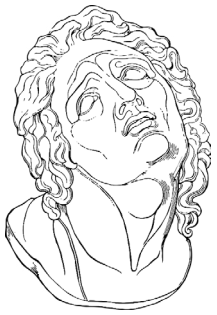
Archiving Feminism: Cooperativa Beato Angelico, Suzanne Santoro, and the Casa Internazionale delle Donne

Elena Sinagra

Elena Sinagra is a PhD candidate in the History of Art Department at the University of York, funded by the AHRC/WRoCAH. Her research examines feminist artistic practices, focusing on how alternative mediums engage with mythological and allegorical concepts as feminist gestures. She completed her BA in New York and her MA in Florence, Italy, specialising in contemporary art history and curatorial studies. Her broader research interests include feminist art historiography, decolonial theory, performance art, and community-engaged practices.



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Introduction

Founded in Rome in 1976, the Cooperativa Beato Angelico was a pioneering women's artistic cooperative and exhibition space operating within the framework of Italian feminism. Although the cooperative was active for only two years, it has become an important focus in the growing body of literature on feminist artistic practices in Italy during this period. This renewed attention is partly due to former member Suzanne Santoro. In 2013, she donated her personal archive, including the surviving material on the Cooperativa Beato Angelico, to Archivia, the library and archival project housed within Casa Internazionale delle Donne, a feminist institution that has long served as a vital centre for activism, care, and cultural memory in Italy.

This article explores the *archival afterlife* of the Cooperativa Beato Angelico within the Casa Internazionale delle Donne, asking how feminist memory is preserved, activated, and reimagined within this unique institutional setting. Drawing on personal experience conducting research at Archivia, I adopt a methodology that blends autoethnographic reflection with feminist archival theory. In doing so, I examine the implications of situating an archive within an actively feminist space, thereby challenging conventional conceptions of archives as neutral, static repositories of the past. Rather, this context highlights the archive's potential as a dynamic and situated site of knowledge production that fosters politicised modes of engagement.

Italian historian and archivist Rosa De Lorenzo has argued that:

> feminism considers the archives as tools for proving women's existence, granting them a new social and cultural exposure, becoming a powerful and revolutionary tool for women's empowerment and strengthening the network of their relationships.[1]

As she outlines in her chapter "Building a Different Memory Together," the creation of Women's Documentation Centres in 1980s Italy emerged not only in response to women's historical erasure, but also as a forward-looking strategy of solidarity. De Lorenzo's framing of the archive as a revolutionary and relational tool resonates deeply with the Casa Internazionale's archival practices, where preservation and political care are intimately intertwined.

This article unfolds in three parts. It begins with a reflection on my own experience conducting research at the Casa Internazionale delle Donne to consider how feminist institutional space shapes the act of archival inquiry. I then situate the Casa Internazionale's

documentation centre, Archivia, within its broader activist and organisational framework, examining how its history and infrastructure reflect embedded feminist archival approaches. Finally, I engage with theoretical perspectives on feminist archiving to explore the legacy of Cooperativa Beato Angelico and the ways in which the safeguarding of its materials at Archivia has enabled and enriched current feminist scholarship. In doing so, I build on the important recent work of scholars such as Katia Almerini, Maria Bremer, and Marta Seravalli on the cooperative, as well as De Lorenzo's research on feminist archives in Italian feminist history. This paper offers, to my knowledge, the first analysis of the cooperative's archival material as a feminist object within the specific institutional context of the Casa Internazionale delle Donne.

By using the Casa Internazionale delle Donne as a case study, this article contributes to broader debates on the ethics and politics of feminist archiving. It proposes that when feminist histories are embedded within social justice-oriented institutions committed to the advancement of women, they do more than preserve historical memory—they instead actively cultivate spaces of recognition, care, and political possibility. In this context, the archive becomes a living, relational infrastructure, one that not only animates feminist histories but also sustains them as part of an ongoing campaign of collective empowerment and cultural resistance. The presence of women's history within such a space reinforces the underlying concept that the most effective feminist archives are not neutral containers, but rather socially situated and presently oriented sites of meaning-making.

Figure 1. *Archivia Library*, 16 February 2004. Archivia Archive, held at Archivia, Rome.

Inhabiting Feminist Memory: An Autoethnographic Journey Through Archival Space

In what follows, I adopt an autoethnographic approach to reflect on the experience of researching within the archive: how being physically present in this space, and engaging with these resources, influenced my understanding of both the material and feminist art historiography.

Donated in 2013 by Suzanne Santoro, artist and former member of Cooperativa Beato Angelico, the archive is organised into six series and contains thirty-eight folders, 1,521 documents, and thirty magazines.[2] Its contents span personal correspondence, feminist writings, artistic works and documentation related to the Cooperativa, as well as materials from exhibitions, press clippings and publications.[3] At times the collection appears limited, yet, when immersed in its contents a textured narrative begins to emerge—offering a vivid, if fragmentary, glimpse into the life of a woman navigating the artistic and feminist currents of

1970s Italy.

My first visit to Archivia marked the beginning of my doctoral research. Entering the building felt like crossing a threshold as the convergence of past and present was immediately palpable. The walls were lined with black-and-white photographs, protest posters, and flyers from decades of feminist activity. The archive room itself was quiet, sunlit, with binders and books crowding the shelves, which held a sense of reverence. I was greeted by the archivist and sat down at an expansive table in the middle of the room. I remember another young researcher reading quietly nearby, her presence somehow affirming that this was a shared endeavour. The archivist handed me Santoro's folder, its worn manila envelope thick with papers. As I sifted through the documentation, the lives I was studying came into sharper focus, not as static historical subjects, but as women who were actively learning and growing during this period. The first part of the archive holds her correspondence, revealing connections not only within Italy, but across Anglophone feminist contexts through a transnational network, including exchanges with the journals *Spare Rib* and *Heresies*. Furthermore, the array of letters and proposals called to mind interconnected webs of people and ideas, manifesting as a deliberate feminist exchange, shaped but undeterred by the limitations of the era's communication technologies.

Excitement peaked when I reached the part in the archival folder related to Cooperativa Beato Angelico. I was especially moved by the materials connected to the 1976 *Aurora* exhibition, which featured the monumental Baroque painting of the same name by Artemisia Gentileschi (1627). Photographs, press clippings, and reviews brought the event to life. I imagined women at the opening, exchanging reflections during cigarette breaks and the after party—perhaps some of them feeling deeply seen and represented by the Baroque artist. Knowing that Santoro had suffered under the tutelage of her teacher and fellow artist Salvatore Scarpitta, I wondered whether she, or others, saw Gentileschi not just as a historical icon, but as a resonant figure of survival and resistance.

Figure 2. *View of the Cooperativa Beato Angelico's opening exhibition,* 8 April 1976. Cooperativa Beato Angelico of Rome, inauguration of activities with the exhibition of L'Aurora by Artemisia Gentileschi. Photo by Alfio Di Bella. Suzanne Santoro Archive, Series 4, Folder 28, Archivia, Rome.

Later, as I wandered down the halls in search of a break and fresh air, I passed a room with small shoes neatly lined outside and the sound of children's laughter drifting from within. The Casa Internazionale's children's space was in session, a quiet reminder that life continues alongside research. I thought that the presence of childcare within the same building that houses an archive of radical women's histories disrupts the academic illusion of compartmentalised intellectual endeavours, instead affirming the embodied, lived nature of feminist knowledge production, where care coexists with theorising. At that moment, I was reminded that feminism—like life itself—is plural: it happens in conference rooms and kitchens, in childcare centres and reading groups, across generations and registers. The archive, then, is not just a place of preservation, but a space where the interconnectedness and vitality of feminist life continues to unfold.

When I returned to the archival room and recommenced studying the material, two older women entered, warmly chatting with the archivists. Each carried shopping bags filled with books and magazines they had come to donate. For a young researcher, the scene was unassuming but profoundly moving, as I began to realise that the archive, and women's history itself, is a living, breathing organism, sustained by the ongoing commitment of individuals dedicated to safeguarding and remembering. These were women who had lived through the very movements the archive sought to preserve and their act of donation was more than a historiographic contribution; it was done in the service of storytelling, placing their materials into a shared feminist memory that would outlive them. Watching them, I was reminded that archives are built not only through systems of collection and categorisation, but also through gestures of trust, generosity, and relationality. The knowledge stored here was neither abstract nor detached from current reality; it had been lived, carried, and offered again for safekeeping and dissemination within following generations. This moment made visible the quiet, sustained work that goes into feminist cultural preservation by scholars and everyday participants in the movement who see in these spaces a place to anchor their histories.

Autoethnography merges ethnographic observation with personal reflection, creating room for the researcher's own positionality and experience to shape the narrative. As the social scientists Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner define it, autoethnography is "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)."[4] It treats personal subjectivity not as a limitation but as a valuable methodological tool, in line with feminist epistemologies that prioritise lived experience, self-reflexivity and emotional insight. This method helped me register how feminist praxis materialises simultaneously through archival content and the social and spatial dynamics of the Casa Internazionale. Compared to more institutionalised archives dedicated to different material within other groups I visited later in my research—such as the Biblioteca Nazionale in Naples and the MAXXI Museum in Rome—Archivia felt intimate and reciprocal. There were no rigid bureaucratic structures or requirements to prove my academic credentials in order to enter. This openness, this fusion of academic materials and everyday life, reaffirmed the feminist principle that the personal is political.

Reflecting on my experiences across these three sites, I became increasingly aware of how the organisational context of an archive shaped the way I understood the materials. At the MAXXI archive—part of Rome's national museum of modern and contemporary art—I engaged with the documents through the lens of art history and creative production, thinking about their place within aesthetic and curatorial discourses. In contrast, my time at the Biblioteca Nazionale in Naples—a state-run public library—led me to connect the materials more closely to the local identity and cultural history of the city. While these are only a few examples, they suggest that even when accessing adjacent types of feminist artistic materials, the institutional context can significantly shape how their contemporary relevance and resonance are understood.

To research in Casa Internazionale is, I believe, to engage with a feminist methodology already embedded in its walls and history, one that resists abstraction and insists on connection. It is also to feel accountable to the women whose lives and struggles we

attempt to narrate. Archivia invites us to do more than retrieve histories; it asks us to inhabit them by placing our bodies, voices and research practices into a continuum of feminist struggle and care. This inhabitation happens through the rhythms of the space, manifesting in shared silences in the reading room, informal conversations with archivists, the presence of childcare facilities down the corridor, and the generosity of women donating their memories and records. These are not neutral acts; they situate us within a broader feminist framework of collective responsibility and political continuity. In this way, the archival project becomes not only a site of memory but a practice of feminist time, where past, present, and future coalesce in the intimate act of reading, remembering, and imagining otherwise.

Archivia and Herstory: Mapping Feminist Activism Across Time and Space

In order to better understand the specific nuances and methods involved in Archivia, it is important to have a grasp of the historical foundation of the archive and Casa Internazionale. Archivia was established through the collaborative efforts of ten feminist associations based in Rome, some of which had been active since the early 1970s.[5] These organisations had independently preserved extensive archival collections, including libraries, newspapers, periodicals, theses, manuscripts, posters, photographs, audio recordings and video materials. Their holdings documented over three decades of feminist history, with a particular emphasis on activism of the 1970s and the visibility of lesbian communities in the 1980s.[6] By consolidating their resources within Archiva, these associations laid the foundations for an ambitious cultural initiative aimed at preserving and disseminating feminist knowledge. As feminist historian Adriana Perrotta Rabissi wrote, "giving life to an archive is an act of communication and transmission of knowledge, values, and visions of the world."[7] The core of the Archiva collection consists of international feminist publications from the 1960s and 1970s. Over time, this has been expanded by donations from individual women who played significant roles in feminist movements and wished to ensure that their personal histories, through letters, diaries, agendas, and unpublished writings, were safeguarded and could be used for future generations.

Today, the archive holds over 30,000 books, 600 periodical titles, forty-three archival collections, 35,000 photographs, 900 posters and a significant body of audiovisual materials.[8] These resources not only testify to the multifaceted nature of women's labour—intellectual, political and creative—but also offer rich insight into the social transformations driven by feminist struggles for emancipation.[9] As the project has evolved, it has come to play a crucial role in redefining how feminist histories are accessed and understood. As the organisation itself affirms, "to support the redefinition of methods and content, Archiva offers access to women's history and gender culture, which traditional dynamics often marginalise or do not consider: a different way of engaging with culture and of creating history."[10] This mission underscores Archivia's broader cultural significance, not only as a holder of memory but also as an active site for feminist knowledge production and historiographical intervention.

An important aspect of the Archiva project is its extensive online presence, taking the form of a project called *Herstory: Mappa Online del Lazio* (Herstory: Online Map of Lazio), which is an interactive digital project designed to preserve and make accessible the rich heritage of feminist and women's activism in Rome and the Lazio region. In addition, since 2004, the project has been a part of *Rete Lilith*, a vast network of organisations, centres and archives throughout Italy.[11] The *Herstory* project, created by Giovanna Olivieri and Valeria Santini and funded through the regional initiative *Innovazione Sostantivo Femminile*, offers a digital map that traces the spaces, groups and mobilisations of women's movements across decades.[12] In their own description:

> It provides a special guide to the places of activity and mobilisation of women and feminists in Rome and the Lazio region, with the aim of preserving an important historical and documentary heritage in digital format and making a historical

> and cultural legacy—too often forgotten or overlooked—known to younger generations.[13]

Drawing from the extensive holdings of Archivia, the project curates documents, photographs, flyers, clippings and posters into an interactive cartography. It provides a chronological mapping of feminist presence, divided into "Mappa anni '70," "Mappa anni '80," and "Mappa anni successivi," with a special "Mappa Manifestazioni" showcasing photographic documentation of public protests and events.

The platform is both an archival and educational tool, intended to digitally conserve historical material while introducing younger generations to a legacy often marginalised or forgotten. From the site's menu, users can access detailed entries on specific groups and collectives, browse digitised materials, explore photographic galleries of feminist mobilisations, and consult critical writings and archival documents. Research is facilitated through a keyword search function, enabling targeted exploration of themes and movements. *Herstory* thus not only safeguards feminist memory but revitalises it as an accessible and living resource in the cultural and political landscape of contemporary Italy.

Roots in Resistance: The Origins of the Casa Internazionale Delle Donne

Casa Internazionale delle Donne, translated as International Women's House, is a multi-dimensional social organisation serving the betterment of women. The origins of the organisation sprung from the active political movement during the 1970s with the occupation of Palazzo Nardini in Via del Governo Vecchio by Movimento di Liberazione della donna (Women's Liberation Movement) on 2 October 1976.[14] Soon after other feminist groups joined the occupation, and the run-down palazzo rapidly transformed into a vibrant centre for feminist activity in Rome and beyond.[15] Governo Vecchio came to serve both as a residence for dozens of women and a site for political and cultural mobilisation. The building hosted consciousness-raising collectives, public meetings, exhibitions, and even became the home of the feminist radio station Radio Lilith.[16] Governo Vecchio was also a space of critical political engagement, where participants addressed pressing issues such as separatism, political terrorism as it related to the class fight, and sexual violence. In 1977, a working group on sexual violence within the occupied space was created.[17] Through questionnaires distributed to women who frequented Governo Vecchio, the group gathered evidence of the widespread and often everyday nature of sexual violence, demonstrating its intimate and systemic character.[18] Despite limited resources and professional training, members of the group took direct action by establishing an informal women's shelter in the building for those seeking refuge from abuse. Inspired by feminist movements in the UK and elsewhere, the group also organised Italy's first *Riprendiamoci la notte* (Reclaim the Night) march in Rome in November 1976.[19] This was followed by the 1978 international conference "Violence Against Women," which welcomed feminist collectives from across Europe.[20]

Ultimately, the city ordered the eviction of Palazzo Nardini and offered the feminist collectives Palazzo del Buon Pastore, the ex-prison and reformatory for women in Trastevere in Rome, where Casa Internazionale still stands today. This relocation initiated a long process of restoring the building and formalising its transfer to the feminist groups.[21] The transformation of this space, historically used to discipline and control women, into a feminist centre of empowerment marked a significant symbolic and physical reappropriation. This relocation marked a new chapter as the Palazzo del Buon Pastore soon became a cornerstone of 1980s Roman feminism, housing pioneering initiatives such as the Università Virginia Woolf, an autonomous women's university, and the feminist daily newspaper *Quotidiano Donna*.[22]

During this period, similar centres began to appear across Italy, serving as both refuges for survivors of domestic violence and gathering spaces for women. Historian Anna Rossi-Doria observed that these cultural hubs were among the first to recognise and interpret "the signs of women's need to succeed in the open field, to be visible, to be able to

influence the course of things [...] and the signs of intolerance for the two serious disparities between energies committed and the results achieved."[23] The Casa Internazionale delle Donne traces its origins to this transformative moment, when Italian feminism was deeply engaged in rethinking subjectivity, sexuality, and the structures of patriarchal authority. In this context, autonomous, women-only spaces were vital for generating new feminist imaginaries and relational modes that could not develop within mainstream institutions. Through its symbolic reappropriation of institutional space, the Casa Internazionale became an infrastructure for feminist life, simultaneously practical and visionary.

Today, the Casa Internazionale delle Donne has become an integral feminist centre that sustains and reactivates the ideals seeded during the Governo Vecchio years and stands as a living testament to feminist resistance and invention. It describes itself as "a laboratory where gender politics is manifested; a local, national, and international centre for welcoming, meeting, promotion of rights, culture, policies, 'knowledge,' and experiences produced by and for women."[24] The organisation works to fight against sexism and racism, addressing issues disproportionately affecting women, including reproductive health and domestic violence support.[25] Casa Internazionale delle Donne also serves as a multi-purpose centre, offering services relating to legal aid, health, psychological counselling and childcare, alongside workshops, exhibitions and discussions on topics ranging from environmental issues to migration and global feminism. In addition, the complex fosters a communal space for gathering, reflection and daily life, with a café, hostel and meeting points that promote social and political engagement.[26] Every year, around 30,000 people visit the Casa to participate in their services or attend one of their events.[27] It connects thirty-three different associations dedicated to a range of issues from architectural cultural heritage, eco-pacifism, to contemporary art groups and, of course, the archive and library.[28]

From its roots in 1970s squatting and public activism, the Casa Internazionale delle Donne has grown, adapted and evolved to respond to the concerns of the present. Yet at its core, it remains deeply connected to the feminist struggles that gave rise to it. This continuity is significant, as feminist discourse and collective memory often segment activism into historical "waves", such as first- or second-wave feminism, which can risk historicising and distancing those movements from the present. The Casa Internazionale delle Donne serves as a living reminder that feminist movements are not isolated episodes, but part of an ongoing trajectory that continues to shape and inform contemporary realities.

Cooperativa Beato Angelico's Legacy and Archival Donation

It is within this vibrant and historically rooted feminist space that the legacy of Cooperativa Beato Angelico finds new life, preserved and reactivated through archival donation and scholarship. It emerged from tensions within Rivolta Femminile, one of Italy's most influential feminist groups, co-founded by Carla Lonzi. Lonzi's radical critique of the art world, which she saw as inherently patriarchal, led her to reject artistic production altogether.[29] This created friction with members like Carla Accardi, Suzanne Santoro and Anna Maria Colucci, who sought to reconcile their feminist politics with their creative practices. This ideological divide prompted their departure from Rivolta Femminile in 1975 and the subsequent founding of the cooperative.[30] Cooperativa Beato Angelico was an all-women's group and space consisting of Accardi, Nilde Carabba, Franca Chiabra, Colucci, Regina Della Noce, Nedda Guidi, Eva Menzio, Teresa Montemaggiori, Stephanie Oursler, Suzanne Santoro and Silvia Truppi. According to Cooperativa Beato Angelico member, Nilde Carabba, they were all dedicated to exploring "what it meant to be a woman in the art world."[31] By combining historical figures such as Artemisia Gentileschi, Regina Bracchi and Elisabetta Sirani with works by their own members, their exhibition methodology introduced new artistic possibilities that resonated within the evolving landscape of Italian feminism.

Much of the limited and fragmented material that remains on Cooperativa Beato Angelico exists thanks to the efforts of Suzanne Santoro. An Italo-American artist born in Brooklyn in 1946, Santoro developed her artistic interests amid the movements of the 1950s

Figure 3. *Members of Cooperativa Beato Angelico*, 8 April 1976. Cooperativa Beato Angelico of Rome, inauguration party at the home of Eva Menzio. From left: Carla Accardi, Suzanne Santoro, Ivana Caruso, Marisa Busanel. Suzanne Santoro Archive, Series 4, Folder 28, Archivia, Rome.

and 1960s.[32] She studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York City under Salvatore Scarpitta and Dore Ashton, who introduced her to Mark Rothko.[33] In 1967, through the connection with Ashton, Santoro worked as a nanny for the Rothko family in Italy. [34]She would later return to the country, where she became involved in the feminist movement and began studying classical art and statuary, eventually creating the book *Per una espressione nuova* (Towards new expression) in 1974, which investigated the female sex and its concealment throughout art history and in classical statuary.[35] After the cooperative disbanded, Santoro continued to make and exhibit art while increasingly engaging in care-oriented work. In 1986, she earned a degree in Art Therapy from the Istituto di Ortofonologia in Rome, specialising in children's graphic development.[36] Between 1985 and 2009, she ran the painting and graphic studio of the institute, working primarily with deaf children.[37] Alongside her career as an artist, Santoro has for many years been involved with the anti-violence centre "Erinna" in Viterbo.[38] In 2013, she proposed donating her personal archive, including materials related to Cooperativa Beato Angelico, to Archivia, acknowledging its extensive work in the promotion of women's historical and cultural heritage.[39]

Archiving as a Feminist Strategy

Santoro's decision to donate her personal archive to the Casa Internazionale delle Donne could be considered as a feminist gesture, reflecting the intersections of her roles as artist, activist and educator. Her diverse work spanning visual culture, art therapy and anti-violence initiatives suggests a blending of personal and political commitments. By choosing to entrust her materials to a feminist organisation rather than a traditional institution like a library, museum or foundation, it is possible to read Santoro's donation as affirming the important role that historical documents play within feminist practices—as spaces where care, memory and activism converge. Furthermore, as feminist scholars Marika Cifor and Stacy Wood describe, archives are "critical tools and modes of self-representation and self-historicisation."[40] Santoro's donation enacts this ideal by positioning women as active agents in shaping their own histories, rather than allowing them to be overshadowed or erased by patriarchal historiographic tendencies. Her archive thus becomes a living site where personal narratives and political struggles intersect, aligning closely with the political and ethical commitments of feminist practice.

Kate Eichhorn, scholar and author of *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, posits that feminist archives are not passive repositories but active sites of political intervention, struggle and resistance.[41] She goes on to state that the feminist archive is "where academic and activist work frequently converge."[42] It exemplifies how knowledge can be co-produced and activated through feminist modes of practice.[43] This perspective acknowledges the interconnectedness

of artistic and socio-political practices and highlights that the organisation and dissemination of knowledge are inherently political acts.[44] Building on this theoretical framing, the presence of such an archive within a feminist organisation foregrounds archiving not merely as a scholarly activity but as a political one, shaping cultural memory and constructing alternative futures. By embedding these histories within the Casa Internazionale delle Donne, the archive ensures that women's artistic contributions remain visible, accessible and connected to broader debates on social change. These histories persist not only as scholarly resources but as lived, evolving sites of empowerment. As the scholar Leah Sidi suggests:

> Put simply, archives hold, order and tend to voices and discussions of the past and allow them to continue into the present. Depending on how they are organised and managed, they can be restrictive or empowering. By providing a space which centres voices and works which are often marginalised, the feminist archive (and the archivist!) gives an afterlife to a work and enables it to be part of a conversation. If we introduce the idea of care here, we can see archives as active, living spaces which are not politically neutral. An archive which cares is an archive which creates the possibility for its content to signify anew.[45]

In this sense, the 'afterlife' of Cooperativa Beato Angelico is made possible through the feminist archive, where its legacy continues not as a static record but as part of an ongoing conversation. Thus, the Cooperativa's work is not consigned to history but remains tethered to contemporary feminist art practices through a fusion of historical memory and ongoing engagement. Unlike conventional archives, which often operate within bureaucratic, depersonalised frameworks, the Casa Internazionale delle Donne builds empowerment through its very structure: as a living feminist commons that combines archival work with services such as legal aid, healthcare, counselling, education, artistic programming and community support. This embeddedness within a feminist infrastructure of care allows the archive to function as an active participant in the ongoing struggles it documents—transforming memory work into a political and relational practice.

Therefore, Archivia not only preserves feminist histories but cultivates the conditions for those histories to remain legible, accessible and transformative in the present. As Eichhorn observes, "Feminism lives on in the archive, strengthening contemporary feminism as a form of genealogical politics," by fostering a lineage of continuity between past and present struggles.[46] By residing in an organisation that offers direct services to women, the archive affirms broader feminist goals that seek to dissolve rigid boundaries between scholarship and activism, history and lived experience. It enacts a model of feminist historiography that is not only about preserving the past but about continually reimagining it in relation to the present.

Cooperativa Beato Anglico and Suzannae Santoro in Current Unfolding Scholarship

Having outlined the histories of both the Casa Internazionale delle Donne and Cooperativa Beato Angelico, alongside Santoro's biography, I now turn to the afterlife following Santoro's donation. This section engages with the theoretical frameworks of feminist archiving that I have set forth, emphasising archives as dynamic, collaborative, and community-driven spaces, and explores how this particular archive enacts and sustains the cooperative's feminist ethos, centred on decentralisation and a methodology valuing collaboration over hierarchy. Although Cooperativa Beato Angelico never issued a formal manifesto, its aims were clearly articulated in a flyer:

> The cooperative was created with the purpose of presenting the work of women artists who work and have worked in the field of visual arts. Alongside this activity, the cooperative aims to study, collect and document such work, and will therefore be grateful to anyone who would like to help in this regard by submitting materials,

books, and photographs.[47]

This simple yet powerful statement reveals an intention to build a female-centred body of knowledge rooted in documentation and historical recovery. Furthermore, their curatorial practice of intertwining works by contemporary members with those of historical women artists anticipated a feminist approach to historiography that resists linearity in favour of continuity, multiplicity, and re-inscription.

Santoro's current archive enacts these foundational commitments towards women artists and has evolved into a crucial tool for researchers, catalysing collaborations and critical inquiry. Archivia's stewardship has been essential in bringing both Santoro and the cooperative's feminist artistic practices into ongoing dialogue with present-day scholarship and cultural institutions. It is important to acknowledge that the materials within the archive are inherently fragmented and do not represent a complete or exhaustive documentation of either Cooperativa Beato Angelico's entire history or Santoro's life and career. Nevertheless, the archive has proven indispensable as a central reference point for scholars and curators, stimulating new research and critical inquiry into the cooperative and its context. The work of Archivia has been pivotal in bringing feminist artistic practices from the 1970s into contemporary academic and cultural conversations through strategic collaborations with institutions such as Temple University Rome, the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Rome, and the Museion in Bolzano.[48] It has firmly positioned 1970s feminist art within contemporary academic and cultural discourse and has established a vital resource for both researchers and curators. The archive's contributions to exhibitions, including *Il mondo è delle Donne* (2011), *Donne, Corpo e immagine tra simbolo e rivoluzione* (2019) and *Il Soggetto Imprevisto* (2019), have been instrumental in situating these feminist practices within the broader narrative of contemporary Italian art history.[49] Through this increased visibility, the archive has evolved into an active site of knowledge production and a catalyst for further academic engagement with Italy's feminist art movements.

In addition, Cooperativa Beato Angelico has been the focus of rigorous and insightful academic research by scholars such as Katia Almerini, Maria Bremmer and Marta Seravalli, who have helped to situate the cooperative within the growing corpus of feminist-informed artistic practice in Italy. The cooperative and Suzanne Santoro were featured in Marta Seravalli's book published in 2013, *Arte e Femminismo a Roma Negli Anni Settanta* (Art and Feminism in Rome in the 1970s).[50] This text provided a comprehensive overview of the artistic and political activities within the Roman sphere. She also conducted interviews with Santoro which were featured within the book. Recognising the archival material's inherent fragmentation and scarcity, a common historiographic challenge when documenting women's histories, Almerini adopted a dual methodological approach, combining archival research with in-depth oral testimonies from former cooperative members. This approach has contributed to significant scholarship, published in edited volumes *All-women Art Spaces in Europe in the Long 1970s* (edited by Agata Jakubowska and Katy Deepwell) and *Art and Feminism in Italy: The Legacy of Carla Lonzi* (edited by Giovanna Zapperi and Francesco Ventrella).[51] In addition, Maria Bremmer's work has also drawn extensively on the archive, particularly focusing on the cooperative's opening exhibition *Aurora* (1978), which featured a painting of the Roman goddess of dawn by the Baroque artist Artemisia Gentileschi.[52] Furthermore, Bremmer investigated the display of Carla Accardi's *Origine* (1978), an art installation which incorporated family photographs with sicofoil strips.[53] Bremmer's analysis situates these exhibitions within broader feminist notions of history and genealogical thought, challenging dominant masculine-coded notions of linearity while also advancing feminist epistemologies.

The scholarship mentioned above has, in large part, been grounded in archival research, drawing upon and referencing materials housed within the Archivia and through oral testimony. However, these historians have done more than simply catalogue or interpret physical documents; through their critical engagement, they have expanded the archive into a conceptual framework of knowledge that transcends its material boundaries. As the historians Jane Freeland and Christina Von Holdenberg state, "the archive is not only a physical space

where records are collected, cared for, labelled, ordered, and sometimes discarded. It is also a conceptual realm of narrative, memory, and memorialisation."[54] By situating the archive within this wider epistemological space, the scholarship has facilitated the dissemination and circulation of knowledge about Cooperativa Beato Angelico across multiple platforms and discourses, situating the cooperative's artistic contributions firmly within the broader trajectory of Italian feminism. This process is especially vital at a time when an increasing number of exhibitions and publications revisit this era, serving as a critical counterbalance to simplistic or linear historicisations of feminist artistic practices. As the Italian scholar and archivist Rosa De Lorenzo has affirmed, following the theories of the sociologist Laura Leonardi, "Italian feminism has been committed to defending personal identity through collective experience, the two dimensions might not correspond. This means that feminists have not just one history or one memory but many histories and many memories that demand to be told."[55] In this way, archival research becomes a generative practice that not only recovers fragments of the past but actively constructs a multiplicity of narratives and memories, offering a dynamic, pluralistic understanding of feminist history and its ongoing resonance.

Conclusion

In his seminal work *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida traces the origins of the archive back to Greek antiquity, exploring its etymological and conceptual foundations. He highlights that the term archive stems from the *arkheion*, meaning "a house, a domicile, an address"—originally the residence of the *archons*, male magistrates who wielded political power and held the authority to preserve and interpret official memory.[56] Thus, the archive was historically embedded within patriarchal structures of law, order and knowledge, with its legitimacy firmly tied to institutional authority and custodianship.

Figure 4. *Sit-in at the Campidoglio awaiting the delegation,* 21 May 2018. Archivia Archive, Archivia, Rome.

In stark contrast to such traditional patriarchal views, where archives assert control over a district or where the house symbolises domestic confinement, the Casa Internazionale delle Donne offers a radical feminist reimagining of the house as a site of refuge, resistance and collective knowledge-making. The moment one visits the Casa's website they are greeted by a photo showing a sign at a protest with the phrase: "A casa siamo tutte" / "At home, we are all." This declaration functions as a rallying cry, encapsulating a vision rooted in collectivity and collaboration rather than hierarchy or sole authority. Among the Casa's many initiatives,

all." This declaration functions as a rallying cry, encapsulating a vision rooted in collectivity and collaboration rather than hierarchy or sole authority. Among the Casa's many initiatives, its commitment to documentation centres and archival practices is foundational. Yet these archives do not operate as static, top-down collections. Rather, they are dynamic, collective dwellings—spaces built through feminist solidarity, memory and relational engagement. By housing the Santoro archive and sustaining the legacy of Cooperativa Beato Angelico within such a context, the Casa Internazionale does not simply propose an alternative model of preservation; it enacts a transformative one.

Through a feminist reterritorialisation of the *arkheion*, the authority once held by the *archons*—the traditional custodians of the archive—is redefined in terms of lived experience, community and care. Here, the "house" becomes a home for unruly histories, for marginalised women artists, and for intersectional futures, not through exclusion or fixed power, but through inclusion, participation and fluid belonging. The feminist archive within the Casa Internazionale delle Donne is thus not merely about conserving the past; it is about reshaping who has the power to remember, and who is granted the right to be remembered. It is an archive that lives, breathes and builds futures—a *casa* in every sense: evolving, open, and shared.

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