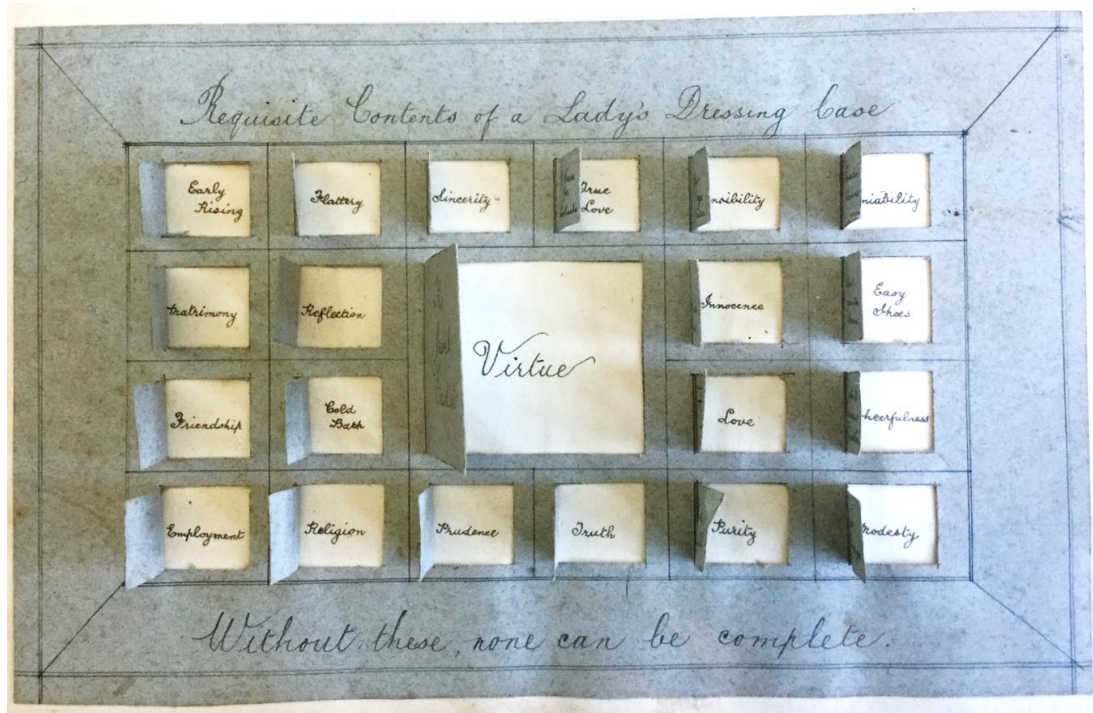
The display, located in Homerton College Principal's office lobby included the following items:

LEAH MANNING, *WHAT I SAW IN SPAIN* (1935). Describes Manning's visit to Spanish Republicans before the Civil War. D.N. Pritt, Socialist MP and international peace activist, wrote an introduction. Publisher Victor Gollancz was a vocal opponent of Fascism and campaigner for world peace. The book has dramatic accounts of her courageous initiatives, visiting political prisoners – men and women – in squalid and dangerous conditions. She supported especially the role of women in revolutionary action.

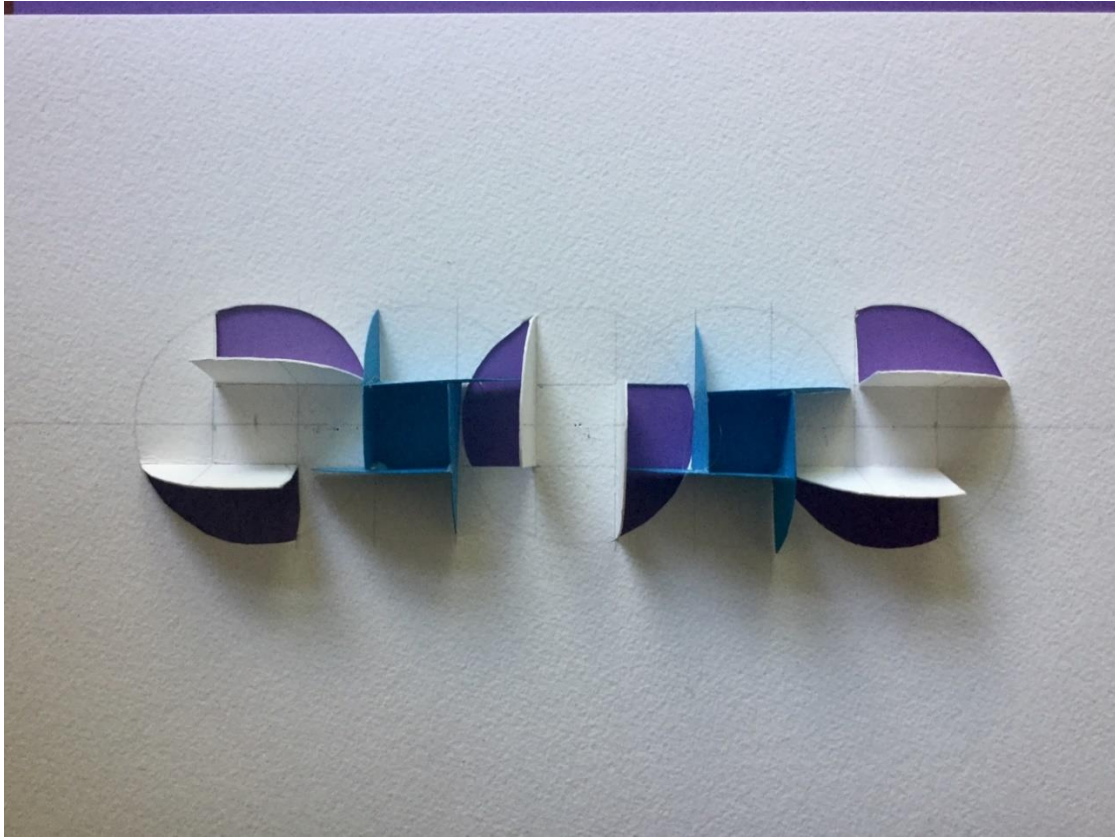
LEAH MANNING, *GROWING UP* (1948). This pamphlet advocated for the Labour Government's plan for women and children, published in 1948 at a time of rising birth rates. The plan aimed to "plant in the hearts of parents a strong sense of security so that they do not fear to bring new life into the world". It promoted the NHS, welfare clinics, Family Allowances and education, including free school meals. The pamphlet is brightly illustrated, written in an accessible and friendly tone.

HOMERTON COLLEGE HOUSE RULES (1900). Maud Horobin was Resident Tutor at Homerton at this time, responsible for overseeing student life in the College.

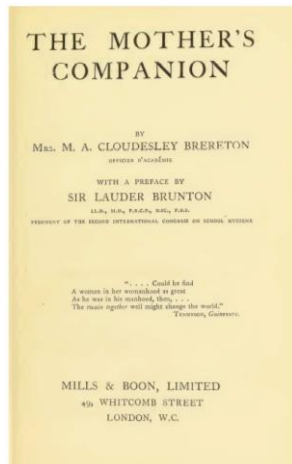
MAUD HOROBIN, "NURSING AND FIRST AID" IN JOHN C. HOROBIN (ED.) *DOMESTIC ECONOMY FOR TEACHERS* (1898). The textbook reflects elementary education as a means to improve the health and well-being of the nation, with teachers preparing girls for motherhood based on new scientific knowledge. In her chapter on "Nursing and First Aid" Maud Horobin anticipates interests she later pursued in domestic hygiene and public health.



SOUVENIR OR MEMOIR ALBUM (JUNE 1899). "The Jewel Casket": "Requisite Contents of a Lady's Dressing Case" features 20 small openings around one large centrepiece. Each 'box' names a cosmetic on its 'lid', inside each is found a corresponding virtue. "Without these, none can be complete".



CARE (PODS), ELENA COLOGNI (2018), WINDSOR AND NEWTON PAPER (Homerton College Archive Collection). This is a study for the metal installation in the veranda *LINES AND CIRCLES (SUPPORT)* (p 17)

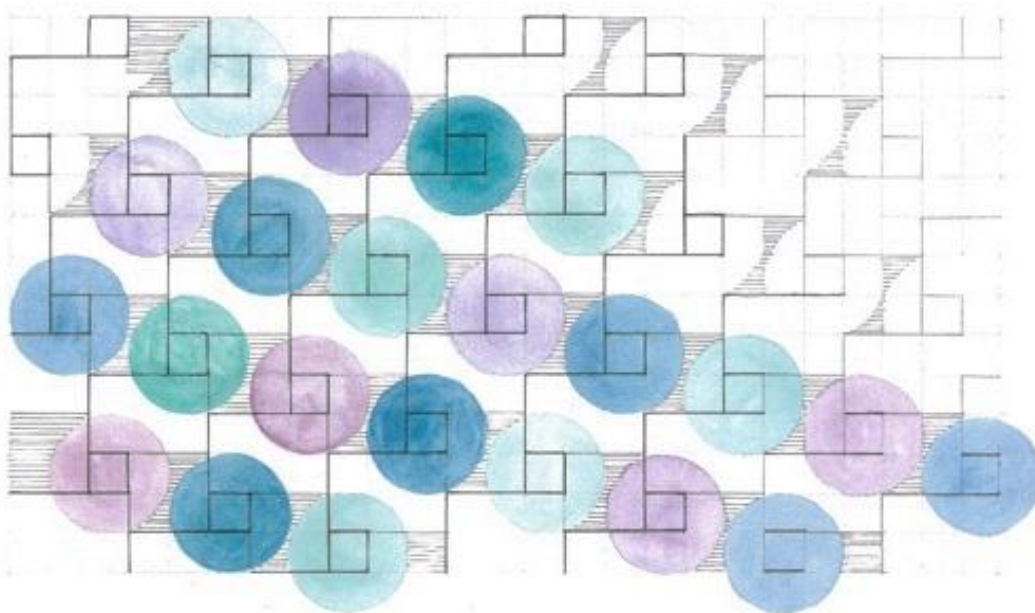


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IX. THE MOTHER AS WAGE-EARNER	89
X. THE MOTHER AS DOCTOR	99
XI. THE MOTHER AS NURSE. I. IN HEALTH	112
XII. THE MOTHER AS NURSE. II. IN SICKNESS	117

MAUD CLOUDESLEY BRERETON, *THE MOTHER'S COMPANION* (1909). Published when Brereton was a mother of five children. She had been honoured by the French Academy for her work in promoting public health. Sir Lauder Brunton, a leading medical practitioner with an international reputation, and a founder of the National League for Physical Education. Mills and Boon were publishers of popular literature and practical handbooks. Above a detail of the content page selected by the artist



MAUD CLOUDESLEY BRERETON, *COOKING BY GAS* (1930). Brereton probably first co-edited *Cooking by Gas* in 1910, encouraging the newfound use of gas ovens as a means of improving health through more effective cooking, and via its efficiency and cleanliness to improve working conditions for women in the home. This paperback edition was published in 1930 to accompany a national exhibition by the British Commercial Gas Association, by whom she was employed.



LINES AND CIRCLES, ELENA COLOGNI (2018, INK AND WATERCOLOUR ON ACID FREE PAPER, ORIGINAL DESIGN ABOVE AND DETAIL OF DIGITAL PRINT ON COTTON, 140CM X 100CM, Homerton College Archive Collection).

CONVERSATIONS

DOES CARING MATTER?

Elena Cogni interviewed by Ayla van der Boor

Can you tell us about your work and its relation to care ethics?

Care: from periphery to centre, draws on the College architecture (Ibberson Building, 1914), and on two key figures in its history: Maud Cloudesley Brereton (formerly Maud Horobin, lecturer and Acting Principal, 1903), and Leah Manning (student 1906-08). Both of international importance, they were concerned with health, well-being, and education, and I am specifically interested in how they engaged with care in domestic (Brereton published the book *'The Mothers' Companion*, 1909) and international political contexts (Manning organised children's escape from the Spanish fascist regime, 1929). A display of items from the archive gives a snapshot of early 20th-century life in a women's College, while focusing on practices of care in society and in students' learning, through domestic studies, teachers training in medicine, health, and physical education, academic subjects which were considered less central than others, but more 'appropriate' for female students.

These themes underpin my sculptural installation designed in response to the 1914 Ibberson building (a former gymnasium) and echoed in the Queen's Wing (housing the new gym) opening to a glass veranda, flowerbeds and lawn. Moreover, after an exchange with care ethics' philosopher Virginia Held, I was able to contextualise my practical work, and focus on aspects of womanhood, relationally and reciprocity at the core of the approach. This process is evidenced throughout the exhibition, including the recorded development of my thinking in a Moleskine sketchbook, and a selection of extracts from one of the publications Held shared with me informed a series of custom-made fabric labels, the steel frieze construction (*Care As Support*), and the steel and rope made sculptures (*Relations Of Care*)

Can you tell us about the ethical concern you engage with?

My interest is now in a possible link between ecofeminism and care ethics (Held) through practices of care. I am trying to embed the adoption of dialogic (inherently interdisciplinary) strategies in the creation of the work, a form of socially engage art practice. These include responding to the spatial (Linda McDowell), social (Henry Lefebvre), and cultural dimension of a place, as well as engaging with specific communities and collaborators therein to create situated (Donna Haraway) and embodied knowledge (Luce Irigaray). My projects often develop through collaborating, and thus

becoming part, of interdisciplinary contexts. For example, the current project was developed in collaboration with the College 250 Archive Working Group and involved subjects like science, education and architecture. However, in my practice, consistent concerns with ecofeminism and place are informed by ongoing conversations with Professor Susan Buckingham (feminist geographer, Cambridge, UK), whereas the artistic strategies with curator Gabi Scardi (Milan, Italy, International Development Fund British Council/Arts Council England, 2018/19), and in reference to historical artists like Mierle Laderman Ukeles (*Maintenance Art Works 1969–1980*).

How did you get involved in care ethics?

In the current project care ethics functions as the lens through which I responded to the College archive, but I have been working in this direction even if I did not address it directly for some time. It naturally evolved from understanding the dialogic approach in my artistic process as a reciprocal form of caring (from the part of myself as the artist, and that of the participant).

How would you describe care ethics?

Care ethics allows us to step out of the dominant social, political and cultural system of understanding society and relations, and look at the peripheral (not the central) instead: the circular (not the linear) thinking, the quiet (not the loud) voices in society as strengths (not weaknesses). Care Ethics teaches and trains us not to get tempted to compete by adopting the same strategies, which have damaged our society and environment, but try different avenues instead. Learning to take care also means to foster and create new connections to solve problems in society, something at the core of some non-western countries' ethos (eg. ubuntu). Essentially care ethics has *listening* at its core, as much as most dialogic approaches including Dolci's, and a lot can come from practicing it.

What is the most important thing you learned from care ethics?

As an artist and academic, I have referred to phenomenology the most since early on (1999-2004), while also understanding the participants' and audience's reception of my work through aspects of psychology, and considering lived experience as central to my work. Care ethics showed me how to position my subjectivity, within this tradition. Virginia Held for example states that "Experience is central to feminist thought, but what is meant by experience is not mere empirical observation, as so much of the history of modern philosophy and as analytic philosophy tend to construe it. Feminist experience is what art and literature as well as science deal with. It is the lived experience of feeling as well as thinking, of performing actions as well as receiving impressions, and of being aware of our connections with other persons as well as of our own sensations." (2006)

How may care ethics contribute to society as a whole, do you think?

I am interested in the fact that it takes us to look at things from a different angle, consider our actions and experience, to then realize how we can contribute to society. More specifically sharing through art, strategies and concerns I have as a mother myself was quite natural, and this will hopefully lead to make people more aware of how they can contribute themselves to society in the everyday. Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher have defined “taking care of” as an activity that includes “everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible” (1990), and this is so relevant now and must be implemented at a social and environmental levels.

What publications do you consider the most important with regard to care ethics?

I can mention the references which are useful for me to consider a very small portion of this wide area of study, and specifically to do with care in relation to women’s position in society, dialogic strategies and ecology. I would mention Nel Noddings’ developed idea of care as a feminine ethic, drawing conceptually from a maternal perspective (*Caring: A Feminine Approach To Ethics And Moral Education*, Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1986), and understanding caring relationships to be basic to human existence and consciousness. Also, Annette Baier underscores trust, as a basic relation between particular persons, and as the fundamental concept of morality (*Trust and Anti-trust*, Ethics 96: 231-60, 1986). Virginia Held wrote numerous publications on care ethics, in which she construes care as the most basic moral value, and describes feminist ethics as committed to actual experience, and lived methodologies. One of the most recent books is *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006). Held argues that rights based moral theories presume a background of social connection, and that care ethics can help to create communities that promote healthy social relations. In this context, I argue that art can be a powerful dialogic tool.

Extract from an interview originally published on the Care Ethics Consortium website (2019)

CARING AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

After being invited by Cologni to read the previous interview, **Virginia Held** responded as follows:

“Dear Elena, In the image *CARE INSTRUCTIONS* (here at p. 20) there is the claim that ‘care work must be paid.’ I don't know of any advocates of care ethics who think that care work must ALWAYS be paid. The kind that is or should be paid should be paid better than it usually is, and it should not be characterized by gender and racial inequality as at present. But a lot of care work -- within families, for instance -- can appropriately be outside the market and unpaid.”

The image Held referred to includes two different pieces: stitched labels referring to aspects of the reading on ethics of care, and the printed label with ‘instructions of care’ including the statement ‘care work must be paid’. The latter comes from one of Maud Breteton’s campaigns in the early 1900’s, way before care ethics developed as a philosophical context. Brereton, who also wrote *The Mother’s Companion* (1909) and advocated for women’s rights and thought work at home ought to be paid. Her work was written about as an early example of feminism (Anne Clendinning, 1998, Maud Brereton ‘Gas and Water Feminism: Maud Adeline Brereton and Edwardian Domestic Technology’).

The following text is an extract from Virginia Held, ‘Care Ethics and the Social Contract’ an Oxford lecture subsequently published in *The Ethics of Care: the State of the Art*, ed Frans Vosman, Andries Bart, and Jaco Hoffman (Leuven: Peeters, 2020) and gives an overview of her position in terms of care and social contract, some of this was discussed during a conversation with Cologni (New York, 2019).

In 1987 I wrote a paper called “Non-contractual Society” (Held, 1987). It asked us to perform the mental exercise of trying to conceptualize society *as if* social relations were all versions of the relation between a mothering person (female or male) and child, instead of versions of contractual relations. This was at a time when contractual relations between rational and self-interested individuals were being promoted for absolutely every context: popular advice columns suggested that we should contract with our children for better behavior – paying them, perhaps, for going to school or for doing their chores. And medical care and education were becoming more and more like businesses, with recommendations increasingly following the market models of rational choice and contractual exchanges. College students paid their money and expected, as customers, to get their money’s worth. Commentators argued for

health care to be improved by the efficiencies of the market, and for-profit childcare enterprises were sprouting everywhere. This trend has unfortunately continued.

I asked in that paper that we think about the model of human social relations as non-contractual. But I was hoping for, or aiming at, a halt to the continuing *expansion* of social contract and market thinking to absolutely everything. I did not seriously question the appropriateness of it for its original combined sphere of the legal and political and economic. And I didn't venture any wider suggestions about how and where to think of the boundaries of this domain, except to say that at least the mothering person/child relation seemed best thought of as outside it.

This was at a time when feminists tended to think of the political as including everything. The political is what has to do with power, and the exercise of power seems to be everywhere. The slogan of the time was that "the personal is political." It would seem to follow, at least at first, that if social contract thinking is appropriate for the political, it would be appropriate everywhere else, even in the family where women should certainly have equal rights. Yet even then, one could see that this couldn't be acceptable. There are certainly contexts where seeking contracts between rationally self-interested individuals is not the best way to think about what is going on or what is needed, and various contexts of care seem to be salient among them. More common has been the radical split between public, where self-interest and contractual agreements prevail, and private, where caring for others is acknowledged. But feminist thinking and progress have broken down the radical split between public and private. We have not yet, however, developed adequate understandings of how to conceptualize the contrasting realms of care and contract.

Recently I have been thinking more about how distorted our views about *society* have been in philosophy and political theory. And I think this is to a large extent because of the social contract tradition and the excessive influence of its assumptions and ways of thinking. Initially, it seems so plausible for us to think, with Hobbes, that a social contract has to come *first*, because without it there would be, if not a war of all against all, at least such chaos and disorder and violence that we could not get on with anything else. I have been among those who have criticized Hobbes's assumption about men in the "state of nature" agreeing to the social contract. He asked us to think of them as "even now sprung out of the earth, and suddenly, like mushrooms, come to full maturity without all kind of engagement with each other" (The Citizen, 205). This view cannot be satisfactory because it leaves out women and

ignores the upbringing of children and all that is involved. But this criticism can still leave in place the *priority* of the social contract.

We can certainly agree with those who argue that of course our image of the people taking part in the social contract should include women, and that our political system should appropriately take account of all the care that is needed to keep it going. Of course, our society should adequately provide, in a fair way, for the care of children and others who are dependent. However, that could still leave us thinking that the *first* and *most important* task of moral and political theorizing is the devising of a social contract, a basis for order so that marauding bands of thugs don't kill the men and rape the women. We might still give *priority* to the legal order needed to keep the peace and let life progress. "State of nature" images could still dominate our thinking.

But consider: the marauding bands are made up of men. They first had to be children. They had to be cared for and fed. Perhaps, if they had been cared for and brought up and educated appropriately, these persons would not have become marauding bands. This is just a thought, but it sheds light on the unexamined assumptions we fall into about the priority of the social contract. It opens the possibility of questioning the priority we accord to the legal and political in our theorizing and our views of society. Daniel Engster argues that contrary to the dominant assumptions about the pursuit of self-interest and the war of all against all, human beings have a natural tendency to engage in care. Drawing on research in evolutionary theory, neurobiology, ethology, and developmental psychology, he argues that "human beings have an innate disposition to care for others" (Engster, 2015: 227). Our natural caring inclinations tend to be parochial, directed toward our own kin and group members. But they can be expanded, and it is the task of morality and politics to bring this about (228).

Under the right conditions, our natural tendencies to care could be promoted and expanded so that we are progressing toward societies in which all who need care receive it in ways that are effective and fair. Certainly, a war of all against all that is channeled into economic battlegrounds is better than one fought with weapons leading to violence and death, but it is still far from the kind of society to which we ought to aim. We *could* strive to bring about a caring society.

ARCHITECTURE AND WELL-BEING

Peter Cunningham

Elena Cologni describes how her interest in Care Ethics is applied to interpreting historical documents and artefacts in the Homerton College archive. College historians have traditionally focused on its structures and systems, policies and formal teaching. Cologni instead identifies an underlying ethos, implicit rather than explicit in the community, its activities and its social relations. Values of health, well-being and care were integral to the curriculum students that followed in training to be teachers, but equally in the conduct of their own social lives. Such values she describes as 'peripheral' (rather than central), 'circular' (not linear) and 'quiet' (rather than loud).

In 1914, concurrent with the outbreak of world war, Homerton's new building designed by Henry Ibberson, accommodated a new emphasis in education, on the visual arts, performing arts and gymnastics, on creativity and expression, specifically for teachers in school, as key to humane and well-rounded development of the younger generation. Teaching began to be viewed as more than simply rehearsing children in the '3 Rs', despite the importance of literacy and numeracy for adult employment in commerce and industry. Teachers were seen as agents of change in developing a civilized and cultured population. Moreover, this was increasingly recognized as a significant new role for women, both as teachers in the classroom and as mothers in the home.

Cologni identified Manning and Brereton, both as products of caring cultures in collegiate teacher at the turn of the 19th century, and as contributors to that culture at Homerton College and beyond, making and impact in national and international forums. Evidence in the archive included their institutional records, and their published works through which they disseminated their experiences, ideas and ideals of care in society. Manning worked and fought hard as a teacher of deprived children to secure them support for their physical health, and educational welfare. She became a president of the national teachers' union, and a Member of Parliament for the Labour Party, nursing republican soldiers in the Spanish civil war, visiting prisoners of war and organizing the evacuation of refugee children to England. Brereton made her national contribution advocating public health and domestic hygiene through the gas industry, organizing major conferences in the UK and overseas, and as a journalist publicizing the health benefits of gas as a source of power for

refrigeration, heating and lighting in the home. She took a radical stance in the 1920s and 1930s by publicizing the economic value for the nation of motherhood that deserved financial recognition by the state. Cologni's installation demonstrates the college archive as a rich source of evidence also for student activity in conducting their social relations. Her selection and display of students' writing and drawing in souvenir albums provokes critical reflection about a 21st century college community, how changes in the needs and provision of care in an age of electronic communications and social media. Finally, her site-specific installation focuses attention on architecture and the physical environment, raising awareness of the specific contributions these make to health and well-being.

TAKING CARE

Melanie Keene

What do you think of, when you take the word care?

For Homerton students in the early twentieth century, taking care meant making an extra cup of cocoa for a friend down the corridor. Creating an elaborate papercraft memorial artwork for your year-group. Or carefree running towards a hockey game in the rain.

For Leah Manning, taking care meant arguing for the provision of free milk to deprived pupils in schools. Evacuating thousands of children from Bilbao under the shadow of the Spanish Civil War. Serving her Harlow constituents as they explored what it meant to make a new town.

For Maud Brereton, taking care meant looking after the College community as Acting Principal after the death of her husband. Care was part of a mother's role, something which should be valued and rewarded. But it was also an industrial responsibility, crucial for domestic and public health.

For archivists and historians, taking care means ensuring objects, actions, memories are captured, curated, and preserved for future generations. For artists, carefulness is intertwined with researching, planning, crafting, and refining artworks and materials.

For participants in our workshop, taking care was revealed in its many manifestations: as rewarding, frustrating, time-consuming, emboldening, or moving; as supportive, expert, amateur, burdensome, helpful, or familial.

Taking care of people; taking care of objects; taking care of the world around us; taking care with our actions; caring too little or too much. Beneath and behind an ostensibly simple four-letter word, the theme of Elena Cologni's installation has revealed an interconnected world of work, skill, and emotion. A world which is often taken for granted, or which operates quietly in the interstices of life.

But what has taking care meant for me? Above all, it has been an opportunity to put into practice the collaborative and interdisciplinary promise of a College community, as we have worked together across different areas of expertise and interest. What I will take away from this project will be the idea and importance of connecting experiences, as the title for one of our events demonstrated. 'CARE: from periphery to centre' has helped me rethink the relationships between art, architecture, and history; between cloistered academic communities, family and private life, and public service and action; between curation, maintenance, and action; and to trace strands of connection and continuity over 250 years, to hear echoes between past and present student life resound within Homerton's walls.

It has also caused me to reflect on my role here at the College as part of a dedicated tutorial team. A cup of cocoa might have been replaced with a mindfulness session, but members of Homerton's community still take care of each other.

ELENA COLOGNI AND THE ART OF CARING

Gabi Scardi

Elena Cologni's work focuses on the theme of care understood as a relational commitment. It is in fact deeply linked to the idea of social bond and to the awareness of the interdependence between the person, the community and the environment in all its components. Its origin lies in the challenges of physical and psychological remoteness. Metaphorically subtracting the individual from separateness in the name of an attitude to "take care" understood as an individual and collective experience is the intent of her drawings, sculptures, and actions.

Her works, which always imply adherence to a dialogic and performative approach in making art, are also born from a marked spatial sensitivity. They concern a space that is such not by definition, but by action. The space that interests Cologni is "between": between us and others, between the individual and the community.

It is therefore expressed in terms of distance, but it is also common ground; it is interwoven with bonds, but it is nevertheless precious as a place of proximity, contact, sharing. This distance Cologni investigates, with the aim of giving it shape. She concentrates on this space, in the belief that common sense and values are produced here.

In particular, she is interested in the attitudes and actions that can arise from this proximity space, and which are stimulated within it: attitudes related to care; because it is precisely to the attitude to care that the artist attributes a character of openness and inclusion, and the possibility of overcoming the dichotomy between the self and the other. By extension, Cologni is interested in the way in which the intimate and personal activity of care can be grafted onto the social dimension. The possibility of breaking the dichotomies and the responsibility towards others, near or far, for future generations and for the environment are fundamental components of her approach.

Her interventions always include an exploration of space, whether public or private, and in many cases they start with historical investigations or with archive research concerning the themes of the feminine and the instances associated with it, the relationships between genders and between the different dimensions of the social and domestic, of work and motherhood, and therefore of female emancipation on the one hand, of the social and cultural heritage of the past, still so alive, on the other.

In addition to these researchers, her artistic practice is nourished by a laboratory approach and participatory paths in which Cologni involves the public and collaborators. The result is a series of common actions, situations to be experienced. These shared actions, together with the tendency to insert works in the public space, are expressions of the value that Cologni attributes to collective requests.

On the other hand, a spatial sensitivity and an interest in the fundamental structures underlying every sensitive experience push her to cool down the affective tone of her research and to distil its documentary aspect; to make accurate measurements and to carry out a process of reduction, in many cases to the point of abstraction. It is through this translation that, in the continually reformulated attempt to negotiate and express the space of experience, bonds and care, his works

finally take shape. The recurring curvilinear trend of her sculptural elements and her choreographies of gestures, installations and drawings is a way to subtract the thought from an apparent linearity and to bring it back to the idea of the circle, metaphorically associated with ideas of equity, of participation, of continuity.

Thus, through all his work, the artist shapes the broad theme of the meaning and quality of social connections, of shared space, of the possibility of common action; making the invisible, immaterial dimension of distance perceptible is a way of talking about the need for closeness and care, the fragility of interpersonal connections, and the need to do so is the driving force behind her work.

There are numerous artists who, in recent decades, have explored with their work the themes of care, the relationship with the place and with the other, care, distance and, vice versa, the need for proximity. We have identified some, which we give as examples: Mierle Lederman Ukeles, Marina Ballo Charmet Adelita Husni-Bey, Wurmkos.

Mierle Lederman Ukeles conceived a corpus of seminal works starting from the idea that the theme of care should be declined in the social sphere and considered in terms of continuity, of time. Starting in 1969, Lederman Ukeles conceived a corpus of works centered precisely on the idea of maintenance. After drafting a manifesto, he realizes several projects, the most massive of which is Touch Sanitation: the artist spends 11 months meeting every worker in New York's garbage collection. In fact, the artist considers that a tribute is due to them because their work, albeit little recognized, is responsible for the quality of life to which citizens are accustomed. The gift takes the form of a thank you and a handshake. A methodical undertaking, of immense commitment. A tribute to the individual, to work, first of all the many socially little considered activities. Touch Sanitation is a great, eloquent metaphor: care is tension towards the other; discreet, tenacious, and long-term.

Wurmkos is a group of people who share laboratory and artistic experiences that relate art and psychic discomfort, without setting goals of "salvation". In the process that accompanies their various projects enter artists, disadvantaged and not, critics, different people who collaborate in the realization of the works. In the foreground Wurmkos puts the work and its vitality on the one hand, and the strength of the person and relationships on the other. Artistic work is a central nucleus to which an enlarged, shared practice of reflection can be anchored. The workshop moments that accompany the creation of the work are a common ground for dialogue and a forum for shared reflections. But the artistic relevance of the results obtained remains an essential element for the group.

A similar attention to the quality of experience, although very differently declined, inspires artist Adelita Husni-Bey. Husni-Bey is a young Libian-Italian artist, now based in NY, after years in London. She is interested in collectivism, theater, law, and urban studies. Many of her works are issued from workshops based on non-competitive culture and pedagogical models. Her video *After The Finish Line* (2015) which was filmed at a deserted mall in Cupertino, California, is about a group of US teenagers who each practice a sport competitively. All of them had pushed their bodies to the point of serious injury. The zooms in are on the dynamic movements of the young athletes; while their voices recount the toll that is charged on them for practicing the sport, and the weight due to expectations; and the experience of physical, and psychological trauma from an injury, as well as from the compulsion to perform and compete. At the end of the meeting the artist reveals to the participants the etymology of the verb "compete" which, contrary to what it may seem, means converging to the same point) and asks them to share their reflections through an exchange made only of slow gestures: we find here once more the theme of a long time, which serves to rebalance a society which is based on psychological and physical competition, endangers. Pain, which so frequently is not just debilitating but distancing and isolating, becomes a medium of mutual recognition. The same happens in *Encounters on Pain* (2015): some life-size silhouettes chart where participants identified recurring pain due to bad posture or repetitive strain. Relation can be a safety net.

Marina Ballo Charmet psychotherapist is interested in the non conscious, non-central and the marginal within the ordinary: ordinary landscape and ordinary experience of life. Her main focus is on things which are apparently insignificant, useless, but, when made central, can assume presence, ^[1]_{SEP} and a meaning; although not a fully-defined meaning. In fact her aim is precisely to avoid looking for a final and fixed interpretation of the reality around ourselves, because this may end up controlling our perception, and we would risk to just follow a "reading" habit. In 2002 she realized *Stazione Eretta (Standing up)*: a concise video (1 minute) about the first steps of a child learning how to walk. In the video, the framing follows a child taking his first difficult, uncertain steps, and experimenting his mobility. His path, his trajectory are not that of a habit or an automatism. The child moves across a terrain without conscious references. Once we started observing the huge efforts the baby is doing to stay on its feet, we realize what an achievement walking is. first of all we need contact with the ground,, then to achieving balance; then we need gestural ability. Then comes the explorations of the environment, the empty space, the objects.

We also realize that, apart from the initial usual enthusiasm of the parents for the first steps of their children, in general, the struggle to stand upright is of no great interest. We tend to take it for granted. Only if we really pay attention to the infants, as Ballo Charmet does, we can realize how

constituent to living beings this experience is. This work is essentially about the relationship between body and space – and vision. It conveys a special sight, one of attention and care. Only this sight can lead to being surprised by the child efforts and to perceive the intensity of these first attempts, and the meaning of his movements through the terrain/ territory of the house.

Once more, when we speak about care nothing is too small or too big to be taken care of, and it is easy to break down the barriers between domestic life, public life, social issues.

Focusing on care is a way to evade the “temptations of sensationalism”. Instead, attention, thoughtfulness, a relation with the subject and an interest for their relationship with their own environment, and, most of all, a desire of proximity are essential, whether it’s about babies deambulation, about teenagers experience of the world or a significant city services, like in the case of Mierle Lederman Ukeles.

Of course, it is necessary to find a method of expression for all this. Each artist necessarily has to find it through their, personal, unique language. This is the case of the artists we have seen; like Mierle Lederman Ukeles, and Adelita Husni-Bey who analytically and at the same time empathically referred to the teenagers' stories; Marina Ballo Charmet who refers to what the child sees and experiences; Wurmko with their shared, collective processes. And, of course, Elena Cologni.

This essay is an adaptation of the paper Scardi gave at *CARE: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Interdisciplinary Symposium on Sunday, 21 October 2018

RELATED EVENTS

CARE: From Periphery to Centre, Exhibition and site responsive installation at Homerton College
Monday, 15 October - Sunday, 28 October 2018

CARE: Launch Event, Talk and tour with Elena Cologni and Geoff Ward Principal of Homerton College
15 October 2018

CARE: Connecting Experiences, Workshop with Elena Cologni and Melanie Keene, Homerton College
17 October 2018

CARE: Leah Manning, London to Cambridge, Talk and workshop with Elena Cologni, Melanie Keene and Peter Cunningham at the Gibberd Art Gallery, Harlow. This was Introduced by Director Kate Harding
19 October 2018

CARE: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, Interdisciplinary Symposium, Homerton College
21 October 2018

Historians, curators, and medical researchers compared concerns over care, health, and wellbeing across the twentieth century. The panels of experts reflected on how ideas, practices, and spaces of care have moved from peripheral to central roles in society, demonstrating the value of interdisciplinary and collaborative working, while proposing new interconnected models to think about art, medicine, and education.

Panel 1: CARE in early 20thC: health, motherhood, education

Chair: Melanie Keene (Homerton College)

Peter Cunningham (Homerton College), Jessica Meyer (Leeds), Francesca Moore (Homerton College)

Viewing of CARE: from periphery to centre

Panel 2: CARE today: medicine, art, society

Chair: Philip Stephenson (Homerton College)

Elena Cologni, Gabi Scardi (Università Cattolica di Milano), Peggy Watson (Homerton College)

Homerton 250 Festival, Including tours of the exhibition with Elena Cologni and Peter Cunningham, and visits to the archive with Svetlana Paterson
27 October 2018

Creativity For Resilience - Inspiring Mornings interview: Elena Cologni in conversation with Adama Sanneh, Moleskine Foundation

7 May 2020 Online streaming event at <https://www.facebook.com/MoleskineFoundation>
and archived at <https://moleskinefoundation.org/creativity-and-resilience/>

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