

Bericht Seedfunding

Dropping In and Out - A Response to Uncertainty

An artistic research project initiated by Prof. Mathilde ter Heijne, Dr. Jessica Goodman (St Catherine's College, Oxford), and Dr. Vanessa Gravenor (Lehrbeauftragte–artist)

Participants Phase 1 2025–2026:

Oreet Ashery (Ruskin School of Art Oxford), Elleke Boehmer (St Catherine's College, Oxford), Hanne Loreck (HFBK Hamburg), Jade de Montserrat (Ruskin School of Art Oxford), Heike Munder (non university member–curator), Katharina Koch&Sylvia Sadzinski (non university member–curators), Sonya Schönberger (non university member–artist), Katja Gretzinger (non university member–graphic designer), Amy Patton (non university member–editorial support)

Institutional partners

alpha nova & galerie futura Berlin, Oxford's Humanities Division, St Catherine's College, Ruskin School of Art Oxford, art&dialogue Berlin



Short Description

Dropping In and Out is an interdisciplinary research project that explores how different historical and geographical contexts shape the ways in which the artistic legacies of women* and non-binary people are conceived and experienced, and how we, as authors today, can help recover the works and impact of those who came before us. Aiming to address gaps in the genealogical narratives of feminist producers and foster reciprocal solidarity across time

and space, the project will track the erasures of women artists' biographies, and interrogate the significance of feminist perspectives in artistic production.

Continuity, Recognition & Erasure Across Time

Our research topics also address the challenges of historical continuity and recognition, whether for eighteenth-century figures under the Revolution, or contemporary feminist artists faced with career interruptions, exclusion from mainstream narratives, and institutional erasure. The question of how individuals shape their own remembrance—whether in literature or art—forms a strong thematic bridge between the different disciplines.

Revisiting & Reinterpreting the Past for the Future

The act of *imagining the future* is inherently linked to how we interpret and rework the past. *Dropping In and Out* looks at feminist artistic practices that reclaim forgotten histories. We examine how these acts of imagination not only respond to historical exclusion but also create new possibilities for the future. The key concept of 'falling in and out' (of a career) offers a liberating lens when discussing gender politics, creative practices, and life paths. It challenges the dominant notion of an 'uninterrupted creative life', which is rooted in patriarchal, white, heteronormative ideals, and the idea of a 'complete archive'—a structured, gapless, and fully preserved record—which reflects these same biases. Going forward, we want to make this critical stance more explicit: naming the forces that sustain these exclusions and foregrounding the significance of gaps, silences, and archival omissions. At the same time, we seek to explore reparative strategies—how lost voices, interrupted careers, and forgotten narratives can be reimagined and re-narrated.



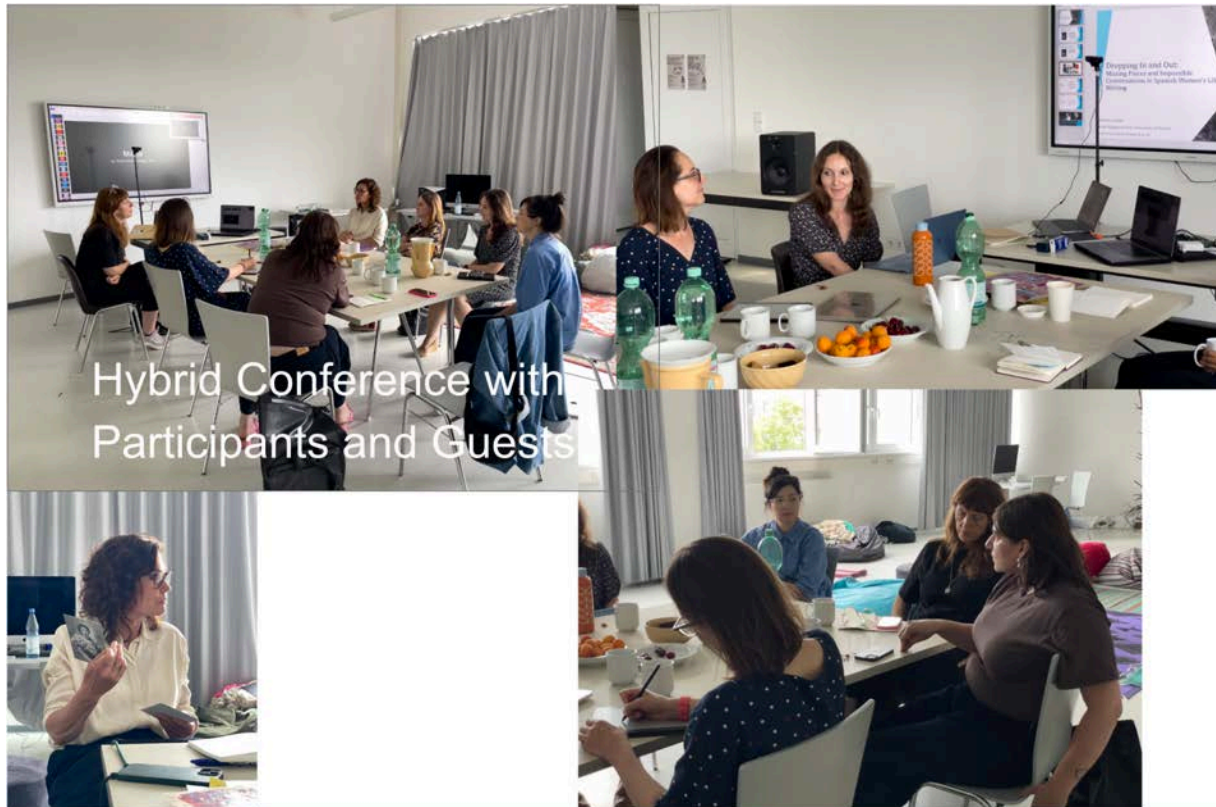
Interview with Elleke Boehm at St. Catherines College, Oxford, Mai 2025



Interview with cultural theorist Dr. Hanne Loreck at the Berlin University of the Arts. June 2025

A Project of different Phases

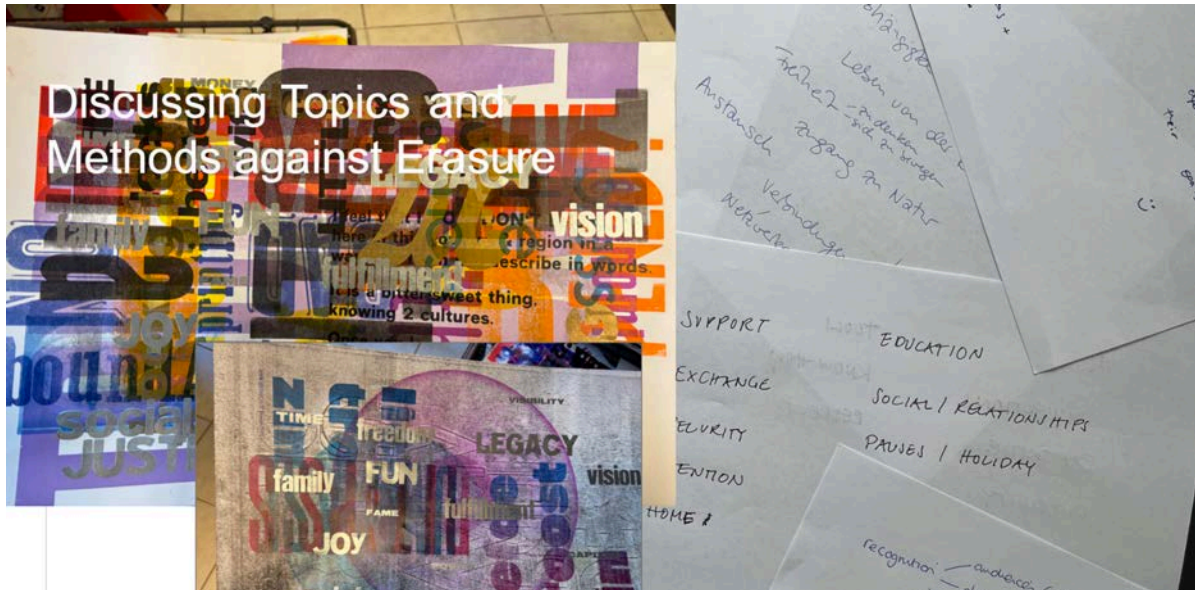
The project connects participants from Oxford's Humanities Division and the Ruskin School of Art with Berlin-based artists and lecturers at the University of the Arts Berlin and functions as a growing network, a blueprint for survival, that unfolds in different phases. **Through the first phase**, which was financed with the Seedfunding application, we conducted interviews with senior cultural scientists from Germany and the UK, held horizontal conversations between participants online, and created a hybrid symposium in Berlin.



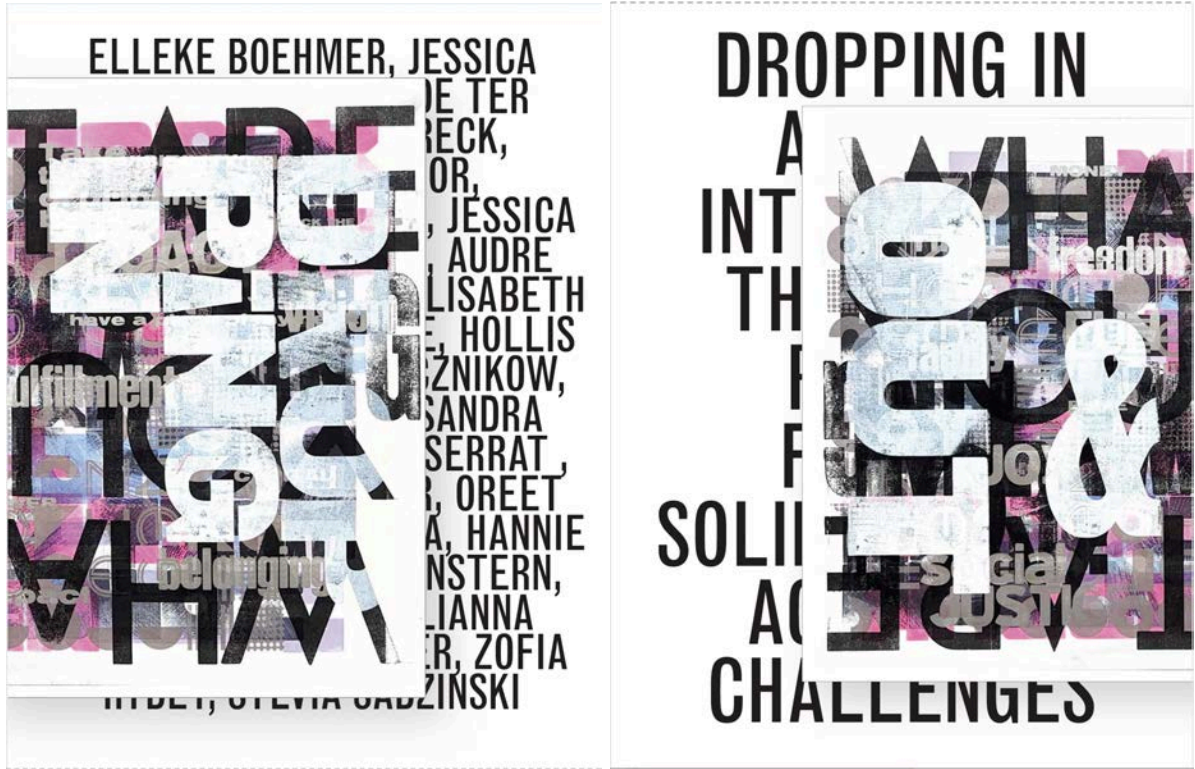
[Dropping In and Out Kick Off Meeting, July 8, 2025, University of the Arts Berlin](#)

With our conversations and symposium we hoped to provide opportunities for the participants to share their personal stories and to work together to confront patterns or erasure with updating how we write our own stories into the canon.

Often the archival record does not include the community or network that created an artist. Our project intends to trace networks of friendship while proposing one of our own making with collaboration and sharing between participants.



As part of this phase, participants were commissioned to write texts that engage with a deceased woman or non-binary artist through artistic or scholarly means. In the conference we decided that these texts should take the form of the letter - writing to past, present, or future. These letters imagined new forms of practicing otherwise and created blueprints for how to navigate our uncertain present. A comprehensive zine publication with the letters is in production and will be published in Spring 2026.



Cover of the publication

With the second phase we can realise with UdK follow-up-, BUA flexible-, and TORCH funding we'd like to extend the project, deepen our collaborations with participants, and further make publicly accessible our research through Workshops at the UdK, and an **exhibition and performance series at alpha nova & galerie futura, Berlin, opening on 18 September 2026**. We are planning an hybrid artistic/research exhibition where both researchers and artists are featured. This event will include the publication presentation with didactic research materials, lecture performances and audiovisual performative readings of our letters.



50 unique posters created for the exhibition

For this stage of the project, we additionally plan to bring our project to University students. By employing our developed methods, we strive to impact a younger generation of artists and shift the narrative of flawless success by spotlighting artists with non-normative career paths.

Dr. Vanessa Gravenors developed the workshop “**Letters to the Past,**” a **two-part workshop for Fine Arts students in the summer semester 2026** aimed at developing concepts for performative artworks as part of the research and exhibition project “Dropping In and Out.” During this practice-oriented workshop, participants will develop performative sketches, read selected text passages, and learn new methods for feminist historical research as well as narrative forms. Here, participants also **discuss their own observations drawn from personal and professional experience**. In this way the project provides both a reality check and a knowledge base to a younger generation of female artists, teachers and researchers who are early- or mid-career. They often avoid long-term strategic career planning; this is not part of the curriculum. No one likes to talk about falling in and out of one's career because of illness, family commitments, war, or economic instability. Yet, when looking back into history, this a particular storyline central to women and non-binary artists. **A curated**

selection of the students' performative artworks will be showcased during the exhibition Dropping In and Out and alpha nova & galerie futura in Berlin in October. The students will stage their performative projects against the backdrop of the project participants' artistic works and literary letter fragments. This gives the students a chance to gain experience, grow their networks, and work with a queer feminist space.

Third phase - applying for further funding

The collaboration provides a framework for young female and non-binary artists, researchers, and cultural workers to reflect on structural barriers that affect their careers.

In democratic societies, resilience requires that new generations can participate fully and with confidence. This project offers role models, shared knowledge, visibility for its participants, and an honest examination of failure and discontinuity that is rarely discussed in education.

This equips emerging practitioners with strategies for navigating precarity and artistic marginalisation—strengthening democratic participation in cultural life. That is why we think that our project will fit very well into the **equalACT**, a collaborative project between the HfS Ernst Busch and the Berlin University of the Arts that supports women and tin* individuals who integrate the themes of gender, diversity, and anti-discrimination into their artistic research. By taking part in the project equalACT, we hope to establish the project Dropping In and Out in an even wider network. **Further events and presentations are being planned for 2027 in Berlin (we're in conversation with Künstlerhaus Bethanien) and (the Schwarzman Center) in Oxford.**

Conclusion

At the core, our project is based upon Democratic Practices and horizontal dialogue between all participants. It also highlights community resilience by focusing on artists who shifted their practice to socially engaged themes and activism. For example, artist and scholar Prof. Oreet Ashery is researching the work of Dora Benjamin through the prism of her own socially engaged practice. In addition to this, Ashery has reflected on the community that facilitates her own research, a form of engagement echoed in all the participants' contributions. This collaborative mode of practice stresses resilience and exchange between generations of artists in different career stages. It also repairs cultural memory through intersectional feminist reinterpretation.