



12 YEARS

A FEMINIST PUBLICATION ON ART AND POLITICS

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In memory of
Lyn Blumenthal,
1948–1988,
who was an associate
member of *Heresies*.



This statement appeared in the very first issue of Heresies in January 1977 and in every following issue. It remains pertinent.

Heresies is an idea-oriented journal devoted to the examination of art and politics from a feminist perspective. We believe that what is commonly called art can have a political impact and that in the making of art and all cultural artifacts our identities as women play a distinct role. We hope that *Heresies* will stimulate dialogue around radical political and aesthetic theory, as well as generate new creative energies among women. It will be a place where diversity can be articulated. We are committed to broadening the definition and function of art.

Heresies is published by a collective of feminists, some of whom are also socialists, marxists, lesbian feminists, or anarchists; our fields include painting, sculpture, writing, anthropology, literature, performance, art history, architecture, filmmaking, photography, and video. While the themes of the individual issues will be determined by the collective, each issue will have a different editorial staff, composed of members of the mother collective and other women interested in that theme. *Heresies* provides experience for women who work editorially, in design, and in production. An open evaluation meeting will be held after the

appearance of each issue. *Heresies* will try to be accountable to and in touch with the international feminist community.

As women, we are aware that historically the connections between our lives, our arts, and our ideas have been suppressed. Once these connections are clarified, they can function as a means to dissolve the alienation between artist and audience, and to understand the relationship between art and politics, work and workers. As a step toward the demystification of art, we reject the standard relationship of criticism to art within the present system, which has often become the relationship of advertiser to product. We will not advertise a new set of genius-products just because they are made by women. We are not committed to any particular style or aesthetic, nor to the competitive mentality that pervades the art world. Our view of feminism is one of process and change, and we feel that in the process of this dialogue we can foster a change in the meaning of art.



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ERRATA. Corrections of material appearing in *Heresies 23: Coming of Age* appear on page 62.

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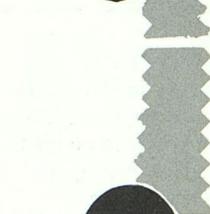
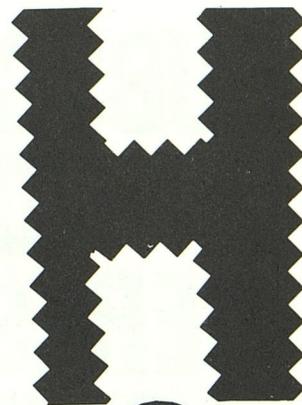
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A FEMINIST PUBLICATION ON ART AND POLITICS

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You are the reason we started *Heresies* in 1977. We built this magazine on a simple premise: feminist art is not only rooted in the real world, but in the art world. Once upon a time, not so long ago, the notion that art and politics can mix was a heretical thought. Feminist art was viewed as "propaganda," or even worse, as "sociology." Feminists, of course, were deeply committed to both subjects and determined to demonstrate that art, at its best, was indeed "propaganda," and moreover, could have an effect on "sociology," by unraveling the discourses that construct it.

As a result, we decided to publish a magazine that gave equal space to women's art, criticism, and articles (including fiction and poetry) on the social issues that inspire feminists—artists or not. Twelve years ago when we began, there were almost no art magazines that took women's art seriously. From the beginning, one of our long-term goals has been to carve out a significant place for feminist art, but before this mission could be accomplished, it was necessary to make this work visible. Twelve years ago, you saw art by certain (familiar at long last) women artists in *Heresies*—first.

And you saw much more than art. For example, two of our most significant and controversial issues—The Great Goddess (#5), and The Sex Issue (#12),—broke new ground within debates that are still crucial to the project of feminism. The uneven progress of *Heresies* is not unlike the uneven progress of the feminist art movement itself. We have made mistakes, angered readers and authors on occasion (not to mention one another), but we have also brought you reams of material on the crucial issues that have informed our movement and shaped our art.

Where have we been? Where are we going? This is our Anniversary issue, and Anniversary issues are supposed to tackle the Big questions. But, like all *Heresies* issues, this one doesn't contain any Big answers. What it does do, however, is offer a picture of where we are right now. We are pleased with this issue because it touches on some of the same themes we have considered over the years, yet it goes further, updating and continuing to investigate some of the ideas that we hope will continue to inspire, if not push, the women's art movement in an even more radical direction.

It is our view that artists must be key to any movement of social change, and we all know that little changes unless women take the initiative.

Heresies, like any other progressive publication, or any other progressive person, will have to become more radical, more activist, more willing to confront our adversaries in the coming years. The battle for our survival on the earth—an earth we all want to live in—will be fought not only with our bodies in the streets, but with our images, which can travel anywhere.

1976, retreat at Joan

Snyder's farm. Top, left to right: Mary Miss, Joyce Kozloff, Arlene Ladden, Joan Snyder, Patsy Beckert, Elizabeth Hess, May Stevens, Harmony Hammond, Sally Webster, Susana Torre. Bottom: Mary Beth Edelson, Miriam Schapiro, Lucy Lippard, Joan Braderman, Elizabeth Weatherford, Marty Pottenger, Michelle Stuart.



PHOTO: MARY BETH EDELSON



PHOTO: JENNIFER KOTTER

IDA APPLEBROOG *Two Women II* (page 2) and *Two Women IV* (page 3), 1985, oil on linen, two panels each (72" × 74" overall).
Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.



PHOTO: JENNIFER KOTTER

Ida Applebroog, born in Bronx, New York, lives and works in New York City and the Catskills.

CUNTS/QUILTS/CONSCIOUSNESS

MIRIAM SCHAPIRO & FAITH WILDING

In the spring of 1987 we spent a few days looking at hundreds of slides of women's art from the early 1970s through the 1980s. Spurred by often divisive, current debates between "deconstructionist" and "essentialist" schools of feminist criticism and practice, we wanted to take a fresh look at the short history of feminist art by surveying what we could of the work itself and studying its imagery, content, styles, and the conditions and contexts of its production. We also looked for connections and differences between the early feminist art of the '70s and the current practices and works of feminists in the '80s.

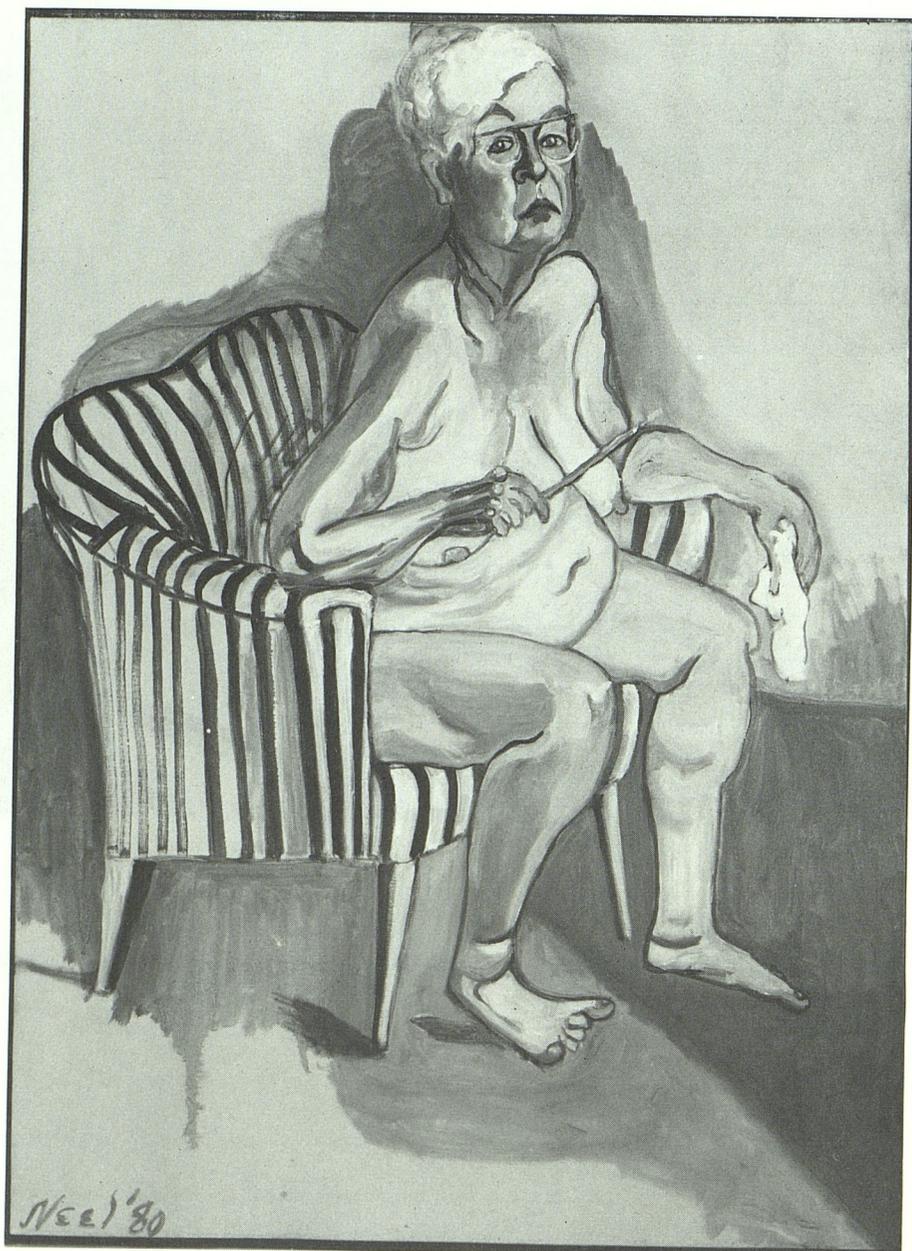
Our slide retrospective overwhelmed us by its clear evidence of a female visual language well established but still evolving. After much sorting and list-making we identified some major subjects of feminist artmaking in the 1970s that particularly interested us and are still fertile in feminist art in the '80s: Cunt/Body/ Spirituality; Autobiography/ Narrative/ Representation (and the Politics of Representation); and Domestic and Traditional Arts: Community and Collaboration. (This is a personal list, not necessarily complete.) The categories refer both to content and subject, as well as to methods, styles, practices, and sources. Thus, for example, performance as a practice could take as its subject the body, autobiography, ritual, or the political analysis of power and domination.

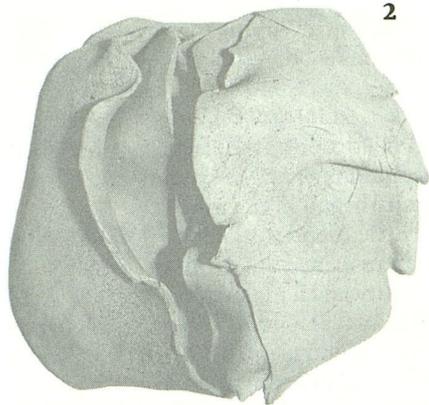
In our essay we present a short discussion of each category and some key visual illustrations, which, due to lack of space, will have to stand in for hundreds of other possible examples. We will demonstrate that the early groundbreaking feminist art explorations of the '70s were a radical challenge to the disciplines of art and art history, and that these strategies opened new possibilities and posed

new questions about received notions of art and its function in culture. It is our view that much of the feminist art of the '80s derives its impetus and strategies from '70s feminist art, although often heavily freighted with currently popular critical theories of representation and gender construction.

Today, the early feminist art movement is often criticized for its crude imagery, fixation on the body, and naive glorification of woman's specialness or

"difference." In bringing about the beginning of a vital cultural/political shift, '70s feminists *were* crude, also passionate, loud, angry, and often mistaken, but they began a movement that is still vitalizing and shaping contemporary art. We firmly believe that the anger, exhilaration, body force, new knowledge, and woman-bonding of the 1970s energizes, enlivens, and inspires the more cerebral and theoretical debates and productions of the 1980s, and will continue to do so.





Cunt, Body, and the Spiritual

In censoring the body, one censures at the same time breathing and speech.

—Susan Suleiman, *The Female Body in Western Art*

Indeed we must admit that we are still unable to produce a female image or symbol that would counterbalance the monopoly of the phallus in representing desire.

—Jessica Benjamin, "A Desire of One's Own," *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*

The female body is the bedrock of feminism.

—Naomi Schor, MLA Panel, 1987

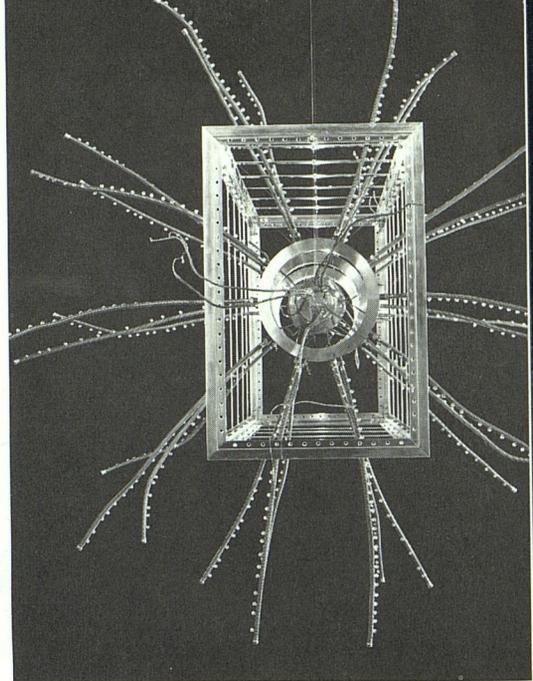
In the 1970s French feminist writers and theorists attempted to "write a woman," to create a sexual poetics of the female. Simultaneously, but independently, American feminist artists began to reappropriate, reclaim, and re-image the female body—their bodies—in opposition to male cultural constructions of woman/body.

"Cunt art" was a defiant challenge to traditional depictions of submissive fe-

male sexuality. It was a form of body art that could not be absorbed by the mainstream, for it questioned the definition of woman as a (mere) "hole" ("woman is the configuration of phallic lack, she is a hole," as Jane Gallop wrote in *The Daughter's Seduction*). By laying claim to an astonishing new lexicon of images, cunt art rejected the view of woman as a passive sexual object. From a woman's point of view the "morphology of cunt" was a new idea. Depicting it as potent, pleasure seeking and giving, sometimes painfilled, sometimes desiring, and infinitely variable, women artists gave this organ a life of its own. Cunt art was a transgressive spark that flashed across the arid field of female representation, signaling new possibilities and provoking laughter, embarrassment, secret glee—and strong disapproval.

In the early 1970s women made cunt images in a dizzying array of materials and styles: the cunt could be an identified flying object, a pleasure garden, fruit, a room, lair, chapel, futuristic space house, a sculpted porcelain dish, a pearl-inlaid treasure chest, an exploding sphere, pulsating whirlpool, aggressive maw, or burning bush. It was crocheted, stitched, sculpted in lint and marble, painted, drawn, photographed, cast in latex, quilted, and collaged. Cunt art was made by all kinds of women artists, including successful ones who sometimes hid it and young students who often flaunted it. Cunt art was profoundly feminist and liberating—even politicizing.

If cunt art was a positive sign of rebellion and transgression, body art of the 1970s was often more complex and ambivalent; it revealed the way women have



absorbed and reflected cultural constructions of their femininity. For the first time many women produced work with their own naked bodies as subject, exploring them from their personal points of view. The body became the book: it was written upon, painted, photographed, ritually arranged, bathed in eggs, mud and blood (as in the "Ablutions" performance by women from the Cal Arts feminist art program), and draped in flowers, seaweed, or other detritus of the natural and manmade world.

In the 1970s the "Goddess" provided women with a potent new image of the fusion of female sexuality and spirituality. Through research into ancient cultures, feminist artists found a new cosmology, mythology, and rich cultural reservoir of nature images. Women explored their bodies as part of nature, infused by the spirit of the earth, and as related to ritual depictions of the goddesses of past cultures. Both Mary Beth Edelson's altered photographs of her nude body, which she inscribed with spirals, horned moons, wings, and other marks of female spiritual power, and Ana Mendieta's archetypal female forms, made from earth, covered in tiny white flowers, or seared with gunpowder, are powerful examples of contemporary spiritual art. The pioneering work of many women artists has also had a decisive influence on the politics and practice





of the American Green and ecofeminist movements, both of which have incorporated the issues of women's bodily and sexual autonomy into their agendas.

Self-exploration and autobiography were popular themes for many early feminist exhibitions. These shows demonstrated the clear difference between the classic female nude as painted by men and the actual experience of the female as depicted by women.

The radical expressions of women's sexuality in feminist writing and early cunt and body art have helped to shift our view of "what a woman is." In the 1980s the representation of the female body is still a hot—and hotly disputed—topic. Much of the energy and juicy female pleasure of "cunt" is palpable in Elizabeth Murray's biomorphic, shaped paintings; in Joan Snyder's thick, visceral paintings; in Harmony Hammond's organic abstractions. Woman looking at herself as a socially constructed female has been the preoccupation of Cindy Sherman's photographed tableaux, and is recorded in Mary Kelly's *Interim*, in Martha Rosler's videotape in which a man measures the "vital statistics" of her naked body, in Vanalyne Greene's performances about her eating binges, and in Alison Saar's larger-than-life bodies, which carry a host of inscribed messages. Women who were involved in the early stage of feminist art are investigating female desire and identity with a new pas-

sion fueled by the discussions of French psychoanalytic theory and feminist readings of Freud. In so doing they are also beginning to depict the male body and male sexuality in new ways: Mira Schor's gigantic, visceral paintings combine penises, trees, and ears to suggest new arenas for the interaction of the senses/sexes; Joyce Kozloff playfully combines traditions of erotic imagery from other cultures with American pop

icons; Faith Wilding intermingles male and female bodies in new attitudes of desire, power, and dependency. Sylvia Sleigh, Anita Steckel, Joan Semmel, Judith Bernstein, and others continue their depictions of male sexuality and female desire begun in the mid-'70s.

The theoretical debates of the 1980s have reopened questions of woman's identity and female experience. Do women share "essential" fixed sexual characteristics and identities? Are their gender roles socially constructed, or are they biologically inherent? Does being female mean primacy of the body over the mind? How can women's experience be described in male-dominated language? Amid these debates many feminist artists continue to rely on their strongest source in the attempt to articulate authentic knowledge about their primal body and cultural experience, that is, on their own autobiographies and the collective history of women.

Autobiography/Narrative/Representation

Frequently, moreover, she [the woman writer] can begin such a struggle [writing] only by actively seeking a female precursor who,



far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by example that a revolt against the patriarchal literary authority is possible.

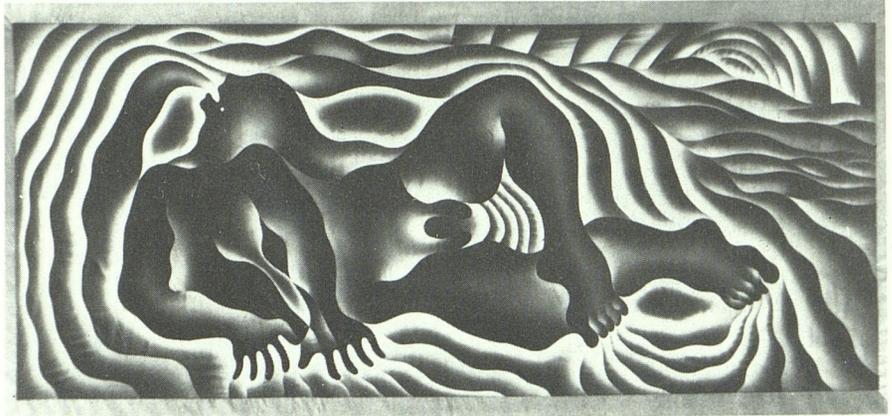
—Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*

First came the talking (life stories), then came the writing, then the visual images. The work in the first feminist art programs and women artists' collectives began with consciousness-raising—telling the life story. Much early feminist work was realistic, descriptive, literal, narrative. But it was deepened, widened, enriched by historical research into the lives and creative work of women of the past. Soon personal narratives became dialogues with everywoman's autobiography, and we began to see our similarities and differences as women. Feminist artists have, in a sense, become curators of their own history, which is the gathered creative work of women in writing, crafts, needlework, artmaking, cooking, "home-making," and childbearing. This collective work-history becomes a theater for a dialogue between the woman artist and the world in which a new philosophy of woman is being formulated.

This is a feminist version of appropriation, for we have appropriated the history of women and the work of our predecessors as our creative and spiritual base. In contrast, many of the appropriationist tactics so currently fashionable often present only self-reflexive media images, which ignore the rich historical reservoir of women artists' self-representation.

In the early 1970s feminists made many kinds of narrative and autobiographical art. In street performances Jackie Apple and Martha Wilson exchanged lives and identities; Adrian Piper and Vanalyne Greene created fictional selves and flouted acceptable female behavior; Linda Montano and Eleanor Antin took on new personas with new personal histories. These performances challenged and shifted traditional views about women's lives, while also breaking out into new subject matter and techniques for artmaking. Early feminist visual narrative works employed humor, related dreams, and created a new mythology of the female self as in the paintings, drawings, and bookworks of Stephanie Brody Lederman, Hollis Sigler, and Ann Leda (Shapiro). Dottie Attie, Jerri Allyn, Judy Baca, and Nancy Spero also continue to make strong female narrative work in many media.

The critique of gender roles was one of the richest veins mined by students



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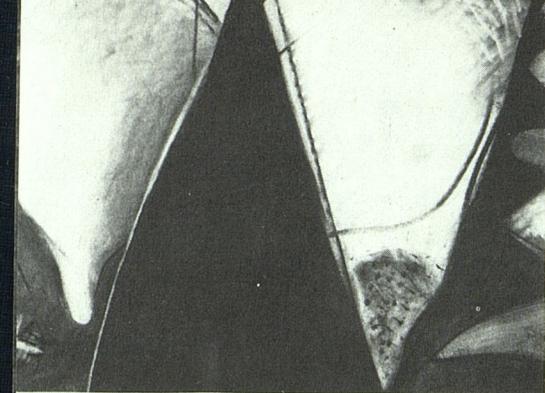
in feminist art education programs. They made "dress-up" photographic self-portraits that explored the pain and artificiality of the masquerade of female stereotypes. These private images rarely entered the "high art" world (as Cindy Sherman's have done), but they were shown in alternative contexts where they influenced much later feminist art. Photographers, including Judy Dater, Judith Golden, and Joanne Leonard, also concentrated on the revelation of self and of female identity, by exploring fashion, costumes, tableaus, and relationships in their pictures.

Woman's experience of herself as "other" was depicted in feminist art from

the beginning and repeated in a thousand variations. "Taboo," an early show at Womanspace gallery in Los Angeles (1974), included many forbidden truths about women's feelings toward motherhood and sexuality, and also the constrictions of being black, old, handicapped, bad, and ugly. No longer taboo, these subjects are stronger than ever in the work of artists like Ida Applebroog and May Stevens. A recent show "Autobiography: In Her Own Image" (curated by Howardena Pindell, at INTAR, New York City, May 1988) collected a powerful body of contemporary narrative and autobiographical work by women from different cultures that revealed both the



8



"difference" of female experience and that of being non-white. The narrative/ photographic works of Lorna Simpson, Clarissa Sligh, and Pat Ward Williams derive from a strong vein of personal storytelling, revealing painful truths about women's lives, while paintings by

subversions of the signs and symbols of consumer culture. Much of this work analyzes how sexual difference is deeply embedded in language structures and in ideological systems of representation in "high art" and the media. Their work also demonstrates how difficult it is to make alternative, positive, or empowering images of women. But women artists do have another powerful resource to draw upon in the "revolt against patriarchal (artistic) authority": by seeking "female precursor(s)" and by building on the examples of women artists who have led the struggle against the effects of female socialization and who have proved the power and possibility of "female invention."

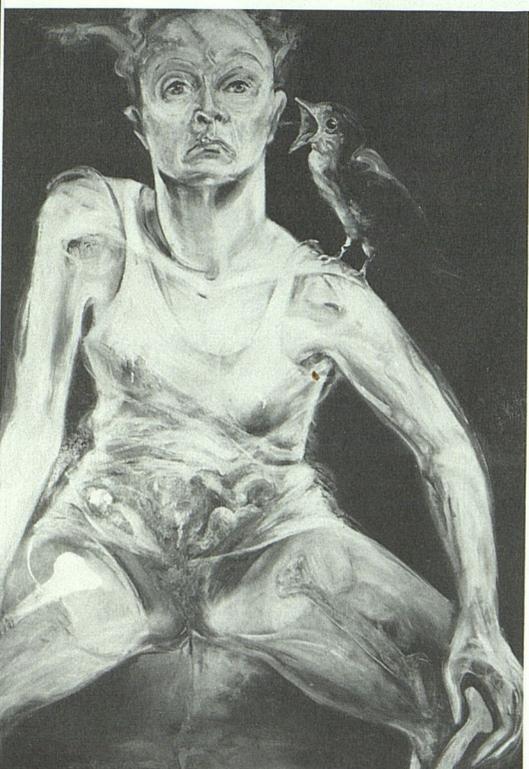
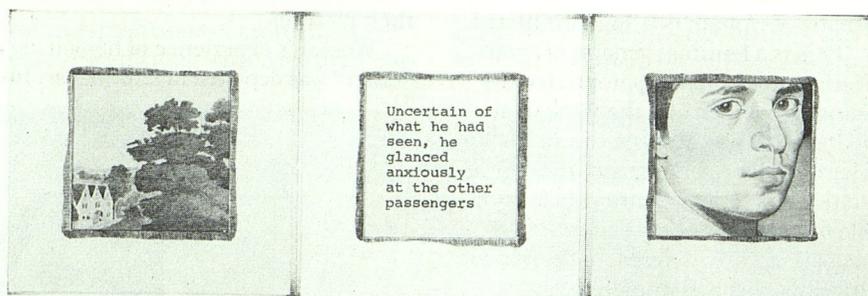
female predecessors. Traditionally, domestic creativity has often been carried on in kitchen and living-room studios, smelling of garlic, cinnamon, and camphor, littered with colored patches, strands of silk, needles, and pins. The emphasis was on intimacy, on collaboration, on making beautiful and comforting objects with sensuous and tactile appeal. The necessity of this kind of work linked it closely with women's everyday activities—how they talked to each other, learned from and taught each other, defined themselves, dreamed and planned. Thus into the work crept subject matter that spoke directly about women's lives. As Lenore Malin has pointed out, "Women's historical position outside of culture may be what has enabled them to treat the kinds of intimate themes that are usually considered taboo. And for many women artists the taboo has assumed a politically subversive edge" (from the exhibition catalog *The Politics of Gender*, 1988).

Early examples of feminist domestic art include *Womanhouse*. Here an actual house was made into a work of art



Marina Gutiérrez, Emma Amos, and Margo Machida show us women of color relating to "the grand scheme of things" (from an Amos title) from a female point of view.

Much current work about gender roles is built on early feminist art strategies. This includes Sherman's "dress-up" photos, Barbara Kruger's text/image collages, Silvia Kolbowski's use of fashion images and photographs, and Ilona Granet's and Erika Rothenberg's feminist



Domestic and Traditional Arts: Community and Collaboration

Starting to embroider in a fine-art context was a direct result of my activities with the Women's Liberation Movement from about 1970. At that time I had not found any application of my feminist ideas to art, but felt a strong need to make feminism literally visible. Embroidery was one technique among many which could be combined in new ways to create forms of art truer to our skills and experience.

—Kate Walker, quoted in *The Subversive Stitch* by Rozsika Parker

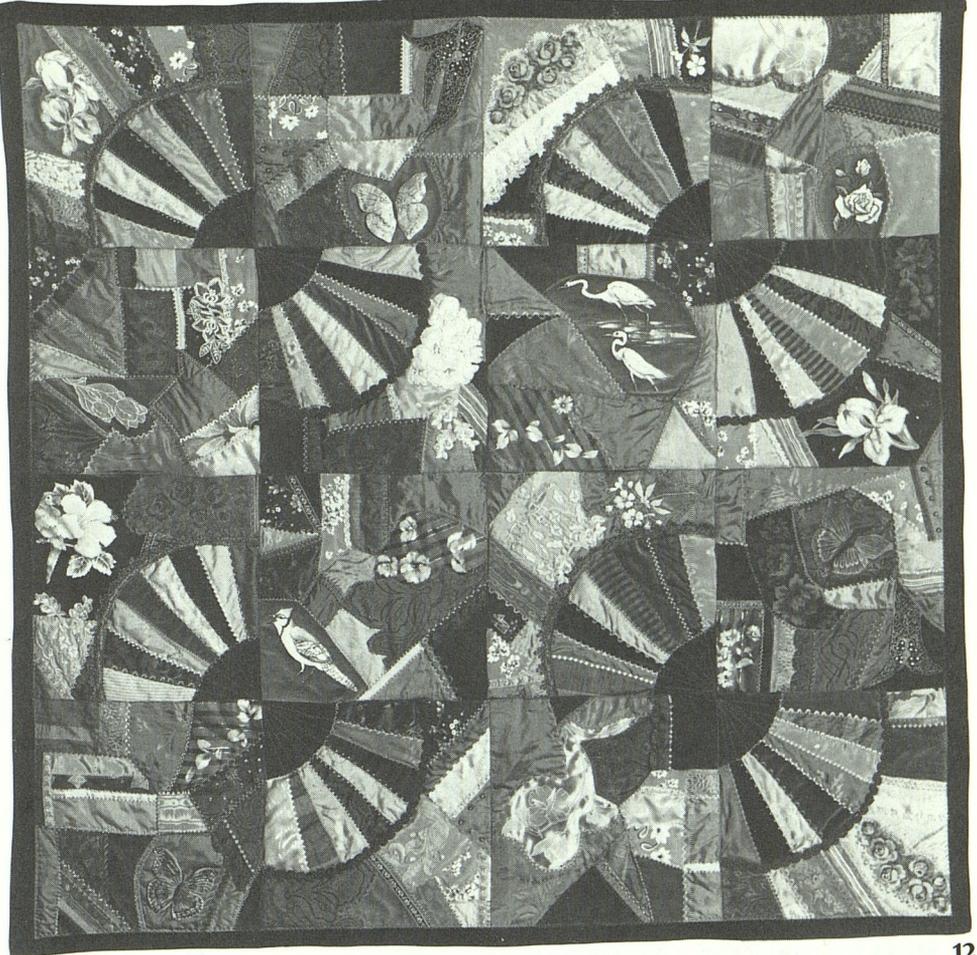
Kate Walker's experience was shared by many women in the early feminist movement. Though many feminist artists no longer feel connected to the traditional women's arts of needlework, lapwork, and other female domestic handiwork, there are others who have found inspiration and a rich new source of art subject matter and materials in the art of their

to expose, criticize, and celebrate women's traditional creative handiwork. *Womanhouse* was also a collaboration containing other collaborations, such as the *Dollhouse*, a critical piece by Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody, which expressed women's ambivalence about domestic roles and presented an ironic commentary on power struggles in the home. Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*, with its painted porcelain plates, elaborate needlework runners, and carefully researched history of female production, celebrated women's past achievements and showed how contemporary art can be enriched by reincorporating traditional crafts materials and techniques. In Britain, a group of feminists filled London's pristine ICA Gallery with flapping clotheslines, ovens spilling art, embroidered plates containing quilted food messes—a saucy contrast to the serious (male) art usually exhibited there.

These early collaborations were not only based on the techniques of domes-

tic art, but often made intimacy and relationships between women their subject matter. In this they often harked back to the work of important female precursors. For example, intimacy between women was the subtext of many of Mary Cassatt's paintings. In *The Dressmaker*, the eye is drawn into the picture along the curved back of the working-class woman who is pinning up the hem of a lady's dress. The relationship between the two women is intimate and palpable—the one literally activates the other—and is the subject of the painting.

Feminist researches into the traditional arts of women led directly to the "Pattern and Decoration" movement of the mid-'70s. Determined to "break the minimalist code," Miriam Schapiro, Robert Kushner, Robert Zakanich, Joyce Kozloff, Jane Kaufman, Cynthia Carlson, Valerie Jaudon, and Kim McConnell met to start a movement that would bring back pattern, decoration, opulence, glitz, glitter, and a shameless celebration of beauty. Working together on Issue #4 of *Heresies* ("Women's Traditional Arts: The Politics of Aesthetics") the women of the P&D group realized that women had been restricted by custom—even sometimes by law—to using nonrepresentational patterns, geometric abstraction, and decoration, and been forbidden to make images of humans and of god. For centuries, women had learned to express



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much of their subject matter in covert and hidden ways, using color and dazzling pattern to signify passion or anger, compulsive stitchery and texture to denote frustration or exaltation, and as a result had created a distinct female visual language.

The way in which the Pattern and Decoration movement was derived from feminist art practices is only one example of the many ways in which art of the 1970s seeded the art of the '80s. The continuing influence of P&D and of "femmage" (a feminist version of collage) on such artists as Rhonda Zwillinger, Rodney Allan Greenblatt, and Aimee Rankin is evident in their use of decorative materials and glittery objects and colors, and in the design and fabrication of their pieces.

Quiltmaking was one of the most important female domestic activities for many centuries. In the collaborative, community-oriented art of the quilt, lapwork gives way to an ambitious, multilayered work. Transcending boundaries of class, race, country of origin, and history, the quilt is a humanized, democratized art form. Even its subject matter—weddings, commemorations, friendship, freedom, political loyalties, family records—reflects rituals of community life. Once coveted as prized household possessions, quilts are now exhibited as

art works in museums and galleries. Contemporary quiltmakers often collaborate with well-known male and female artists, and many artists use quilt techniques in their work. Jane Kaufman transforms traditional patterns into paintings, while Susan Shie makes wildly inventive, exaggerated trapunto narratives. Faith Ringgold is telling her whole life story in a series of painted, stitched, photomontaged, and written upon "story quilts." Quilts are made by Native American women such as Jimmie Fife, Mae Whitman, and an entire tribe of Seminole artists, who make orthodox quilts as well as using old patterns in contemporary clothing. *Womanhouse*, which exhibited the austere beautiful abstract quilts of Fran Raboff, resembled a quilt in its fabrication, for it was pieced together from fragments of female history. A metaphor of survival and shelter, its thesis was the humanizing influence women have had through the work of their hands.

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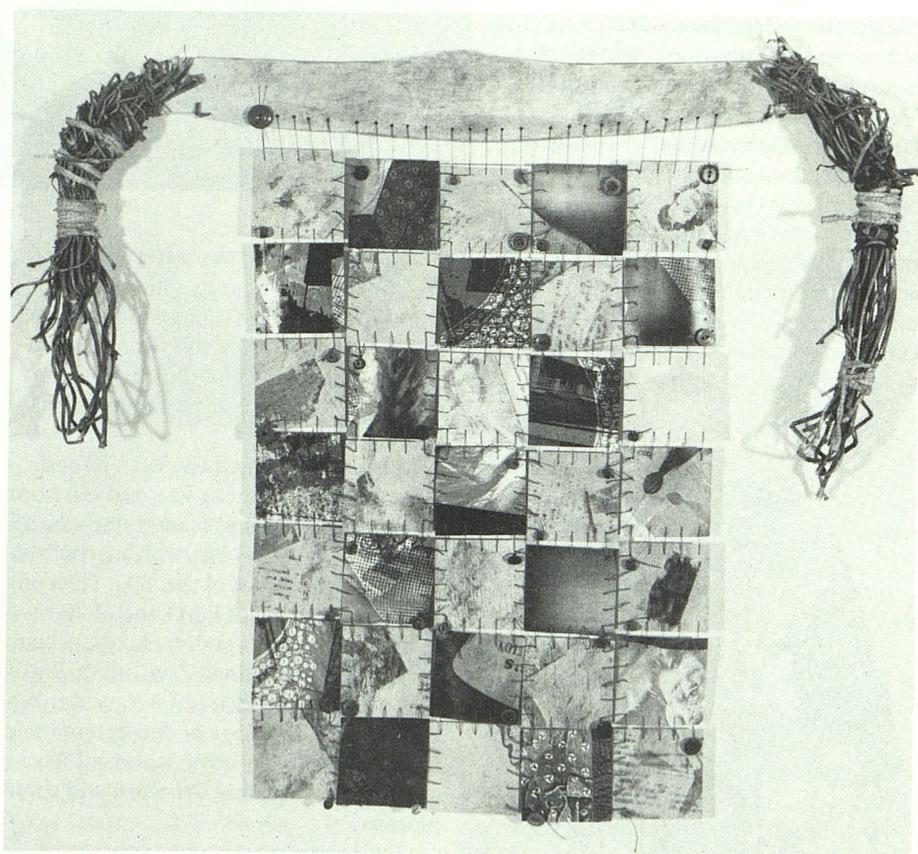
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As Virginia Woolf wrote in *A Room of One's Own*: "For women have sat indoors all these millions of years, so that by this time the very walls are permeated by their creative force, which has, indeed, so overcharged the capacity of bricks and mortar that it must needs harness itself to pens and brushes and business and politics." Nurturing is not enough. From earliest times women's hands have not been still and their creations of decoration and embellishment in the domestic arena have been their expression of desire— desire for beauty, for a greater life, for embellishing necessity. Sewing a fringe on curtains, pulling threads to form a design on a tablecloth, stenciling a floor, or tating intricate lace for the edge of a cheap cotton handkerchief—these are all sentient efforts and part of the fabric of female lives. In 1987 performance artist Suzanne Lacy (in collaboration with Susan Stone, Miriam Schapiro, and others) created *The Crystal Quilt*, a grand tableau that paid homage to the ancient female arts of bonding and used the quilt as its central metaphor. Similarly, the AIDS quilt and the Pentagon Ribbon are eloquent contemporary testimonies that the collaborative, satisfying, embracing traditions of female domestic art still enable people to connect and express personal grief, political rage, and joy.

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Conclusion

In the 1970s the feminist art movement expanded the definitions of art, invited dialogue, and created community. Radical experimenters depicted new subject matter; explored female sexuality, spirituality, passion, and rage; and began to create a distinct female visual language. Defiance of traditional forms led to new amalgams of techniques and processes including "femmage," female narratives

and autobiographies, and the intermingling of high and low culture.

In the 1980s feminists have continued to challenge the disciplines of art and art history by chipping away at the ideological conventions of language and the traditional representation of gender roles, and by opening up new fields of knowledge to the strategies of art.

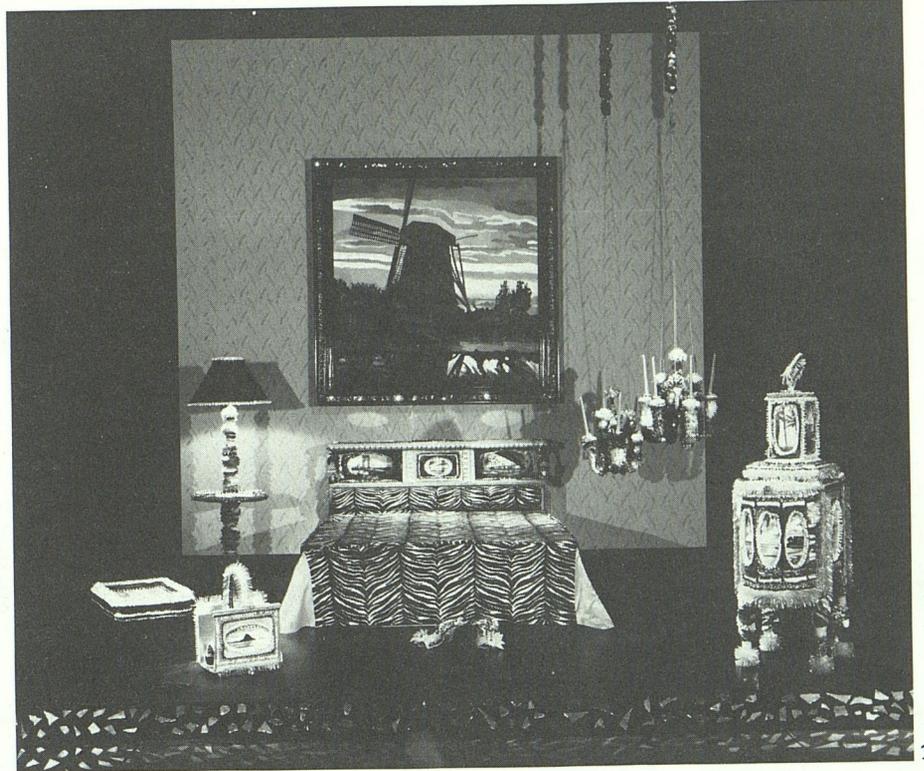
What then are the challenges and tasks of the future? The issues of woman's desire and pleasure and the

expression in art (and life and politics) of a positive role for women are still paramount concerns. Beyond that, feminist artists must continue to seek new voices for the unheard, the suppressed, and the silenced, and to find ways to enter and change the art system so that their work may be seen more widely and have a greater influence. They must continue to create an interventionist art that poses uncomfortable questions, disrupts unity, and interrupts received notions about female being. Above all, they must infect with laughter, ignite with unseemly passion, and overwhelm with beauty the cold, ironical modes of art so popular today.

Miriam Schapiro is an internationally known artist whose work is represented in museums from New York to Australia. She has just published *Rondo* and is a recent recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Faith Wilding is a feminist artist (all stages) who paints, teaches, writes, makes artist books, and produces radio programs. She lives and works in New York City.

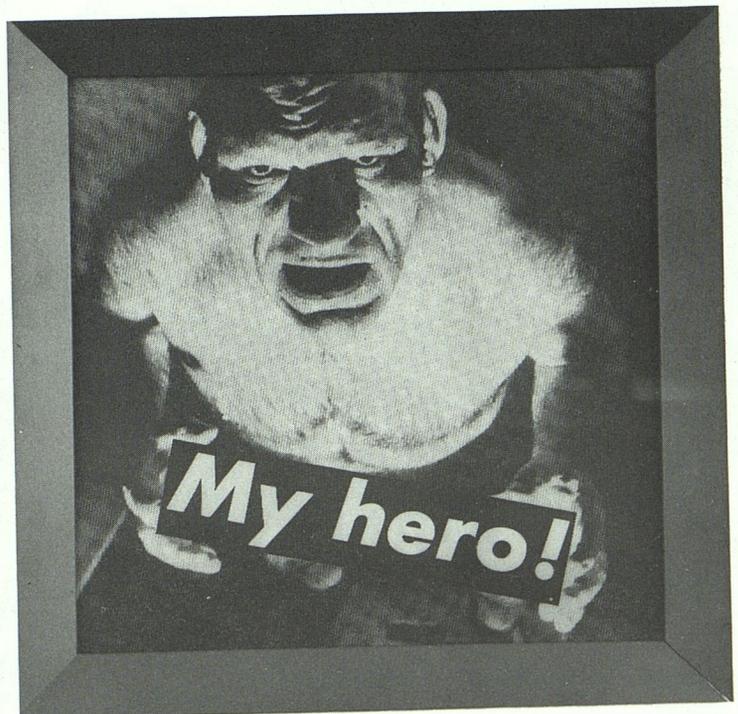
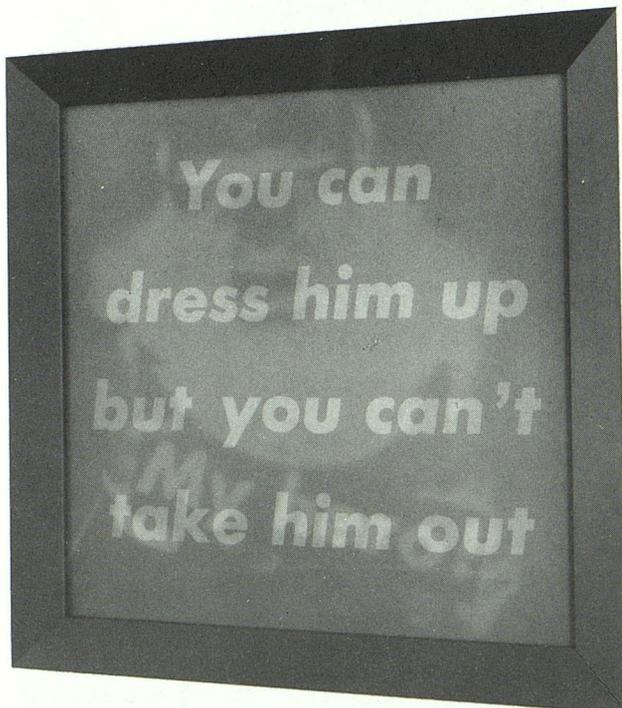
- 1 Alice Neel, *Self-Portrait*, 1980, oil on canvas, 54" × 40". Collection, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C. Photo courtesy, Robert Miller Gallery, New York.
- 2 Hannah Wilke, *North American Candle Snuffer*, 1966, terra cotta, 12" × 12" × 5". Courtesy, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.
- 3 Gilah Hirsch, *Echo II*, watercolor, 25" × 34½".
- 4 Bonnie Van Allen, *Family Jewels*, 1988, mixed media, 5' × 5' × 8'.
- 5 Michelle Stuart, *Stone Alignments/Solstice Cairns* (aerial view), 1979, Rowena Plateau, Columbia River Gorge, Oregon, 1000' × 800'. Commissioned by the Portland Center for the Visual Arts. Photo: Michelle Stuart.
- 6 Faith Wilding, *Leaf Scroll* (detail), 1987, mixed media on paper, 20" × 17".



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- 7 Judy Chicago with Jacquelyn Moore (quilter), *Earth Birth*, 1983, airbrush and quilting, 63" × 135". Courtesy, Through the Flower Corp. Photo: Michele Maier.
- 8 Emma Amos, "Mama's Best Friend," *Irene at 13*, 1988, monoprint with color laser transfer, 19¼" × 12¼". Photo: Nicholas Amos.
- 9 Lucinda Parker, *Grade A*, mid-'70s, charcoal on paper.
- 10 Dotty Attie, *A Carriage Ride*, 1976, 120 drawings, pencil on paper, 4½" × 4½" each.
- 11 Bailey Doogan, *Silver Bones*, 1985, oil and modeling paste on canvas, 60" × 48".
- 12 Jane Kaufman, *Butterflies*, 1987, mixed media, 50" × 50". Courtesy, Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, New York.

- 13 Mimi Smith, *Steel Wool Peignoir*, 1966, steel wool, nylon, lace, 59" × 26" × 8".
- 14 Miriam Schapiro, *Conservatory*, 1988, acrylic and fabric on canvas, 72" × 152". Courtesy, Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, New York.
- 15 Sabra Moore, *Gladys Apron No. 2*, 1985, mixed media, 24" × 24".
- 16 Rhonda Zwillinger, *Mixed Metaphore*, installation at P.S. 1, Long Island City, New York, January 1985. Courtesy, Gracie Mansion Gallery, New York.
- 17 Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (My Hero!)*, 1986, lenticular photograph, 19" × 19". Courtesy, Mary Boone Gallery, New York. Photo: Zindman/Fremont.



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MADHOUSE MADHOUSE KATE MILLETT

In 1972 through misguided family intervention I was caught and held in a California madhouse. And again in 1980, this time in Ireland where my sympathy with the hunger strikers and my 'record' made it possible for the police to catch me and haul me to a back ward asylum in County Clare.

I was fortunate that both imprisonments were brief. Few the same. But I have a record now; it could happen again any time.

Kate Millett is a New York sculptor and writer. She has been sculpting in mixed media for 30 years.

FROM LIBERATION TO LACK

MIRA SCHOR

The three phases of the historical and political development of feminism—from the demand for equality, through the rejection of patriarchy by radical feminism, toward a third position that sees the male/female dichotomy as “metaphysical”—present a dilemma to feminists whose own personal maturation has been synchronous with the women’s liberation movement of the early ’70s, the feminist art movement, and the recent influx of French feminist psychoanalytic and linguistic theories, a dilemma that is replicated in the disposition of the books in my library on feminism and feminist art and art-historical analysis.

Equality*

In a cardboard box stored at my mother’s house: a dog-eared copy of *Our Bodies Ourselves, Everywoman* (by the Fresno Feminist Art Program, 1971), and the first issue of *Ms.*

In my closet: a yellowed photocopy of Linda Nochlin’s essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”

On my shelves: *A Room of One’s Own* (every sentence underlined and then reunderlined in darker graphite); *The Second Sex* (inherited from my older sister, the pages nearly powder).

Radical Feminism*

From the Center by Lucy Lippard; *Women Artists 1550/1950* by Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin; *Feminism*

and *Art History* edited by Nochlin and Thomas Hess; monographs, catalogues, autobiographies and biographies of women artists: Frida Kahlo, Charlotte, Louise Bourgeois, Alice Neel, Georgia O’Keeffe, Agnes Martin.

Rejecting the Dichotomy*

More accessibly placed in the front row of my shelves: *Old Mistresses: Women Art and Ideology* by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock; *The Madwoman in the Attic* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar; *New French Feminism: An Anthology* edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron; *The New Feminist Criticism* edited by Elaine Showalter.

On my sofa, bookmarks stuck between pages: *The Daughter’s Seduction* by Jane Gallop; *Speculum of the Other Woman* by Luce Irigaray; *The Newly Born Woman* by Cixous and Clement; *Sexual/Textual Politics* by Toril Moi.

All is not on the distaff side: back shelf, *Letters to a Young Poet* by Rilke; in the front, *Ways of Seeing* and *The Sense of Sight* by John Berger, *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation* edited by Brian Wallis, *Recodings* by Hal Foster; on my sofa, *Male Fantasies* by Klaus Theweleit.

The purpose of this list is not to boast of erudition but to illustrate the feminist dilemma, which is that all of these books remain relevant. Feminism has little institutional memory, there has been no collective absorption of early achieve-

ments and ideas, and therefore feminism cannot yet afford the luxury of storage. Teaching young women to paint, I have found that every young woman who feels in herself the inchoate desire to do something, say something about her life, must begin at the same beginning, or very close to it, that my sisters and I did 17 years ago. The rose-filtered lenses that camouflage patriarchal domination need to be removed, and the ABCs of feminist art history and thought must be learned anew. Thus, a feminist art teacher cannot afford to pack away Linda Nochlin’s signal essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” yet she must also be cognizant of the psychoanalytic and linguistic writings implicit in the very title of Nochlin’s more recent essay “The Origin Without an Origin” (*October*, no. 37). While alert to the need of unformed art students, the feminist teacher must be responsible to the growth of her own work. Women of my generation form a living bridge across ebb tides of feminist thought. It is in the spirit of this role that this essay on feminist art is written.

The earliest proposals for what might constitute feminist art concentrated, in terms of content, on personal experiences

re-examined in consciousness-raising sessions. Untold stories of marginality and repression were shared and reworked into statements of rebellion and affirmation. There was an awakening of body awareness, pride, and anger. Satiric readings of female images in popular culture were attempted. Formally, central-core imagery and layering were proposed as metaphors of female sexuality. Previously trivialized methods of production, such as quilting and embroidery, were redeemed for "high art."

These proposals were based on empirical observations of thematic and formal recurrences in art by women (and it is remarkable how persistent these occurrences are), and fueled by the understandable desire (urge) to define and validate what a visible "Other" might be. Innocent and idealistic, and also in opposition to male representations, women artists sought to create representations of female sexuality, of femaleness, and femininity. In their search a belief in representation was evident and implicit.

In the last decade, the work of French psychoanalytic and linguistic theorists has served to undermine the stability of concepts such as identity, authorship, origin, representation—precisely the concepts that American feminists had been trying to resituate within the art work of women artists.

It is a familiar irony in the history of feminism that the goals feminists fight to achieve are declared insignificant or in error just as the goals are at last met. For example, in the nineteenth century, just when women art students were finally admitted to drawing classes with a male nude model, the nude lost its primacy as a concern of art. Some of the ideas of French feminism might seem to operate in a similar pattern of frustration. This is not to say that there are no threads linking the old feminism (Anglo/American) and the new (French). There are times when the description that an Italian waiter once nightly affixed to a pensione's endless re-presentations of veal—*la même chose* ("the same thing")—applies, but with different references and more sophisticated and erudite methods of analysis and critique. American feminism of the early '70s un-



CINDY SHERMAN *Untitled Film Still*, 1979, black-and-white photograph, 10" × 8".
Courtesy, Metro Pictures, New York.

veiled the sexism embedded in the quotidian experience of our culture, and further, in Western, Greco/Roman, Judeo/Christian civilization. French feminism restates the problem, indeed deepens it, by positing that a person's very acquisition of language, her entry into culture, is an inscription into the world of the Phallus, the law of the Father, which language *is*. (These are ideas primarily developed by the French psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan.) Any effort to ignore this law, to search for a definition and a representation of female sexuality, crosses a field mined and snared by phal-

locentric logic; to seek to define the "Other" is still to operate within the framework of a "binary system" in which the Phallus is the primary referent, yet to try to expose the flaws in phallogocentric thought by taking its arguments to their logical ends, to use phallogocentric thought against itself by "miming" it, is to risk being "recuperated" (remember how feminist art themes and forms used to be "co-opted" by male artists?—*la même chose*, only different). So one can find oneself literally in a *no-man's land*, where, as Janis Joplin so aptly put it, "women is losers."

A question central to the visual artist, then, is how women artists have represented female sexuality, which has been specularized² and fetishized by men, yet posited as unrepresentable because unseeable, unknowable, and unthinkable. This question is addressed in the work of more women artists than one essay could sensibly deal with; this essay will concentrate on some work dealing with the representation of female sexuality as interpreted in recent feminist critical writings, or work perceived by contemporary art critics to be dealing with “issues of representation” and “originality.”



Cindy Sherman's work is generally considered an exemplar of the instability of identity. Also, her work functions as textbook illustration of recent critical analyses of the “specularization” of woman; it seems to spring from and to cause a proliferation of text:

Is it necessary to add, or repeat that woman's “improper” access to representation, her entry into a specular and speculative economy that affords her instincts no signs, no symbols, or emblems, or methods of writing that could figure her instincts, make it impossible for her to work out or transpose specific representatives of her instinctual object-goals? The latter are in fact subjected to a particularly peremptory repression and will only be translated into a script of body language.
—Luce Irigaray³

Now the little girl, the woman, supposedly has nothing you can see. She exposes, exhibits the possibility of a nothing to see.
—Luce Irigaray⁴

When you lose your mind, it's great to have a body to fall back on.—Shari, Calvin Klein commercial

Formally mimicking “cultural productions” dominated by male specularity—movies and commercial photography—Sherman poses and makes herself up; there is no one “I” in her work. She is a blonde lying on a bed dressed in a black bra and panties, mouth half-open, eyes unfocused, body akimbo in a pose hinting at post-orgasmic stupor, or, more likely, a police photographer's view of a crime victim. She is a crouching young girl in a red calico dress, looking up innocently and fearfully. She is a sweating, open-mouthed, vacant-eyed, prone woman in a wet T-shirt. She is a witch, a pig, a pimply ass, a corpse half-visible under dirt and debris. A complete survey would

indicate that a substantial number of the women “enacted” by Sherman are either squatting, crouching, or prone, crazed or dead. More “positive” images tend to look stupid or have a slight mustache.

The possible interpretations of this category of “negative” representations (representations of negativity, a “nothing to be seen”) unfold in a peculiar sequence which reflects the changes in her work. The ironic intention of these textbook representations of the “Other”—cunt, witch, shrew, bimbo, victim—presumably ensures that they will be seen as *critiques* of this vision of woman, in much the same way that critics have explained away images of woman in the work of her male contemporaries (such as David Salle).

One has to see a Sherman photograph on a person's wall to understand the nature of its appeal: a wet T-shirt clinging suggestively to breasts is *la même chose*, whether you call it *draperie mouillée* (Kenneth Clarke, *The Nude*) or tits and ass. These negative representations are disturbingly close to the way men have traditionally experienced or fantasized women. Sherman's camera is male. Her images are successful partly because they do not threaten phallocracy, they reiterate and confirm it.

And yet another interpretation of Sherman's negative representations allows the female artist's sense of her own monstrosity, the monstrosity of her project of being an artist, to seep to the surface. The “anxiety of authorship” proposed in *The Madwoman in the Attic* results from the conflation of two phenomena faced by women artists: “the dominant patriarchal ideology presents artistic creativity as a fundamentally male quality” and the “dominant images of femininity are male fantasies”⁵—the “Angel in the House” and the Whore. Women artists seek to adopt/adapt male forms in order to be read (in order not to be thought to babble incoherently in “no-man's” language), but their sense of monstrosity in rejecting these fantasy images and of the monstrousness of their anger against these images lurks more or less veiled within their work, like Mr. Rochester's first wife, hidden but unconsciously violent.

Sherman denies the element of self-portraiture, and there is much criticism of the autobiographical “phallacy” which would limit women artists to their (biologically determined) experience and limit the work of art by chaining it to one author. Nevertheless, Sherman is the artist and her model, the camera and its image. The more successful she becomes

commercially, the more she dares her public to turn away from images so hideous they couldn't possibly sell (predictably they do)—images of the relentless degradation of woman until she molds underground. In a 1985 tableau (#150) she is seen from above, her face is covered with sweat, her hand touches a grotesquely large red tongue. Her expression is one of subservience yet rebellion. Perhaps a sexual slave, she is also monstrously huge in relation to the teeny “normal” figures in the background. A 1987 image (#175) presents a bulimic apocalypse in which only Sherman's tiny, prone, screaming reflection in mirrored sunglasses remains amid half-eaten junk food and vomit. A rejection of junk culture, it is also a case history of a female disorder—disruptive of the more conventional sexuality of her early work. The monstrosity and self-hatred of female authorship, increasingly evident in Sherman's impersonations, run rampant over the irony and create, paradoxically, a powerful feminist body of work.

But woman has sex organs just about everywhere. She experiences pleasure almost everywhere. Even without speaking of the hysterization of her entire body, one can say that the geography of her pleasure is much more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is imagined—in an imaginary centered a bit too much on one and the same.—Luce Irigaray⁶

Sherman's hysterical reenactments of specularization and of the monstrosity of a woman artist's rebellion focus on aspects of female sexuality related to woman as the object of the male “gaze,” as a “nothing to see.” Works by other women artists move toward metaphors of the multiplicity of female sexuality, of “This sex which is not one.” The “geography of her pleasure” is mapped out on the scattered leaves of the “Cumaean Sybil” discovered by Percy and Mary Shelley and reilluminated by Gilbert and Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*. The legendary poetess's histories and prophecies, traced in undecipherable languages, are strewn about a dark cave. This vision of “the body of her precursor's art, and thus the body of her own art, [lying] in pieces around her,

dismembered, dis-remembered, disintegrated⁷⁷ is bracingly close to the experience and the work of many significant women artists.

Significant and monumental works by women artists have been constituted by a proliferation of "Sybil's pages," multiple images, often rectangular, framed and placed along a grid. The works I have chosen to examine in content and intent span several phases and families of recent art and feminist thought.

Hanne Darboven covers the walls of the gallery (cave) with identically framed works which bypass the pitfalls of male language by presenting texts that are not texts, in any decipherable sense. Her environments, of systems, indexes, and numbers, hint at an unclosable infinity of references. The pages of this Sybil are covered with an uncracked code, but laid out in the irreproachable (male) grid.

Darboven's austere neutral (neuter) and obsessively expansive cyphers can be bookended with Mary Kelly's obsessional documentation of truly the oldest female profession, being the mother of a son. Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* (1976–1980), a diary of her son's early years, is considered the epitome of art informed by Lacanian theory:

Kelly's work is an attempt to find a way to expose these processes [representation, language and sexual position] and their significance for both woman and art. She has constructed the document in order to show what lies behind the sexual division of labour in child care, what is ideological in the notion of natural maternal instinct, what is repressed and almost unrepresentable in patriarchal language, female subjectivity. In making the mother and child relation the subject of her art work, she is addressing some of the most politically important and fundamental issues of women, art and ideology.—Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock⁸

Indeed, Kelly's work has many characteristics of feminist art in its early stages: it is multiple, layered in time; its subjects are motherhood, nurturing, separating. It is autobiographical and biographical in its obsessively complete narration of infant development. From Darboven's barren but infinite cryptography, we have come in *Post-Partum Document*

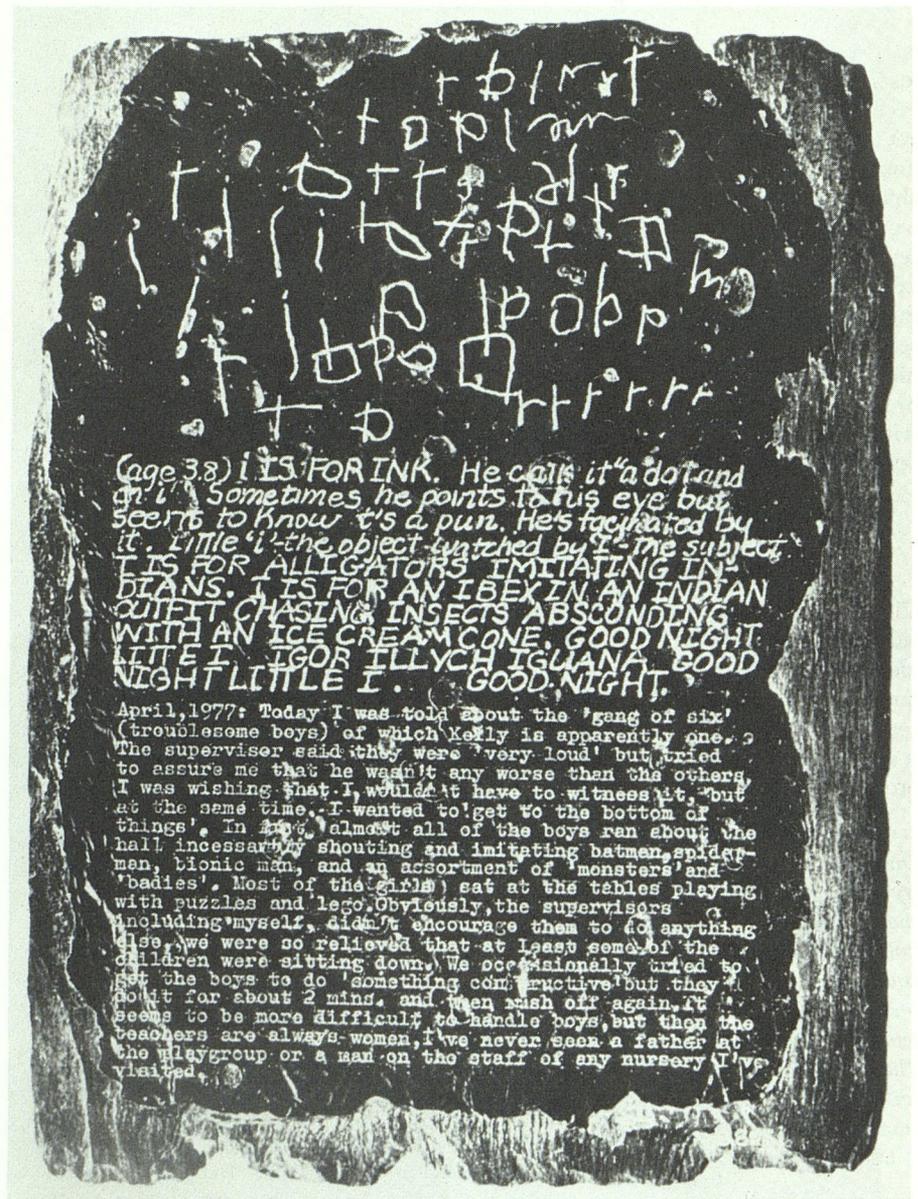


PHOTO: RAY BARRIE

MARY KELLY "Document 6" from *Post-Partum Document*, 1979, resin on slate. Collection of Arts Council of Great Britain. Courtesy, Postmasters Gallery, New York.

to the all too familiarly decipherable saga, whose heroic subject is a little boy-child who triumphs against the engulfing intimacy with the mother's body and enters into language. The piece, which begins with impressions of the body's shit on his diapers—a Lacanian Shroud of Turin—ends when he learns to write his own name.

The name of the Mother remains unwritten. And exegeses of Kelly's work, while illuminating, leave important (and obvious) questions unasked. Would a work based on the development of a hypothetical girl-child lead to an as predictably Lacanian conclusion? And would the critical realm have valued a piece dedicated to a "nothing to be seen"? As Irigaray has noted: "the mother/daughter, daughter/mother relation constitutes an

extremely explosive core in our cultures. To think it, to change it, amounts to knocking over the patriarchal order."⁹

Between these bookends lie the pages of the supposedly genderless, successful artists of the '80s. Multiplicity of forms and images, a type of layering, occurs in the works of Jennifer Bartlett and Pat Steir. Bartlett's *Rhapsody* and *In the Garden* and Steir's *A Vanitas of Style* and her self-portraits in the style of great (male) masters are major works in which mimicry of male styles is inscribed and deconstructed within the format of "ready-made grids, a code prepared in advance"¹⁰ (male).

Bartlett's pieces are encyclopedic assemblages of basic subjects of traditional representation (tree, house, figure) and visual components (color, geometry,

mark], all on identically measured squares or rectangles. There is no "I" at all, only a hundred mimings of other identities. In *Vanitas* Steir brilliantly mimics styles and techniques from the history of art. In her self-portraits, an "I" appears repeatedly, yet transformed, disfigured, by the lens of male self-portraiture. A new Alice in Wonderland, she leaps through the "mirror phase" into the Symbolic Order.

This art of the myna bird is a virtuosic brand of guerrilla warfare, for the Annie-Oakley-I-can-do-anything-you-can-do-better excellence of its "mimicry of male discourse."¹¹ The equivalence implied by the multiplicity of imagery seeks to undermine the coherent face of phallic identity, by belying its claim to uniqueness or originality. Both Steir and Bartlett make no effort to represent a female Other. They confront a male audience with its own image, in a fractured, albeit gridded, mirror.



One can detect a link between current theories about origin and originality, representation and reproduction, and the "law of the same," which ordains that "woman's only relation to origin is one dictated by man's."¹² The injunctions against concepts of origin and originality central to "simulationist" art, for example, seem to go hand in hand with those injunctions against female representation. The undermining, in deconstruction and simulation theory, of any integrity of representation specifically represses female representation. The art that is presently validated relies on theory and language, and language, we are told, is the Father and the Phallus. In its repression, representation is feminized.

One returns then to the problem of representations of female sexuality or femininity, that is to say, the problem of essentialism:

Essentialism in the specific context of feminism consists in the belief that woman has an essence, that woman can be specified by one or a number of inborn attributes which define across cultures and throughout history her unchanging being and in the absence of which she ceases to be categorized as a woman. In less abstract, more practical terms, an essentialist in the context of feminism, is one who instead of carefully holding apart the poles of sex and gender maps the feminine onto femaleness, one for whom the body, the female body that is, remains in however complex and problematic a way the rock of feminism.—Naomi Schor¹³

Women are waved away from the door marked "essentialism" by deconstructionist critics and by others afraid of the biologicistic implications and dangers: they altruistically warn of essentialism's error of logic, the trap door of binary oppositions (male/female, active/passive, culture/nature). Woman is waved back, but to what? ... to PHALLUS and LACK, lack, lack, the keystones of Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Like

"In our difference is our best hope for universality, or specificity."

Bluebeard's last wife, she may nevertheless be impelled to open the forbidden door, even if that act reeks of the illogical, the biologicistic, the binary. And in there are the wives Bluebeard has killed, a locked room full of lacks (whose portraits Cindy Sherman may have limned in her tableaux of self). But what of the still-alive wife, who opens the door?

Phallic culture (from all accounts a redundancy) has done everything to prevent, to disable women from achieving any representation of self that would not return to the primacy of the Phallus, one way or another. And while it is certain that all women are permeated by the phallographic order, efforts to escape the system, to enter a no-man's land, are understandable, even laudable, however quixotic. The injunction against essentialism seems a continuation of the repression by Western civilization of woman's experience (of which sexuality is only a part), and it should be defied, no matter the risk.

Opening Bluebeard's door takes many forms. One, certainly, is the feminist spin I have sought to put on works by women who attempt to bypass feminist interpretation in order to gain wider acceptability. It is a common reflex of women artists wishing serious consideration (and deservedly so) by mainstream standards of judgment to suppress and deny the female quotient of their art, to refuse to admit to difference. Georgia O'Keeffe's vehement denials of the sexual content of her images is a classic example of the wish to "pass." Cindy Sherman's denials of self-portraiture and of feminist intent (female rage) are a contemporary version of the same reflex. It is quick and deep: "of course my work is of universal import, I am an artist first, a woman second." As Susan Rothenberg remarked in an interview, "When I'm in the studio, I'm just a painter."¹⁴ No one wants to be part of a second class, no one wants to be

marginal (although men can freely co-opt feminist ideas and forms, and can self-righteously search for and claim an anima ... and get brownie points for trying).

It may be worthwhile heeding Cynthia Ozick's warning to Jewish writers with a comparable desire to assimilate:

We can give ourselves over altogether to Gentile Culture and be lost to history, becoming a vestige nation without a literature; or we

*can do what we never dared to do in a Diaspora language: make it our own, our own necessary instrument, understanding ourselves in it while being understood by everyone who cares to listen or read.*¹⁵

In our difference is our best hope for universality, or specificity. The Surrealist movement, in its preoccupation with the irrational and the unconscious, was in a sense the artistic apotheosis of lack (significantly the Surrealist movement begins with Freud and ends with Jacques Lacan). The very intensity of its focus on lack makes it the perfect site for its reinvestigation by women artists.

The male Surrealists ... passionately desired woman's ability to bear children, which is why they desired woman. Indeed, I would argue that much of Surrealism is an attempt to appropriate woman's power to give birth by every treacherous means possible. Much Surrealist imagery can be understood as the product of a false pregnancy—a strangely aborted product from a female point of view.—Donald Kuspit¹⁶

Works by women artists such as Frida Kahlo, Louise Bourgeois, and Elizabeth Murray are representations of femininity whose organic forms and stylistic peculiarities owe much to these "strangely aborted" Surrealist products. These characteristics are often described by post-modernist critics as narcissistic and fetishistic, yet these works deal directly with female body experience, sexuality, fruition, barrenness, and the quotidian facts of woman's life.

To begin by juxtaposing Kahlo's self-portraits to Sherman's, one might note that Sherman's work clearly has a Surrealist dimension, as it slides into dream-like irrationality and fairy-tale grotesquerie. Whether self-portraits or not, hers are hardly "realist" works. In Kahlo's openly autobiographical work, an exactly controlled, detailed and smooth paint surface, biomorphic forms, and dream-like scenes that are retablos of her own life parallel work by male Surrealists. But, in her work, the tragedy of truncation (real) and infertility (real, not, as in the case of the Surrealists, fanciful), and the possibility of fruition through art, are depicted directly, without disgust, without sentimentality, without irony. In *Henry Ford Hospital* (1932) she lies naked in a pool of blood on a large hospital bed in an empty space far away from "man's land" (the factories of Detroit); from her hands flow veins of red blood/paint toward images of sexuality and loss. She is alone with pain and paint. It is a rich solitude, transfiguring clots of endometrial blood into the richly colored matter of painting.

Louise Bourgeois also claims no distance from physical experience and autobiography. Her insistence on the source of her work residing in psychological

wounds inflicted on her by her father contravenes any formal theories of art and yet embodies the Oedipal crisis that psycholinguistic theory interprets as the entrance of human beings into the Symbolic Order of the Father. Bourgeois obsessively returns the critical audience of her work to its motivating source—the murderous rage of a betrayed daughter. Her admission to the Symbolic Order has been warped by her father's open affair with her governess, yet her link back to the Imaginary (completeness of relation to the Mother) is damaged by her mother's presumed complicity.

The forms that Bourgeois' anger takes are directly related to those of Surrealism. The influence of "Primitive" sculptures and totems is pervasive. "Primitive" art was a locus of the (female) unconscious of "civilized" (non-primitive) Western man; its influence on a woman artist is bound to differ. Bourgeois' *Femme/Couteau* and Giacometti's *Spoon Woman* are kin but they are not sisters. *Spoon Woman* has a tiny head and a large receptive body. *Femme/Couteau*, in its degree of abstraction, is ambivalent and bisexual. It is a vulva and a knife—what woman is and is feared to be. Bourgeois' forms are blatant vaginal, mammary and womblike, yet

exuberantly, mischievously phallic. It would betray her intent to deny the role of her own body experience. The rawness of her surfaces and the openly sexual nature of her forms vitalize the organic/biomorphic Surrealist vision of lack and dissolve the distance the male viewer seeks to place between himself and the art object and between consciousness and his own suppressed physicality and mortality.

Elizabeth Murray's paintings are not only of organic forms, they are organic forms. Like the fluids of Irigaray, like the creature in *Alien* (a mother, it turns out!), the paintings push away the rectangular frame and the picture plane, not in the additive and self-consciously art referential (reverential) manner of Frank Stella, but in a stream of interlooping, thrusting and curving sweeps of saturated color—as their subjects, the contents of daily and studio life, are swept off their feet toward abstraction. Even her drawings insist on reshaping the frame of traditional art; but while the frame is forced to zigzag around the drawing, the drawings often center around a round, wooden clitoral plug affixed to the gritty pastel surface.

These works by Kahlo, Bourgeois, and Murray may seem subservient to Surrealist influence. But they are by women, and, as such, the disturbing possibility of his own castration inherent in the fetishized object is doubled for the male viewer. "The idea that a 'nothing to be seen,' a something not subject to the rule of visibility or of specul[r]ization, might yet have some reality would indeed be intolerable to man."¹⁷ Perhaps more disturbing, then, is the possibility that the female experience of container/contained, inside/outside, evidenced in these works intimates that woman is not just a lack, not just a hole, but w/hole, that the lacks represented in these works are full metaphors for the membrane between thought and matter, life and death, which is at the core of art.

Postscript

Important work has been left out, unhappily. The "pattern and decoration" work of such notable feminist artists as Miriam Schapiro and Joyce Kozloff did not quite fit into the pattern of this particular train of thought. Further along the loom of woman's work, one might have included the work of the German artist Rosemary Troeckel, but I have not yet had the opportunity to see it "in person." Other pages from the Sybil's cave beg inclusion—the works of Eva Hesse, Nancy Spero, Agnes Martin. Many of these works would lead to another essay altogether, on the role of abstraction (understood in a formalist sense) as a metaphor for female sexuality.

FRIDA KAHLO *Henry Ford Hospital*, 1932, oil on metal, 30.5 × 38 cm. Collection, Dolores Olmedo.



NOTE: This article was originally written in 1987.

¹This three-part schema is derived from Julia Kristeva's "Women's Time," as summarized by Toril Moi in *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London & New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 12.

²*Specular* (*specularized*, *specularity*) is a key word used extensively by the French psychoanalyst and philosopher Luce Irigaray to describe the mechanism whereby the instrument (the speculum) that man uses to see and represent woman is a mirror in which he sees only his own reflection (a "return to the same"). "[Woman is] a mirror in which the 'subject' sees himself and reproduces himself in his reflection." This quote is from Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman*, translated from the French by Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) p. 240. With its echoing of words such as *spectator* and *speculation*, it is a very useful term in feminist theory.

³Irigaray, p. 124.

⁴Irigaray, p. 47.

⁵Moi, p. 57.

⁶Irigaray, "Ce Sexe qui n'est pas un" ["This Sex Which Is Not One"], *New French Feminism—An Anthology*, edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), p. 103; Mary Shelley, quoted by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 96.

⁷Gilbert and Gubar, p. 98.

⁸Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. 167.

⁹Irigaray, *Le Corps à corps avec la mère* (Montreal: Les Editions de la Pleine Lune, 1981), p. 86, my translation.

¹⁰Irigaray, quoted by Moi, p. 147.

¹¹Moi, p. 139.

¹²Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 33.

¹³Naomi Schor, "This Essentialism Which Is Not One: Coming to Grips with Irigaray," lecture for *Our Academic Contract*, University of Alabama symposium, October 1987.

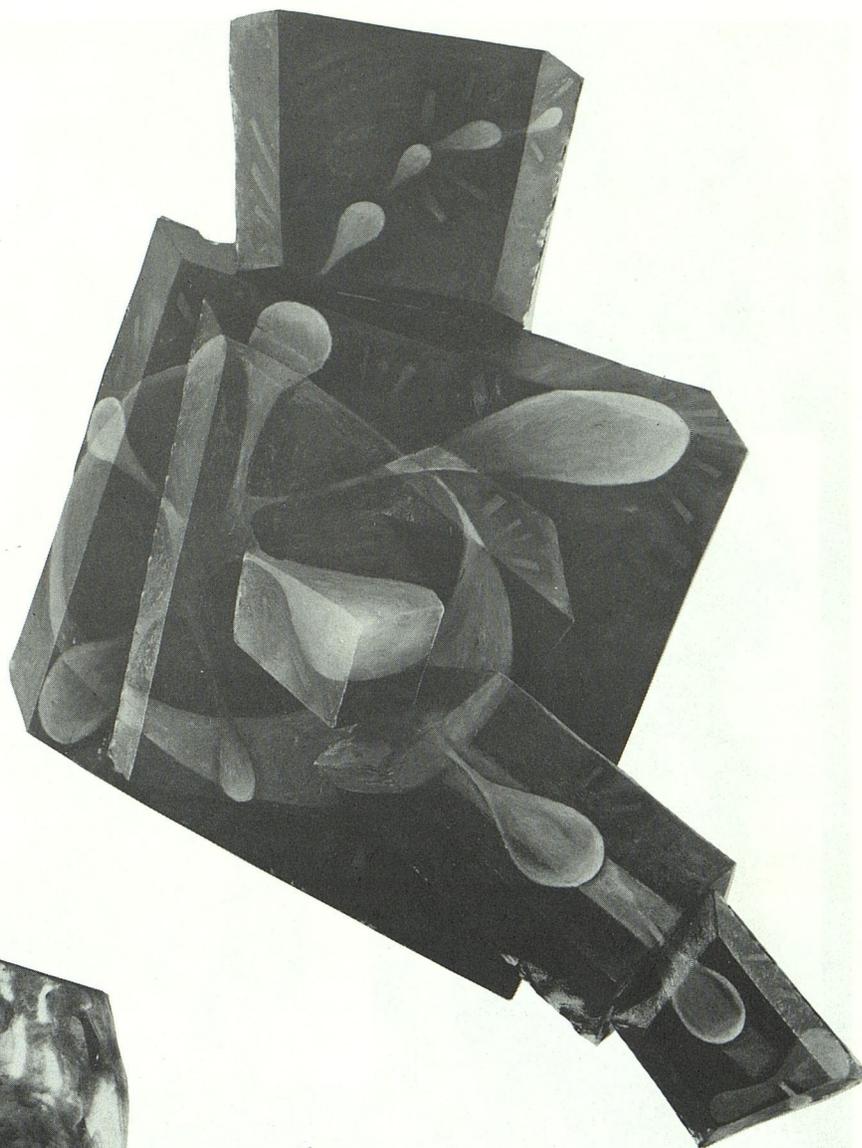


PHOTO: ANDREW MOORE

Above:

ELIZABETH MURRAY *Wild Life*, 1986, oil on six canvases, 62" × 81" × 21". Collection of Douglas S. Cramer Foundation, Los Angeles. Courtesy, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

Left:

LOUISE BOURGEOIS *Nature Study*, 1984, version II (cast 1988), bronze with polished patina, 30" × 19" × 15". Courtesy, Robert Miller Gallery, New York.

¹⁴Quoted by Eleonore Heartney, *Art News* (Summer 1987), p. 140.

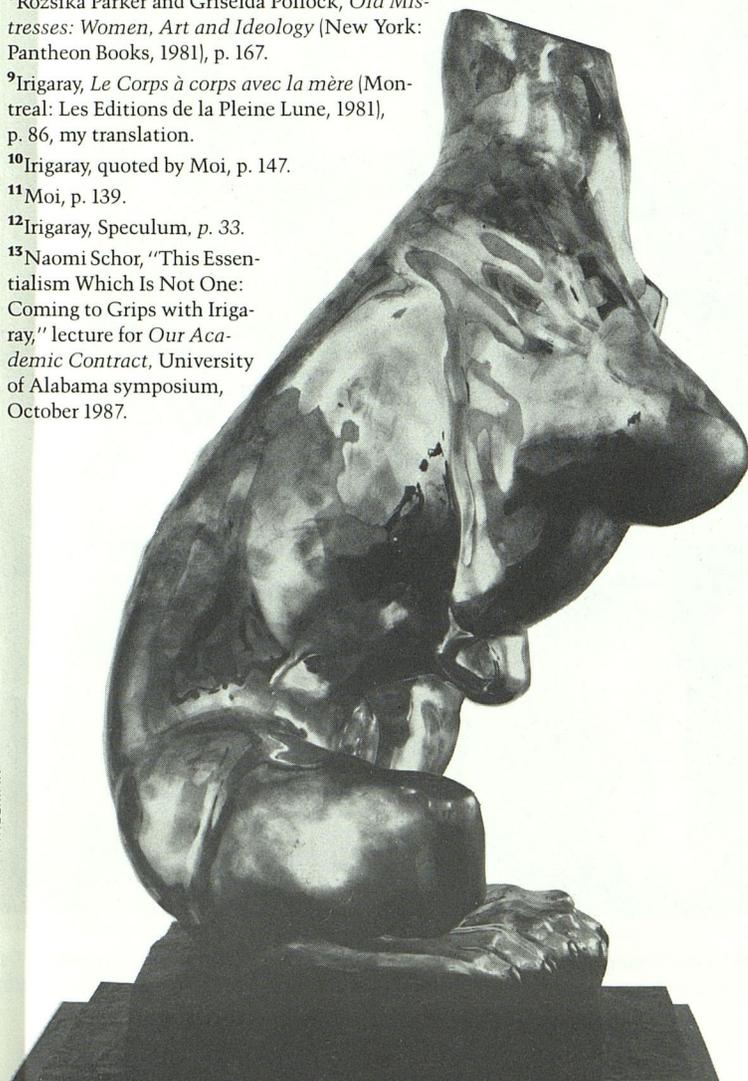
¹⁵Cynthia Ozick, *Art & Ardor* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1984), p. 177.

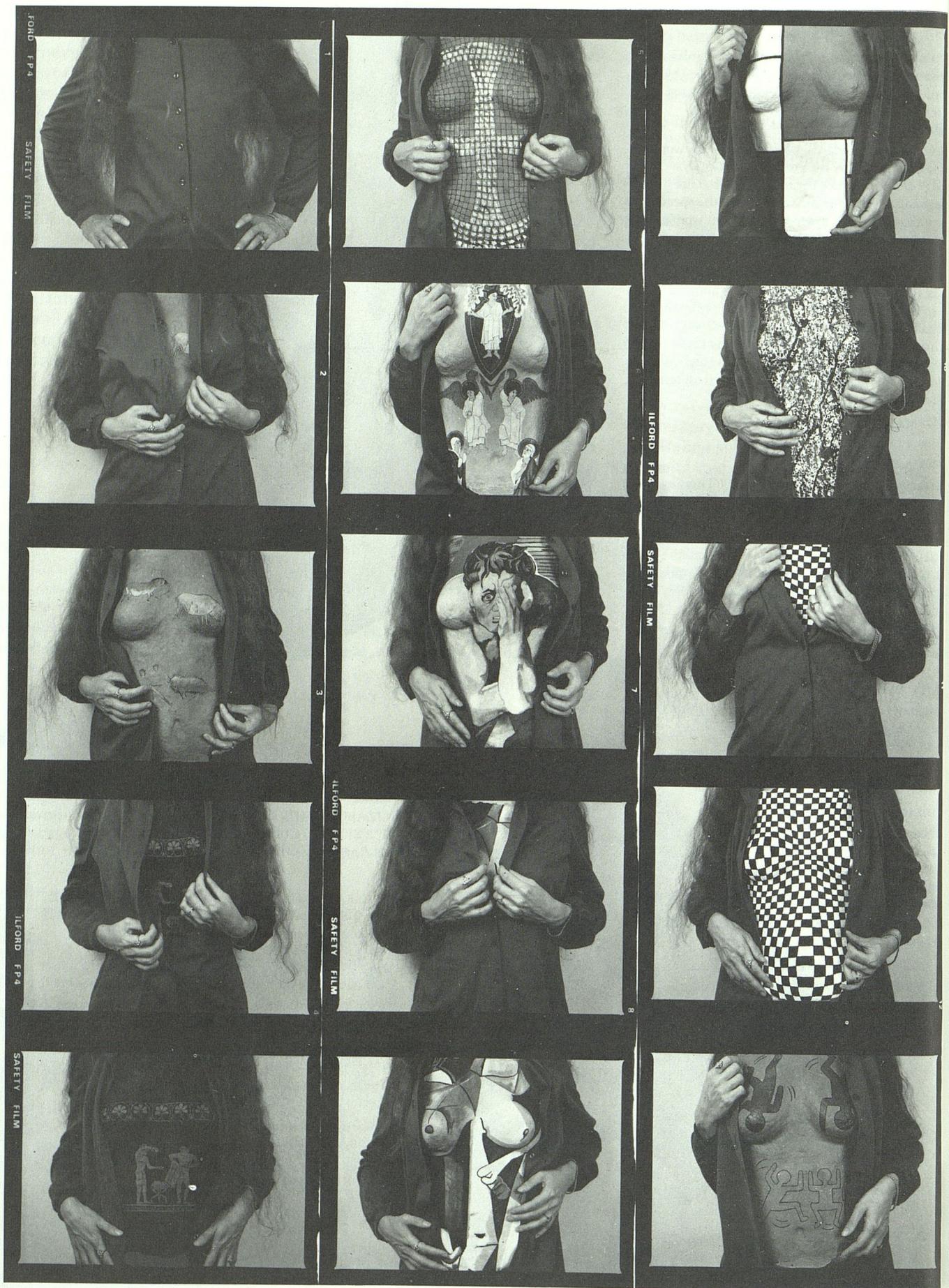
¹⁶Donald Kuspit, "Dorothea Tanning's Occult Drawings," *Art Criticism*, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 47.

¹⁷Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 50.

Mira Schor, a painter living in New York, is co-editor of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*, a journal of contemporary art.

PHOTO: ALLAN FINKELMAN





VIRGINIA MAKSYMOWICZ *The History of Art* (ongoing series), 1988, cast paper and acrylic paint, cast from life. Virginia Maksymowicz is a sculptor who makes art about social and political issues.

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NEGOTIATING THE FEMINIST DIVIDE



Whitney Chadwick

Woman, then, stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.
—Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"¹

First published in 1975, Laura Mulvey's germinal essay located the image of woman as the site of the struggle over "meaning" in art. Who speaks? And to whom? Who is silenced? By whom? Fourteen years later feminism in the arts has broken into increasingly, sometimes absurdly, polarized groupings: feminism/postfeminism, feminism/theoretical feminism, essentialism/poststructuralism, feminist practice/poststructuralist theory, feminist analysis/gender studies. Among feminists themselves the issue of woman—as artist and as image—increasingly occupies a contested space, and it is by focusing on this issue that we can perhaps begin to question the political implications of the new divide between theory and practice.

It is ironic that shortly after feminism legitimized the unique experiences of women, experience *itself* as a way to understand the world and one's place in it has come under attack. One can't help but see significant and ominous parallels with the history of women and academic art in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a time when, just as the academies finally began admitting women, male artists decamped and new, bohemian social and artistic ideals began to dominate. As a feminist art historian now writing a book that deals with a series of historical issues having to do with the intersection of production by women and representation of women,² I am struck both by how far we have traveled since the early 1970s, and how con-

flicted many of us feel about the current disjunction between feminist practice and poststructuralist theory, or between modernist views of artistic innovation and postmodernist rejections of originality, or between the production of gender relations and the processes of making art. Stepping into the divide between essentialism and poststructuralist theory is a way of raising a few of the issues that confront all of us working as feminists in the arts today. I want to emphasize that there is no inherently "correct" feminist art and art criticism, but there are ways of using what feminism has taught us to produce art and criticism, which can take their place among the varied strategies through which we understand the production of meaning today.

Feminism in the arts grew out of the contemporary women's movement of the early 1970s; its first investigations relied heavily on sociological and political methodology. Early feminist analyses focused new attention on the work of remarkable women artists *and* on unsurpassed traditions of domestic and utilitarian production by women. These analyses uncovered a history of productive women artists long overlooked, misunderstood, and neglected by art historians. They revealed the ways that women and their productions have been presented in a negative relation to creativity and high culture. It is now a tenet of feminist analysis that the esthetic value of painting and sculpture is often defined in opposition to qualities such as "decorative," "precious," "miniature," "sentimental," etc. Those very qualities which are used to construct a social ideal of "femininity" are also employed to denigrate its productions. Presented as outside culture and history, women and their art have provided a set of negative characteristics against which to oppose "high" art. Economically, legally, and politically powerless through much of West-

ern history, women have been linked to nature and the unknowable through metaphors of the body while the masculine has signified culture and mental activity.

As the inadequacies of methodologies based on the ideological and political conviction that women were more unified by the fact of being female than divided by the specifics of race, class, and historical moment were exposed, many feminists began to turn to structuralism, psychoanalysis, and semiology for theoretical models. As feminist teaching programs in the arts have closed or moved outside the university in recent years, often in response to economic and political changes in society, and as many women artists have sought support and community in the professional art world rather than in the academy, earlier alliances between feminist artists, critics, and historians appear to have broken down. The multiple discourses that make up poststructuralism today challenge the humanist notion of a unified, rational, and autonomous subject, which has dominated study in the arts and humanities since the Renaissance. Yet much art by women, many of them encouraged to speak out for the first time during the early, heady years of the women's movement, remains rooted in a search for authentic modes of expression that are centered in the experience of the body.

For many women, authenticity of artistic expression and the experience of being female were inextricably bound to-

gether. A belief in essentialism, or a true biological femaleness, most convincingly theorized by Adrienne Rich, Mary Daly, and Susan Griffin, motivated much art by American women during the 1970s. Primarily ahistorical, and outside of race or class analysis, essentialism offered fixed ideas about the "nature" of women. These ideas were often reduced to a set of characteristics or a form language—layered, tactile, "central core," etc.—and

defined only in relation to what was understood as male at a specific time.³ This paradox, and the difficulty of stripping art by women from social constructions of gender, is central to Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock's "deconstruction" of femininity in *Old Mistresses*.⁴

Our ways of evaluating art remain shaped by patriarchal ideologies, which prevent us from arriving at a moment

though essentialists have equated the feminine with the unconscious and the prelinguistic, the art that results from this position still has to be understood as involved in the broader cultural production of meaning. Yet, if essentialism has come to be seen as naive by some academic feminist critics and historians, poststructuralist theory appears to many women artists to be little more than another misogynist denial of their voices. (In Alexis Hunter's 1982 painting *Considering Theory*, an enraged Eve bites the snake's tail with ferocious force.)

All forms of poststructuralism—the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and Emile Benveniste, the Marxist analysis of Louis Althusser, the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, the theories of discourse and power associated with Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence—assume that subjectivity is produced through a whole range of discursive practices (economic, social, political) and that meaning is not determined or guaranteed by author or artist. Poststructuralist theories have worked to deny the authenticity of individual experience by decentering both the rational, autonomous subject of liberal humanism and the essential female nature advocated by many radical feminists. Instead, subjectivity is seen as socially constructed within language. Language becomes the common factor in analyses of social organizations, social meanings, uses of power, and individual consciousness.⁵

Poststructuralism has deeply influenced a wide range of recent artistic practices. Originating in structural linguistics and the analysis of literary texts, poststructuralism has been applied to visual images as a means of unraveling the ways that images confirm or interrupt dominant contemporary ideologies, such as gender, power, and patronage. Derived from complex, primarily European, intellectual traditions, poststructuralism remains centered in the university, answerable neither to the realities of studio practice nor to women's need to transform patriarchy through political action. Often viewed as denying the authenticity of individual experience, while reinforcing the goals of academic feminist intellectuals, poststructuralist theory has become the primary means of defining a new avant-garde in the arts. Weighting text over image, and theory over practice, it has provided developmental models against which issues of content can be measured.

At the same time, the writings of Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kris-

"Above all, we need to be cautious of tendencies that polarize intellect and feeling."

used to validate empirical data rooted in women's experiences of life under patriarchy. Women artists turned to menstrual blood, vaginal images, feminine body language, pregnancy, childbirth, and maternity to offer aspects of female sexuality, which are largely repressed in the history of male art. In the end, however, after proposing new subjects and compiling an inventory of features characteristic of art produced by women (and eliminating all those evident in the work of male artists), it was not clear that we had arrived at anything essentially feminine. More likely, we had simply established a new notion of historically defined *difference*; the genuinely feminine was de-

of truth that would allow us to conclude that an image or a process is innately female. Because we live in a culture that has deeply internalized the codes through which we understand visual representations of the female body, it is hard to shake that body image loose from the conventions that structure its meaning in Western culture. The feminist iconography of the body often tells us less about essential experiences of being female than about how patriarchy has mapped and controlled the female body and used it as an object of exchange between men. We have seen images made by women in celebration of the female body read as pornography by some male viewers. Instances of the censorship and destruction of nude images made by women have highlighted the difficulty of producing positive images of the human form in a culture that has no tradition of erotic art and in which the nude female has traditionally served as an object of exchange. Yet refusing to represent the female body and female sexuality, as some feminist critics have advocated, eliminates the possibility of addressing important issues of women's sexual pleasure.

Essentialism has been viewed by its critics as serving to confirm the positioning of woman in patriarchal society—as unconscious force, as nature, as mystery. Since its biological orientation prevents those who adhere to it from engaging with the problems and power relations of everyday life, it has remained a discourse without the social and institutional power to effect change. Al-

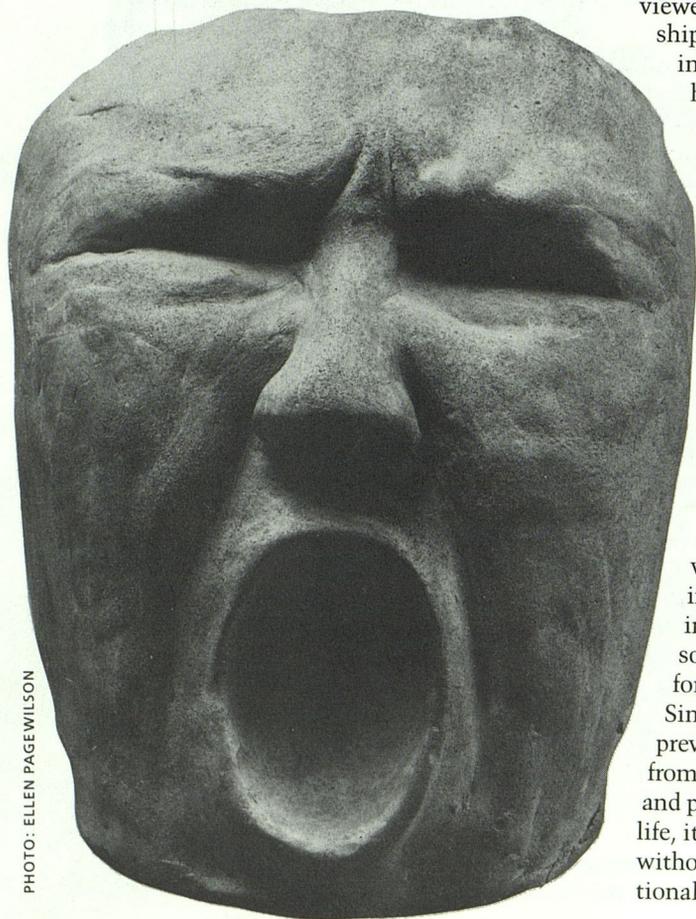


PHOTO: ELLEN PAGE WILSON

teva, and other contemporary French theorists interested in female authorship, pose the issue of woman's "otherness" from radically different bodily perspectives. Kristeva's semiotic proposes a denial of the body *in order to speak*; Irigaray and Cixous demand that we locate the feminine in the unconscious and introduce the body into art as a way of disrupting a restrictive phallogocentric control of language. Both positions have proved problematic for American women artists. For Cixous, feminine writing means "writing the body"; yet her demand that we enter and "explore the dark continent" has been too closely aligned with the psychoanalytic orientation of French theory to have attracted many American converts among artists. The originators of the discourse about *écriture féminine* have demonstrated a brilliant understanding of the dangers of a reductive essentialism on the one hand, and the limitations of current psychoanalytic ideologies on the other. Yet the traditions of *sentiment* and bodily sensation that originated in eighteenth-century France and that familiarize their views for European feminists have no real parallel in American culture. The stress on writing in French theory, its adherence to the principles of structural linguistics, and its rejection of the empiricism and pragmatism that underlie American feminism have limited its appeal for many American artists.⁶

As poststructuralist theory has moved from academic contexts into public consciousness, it has become one of many reflections of the forces shaping contemporary culture. I don't believe that any of us can, or should, retreat from its challenges. Nor do I believe that artists must read Derrida or, worse, struggle through Lacan's tortured prose. As feminists we need to be aware of theoretical models that can help us understand the positioning of women in Western culture, and we need to find new ways of using language to confront and deconstruct dominant assumptions and hierarchies. At the same time we need to be constantly alert to the political and artistic implications of discourses that circumvent or ignore the real conditions of artistic production and often fail to address issues of social context, particular interests, and changing power relations. Above all, we need to be cautious of tendencies that polarize intellect and feeling, thus reiterating the mind/body duality of Western culture with its delineation of intellectual activity as masculine and "nurture" as feminine. Artist May Stevens has called for "a balancing act"; "Theory

cuts off its roots, loses its connection to reality when it ignores feeling; feeling needs structuring, a means of evaluating between conflicting feelings."⁷

One of the functions of a feminist art history has become the exploration of ways in which visual representations construct certain images of women and ideas of femininity, which are then "naturalized" through ideology. Although most feminist art historians working today are convinced that there is no essential femininity, no linked lineage of women artists that transcends historical specificity, there is little agreement about how to proceed from that point. We now have an important tradition of writings about art that express aspects of women's experience in the world, which are not shared by men, and about works of art as examples of how class and gender are constructed and reinforced through representation. Much less has been written about the intersection between production by women and representations of women or about attempts by women artists to negotiate a new understanding of subjectivity based on feminine knowledge and desire.

The focus of much recent writing about women and art seems to have shifted from production of representation as recent theoretical developments have focused attention on textual issues. But language, whether verbal or visual, is inflected by specific historical conditions; often it is the artist, not the intellectual, who can most quickly embody ideological contradictions and force a meeting between intellect and feeling. It remains for women artists to negotiate new relationships to the noncolonized body and to find ways of speaking the *difference* of femininity, which is not bound to negation and otherness. We need a feminist art that retains its ability to affect the institutions of power by refusing to ignore issues of race, class, sex, and age; and a feminist criticism/history that can continue to respond to and theorize a feminist art, which is accessible to and pleasurable for women.

¹Screen 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975), pp. 6–18.

²Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

³The issue of essentialism is the subject of Gisela Ecker's introduction to *Feminist Aesthetics*, trans. H. Anderson (London: Women's Press, 1985), pp. 15–22.

⁴Rozzika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

⁵The best current introduction to these issues is Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

⁶Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London/New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 102–167.

⁷May Stevens, "Taking Art to the Revolution," *Heresies* no. 9 (1980).

Whitney Chadwick is an art historian who writes on surrealism, contemporary art, and feminism. Her books include *Myth and Surrealist Painting, 1929–1939; Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement; and Women, Art and Society*.



NANCY FRIED *The Nightmare* (front, left page, and back, this page), 1987, terra cotta, 7½" × 8¼" × 8¼"

Courtesy Graham Modern, New York. Nancy Fried lives in New York and shows her work at Graham Modern gallery.

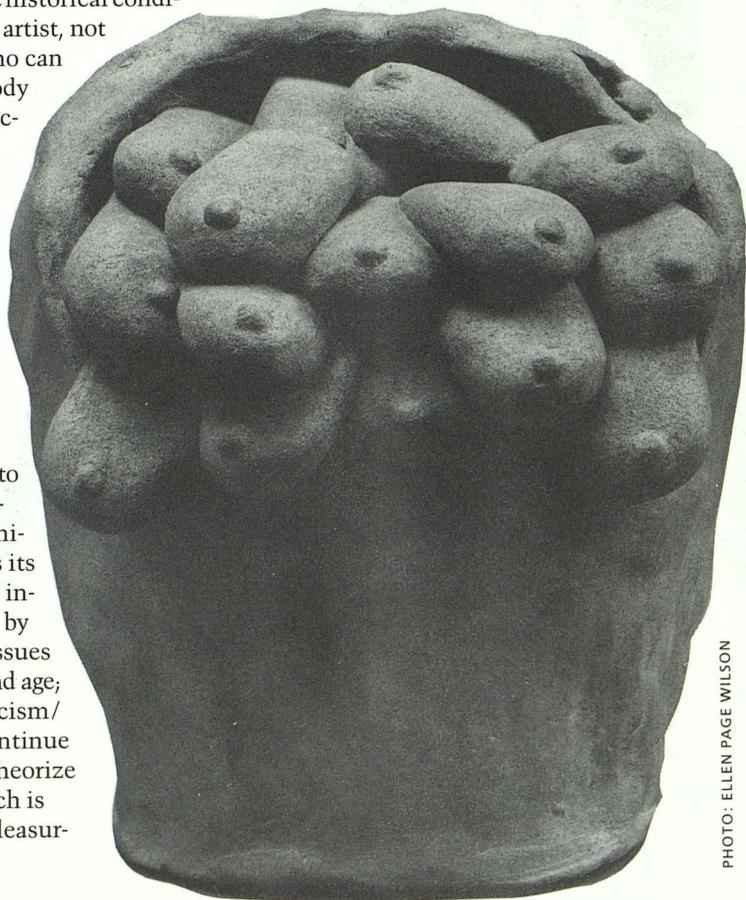
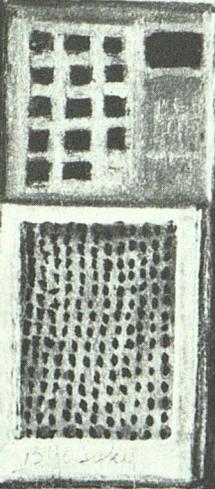


PHOTO: ELLEN PAGE WILSON

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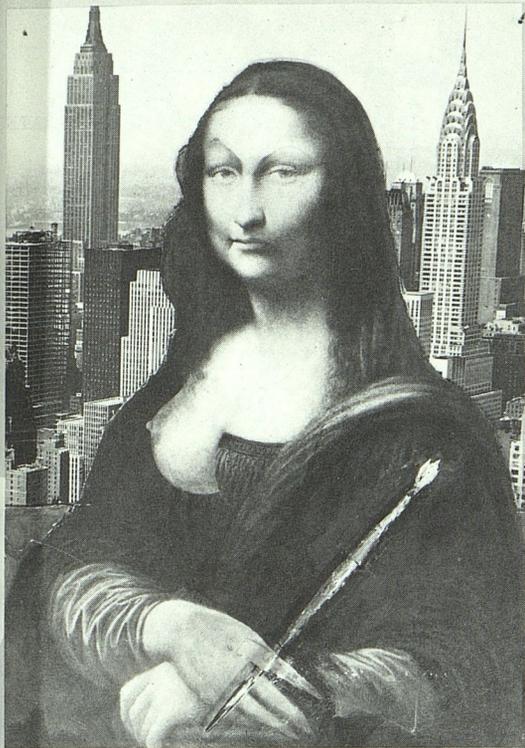
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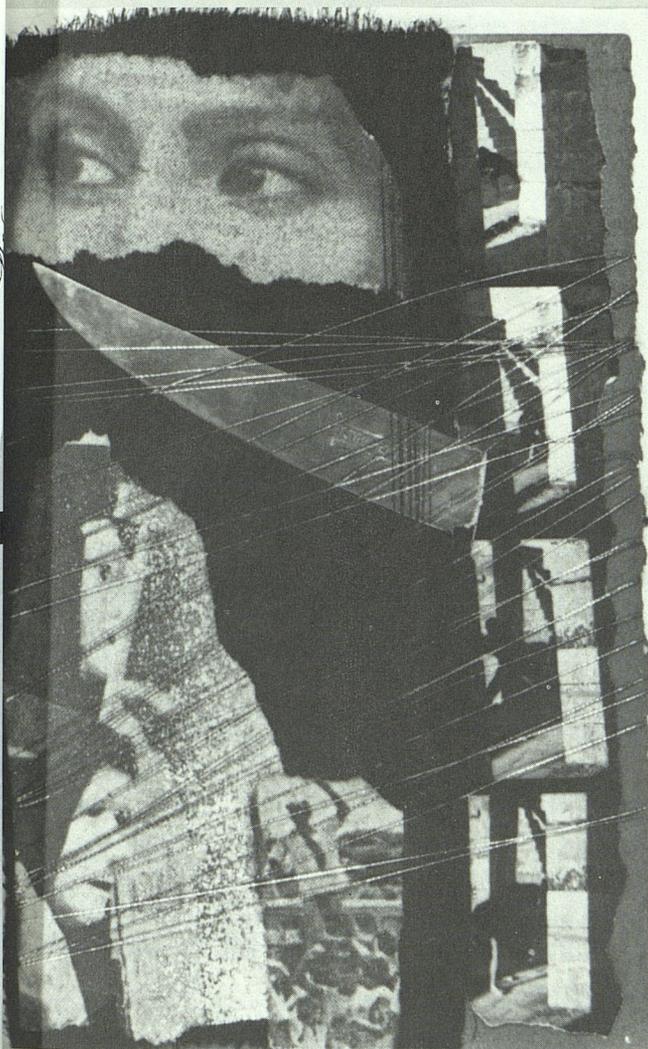
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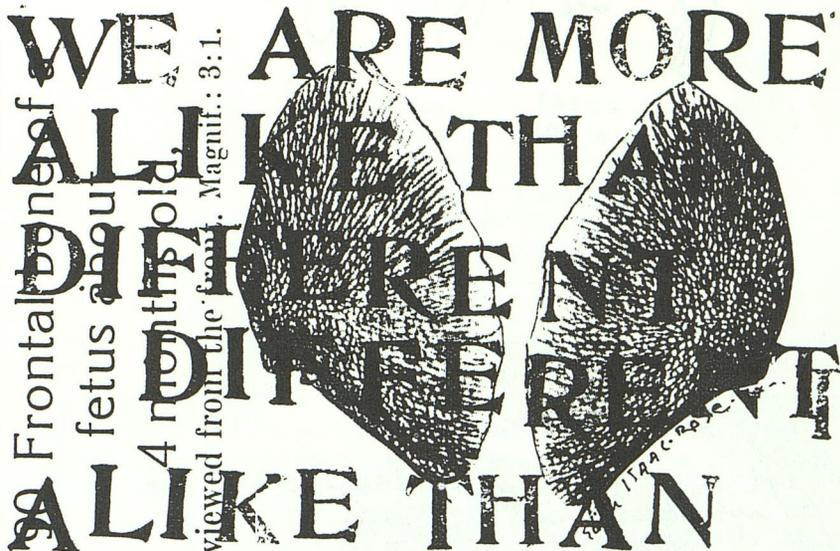
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- *THE FEMINIST ART MOVEMENT WAS FOUNDED IN 1965 BY CLEMENT GREENBERG.
- *IMPORTANT FEMINIST ART IS ABOUT MEETING MEN.
- *SINCE THERE ARE NO WOMEN POLITICIANS, FEMINIST ART CANNOT BE ABOUT POLITICS.
- *VISIT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART'S PERMANENT FEMINIST ART COLLECTION!
- *FEMINIST ARTISTS DO NOT USE MACHINES BECAUSE THEY KNOW THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND HOW THEY WORK.
- *IT ISN'T FEMINIST ART UNLESS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED - 1.A USED TAMPEX 2.A VULVA SHAPED OBJECT 3.A BALLET OUTFIT.
- *FEMINIST ART IS PINK.

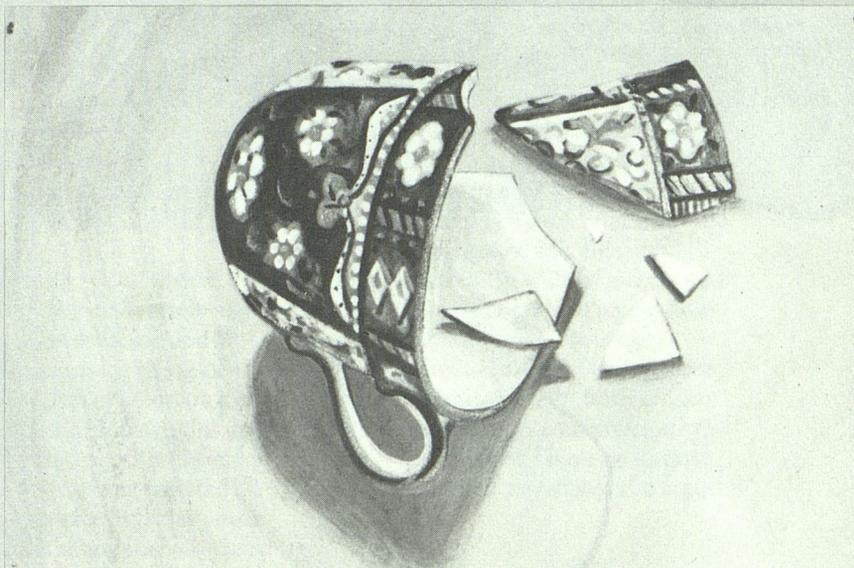
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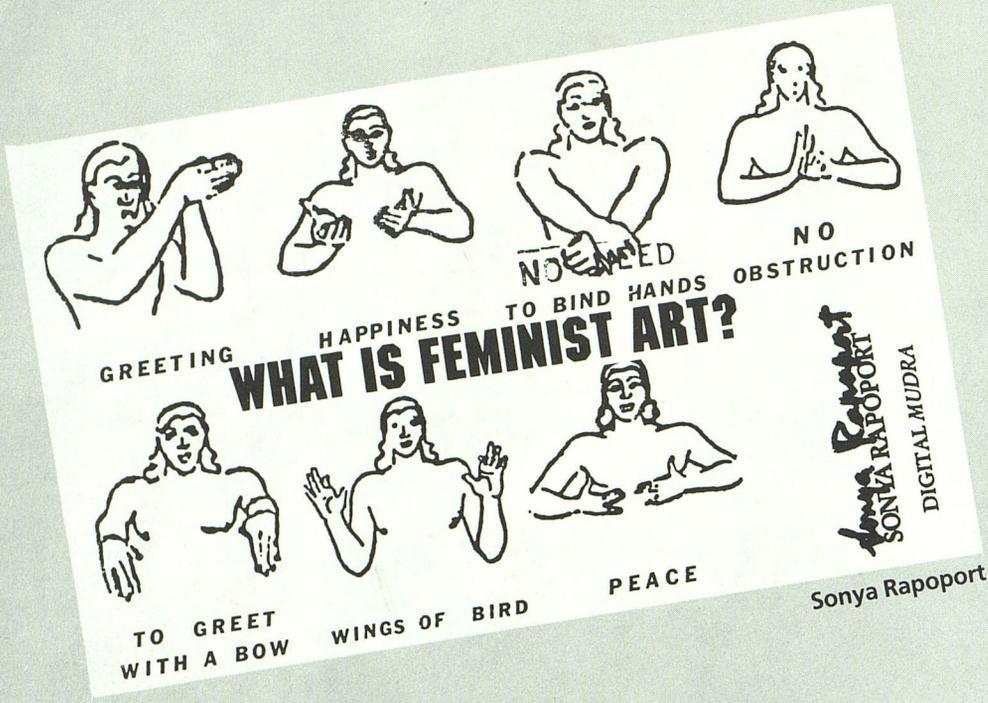
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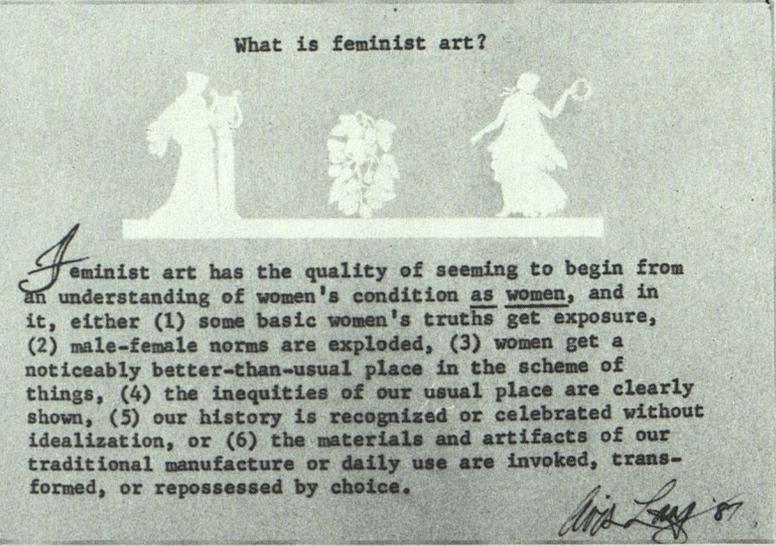


FEMINIST ART COCO GORDON

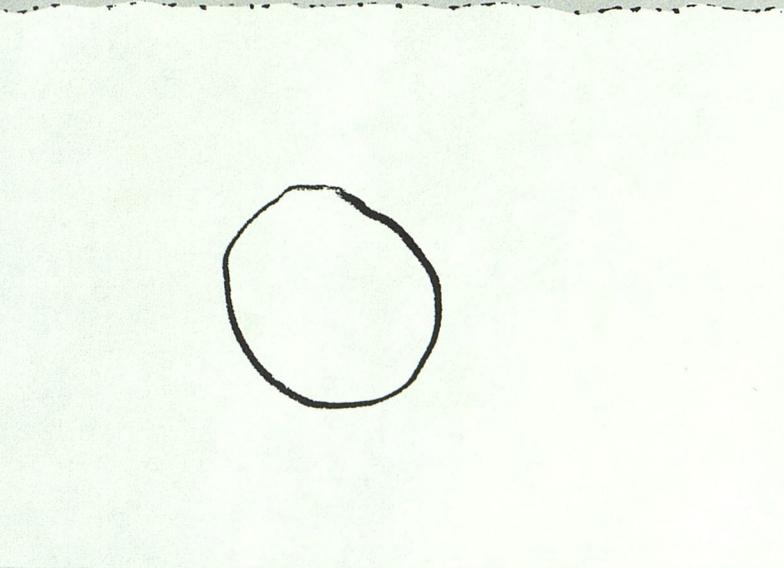
A FINE STAMEN.
 IN MEAT, FAT, ATTIRE, MINT IT RATE
 ITS SIN RAINS.
 IN TIME-- FEAR FATE.
 MANS SMEAR IN IT A PART MEANT SEM
 MARS. REMIT IT.
 IN TRAPE IN STRIFE IN TRISTE,
 A MINISTER.
 LES TRAIT SEME FAR.
 SEMINAR.
 IS (IN)FINITE.
 SMR-VINS, TINS, TART, MART, A
 STATE.
 LES FIST HEAR REC.
 MEANT AT STREAM "HERR" MEN.
 A STARE, A STAIN, A FIT.
 A NEST, A RIPT, A START.
 ITS PAN ITS PAND.
 ITS AIM ITS (IN)TENT.
 IT IS. IT IS IN. IT IS IF. IS AN.
 TEN REMS TRIM.
 ISNT RIF RAF ISNT TIT "FER" TAT
 ISNT SERP. ISNT NEAT. ISNT FRAME.
 REMAINS IN "FIRMEN".
 REFRAIN: A FIRST.

(It is its own definition,
 taken from its own
 spelling F E M I N I S T A R

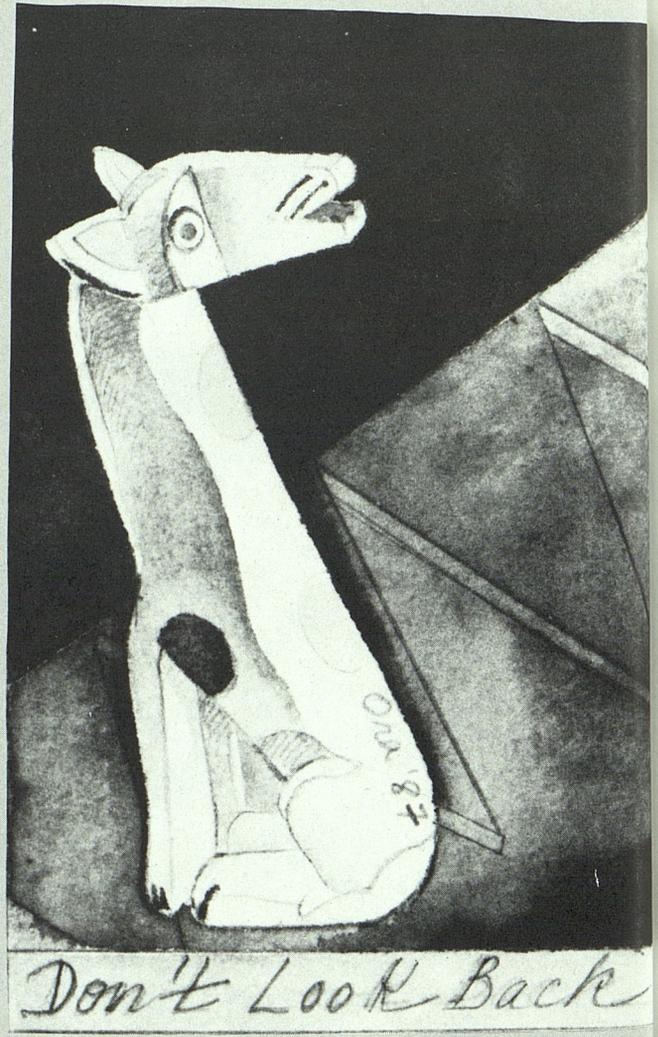
Coco Gordon



Avis Lang



Pat Steir



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BOTH SIDES

NOW

[A Reprise]

Lucy R. Lippard

It makes perfectly good sense that after twenty years, feminist art is a braid of multiple positions. But in fact, it's not multiple enough. Listen to Audre Lorde:

I've been talking about racism in the feminist movement for how many years! I think that to the extent that the white American women's movement does not take racism as an endemic, integral problem within the movement, to that extent it will fall apart. . . . I just came back from Germany and it was so obvious that if the white German women's movement doesn't take anti-semitism and racism as an integral part of their concerns, they will also fail. Whatever the core problems of any society are, they must also be the core problems of the women's movement, because we are part of society and we reflect those things for good and ill. . . . Racism is a problem of white America and ultimately that's where it's going to have to be solved. Because more and more, as I say when I talk to Black student groups, we must move on—with or without white people, we'll have to move on. White women of good intent must work within their own communities first of all. It's not that we don't come together, it's not that we don't share interests, it's that basically we need to work with ourselves before we can come together as wholes, not as pieces of people.

"Both Sides Now" was the title of a show I organized a decade ago to reconcile cultural and socialist feminisms. This reprise considers two newer strategies fighting it out for a center that is not even ours to control, a center that continues to ignore the peripheries. Now we have the "essentialists" versus the "deconstructivists" or old-fashioned versus postmodern feminists, a confrontation that has too often been simplistically boiled down to practice versus theory, as in the early days of this wave of feminism. (I have an Australian poster from the '70s in which Wonder Woman swoops

down on her opponents yelling, "Pure Theory equals pure shit! Egghead feminists and other useless theorists, Get Fucked!" "Where do correct ideas come from?" she asks. "Do they drop from the Skies? [a brick with "Althusser" written on it] No! Are they innate in the mind? No! They come from Social Practice!")

Today the essentialists at their most extreme dismiss all theory and unfamiliar vocabularies as obfuscatory, oppressive, and male; the deconstructivists at their most extreme dismiss both spiritual feminism and activist feminism as male-imposed, exclusively socially constructed, and just plain deluded. Each in its way ignores the best of the feminist movement, which is our ability to embrace contradiction and understand it, or at least cope with it, without collapsing all the differences into liberal wishy-washiness. As Jane Gallop says, "this problem of dealing with difference without constituting an opposition may just be what feminism is all about." So can't we analyze social formation and envision social transformation at the same time? Must we throw the body out with the bathwater?

Difference is what it's all about, but not just gender difference. We rarely apply our insights on representation and stereotypes to women outside the (global) white minority; artists of color are just beginning to be included in articles and exhibitions on "differences" and gender. Socialist feminism has long insisted on the incorporation of race and class into feminist theory, but along the way there has been a kind of competition between gender and race/class. Socialists have accused radical and cultural feminists of bourgeois romanticized elitism and of supporting all women regardless of their politics (the Margaret Thatcher/Indira Gandhi syndrome). The opposition has

insisted that women's struggles are always put on the back burner in favor of (at least) lip service to race and class, that Marxism is incompatible with feminism and that all models of women in power, no matter how abusive, must be supported. Both positions are right on various levels but over the years the debate has rarely progressed beyond this basic argument.

A lot of differences between essentialism and deconstructivism today are found in methodology, context, and language rather than in basic belief. Nobody is arguing against the notion that woman as sign is the site of our commodification. Still, I was disturbed by a feminist panel at the New Museum in 1987 which seemed to be digging the trenches deeper rather than producing dialogue. Its publicity pitted "the Goddess" (represented by empirical artists who have often been activists rather than by the spiritual feminists who lay most claim to Her) against "social practice" (represented by European-oriented postmodernist critics whose idea of social practice is almost entirely based in theory). Two Derridaesque statements in particular from the latter camp provoked me. Rosalyn Deutsche said flatly, "There is no experience of the body outside of representation." Kate Linker said, "It is only through images of women that female sexuality is constructed." Both writers have made important contributions to recent feminism and I have no quarrel with most of their positions; the argu-

ments that follow are aimed at the implied narrowness and exclusivity that endanger their potential to feminism.

In the mid-1970s, we talked a lot about the dangers of being preoccupied and thus ruled by our opposition. This problem still seems inherent in the fascination of much postmodernist theory or "critical practice" with that which is being criticized, or deconstructed—capitalism, the patriarchy, the media, lifestyles of the rich and famous. Clearly we can't be ignorant of what They are doing

"I am convinced that there are experiences I share only with other women."

to us, or even what They are doing when they are not apparently doing anything to us, and even when They seem to be doing something for us (as in some overtly conservative postmodernist theories of art that seem bent on co-opting feminism as a not-quite-political stance). But at what point are we simply swallowing that which we can't afford to digest, and getting a terrible bellyache in the process?

Feminists are generally agreed that language and visual representation of women mediate much of our experience, even in societies where the mass media is less ubiquitous than in our own. Analysis of the socially imposed and debilitating image of woman and its effect on our lives and our sexuality has been a

bulwark of feminist art since 1970. "Foregrounding" this project is one thing; isolating it is another. Too often I find a kind of fatalism—even self-hatred—in deconstructivist positions like those expressed above. If we have no experience that is not formed by the patriarchy, from what base can we even imagine our own transformations? And if language is so formative in social construction, why does most postmodern feminist theory adopt the impenetrable "discourse" of the patriarchy to overturn it? Why look

at everything through the notion of a castration complex that is so clearly a male construct too? Why not duck out from under that regimenting scrutiny? Why not concentrate on what the male gaze cannot see?

I am convinced that there are experiences I share only with other women. My experience cannot be fully regulated, controlled, or interpreted by bodies and minds that do not know it. There are some aspects of femaleness (if not of femininity) that simply escape men. They provide the firm ground, the grass roots, from which women can analyze and act. Some elements of difference we have chosen for ourselves; others are the common experience of the oppressed. Experience

is not dumb; it includes thought. Analysis is made on the basis of experience and, ideally, leads to action, which in turn can lead to a changed experience from which a new analysis can be born, and so forth. Analysis can also end up in an academic cul de sac, so distanced from experience that it no longer means anything to anyone except those specialists who live within their own self-erected domains—just like the patriarchy does. Some of us "old-fashioned feminists" are reluctant to see the whole bundle of recclamation and celebration tossed out in favor of a new line that often seems unduly harsh and narrow—downright *un-generous*, despite its intellectual appeal.

I know other women from the first generation of this round of feminism who began their feminist artwork some 20 years ago and are also feeling rather buffeted by the inevitable but often constructive changes since then. (In fact it is artists like May Stevens, Ida Applebroog, and Nancy Spero, among others, who are making work with the most to offer to both camps.) We've lived through the exhilaration and rage of the early '70s to the generalized backlash of the mid-'70s (backlash from the dominant culture, the art world, and other women), to the so-called postfeminism of the early '80s, to the present, where feminist theory is influenced by Europeans both male and female—Freud, Lacan, Cixous, Kristeva—who, incidentally, echo the main focus of British left feminists from the mid-'70s.

Significantly, these new theories emerge from media analysis, especially film criticism. Laura Mulvey, whose hugely influential "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" was written in 1974, wrote in retrospect a decade later that this essay belonged "properly to the early confrontational moments of a movement. The great problem is then to see how to move from a deconstructive mode of thought to 'something new,' from creative confrontation to creativity." Mary Kelly, an American artist who has lived in London some 20 years, and along with Mulvey has been a persuasive spokeswoman for the deconstructivist or "critical" position, has long argued "against the supposed self-sufficiency of lived experience and for a theoretical elaboration of the social relations in which 'femininity' is formed." But Kelly's own art is important because it does not deny lived experience; she uses it to ground her theoretical investigations and the combination forms her art. Unlike some contemporary art, Kelly's work does not become the social mechanisms that it criticizes. As Jill Dolan has observed, feminists

ERIKA ROTHENBERG *Is God Punishing Us?*, 1987–88, acrylic on canvas, 40" × 54".
Courtesy P.P.O.W., New York. Erika Rothenberg, currently based in California, shows at P.P.O.W. in New York.



PHOTO: ADAM REICH



PHOTO: ADAM REICH

ILONA GRANET *Curb Your Animal Instinct*, 1986, silkscreen enamel on metal, 24" × 26". Courtesy P.P.O.W., New York, Ilona Granet asks, "Why didn't Malcolm Forbes invite me to his birthday party? It's my birthday too."

"have become so enthralled with the possibilities of the theory, we have forgotten to point out that in practice, the post-modern esthetic fails to realize anything close to a feminist agenda."

About a decade ago, I wrote that to reject all aspects of woman's experience as dangerous stereotypes often meant simultaneous rejection of some of the more valuable aspects of our female identities. Though easily used against us now, the disappearance of female identification with the earth, with nurturance, with peace (and more problematically with motherhood), would serve the dominant culture all too well. One of the many reasons so many women artists have engaged so effectively in social change and/or outreach art is our political identification with oppressed and disenfranchised people. We don't have to approve the historical reasons for that identification, but we do need to wonder why we are so often discouraged from thinking about them.

Feminist philosopher Sandra Harding, rejecting a liberal generalization of all women's experiences as complicitous with the status quo, points out that if differences between genders are crucial, aren't race and class equally so? These "other" differences are not parallel with gender, they are part of it, constituting another kind of difference within gender that is potentially a great positive resource. "We can't share each other's exper-

iences," said Harding in a recent lecture, "but we can share the politics" that arise from different experiences. Diversity is something more complex and important than the "great Disneyland of ethnicity" preferred by liberals. Neither gender nor race should be isolated within politics, nor should race be flattened out as just another internal conflict between groups of white middle-class feminists.

As a socialist feminist (albeit an occasionally emotional, romantic one), I've always had trouble with the notion that women are inherently better than men; as a cultural feminist (albeit a quasi-Marxist one), I have always liked the way women go about life better than the way men do. I can look back at the ideas we had about "female sensibility" in the early '70s and feel a certain nostalgia for the sense they made at the time. I still can't completely disavow these ideas today, because women and men still have totally different experiences in this world, biologically, socially, politically, and sexually. At the same time the deconstructive strategy (in use before it was named) is one effective way to gain our balance within the dizzying array of identities that are offered us. Although I'm personally not well enough read (and too red) to be a bona fide deconstructivist, I can work to peel away the intimidating jargon and discover the valuable parts of the feminist puzzle buried in these theories.

Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Matthews, in their "Feminist Critique of Art History" (*Art Bulletin*, September 1987) suggest that the first generation of recent feminists has a "fixed" notion of the female sensibility, while the second generation has an "unfixed" concept that attacks the accretions of patriarchal construction from all sides. This may, however, be somewhat unfair to those early days. It's true that we *fixed* on those aspects of femaleness that had been buried, that made us feel good, as principles of unity. But such rediscovered celebratory concepts weren't static; on the contrary, we could see and feel the changes happening in ourselves. A very real flux, and flexibility, proved to us that there was some hope of remaking ourselves, our images, and the world—even uphill against the inevitable social dominance. We acknowledged that our notion of a female sensibility was in part socially constructed, but we felt that we had also constructed it ourselves by inverting the stereotypes, by reclaiming the positive and disclaiming the negative. An idealist approach, sure. Sometimes idealism is necessary, and works.

Today we're all more sophisticated, and resigned to a longer, deeper struggle than we'd expected in the very beginning. My own choice has been to spend my time on images of the world *by* women rather than on images *of* women by the world; I like to work in what Abigail Solomon-Godeau has called "the elusive and unknowable register of the real." So I'm grateful to those who are painstakingly dissecting the stereotypes and examining the mechanisms, even when they lose me intellectually. At the same time a little balance, please. The total rejection of the spiritual by some deconstructivists and some socialists disturbs me. I don't happen to "believe in" a goddess any more than I believe in a god. But it's not merely a matter, as Deutsche disparagingly put it at the New Museum panel, of "the obsolete need to return to a simpler time." That *need* is not necessarily obsolete, no matter how unrealistic it may seem. And as Arlene Raven pointed out that same night, the goddess in eco-feminism "stands for a larger development." Sometimes it *is* a matter (so

to speak) of incorporating empowering ideas from the past into current struggles, undistorted by a false nostalgia and exaggerated romanticism, or by New Age apolitical elitisms and wishful thinking (as in "create your own reality"—a marvelous idea and impetus that is constantly abused). "Spiritual" to me means not only the "kinship among women" that Suzanne Lacy exhorts, but a sense of the ungended possibilities of a far wider psychic field than conventional disciplines can cope with. But that's another

story, even harder to integrate into global feminism than the essential and the postmodern.

Some postmodern theory challenges the frequent oversimplification of some essentialists, who verge dangerously on biological superiority built on the sand of biological determinism. But if essentialism is accused of idealism, optimism, and naiveté, surely the alternative is not to banish these not-altogether-despicable elements in favor of an apolitical defeatism. And if essentialists are accused of

one kind of fetishism, deconstructivists must admit to a linguistic fetishism in which the sacred sign, signifier, and text overwhelm much of what's before our very eyes and under our very fingers.

A feminist theory that does not recognize an activist wing, or at least an activist potential, is inadequate and unsatisfying. I fear the 100% sensuous, sentimental anti-intellectualism that is the worst of essentialism, and I fear the 100% academized intellectualism that is the worst of postmodernism. One lacks the distance that is necessary to see the world from different viewpoints; the other has overdone the "distancing" device we learned from Brecht. Both seem dangerously based in Eurocentrism—elegant French/Italian analyses or pragmatic British/American criticism. And both have been victims of the trickle-down conservatism of the unlamented Reagan era. For all the talk within postmodernism of a "resistant" or "transgressive" esthetic, the overwhelming emphasis on objectification, commodity, production, and consumption finally blurs the peripheries, where I like to hang out. Objectified women are swept up with all objects (including art objects) as merely socialized signs of our unworthiness. In the process, oppositional art gets melled down into "critical practice" — perhaps because, as Fredric Jameson remarks, "you can't really have a cultural politics without a politics." And it's true that North American culture at its most activist still functions mainly as a consciousness raiser . . . and raider.

That's not so bad. On the other side of the coin, much so-called critical art is just as chewed and predigested and predictable as much art on the left. Once life is reduced to images and spectacles for a passive audience, the image becomes the locus of evil, and one forgets that real actors are acting behind and in front of the scenes. The "homeopathic" remedy suggested years ago for art by Hans Haacke is recommended today by Jameson for the postmodern dilemma, as "the idea that you have to go all the way through this and come out on the other side." But if all our energy is spent "engaging the frame" and the "discourse" of the dominant culture, who's going to be out there experimenting with alternatives, and listening to those who are

MARINA GUTIÉRREZ *Race*, 1986, pencil on paper, 8" x 5". From *150 Artists' Book*, Connections Project/Conexus. Marina Gutiérrez, born 1954, lives and works in New York. In addition to making art, she teaches and directs an art program for teenagers.



PHOTO: SABRA MOORE

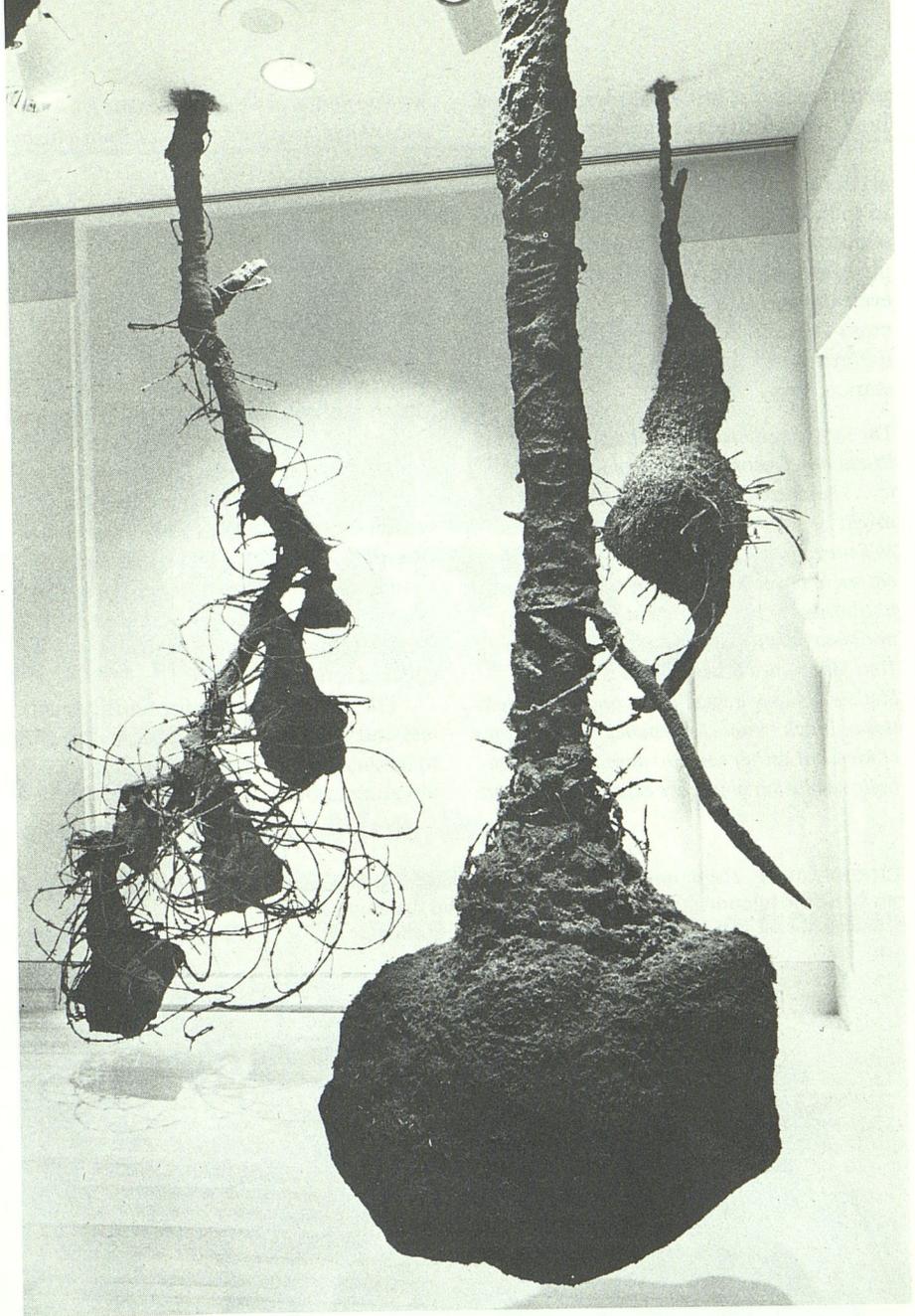
voluntarily or involuntarily hanging out on the margins?

Victor Burgin and others say that critical practices must operate from the center of the system they question, or be ineffective. Yet sometimes valuable ideas belong outside the plaza, on the rooftops where the snipers wait—feminism being a prime example— and I'm not sure they have to be domesticated to be effective. Currently, dissent is sporadically welcome in the center as a diversion. The center may be a nice place to visit, but it's not necessarily the most interesting or most educational or healthiest place for dissent to live. Oppositions too happily ensconced in the center, or in its academic suburbs, even as The Opposition, find themselves no longer in active opposition.

I am, of course, some kind of old-fashioned politico as well as an old-fashioned feminist. I dislike the loose use of the term "political" to include anyone using quotation marks to reflect the status quo, for whatever reasons. I dislike the replacement of the word "political" with the more courteous, less threatening "critical." Solomon-Godeau is probably right when she says that few successful artists want to be called "political" because it means being "ghettoized within a (tiny) art world preserve." (But do those artists really think that their politics or lack thereof go unnoticed in the center?) She also cites the implication "that all other art is *not* political" and says that the term "tends to suggest a politics of content and to minimize, if not efface, the politics of form." True enough, though I know plenty of "political artists" whose prime instrument is precisely the politics of form—the integration of what they have to say with how they say it. "Critical practice," on the other hand, is so broad a term as to be scattershot and meaningless if the criticism has no perceptible target or goal. To take on the mantle, or epithet, of "political" intentions may in this day and age be unwise and unpopular, but it also makes a commitment to meaning. As Gregory Lukow wrote in another context:

It is ironic, in this age of flattened irony, that cynicism has come to permit the embrace of negation, of critique, while at the same time allowing one to ignore the implications of criticism. Via cynicism, criticism has become quotidian, yet ritualized, hollow, hip. . . . Dissent no longer needs to be neutralized. It is part of the act of submission.

How, then, can feminists involved with art take the genuine emotions learned



PETAH COYNE Untitled installation, 1987–88, Whitney Museum of American Art at the Equitable Center, New York. Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Petah Coyne, a New York artist, has current shows at the Jack Shainman Gallery and the Brooklyn Museum.

from lived experience and the insights gained from theory, and use them as a wedge to open feminism up to issues of race and class on a deeper, more honest level? We need to admit how little we know and to build our next theoretical rung on two supports: acknowledgment of racism as a white people's problem, and at the same time acknowledgment of our own ignorance about the ways it works within the feminist community. Investigations of gender should implicitly include other entwined differences. We don't need to settle for the lowest common denominator—the generalizations about women that were important because they brought us together. It's time to get down to specifics again. I

remember Barbara Ehrenreich pointing out that we all have several alliances in and out of the feminist community; we might simultaneously be a woman, a Chicana, a wage worker, a Catholic, a lesbian, a mother, and a socialist. We don't want to iron out all those honorable wrinkles, but to understand the varied ways in which we and other women

experience our multiple identities, and how our priorities are constructed.

For years, I have been told by women artists of color that they do not want to be forced into being "political," or sometimes even to be identified as "people of color" at all. I wonder about this, even though as a feminist committed to cross-cultural comprehension, I have to listen when Michele Wallace, for instance, says:

*The feminist dictum that the personal is political now becomes a kind of killjoy aesthetic. . . . Paradoxically, while black feminism might be expected to focus upon the women's movement's favorite issue—the feminization of poverty—the most compelling articulations of black feminist thought have not been political, but literary works, from Toni Morrison's *Bluest Eye* to Ntozake Shange's *Nappy Edges*. The economic difficulties of black female experience have not precluded but rather seem to demand the symbolic resolution of literary expression. Perhaps*

writing fiction is what Zora Neale Hurston once called, wistfully, "picking from a higher bush."

Postmodern feminism offers the possibility of presence in the place of absence, even as it wallows in that absence. But it is only a partial presence so long as it omits the absence of diverse races and classes. Hal Foster asked, "What is the Other of postmodernism?" And Michael Walsh replied, "If it has no self, it has no Other." If for women, "there is no experience of the body outside of representation," we are deprived of a center from which to venture forth to change that misrepresentation. And if the deconstructivists would deprive us of a self, the essentialists—by idealizing and overgeneralizing—can deprive us of a respected female Other.

The time has come for feminist artists and writers to take the risk of trying to reconstruct, even knowing that we risk building another partially false, interim

edifice of female identity; even though we, as women with such a diversity of experiences and ideas, will no doubt contradict ourselves in identifying and representing each other. This new image of woman, then, may be a setup for renewed shattering, even as it is formed. But at least we won't be stuck forever with the increasingly smaller fragments of a mirror so splintered that we can no longer see ourselves as wholes.

NOTE: This article was written two years ago. Since then, the dialogue has progressed. I'd like to have had time to reconsider some points and refine others, but I didn't, so the above should be read in the spirit of "notes" rather than as a completed thesis of any kind.



Lucy R. Lippard is a writer and activist who lives in New York and Boulder, Colorado. She is completing a book for Pantheon called *Mixed Blessings: Contemporary Art and the Cross-Cultural Process*.

CHRISTY RUPP *Humanitarian Aid*, 1987–88, steel, oxidized metal, 6" × 9¼" × 9". Courtesy P.P.O.W., New York. Christy Rupp is a sculptor studying the relationship between economics and the environment.



PHOTO: ADAM REICH

THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A WOMAN ARTIST:

Working without the pressure of success.

Not having to be in shows with men.

Having an escape from the art world in your 4 free-lance jobs.

Knowing your career might pick up after you're eighty.

Being reassured that whatever kind of art you make it will be labeled feminine.

Not being stuck in a tenured teaching position.

Seeing your ideas live on in the work of others.

Having the opportunity to choose between career and motherhood.

Not having to choke on those big cigars or paint in Italian suits.

Having more time to work after your mate dumps you for someone younger.

Being included in revised versions of art history.

Not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a genius.

Getting your picture in the art magazines wearing a gorilla suit.

Please send \$ and comments to:
Box 1056 Cooper Sta. NY, NY 10276

GUERRILLA GIRLS CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD

Guerrilla Girls formed in the spring of 1985 to combat sexism in the art world.
They decided to use tactics and strategies appropriate to the 1980s and to remain anonymous
in order to draw attention to issues rather than to personalities.

SHARINGS

FREDA
GUTTMAN

A "sharing" is what Filipinos call it—a visit with people for the purpose of learning about the realities of their lives, about their struggles against poverty, unemployment, underemployment, exploitation, and oppression and about the various ways in which they are trying to overcome these conditions.

"Sharings" also work in intensely personal ways to forge bonds of solidarity between the Filipino people and their many foreign visitors.

In the five weeks that I spent in the Philippines in 1987, I was privileged to be able to have many "sharings" with women from all sectors of life—peasants, artists, urban poor, prostitutes, church and human rights activists, health workers, feminists, students, lawyers. Several of the women that I met had been imprisoned, in



Members of a small community of locked-out sugar workers, Hacienda Consuelo, La Carlota City, Negros Occidental

In the Philippine context it is not possible to see women's emancipation as an isolated or separate process. It is closely interwoven into the fabric of the people's struggle, which is national and democratic in character. For example, the terrible exploitation of women and children in the "entertainment" industry

is produced by a cruel and unjust, semi-feudal society that forces most people to live in grinding poverty. At home and abroad, that industry is one of the chief earners of foreign currency reserves for the government.

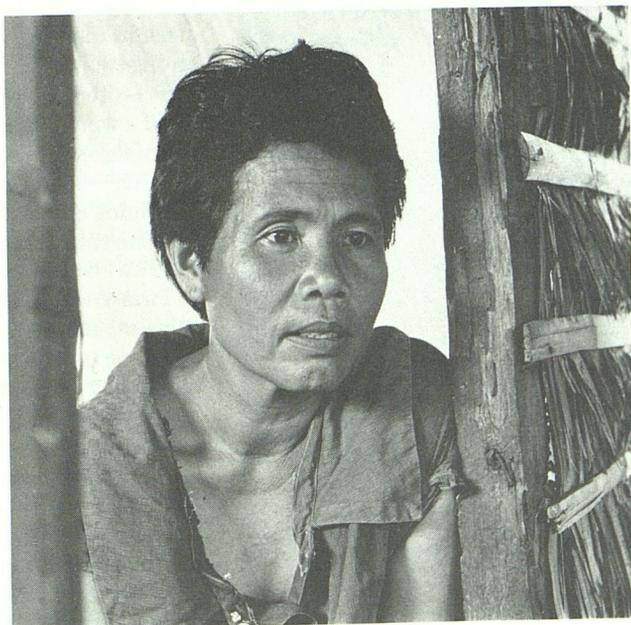
some cases with young children, and tortured during the Marcos years. Everywhere in the Philippines, an astounding number of women are organized and organizing, fighting persistent structural conditions of injustice and oppression that have not changed with the coming of Cory Aquino. Broad coalitions exist that network vigorously within the country as well as reaching out to women's groups in other countries. The most prominent is *Gabriela*, a federation of about 100 women's groups.

Five American military bases, stockpiled with nuclear weapons, take up vast tracts of prime land, pollute with nuclear wastes, and oversee low-intensity conflict strategies, reminiscent of Vietnam. Thirty thousand

Peasant family living on an experimental farm,
project of Negros Council on Peace and People's Development,
funded by Japanese solidarity groups



ABOVE:
Two activists,
Task Force Detainees,
Manila



Filipinas, living in abject conditions around the bases, cater to the "rest and recreation" needs of the servicemen inside. A significant number have been infected with the AIDS virus. *Gabriela* points to this degradation and exploitation of Filipino women as one of the strongest arguments for the removal of the bases, and so they take part in that struggle.

At the same time, there is a consensus among the women's organizations that women suffer a double oppression and that their needs must be addressed and fought for simultaneously with all the other struggles.

I hope that through these portraits of women that I met in the Philippines, a kind of "sharing" can happen between them and *Heresies'* readers.

Freda Guttman is a Canadian artist living in Montreal who does multimedia installations with a political content.

Chairperson, Wives of
Small Fishermen's
Organization,
Bacolod City,
Negros Occidental

HISTORIAS

Women Tinsmiths of New Mexico

HARMONY
HAMMOND



Conchita Quitana
Lopez cuts tin.

Because of its climate and terrain, and because of its history as a Spanish colony and later as a Mexican territory, New Mexico was able to keep its traditional art forms alive and intact until U.S. colonization nearly devastated all forms of native expression.

Although the actual historical role of women in these traditional arts is unclear, Janet LeCompte, in her article "The Independent Women of Hispanic New Mexico, 1821–1846," has noted that the culture of New Mexican women was quite different from Anglo women in the East who, with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution, had already lost their economic importance. Because of New Mexico's isolation, the New Mexican woman was able to retain equal status and power within the community until U.S. colonization. She retained wages and property, could keep her maiden name if she so chose, and had many other legal rights. Often women had occupations outside the home, and women were not barred from "men's work." "While there was a division of labor between the sexes, the distinction was quite flexible and men and women often played parallel or complementary roles in accomplishing one overall task."¹

In the Southwest today, Hispanic and Native American family members not only support each other's creative activities, but frequently work together on the same objects. Where a woman is the only artist in the family, she usually has the strong support of male family members. This is often a matter of basic economics. If a woman has a market for the art she makes, it is to everyone's benefit to help her—sometimes even to the extent of helping make the objects although they are sold under her name.

The "cult of signature," so prevalent in Euro-Western art, does not have the same meaning in the Southwest, where the issue of who signs the art object seems to be primarily a function of the craftsperson's judgment about how to attract the tourist market. Marianne L. Stoller writes about this in *El Palacio*, the magazine of the Museum of New Mexico: "Meeting the public and meeting the public's expectations are held to be more important than claiming individual creation of the work. . . . There are

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

many cases in which men's work was sold under their wives' names because the work was marketed out of their homes and it was then the women who met the public."² In contrast, when work that was jointly created by a man and a woman has been marketed in the art gallery world, it has frequently been attributed to the man.

A Brief History of Tinsmithing

New Mexican tinsmiths can be traced back to Spanish artesanos who crafted beautiful functional objects from precious metals during the Moorish occupation of Spain, and who brought their metalworking skills with them when they colonized Old Mexico (1598-1821). However, when the Spaniards arrived in New Mexico, they found comparatively little silver and gold and were forced to use tin ("poor man's silver") to make devotional objects for their newly built chapels and missions. (The first *candelabras*, *nichos*, frames, crosses, and processional staves were made to light and enhance the chapel interior.) But even getting tin was difficult.

By the late 1830s, small quantities of tin plate were coming across the Santa Fe Trail from the East or up from Mexico on the Chihuahua Trail, but the art of tinsmithing itself did not really develop until 1846 when the United States colonized New Mexico and the army brought lard, lamp oil, and coffee in large, square 50-pound tin containers. New Mexicans saw a wonderful new material in these discarded tins. They salvaged or bought the tins, cut them up, and reworked the pieces into a range of domestic objects including sconces, pie-safes, boxes, *chandeliers*, and frames for pictures and mirrors. Frequently the embossed imprint or painted name of the company that manufactured the product or tin can be found on work of this period.

With the coming of the railroad in 1880, larger quantities of tin and other decorative materials such as glass, wallpaper, religious lithographs, and paint were available. Village metalworkers combined these new materials with the tin, and responding to the local taste for "decoration," began to develop what was to become a truly local art form, which flourished all along the Rio Grande Valley. In fact, ornamental tin became far more popular in New Mexico than it ever was in Old Mexico, where it never developed the same high degree of technical and expressive sophistication.

The tin used in late-19th-century New Mexico was tin plate, a soft iron

sheet covered with a very thin coat of tin. Later, roofing *terne* was used because it was more durable and wouldn't rust. Its lead content made it softer and easier to shape, but eliminated its use for eating utensils.

Ironically, the same railroad that brought the tin almost caused the demise of tinwork and the other traditional arts. It introduced a flood of cheap manufactured goods from the East that became status symbols. New commercial frames and electric lighting fixtures reduced the need for handmade articles; people no longer wanted the crude products of the tinsmiths and other artesanos.

The art of tinsmithing almost disappeared until an influx of Anglo collectors and museum curators in the 1920s and '30s created a new interest. The Spanish Colonial Arts Society and the WPA Federal Arts Projects helped revive traditional architecture and art forms. The New Mexico Arts Project (part of the WPA) sponsored workshops, especially in the rural areas, to teach the dying native crafts, and then as a means of cultural documentation, hired people to recreate traditional pieces for museum collections and the newly constructed public buildings. It was hoped that the arts and crafts could offer economic alternatives for the impoverished Hispanic population during the Depression.

The Native Market, a retail store in Santa Fe in the 1930s, played a major role in the revival of Spanish crafts, sponsoring the first Spanish Market in 1929. The current Spanish Market has been an annual event since the 1950s. It is sponsored and juried by the Spanish Colonial Arts Society and displays the work of artesanos from the city and northern rural areas.

The Craft of Tinsmithing

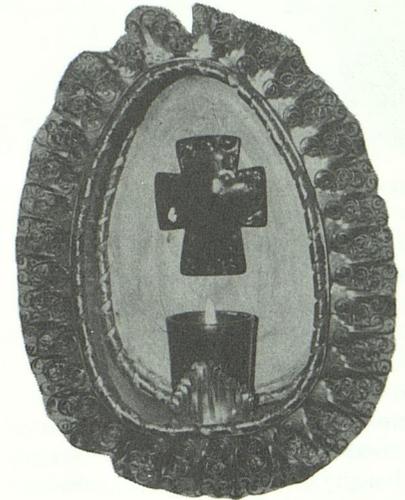
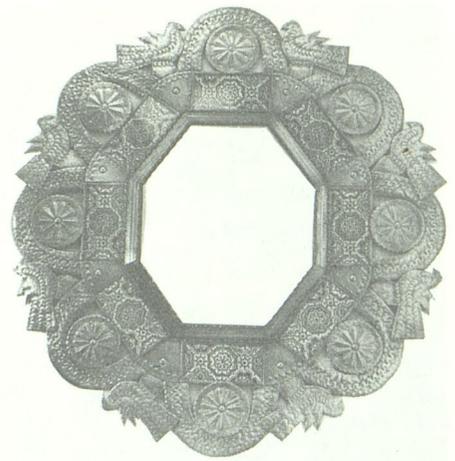
Traditionally tinsmiths either made or inherited their tools, which somewhat resemble those for leatherwork or mak-

Right top to bottom:

ANGELINA MARTINEZ DELGADO
Tin frame mirror with wallpaper. Collection International Folk Art Foundation, Museum of International Folk Art, a unit of the Museum of New Mexico.

CONCHITA QUITANA LOPEZ
Nicho made from tin ham cans.

EMILIO and SENAIDA ROMERO
Tin frame cross with *colcha* embroidery. Collection International Folk Art Foundation, Museum of International Folk Art, a unit of the Museum of New Mexico.





Angelina Delgado in her studio, with variations of her "classic frame."

ing jewelry. Aside from snips or heavy scissors and the bending brake (a tool that turns edges and makes tin channels to hold glass and mirror), most of the tools had blunt ends for punching indentations into the tin. There were, however, sharper tools for scoring and piercing, although piercing, like *repoussé*, was rarely done in New Mexico. Modern-day tinsmiths work with these same basic hand tools with the addition of an electric soldering iron.

When similar pieces are repeated, tinsmiths work from patterns or templates to mark and cut out the initial shape of the tin. Certain design motifs are frequently used with particular templates, but tinsmiths often create personal variations with punching or embellish the original pattern with additional decorative elements.

The most frequent form of decoration in New Mexican tinwork is cold chisel stamping or punching—embossing a design into the tin surface with a variety of tools. The tin is placed on top of a magazine while it is worked in order to cushion and protect the tools; the metal is then usually worked from both sides to create an illusion of depth in the pat-

tern and to prevent the metal from warping. Almost all tin from New Mexico shows some design embossed into the surface. Usually these designs take the form of linear or geometric rows of a repeated motif. Occasionally leaf or floral patterns are used. Another decorative characteristic of New Mexican tin is the cutting of elaborate borders and edges with scallops and zigzags.

Contemporary Tinsmithing

Tin is one of the lesser known of the revived New Mexican crafts. There are only a handful of tinsmiths working today, and most are related to three families who were part of the tinworking activity at the turn of the century or the revival in the '30s: the Delgados, the Sandovals, and the Romeros. While tinsmithing has traditionally been considered a male activity, three of the most prominent tinsmiths today are women: Angelina Delgado and Senaida Romero, who do traditional punched tinwork, and Conchita Quitana Lopez, who cuts and curls tin cans.

Even though until recently it was assumed that all tinwork was done by men, there is no evidence to prove so, nor were there any cultural barriers prohibiting women from working with tin. In fact, sewing (the fitting together of flat shapes into three-dimensional forms of cloth and the decorating of these forms) would easily translate to tin. While no one remembers any female tinsmiths among the "old-timers," Lane Coulter and

Maurice Dixon, in their book *New Mexican Tinwork, 1840-1940*, specifically attribute one old piece to a woman from Chamerino, a village in southeast New Mexico.³ Called "Our Lady of Santos" by the family owning the piece, she created a highly unique and complex glass nicho constructed like a church, complete with tin roofs and brass bells in the tower.

Angelina remembers her grandmother sitting at home stamping patterns into tin in order to help her husband Francisco fill his orders. As far as she knows, though, her grandmother never worked at his shop or designed and fabricated her own pieces. This practice of helping continues today. Bonifacio Sandoval has taught both his wife and daughter how to punch tin, and sometimes his wife will help him out with the stamping, although as yet she is not making her own pieces. On the other hand, Senaida Romero, who began by assisting her husband Emilio, now not only collaborates with him on certain works (signed by both of them), but also designs and makes pieces of her own.

Angelina, Senaida, and Conchita are not folk artists but contemporary artists making sophisticated works that utilize traditional folk art techniques, materials, and images as sources of inspiration for their own art. All work at home, cutting and transforming tin into three-dimensional objects meant to give pleasure. As Angelina points out, they are not making rain spouts or gutters. While they make a range of objects for a retail market using traditional designs, altered by personal interpretation and adapted to modern demands, it is still their religious art that attracts the most attention. Perhaps this reflects the deep faith of the tinsmiths themselves. "I look around at what I've made and think 'How good God is to me,'" says Angelina, echoing the sentiments of her fellow craftspeople.⁴

Many museums have sponsored hands-on workshops in tinsmithing and other traditional arts in the '70s and '80s. Angelina, Senaida, and Conchita all do workshops and demonstrations at museums, schools, and senior citizen centers across the country. For their "Focus America: Santa Fe" in 1982, Lord & Taylor flew Angelina to New York to demonstrate her craft. Conchita participated in the American Folk Life Festival at the Smithsonian, and Senaida represented herself and her husband at the National Endowment for the Arts Heritage Awards in Washington, D.C.

Since the youngest of the prominent professional tinsmiths is in her late fif-

ties, some people are concerned that tinsmithing may again become a lost art. However, the tinsmiths themselves will tell you that the art is not dying out, for they have taught their skills to younger family members, and while those members of the family may only do tin now as a hobby, they will most likely take it more seriously in the future. They point out that they themselves worked with tin part-time for years while working other jobs to survive and were unable to tinsmith full-time until their retirement years. Perhaps the present fast-growing interest and commercial market for traditional Hispanic tinwork will provide enough of a substantial income so that tinsmiths can begin to work full-time at tin in their earlier years.

ANGELINA DELGADO

Angelina Delgado learned the art of tinsmithing from her grandfather Francisco, the first Delgado tinsmith, and her father Idleberto (Eddie). She speaks fondly of her grandfather, a moustached gentleman who worked tin wearing a three-piece suit complete with pocket watch and gold chain. "*Un lugar para cada y cada cosa en su lugar*" announced a sign over his immaculate work area: "A place for everything and everything in its place." "He started tinwork as a hobby when he was in public office under Woodrow Wilson, but his work became so popular that he retired to devote full time to it and opened a shop on Canyon Road and Delgado Street. When he quit, my father took over."

Angelina and her ten brothers and sisters all learned to work tin as young children. She describes herself as a tomboy who hung out with her younger brothers at her grandfather's shop. "I watched my father and tried to copy him," remembers Angelina, who made her first tin pieces at age 12. "In fact, grandpa, who made all his own tools, made me a tiny soldering iron out of a piece of copper wire and I made a little chandelier. Six small birthday candles fit into it. One day I came home from school and my father had sold it for \$5.00. I was thrilled."

Angelina's father and grandfather insisted that she practice a long time before she was allowed to help them with their orders. "They urged me to go slowly and learn well. They believed '*Paso que dura y no reucle*,' which means 'haste makes waste.'" While other girls practiced sewing fine seams, Angelina learned to cut patterns, bend and engrave, and make smooth soldered seams in tin. Later, as a

teen, when she did help her father, she used the money that she earned to pay her way through the Loretto Academy for Girls.

After graduating from the Loretto Academy, Angelina decided to go to the Corcoran Art School in Washington, D.C. There she set up a tin shop in the basement of a restaurant, but couldn't stimulate enough interest in her work and ended up supporting herself by doing Mexican folk dances for dinner parties. After eight months she returned to Santa Fe to help her father in his shop. Married in 1944, she spent the next years of her life primarily raising her children. Then, in 1960, at age 40, she was widowed with four young children to support. She worked as many as four jobs at a time, but all the while kept working at her tin and saved the money each year so she and her children could have a week vacation each summer with the "tin money." "It was during this period," she says, "that I knew my work was improving because it was getting more notice and was more in demand."

In 1971 Angelina married Efen Martinez, a barber who has encouraged her tinwork. "Now I devote all my time to tin. When I walk into my studio, I forget my wrinkles, my troubles, my age. It's like when you have a religion and you forget everything. It's my sanctuary."

While all of Angelina's brothers have continued to do a little tin, she is by far the most active. She has taught her sons, her cousin Maria Luisa Delgado (Roybal), and her niece Patricia Delgado in the family tradition. She tried teaching Efen, but he prefers carving santos. Her special prodigy was her youngest son, Paul Younis. They worked side by side every day in the small cluttered studio behind her house and traveled together to do shows and demonstrations. "We were not like mother and son. We were buddies, friends," she recalls. Paul had been able to devote all his time to tinsmithing, "earning well over what a good state job pays." He had been exhibiting in galleries and at the Spanish Market, but last year died at the age of 32.

Although Angelina likes to work spontaneously and develop her own patterns, most of the patterns she uses have been handed down from one Delgado to the next. She says that she can look at a piece of tin and not only tell in what family tradition it was made, but also who made it. Family styles have always existed and are easily recognized, but she can name the artesano from the nuance of the tooling. "To this day," she says, "the Romero style is different from the

Sandoval style and different from the Delgado style. I can tell if a piece has been done in my family."

Now finally able to support herself off of her tin, Angelina mostly does custom work. She has done some unusual pieces over the years, including a crown and scepter for the fiesta queen and an elaborate frame developed from the fragment of an old frame found in a morada in Rosea, New Mexico, but her trademark is an elegant simplicity of design with a restrained use of wallpaper, colored glass, or decorative painting. Her favorite is "the classic," a Delgado pattern that was also one of her grandfather's favorites. "The classic" is a simple frame with spiral tooling, giving a columnar effect to the sides of the frame. Corner interest varies from small, rounded, triangular pieces of tin to squares punched with additional decorative patterns.

Frequently she adds her own stylistic touches to her grandfather's original designs. "I like to add birds and hearts to his patterns," she explains. "He was devoted to the Sacred Heart and St. Francis, and loved hearts and birds." Some of Angelina's work requires more than a hundred sections to be soldered together, "but," she says, "nothing is difficult if you like to do it. I thank God every day for giving me the health and talent to continue the family tradition."

Angelina has exhibited regularly since 1974, has won numerous awards at the Spanish Market, and has received the 1984 Governor's Award for excellence and achievement in tinsmithing. "I told those present [at the awards ceremony] that I hoped my father and grandfather were present in spirit to see what's been done with the little they had to work with, but secretly I thought to myself, 'If only my father could see me now.'"¹⁵

SENAIDA ROMERO

Senaida Romero was born in the village of Ojo de Vaco, New Mexico. Her grandfather was a tinsmith and zapatero (a shoe and boot maker). Loading his supply of handmade goods onto a wagon, he would travel throughout northern New Mexico to trade for corn, potatoes, beans, or whatever people had. Senaida can



Senaida Romero at her work table. The 150-year-old *baulito* at the left was made by her grandfather.

remember her family eating on plates fashioned from the bottoms of tomato cans. "I still have a little *baulito* from grandpa," she told me, bringing out a foot-long tin and glass jewelry box made from coffee cans that still show the brand label. At least 150 years old, it is a piece of classic tinwork. Although tinning was in her family history, Senaida didn't learn it from her grandfather. It wasn't until many years later that she learned the craft from her husband, Emilio.

Emilio, who had been trained as a sheet-metal worker in Los Alamos, began experimenting with tin about 44 years ago, mostly as a hobby. Literally teaching himself the craft, he copied work that he had seen and liked in museums or in the houses of his friends, "the old-timers." Occasionally he was able to sell work to help support his family during the Depression. Emilio retired about 15 years ago and turned his hobby into a small business. He adapted his sheet-metal tools to the needs of decorative tinwork and made other tools out of hardened steel and iron. He also taught Senaida how to work with tin.

The Romeros work in the kitchen of their Santa Fe house, where they have lived for over 50 years. Their front porch

and yard are full of boxes of tin scraps. They work on two tables—"one for him and one for me," Senaida explains. Each morning, five days a week, after clearing away the breakfast dishes, they get to work on the sheets of tin, cutting, punching, scoring, bending, crimping, and soldering. They work eight hours a day, stopping only for lunch. Sometimes they also work weekends in order to meet the demand for their work.

Senaida began as Emilio's assistant, but now she also executes her own designs, interpreting traditional patterns by adding wallpaper, painting, weaving, or embroidery behind glass. Together Senaida and Emilio have developed a "Romero style," distinguished by clean and careful soldering and channeling and a wonderful sense of ornamentation. They make frames, letter holders, boxes, light fixtures, crosses, nichos, candlesticks, and chandeliers. Their most popular objects are decorative covers for light switches and sockets.

Senaida says that her favorite pieces to make are "serape mirrors"—flat frames that utilize strips of Chimayo-style weaving done by friends and placed behind the glass panels surrounding the mirror. Perhaps Senaida's most important contribution to decorative tinwork is her use of combined materials—her trademark being tin combined with *colcha* (coverlet), a crude kind of embroidery with long, tied-down stitches that has been used in New Mexico for over 100 years to adorn churches and altars. Senaida learned *colcha* from a local woman and now creates strips of *colcha* that

go under the glass borders of the frame. Occasionally she embroiders a whole "picture" of one of the *santos* in *colcha* and then frames it with one of her or Emilio's frames.

The Romeros' house is filled with tin, *santos*, pottery, and straw inlay work by other family members and friends. Their son Jim does some tinsmithing and their daughter Marie Cash is a well-known *santera*. In 1987 Senaida and Emilio received the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Award as master folk artists, the only husband and wife team to have won this award.⁶

CONCHITA QUITANA LOPEZ

Conchita Quitana Lopez started working with tin in 1960 when she entered the Santa Fe Christmas lighting contest. She and her children decorated a large tree in their front yard by cutting up tin cans and shaping the metal into stars, swirls, hoops, and balls—inexpensive and durable ornaments. Her tree won "honorable mention."

After that, her neighbors encouraged her to make more ornaments and sell them. In her free hours—when the children were napping or at school—Conchita worked at cutting and curling the tin, developing a sort of exquisite metal lace reminiscent of Spanish gold and silver filigree jewelry. When she took some of her curled tin to a shop in town, the pieces sold out in one week. Conchita began working five hours a day, making wall medallions, lamp bases, cake stands, a menagerie of animals and insects—dragonflies, butterflies, fish—and a popular series of Christmas ornaments. "These hours," she said, "were the most relaxing of my day!"

Relatives and friends supply her with old tin cans. "I am most grateful when I come home and find a neighbor has left a large box of tin cans on my front porch. . . . My husband accuses me of shopping at the grocery store, not for food, but for the size and color of the tin cans," laughs Conchita. She usually works with the predominant gold and silver of the cans, but in many pieces she incorporates colored tin or utilizes the printed words. Often a piece will be made from one kind or color of tin, like a bouquet of tin flowers made from tomato-sauce cans. At other times she paints the tin or uses many different cans to make a rainbow of delicate rosettes to wreath a mirror or decorate a lamp base. Shapes from the can rims are used to form round, rectangular, oval, or octagonal frames for mirrors or pictures. Sometimes Conchita

stacks lard cans into plant holders or turns two- and four-pound ham tins into nichos for candles or santos.

In one work Conchita added her filigree swirls to an old Mexican bird cage. This attracted the attention of the Museum of Folk Art in Santa Fe and inspired Conchita to make a cage out of tin. She started with a large bakery tin, which she slit and formed into the hand-drawn spokes of the cage, then sculpted a metal bird to sit in the cage next to an anchovy can feeder.

At one point Conchita displayed her work in the Bank of Santa Fe. This was seen by a writer for *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine, who did a feature article on her work; Conchita contributed a "how to do it" article complete with patterns for her "tin can art." She enjoys the fact that most pieces only require two tools—a snips and a small nosed pliers—and takes great pleasure in the fact that she can take her work with her wherever she goes, whether it's just sitting and watching TV, visiting with a friend, or going to the beauty parlor. And she can easily teach others.

Over the years, Conchita has exhibited her work at the Spanish Market and

the Smithsonian American Folk Life Festival, but has not been working commercially since she remarried 11 years ago. Traveling frequently, she has cut back on the amount of work she does, and her studio has been condensed into a large cabinet stuffed full of tin cans, scraps, patterns, tools, and notations for future ideas. While she collects tin on her travels, and even takes work with her, she rarely exhibits and mostly only makes work to give as gifts to friends. Conchita has taught tin to her daughter Elizabeth, whom she says can make lighter, lacier, and more detailed work than she can.⁷

¹Janet LeCompte, "The Independent Women of Hispanic New Mexico, 1821-1846," *Western Historical Quarterly* (Jan. 1981).

²Marianne L. Stoller, "The Hispanic Women Artists of New Mexico: Present and Past," *El Palacio* (Summer/Fall 1986).

³Lane Coulter and Maurice Dixon, *New Mexico Tinwork, 1840-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, forthcoming).

⁴Susan Hazen-Hammond, "Art from Poor Man's Silver," *New Mexico Magazine* (Dec. 1984).

⁵Information and quotations from Constance Stapleton, *Crafts of America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988); Roberta Ross Fine, text for Angelina Delgado's brochure "A Family Tradition"; and personal interview (1988).

⁶Quotations from personal interview (1988); some information also from Victoria Alba, "The Romeros Transform Tin into Gold," *Pasa Tiempo* (Oct. 2, 1987).

⁷Information and quotations from Elena Montes, "Art and Artists of New Mexico," *New Mexico Magazine* (Nov.-Dec. 1962), and personal interview (1988).

Harmony Hammond is a painter/sculptor who lives in New Mexico. A founding member of A.I.R. and *Heresies*, she now teaches at the University of Arizona in Tucson and continues to write and lecture about feminist art and the native, traditional, and contemporary art of New Mexico.

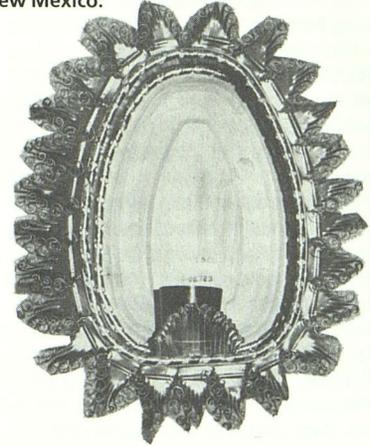


PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

CONCHITA QUITANA LOPEZ Nichito made from tin ham cans.

Aisha Eshe



Daughter Song

She stands tall
with curves that wave
in and out of the pool

She will never be ashamed
of her body
keeping her head down
or arms around her breast
in an attempt to hide the lack

She will be free
as she fights to keep
her legs together
while springing from the board
into the blue water

A Change in Time

I'm glad you can dance Crystall
As you skate across the floor
with your Janet Jackson moves

I'm glad you're not stiff
and scared like I was
As I stood in the 7th grade gym
and took 2 steps up
and 3 steps back

Aisha Eshe, mother of four, has had her poetry published throughout the country and recently published a novella, *Blood at the Root*.

FAITH'S STORY

I'd been out of school for a week home sick with asthma. Mother brought me to school that morning dressed in a new red dress with ruffles and a red ribbon in my hair. I looked at myself in every shop window we passed, swung my bookbag, and wondered what it would be like to be back at school.

They were having a reading lesson when I got there late because I had to go for an allergy shot first. I always felt like I was different from the other kids in my class not only because I was the only little black girl in the class but because I was always absent and late sick with asthma and my mother was always bringing me to school in a way only she could do, as if we were special guests or performers coming to perform some special thing not just to be a part of the class. The other kids hated me. But Lisa, the new girl in class, smiled at me. She asked the teacher if she could sit next to me in order to share her book with me and help me with the new reading assignment. I liked her right away. By lunchtime we had decided to be best friends.

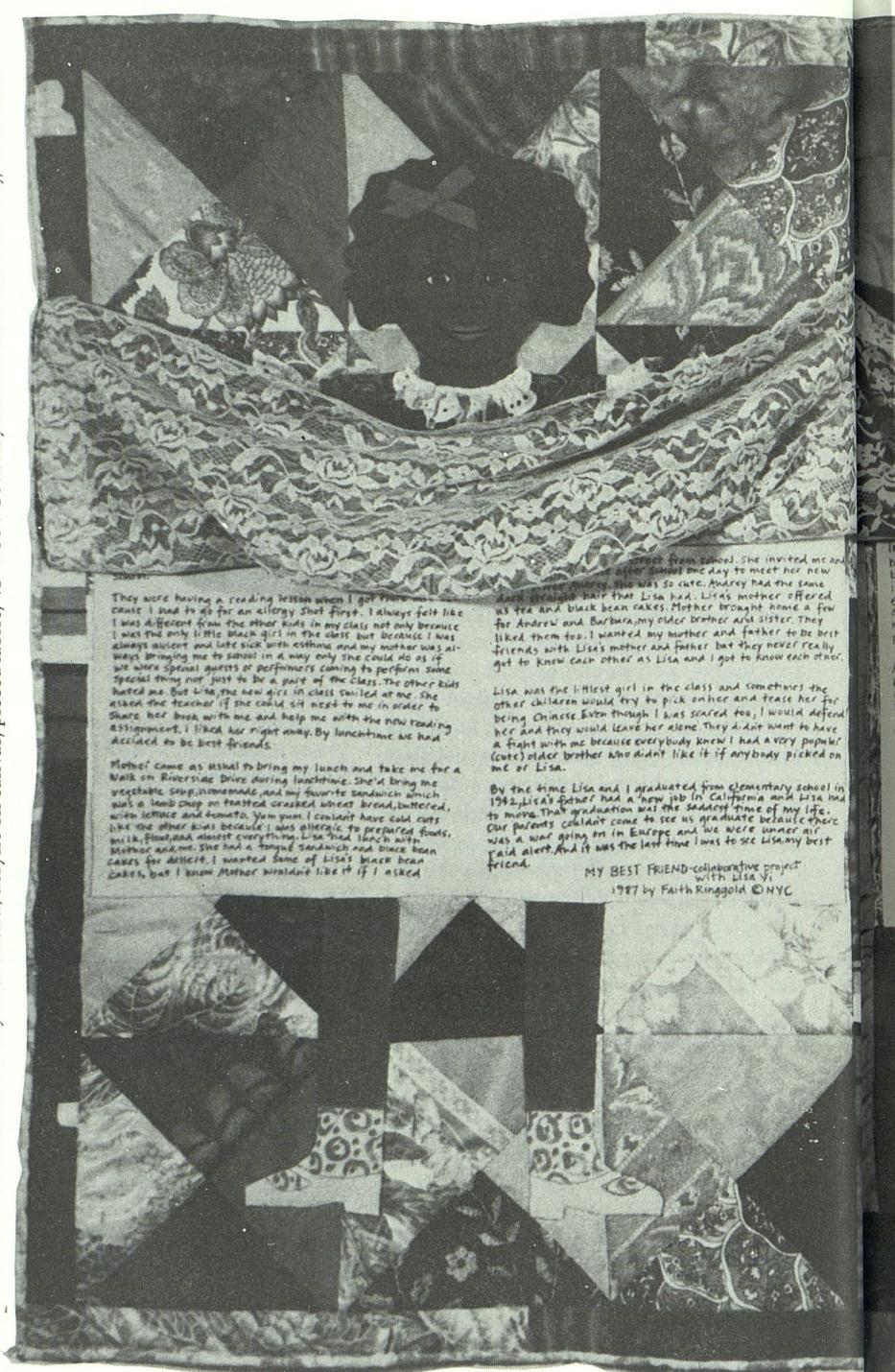
Mother came as usual to bring my lunch and take me for a walk on Riverside Drive during lunchtime. She'd bring me vegetable soup, homemade, and my favorite sandwich which was a lamb chop on toasted cracked wheat bread, buttered, with lettuce and tomato. Yum yum. I couldn't have cold cuts like the other kids because I was allergic to prepared foods, milk, flour, and almost everything. Lisa had lunch with Mother and me. She had a tongue sandwich and black bean cakes for dessert. I wanted some of Lisa's black bean cakes but I knew Mother wouldn't like it if I asked her, and furthermore, I was probably allergic to them. The next day she brought me some and I ate them from my desk before lunchtime.

Lisa lived across the street from school. She invited me and Mother to her house after school one day to meet her new baby sister Audrey. She was so cute. Audrey had the same dark straight hair that Lisa had. Lisa's mother offered us tea and black bean cakes. Mother brought home a few for Andrew and Barbara, my older brother and sister. They like them too. I wanted my mother and father to be best friends with Lisa's mother and father but they never really got to know each other as Lisa and I got to know each other.

Lisa was the littlest girl in the class and sometimes the other children would try to pick on her and tease her for being Chinese. Even though I was scared too, I would defend her and they would leave her alone. They didn't want to have a fight with me because everybody knew I had a very popular (cute) older brother who didn't like it if anybody picked on me or Lisa.

By the time Lisa and I graduated from elementary school in 1942, Lisa's father had a new job in California and Lisa had to move. That graduation was the saddest time of my life. Our parents couldn't come to see us graduate because there was a war going on in Europe and we were under air raid alert, and it was the last time I was to see Lisa, my best friend.

FAITH RINGGOLD and LISA K. YI *My Best Friend*, acrylic on canvas, pieced fabric, 43" x 56". Courtesy Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, New York.



My Best Friend

LISA'S STORY

In fourth grade, my best friend was Faith Posey. We became friends when the teacher asked her to help me to the bathroom after I opened a jar of ants I'd gathered during lunchtime. When I opened the jar to make sure they had enough air, they swarmed all over me and rushed up my arms into my clothes. Teacher asked Faith, who sat next to me, to help me to the bathroom. In the bathroom, Faith helped pick the ants off me and shook my dress off outside.

After that we started sitting together during recess. We both had hayfever and asthma, so we sat at the lunch tables and drew pictures. I didn't like recesses before Faith and I were best friends. The boys would run up to me, pull their eyes to the side, and pretend they were speaking Chinese, or they'd ask me how fast I was running when I ran into the brick wall. They wouldn't bother us when Faith and I drew together at the tables.

Sometimes I'd go to Faith's house for dinner. She had an older brother and sister, so we were the "babies." Mrs. Posey would make dinner while Faith and I played. Our favorite place was her mother's sewing room. There'd be baskets of assorted cloth and all kinds of clothes on dummies with no heads, arms, or legs. We would wrap ourselves in the cloth and pretend to be queens.

Barbara, Faith's older sister, would have tea parties with Fresca and Girl Scout cookies. She'd try to make us be her bridge club lady friends, but mostly we just liked drinking out of the little cups and eating cookies off of little plates. Dinner was a lot of fun. Andrew, Faith's big brother, would smile and tell us stories to make us laugh over bitefuls of crisp fried chicken, grits, black-eyed peas, and mustard greens.

When Faith came to my house for dinner, we played outside while Mom made dinner. We were the oldest girls on my block. Most of the kids were my little sister Audrey's age. We'd ride bikes and play Star Trek. I'd be Captain Kirk and Faith would be Mr. Spock. The other kids wanted me to be Sulu and Faith to be Uhuru, but since we were the oldest (and consequently the biggest), we assumed the roles of power with a decided feminine slant.

Dinner was quieter at my house. Faith and I would talk about school that day over winter melon soup, steamed pork with salted mustard greens, rice, and watercress. Mom told us to finish our bowls and not to leave even a grain of rice in our bowls so we'd have clean faces when we grew up.

Faith Ringgold is a professor of art at the University of California in San Diego and also lives in New York City, where she works on her painted story quilts. A recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship, she is represented by the Bernice Steinbaum Gallery in New York. Lisa K. Yi received her M.F.A. in painting at Columbia University in 1987. Formerly from Santa Cruz, she is now living in NYC and working in mixed media.

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When Faith came to my house for dinner, we played outside while Mom made dinner. We were the oldest girls on my block. Most of the kids were my little sister Audrey's age. We'd ride bikes and play Star Trek. I'd be Captain Kirk and Faith would be Mr. Spock. The other kids wanted me to be Sulu and Faith to be Uhuru, but since we were the oldest (and consequently the biggest), we assumed the roles of power with a decided feminine slant.

Dinner was quieter at my house. Faith and I would talk about school that day over winter melon soup, steamed pork with salted mustard greens, rice, and watercress. Mom told us to finish our bowls and not to leave even a grain of rice in our bowls so we'd have clean faces when we grew up.

MY BEST FRIEND
collaborative project with Faith Ringgold
1987 by Lisa Yi. ©NYC

a collaborative story quilt Faith Ringgold and Lisa Yi

PHOTO: CLARISSA SLIGH



JOAN SEMMEL *Bathing Andy*, 1975, oil on canvas, 108" × 60". Photo: Bcvan Davics.



MARION PINTO *Double Male Nude Portrait*, 1974, oil on canvas, 42" × 84".

THE MALE NUDE

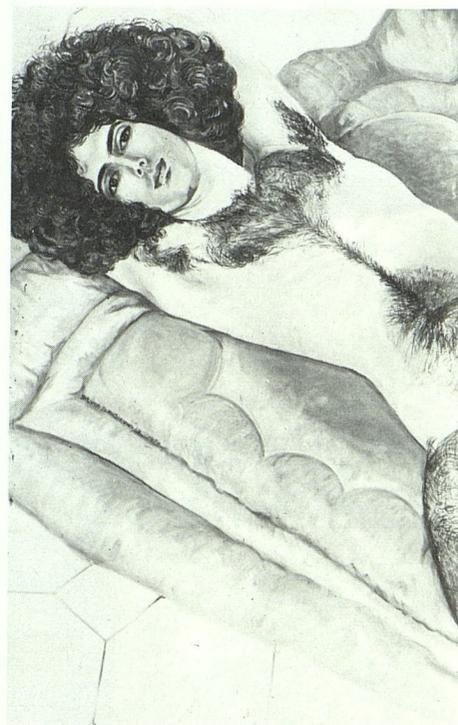
the gaze returned

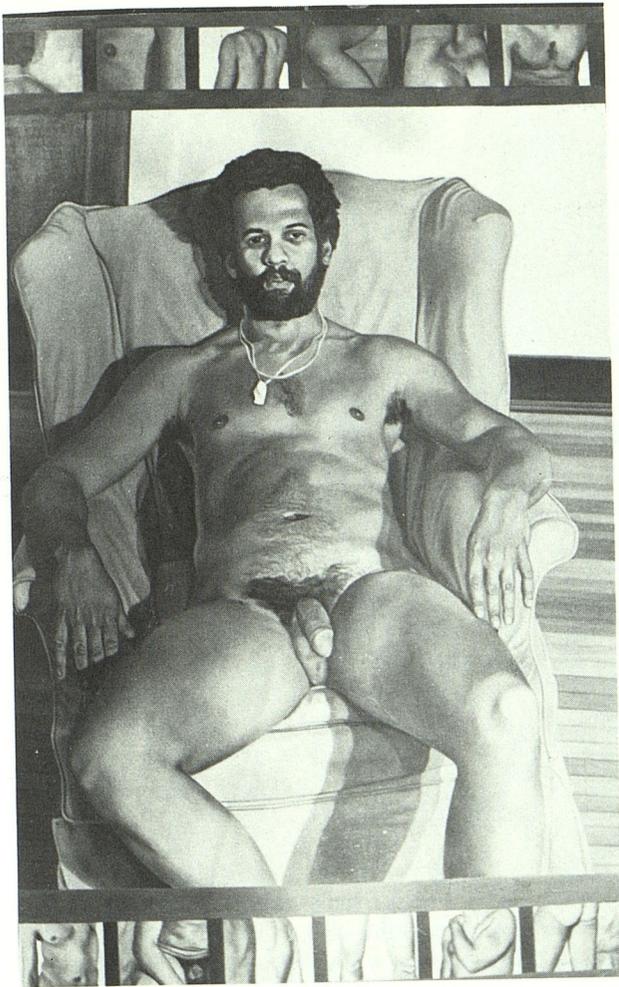
Women painters in the 1970s and early 1980s

DIANA KURZ *Sleeping Youth—Angelo*, 1975, oil on canvas, 42" × 66".



SYLVIA SLEIGH *Paul Romano Reclining*, 1974, oil on canvas, 54" × 78".
Photo: Geoffrey Clements.





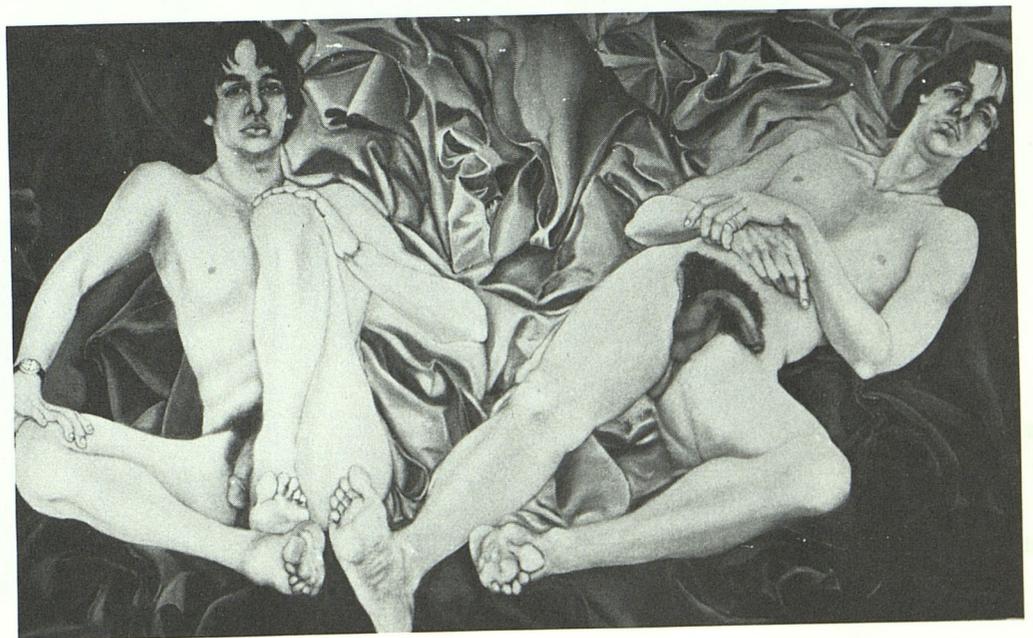
GRACE GRAUPE-PILLARD *Dan I*, 1977,
oil on canvas, 91" × 56½".



AUDREY USCHENKO *Persesus & Medusa II*, 1982,
oil on canvas, 36" × 24".



MARTHA EDELHEIT *Dx2*, 1969–71, acrylic on linen, 42" × 68". Photo: Henry Edelheit.



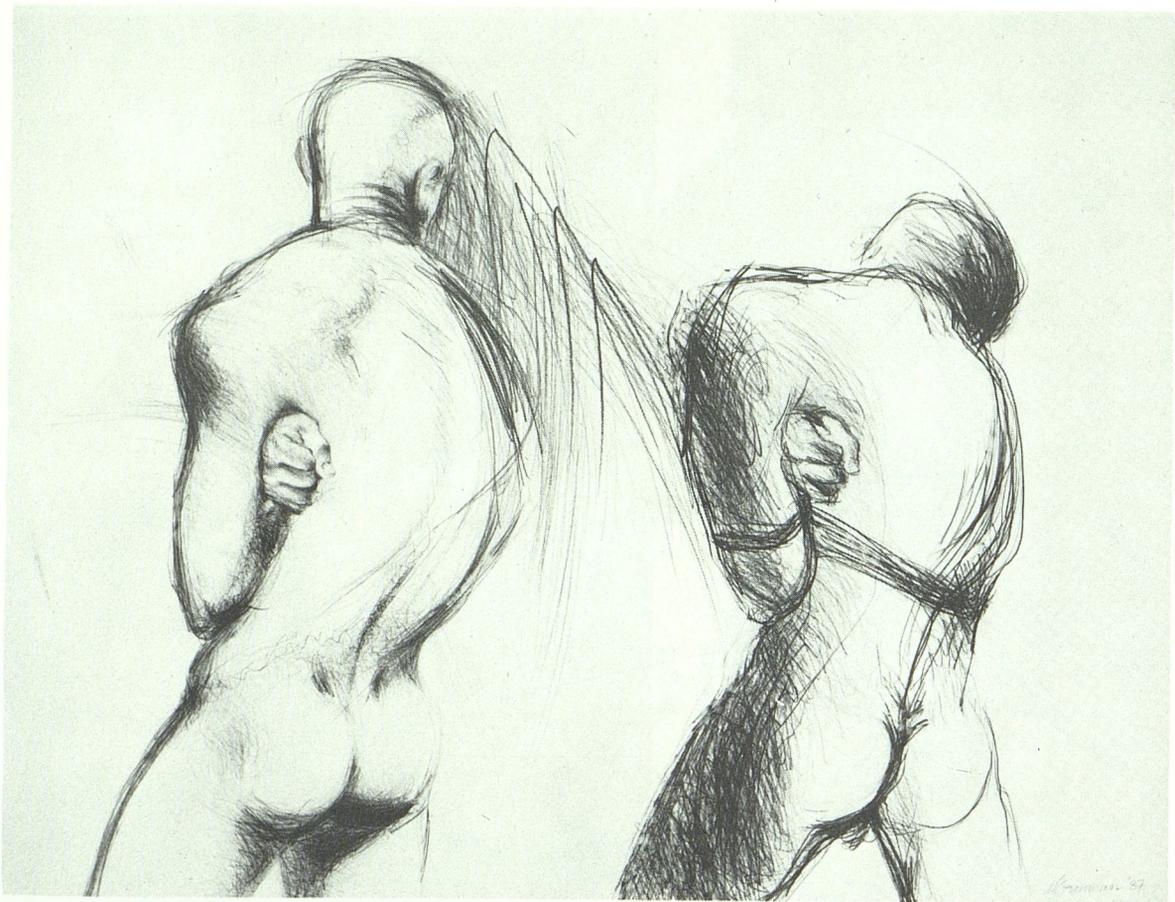


PHOTO: PELKA/NOBLE PHOTOGRAPHY

NANCY GROSSMAN *Double*, 1987, pencil on paper, 42½" × 54¼". Nancy Grossman is an artist living and working in New York.

JUDITH BERNSTEIN *Horizontal*, 1973, charcoal on paper, 108" × 150". Judith Bernstein, who recently received a fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts, has worked on expressionistic drawings on an architectural scale since 1969.

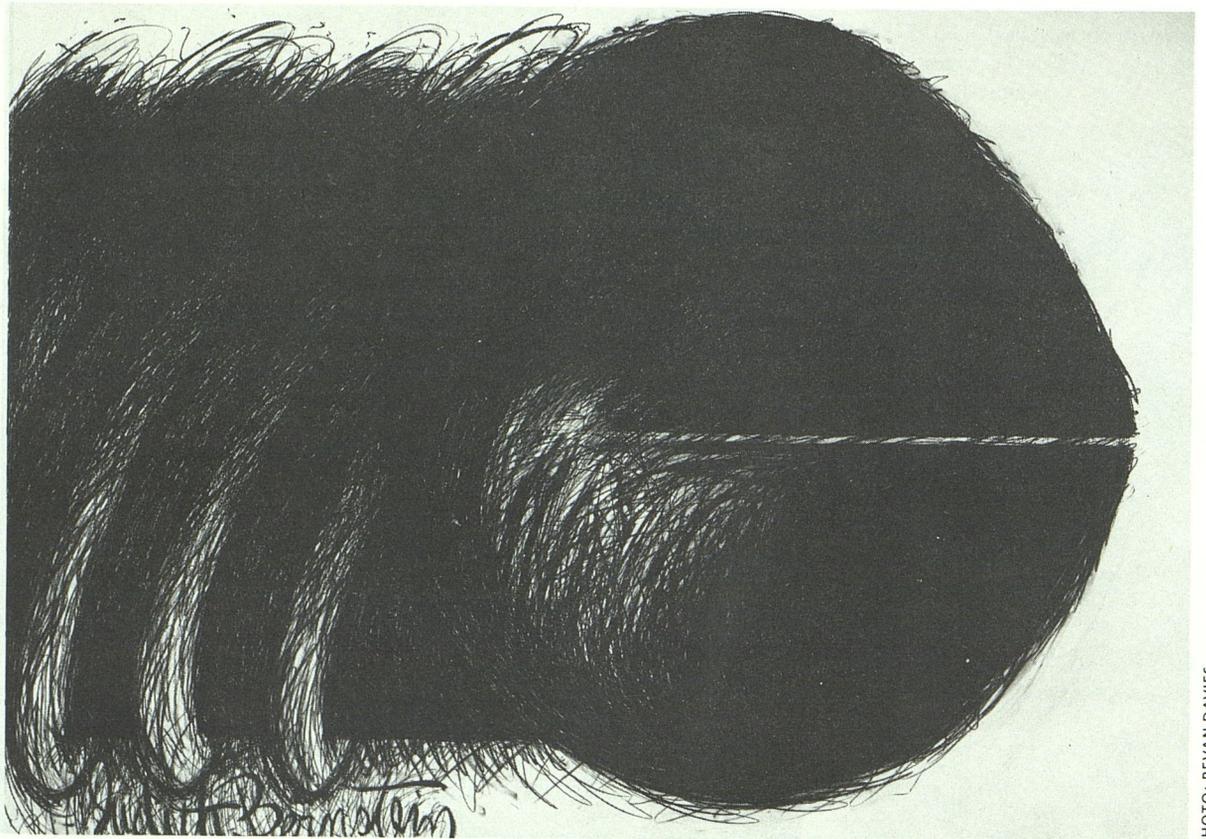
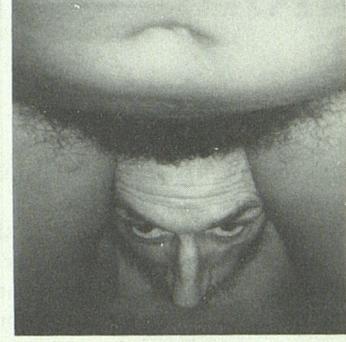
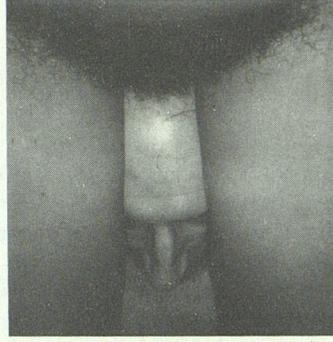


PHOTO: BEVAN DAVIES

HANNAH WILKE *Venus Envy* (with Richard Hamilton), 1980, Polaroid portraits. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York. Hannah Wilke is a conceptual performance artist who created feminist iconography in the early 1960s, encompassing issues of gender and difference.



Ladies Against Women

My own anniversary of my marriage to the late Mr. Chester Cholesterol was just last week. I did as Chester would have done; he would have bought me a personal gift. So I bought myself an eggshell-and-peach-colored trashmaster. I don't know if it's what I really wanted but it's what Chester would have bought me.

And then I heard about two more anniversaries that day. One was *HERESIES*. This is evidently a magazine about little foil-wrapped conical chocolates ... the only truly safe s□x, and not forbidden out of marriage. Unfortunately, I've never read the magazine, but I love those Heresies Kisses, so I decided to send my best. But just as I sat down to knit a nice card to you girls, I heard of another urgent anniversary. Once again we had to hit the sidewalks.

Ladies Against Women Versus Rowing and Wading

It's very hard to get a firm but dainty grasp on all of this. There are about two hundred people in front of the Planned Parenthood Temple of Evil. There are about twenty other people across the street, in front of a car dealer. Each group is pacing around, aerobically exercising the constitutional guarantee of the right to be rude to each other. My fellow Ladies and I arrive rather late, and we approach in demure and tentative steps. Who actually sent out the invitations for this event?, we wonder. It seems that the gentlemen with the "SHAME, SHAME" signs have called this protest of rowing versus wading. I don't know whether those cellular kiddies are supposed to be rowing around in there or wading, but evidently the wrong story won. I fought very hard to tell my children about The Stork, and I guess He would wade rather than row, but I can't say for sure. However, this concerns citizens who are not yet fully born. That is the reason for our protest.

Our *Ladies Against Women* group makes a timid approach.

There are three of us this fine crisp morning. We march up adorned in floral polyester, covered in heartwarming foxies' and bunnies' furs. We are here for the tiniest, most innocent citizens of this realm, the little spermies and ovums. These tiny Americans are constantly being murdered, through all sorts of filthy masculine habits, just because they aren't yet conceived. Why, lots of them end up in those little rubber concentration camps you see in all the pharmacies these days. We must abolish these penal colonies!

We chant as we mingle with those who need to be persuaded, "Blow your whistle! Toot your horn! We love the people until they're born!" We sing, we stomp, and we clap through our gloves. We wave our little signs. "SEX ED CAUSES PREGNANCY EVASION," says one. "CLOSE YOUR EYES AND DO YOUR DUTY" and "THE FEDS BELONG IN YOUR BEDROOM." "The sperms and eggs united, will never be defeated." "No Freedom! No Voice! No Worries! No Choice!" "Right, right, right, right to life. Right, right, our right style of life: For all of you!" The dear expectant mommie with the lace apron and the "MEN RULE" sign cries out, "Men, men: what *will* you do? Your little sperm are people, too!" We find a spot of our own, eventually, on the sidewalk below the corner staked out by the conventional anti-choicers. They wave signs about baby killers at the passing traffic. A block later, we wave signs at cars too. "BAN THE PILL, NOT THE BOMB." "CHOICE CAUSES STRESS." "NO MORE SPERMICIDE IN MY NAME."

Vehicles honked, but I must confess some of them laughed at us. Such is our fate, but we must bravely lift our chins, and other portions of our faces, and go on with the crusade.



By Virginia Cholesterol of *Ladies Against Women*, an incarnation of the Plutonium Players, 1600 Woolsey Street, Berkeley, CA 94703. © 1988. All rights reserved.

THE EVOLUTION OF CHICANA EROTICA

ANA CASTILLO

Although the poetic voice of the Chicana was first heard in allegiance to her socially conscious male counterpart, she soon emerged with an alternative voice, one that complemented her ethnic consciousness. Anglo radical feminism then

became a point of departure for some of the poetry written by Chicanas in the seventies. Here I mean the kind of feminism described by Alix Shulman in which "early radical feminists questioned traditional definitions of women's sexu-

ality, of women's 'nature,' of sexual satisfaction and health (conceived as heterosexual) on the grounds that such definitions, as propounded by men, tended to justify the sexual exploitation of women by men."¹

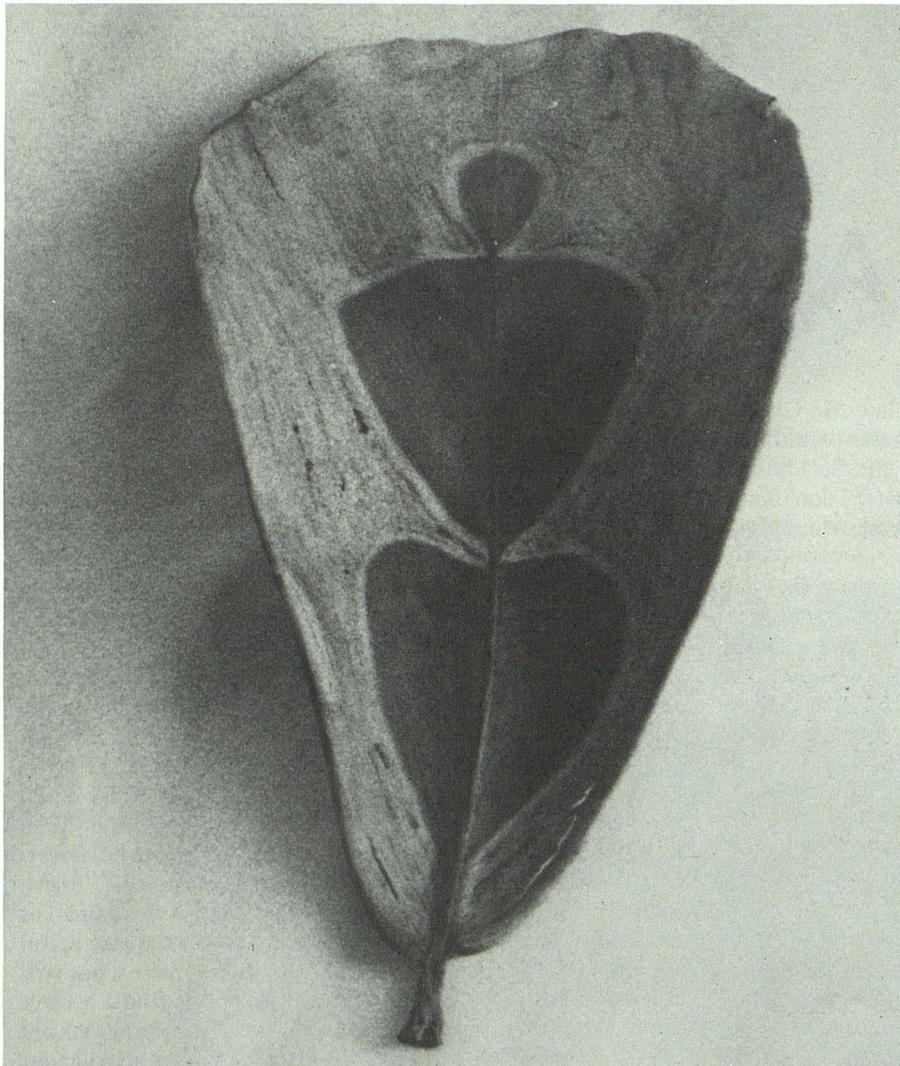
Mexican culture, stoic in its conventionality, does not permit deviation from the honored family and the rigidly stereotyped roles that have long plagued both sexes. A woman who openly expresses physical desire is not tolerated. In repudiating the community's sexual norms, she faces the judgmental eyes of mothers, fathers, siblings, distant relations, childhood friends. As Cherríe Moraga expresses in her poem "Loving in the War Years":

*Loving in the war years
calls for this kind of risking
without a home to call our own
I've got to take you as you come
to me, each time like a stranger
all over again. Not knowing
what deaths you saw today
I've got to take you
as you come, battle bruised
refusing our enemy, fear.*

*We've all we got. You and I
maintaining
this wartime morality
where being queer
and female is as rude
as we can get.²*

While many Chicanas write exclusively in English, perhaps as many write in Spanish or "code-switch," employing both of their languages in the same text. This enriching aspect of Latina literature, however, has also limited publishing opportunities. The small press and self-published chapbooks have been crucial in creating a dialogue about Chicana feminism and, in particular, Chicana sexuality.

The poems here all come from chapbooks and anthologies that have not received wide distribution. They offer an affirmation of Chicana sexuality.



ANA MENDIETA *Untitled*, 1982, drawing on leaf, 6". Courtesy of Raquel Mendieta Harrington. Ana Mendieta, a Cuban-born artist, activist, and feminist, lived and worked in New York and Rome. She died in 1985.

Coffee Break

15 minutes

They take
their morning papers
monogrammed mugs
to the lounge
moaning and groaning
of monday monotony
& self boredom—

she

does a 2 step down
the narrow hall
to the small room
where toilet paper
plugs the keyhole
whitewashed windows
grafitti wallpaper
designed by unknown
heroes and scholars—

A tiny streak

of sun leaks
through a space
of unpainted glass
makes as a spotlight
for 2 talented fingers
creating fast—

ART IN MOTION!

A STAR IS BORN!*

SUCH STYLE!

WHAT GRACE!

The cracked mirror

reveals a winning face
eternity stops just
to applaud
she takes a modest bow
4½ minutes gone
no time for an encore—

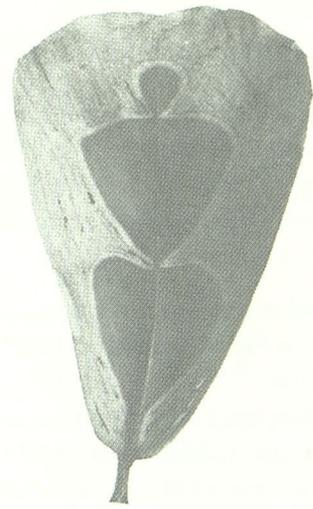
With a hum

& a shuffle
she returns to the bunch
drinking stale coffee
exchanging griefs &
complaints

And

she's singing
"Isn't She Lovely"
on her way
to her desk
when she has
30 FULL minutes:
(the 2nd performance
is always the best!)

—Ana Castillo



What Only Lovers

Once
during our travels
when we stopped
in one of those hot
unbearable places
in one of those
nameless hotels
Once
after our fifth
shower
of that day
you stretched across
the hard bed
let your wet hair
hang over the headboard
and slept

i wanted to talk
to my companion
who was busy then
with a dream
at two
the afternoon was
thick liquid
i found myself
watching you
Once discovered
what only lovers
knew:
the slow rhythm

of your steady
breath
dark red nipples
standing erect
the black hair
on your legs
your legs
mountain climbing
legs
saturday night dancing legs
legs for wrapping
Once
a roach rushed across
your still arm
and i envied it
my friend became
an ocean
and i wanted
to be taken
by each wave
Once the moon fell
on you
the stifling air
cooled against you
the whole room was
eden
taking a taste
of you...
and i wanted to taste you
just once.

—Ana Castillo³

the truth of the matter

the truth of the matter is that you know
nothing about me or of me.

i like the samba...but much more i
like to dance it with that woman from
brazil.

i like the cold winter months...to
spend them on the open beach of that
town in colima.

i like that short train ride from mexico
city to monterrey and having you tell me
the important towns and tell me to be sure
that i have my passport well hidden...like my
secrets.

and i like to listen to old mexican love
songs that my mother heard growing
old in monterrey.

i still like saying that i am mexican, not
mexican-american...like my cousin pat, rose,
or my friend lupe.

i like the names of guadalupe, rebecca and
marie-carmen, over the names debbie, buffy, or wanda.
and when i go to market with my aunt mari, here
in guadalajara...i still want her to show me where
she met the devil one sunny afternoon.
she tells me...not today...it is raining...next time,
when you decide to stay here...and marry that
man who took you to the plaza...i tell her with a
smile...nunca tía...

and i like to have my cousins and friends tell me
that i speak spanish funny;...but that is what happens,
after 24 years of living in el norte.

and finally i like to listen to the stories of my
uncle antonio...and how he cannot wait to die.

there are many things you do not know about me.

—Carmen Abrego

shouting your name

and in my dreams
i see the woman with whom
i had made love in this land
of jade, of perfumed trees, of
white flowers in this jungle.

her eyes were dark as black coal.
she did not speak at all to me,
in one hand she held my future,
in the other she made a gesture
of welcome...she kissed my
lips...then vanished in
the darkness...i opened my eyes
and shouted out your name.

—Carmen Abrego⁴

Cosmic Energy

My
milky way
is between my legs.
A toothless mouth.

I
feel starved when
I look at you.

I am infatuated
my panties could
be saturated
if your tongue
would be the
lining of my mouth.

Passions,
that I believed were dead,
are not.

By suppressing them
I've placed a tombstone
on my bed.

Your full lips
appear to be
fuller—
because of the
fairness of
your skin.

I desire to ...
feel their suppleness
when I look at you—
O' Gluttonous

Mouth

—Rina G. Rocha

Wash 'Em Clean

Change your
bed sheets
wash a

w
a
y

You and his
sweat.

Y'all murmured t-o-o
loud ...
and cried.

Your pillows are
full of
potential gossip
they could repeat.

Wash 'em clean,
clean.

What needs to be
fourteen,
throw 'em in,
the washin' ma-chine.

Change them
bed sheets—
lay down the
clean.

—Rina G. Rocha⁵

i care for women

i care
for women
colored or not
crooked
undecided or straight
skinny
fat or perfect
i care for women
and
i love
very few
and sometimes
not very well
but i will improve
with age
because
i am careful
for women

i love women

—Veronica Cunningham

Cotton with a memory

There was a woman
last night.
She rose from her table
and her breasts pushed themselves
against cotton
to protest the air-conditioning
and their perfect form
reminded me
of you.
I felt like the cotton
they were forcing
themselves against for recognition
forming my existence
around
yours.

I think of you at the damnedest times

—Veronica Cunningham⁶

¹Alix Kates Shulman, "Sex and Power: Sexual Bases of Radical Feminism," *Women and the Politics of Culture*, ed. Michele Wender Zak and Patricia A. Mootes (New York: Longman, 1983).

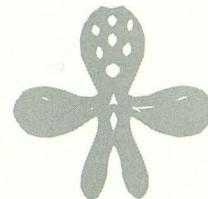
²Cherríe Moraga, *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca paso por sus labios* (Boston: South End Press, 1983).

³Ana Castillo, *The Invitation* (Chicago, self-published, 1979).

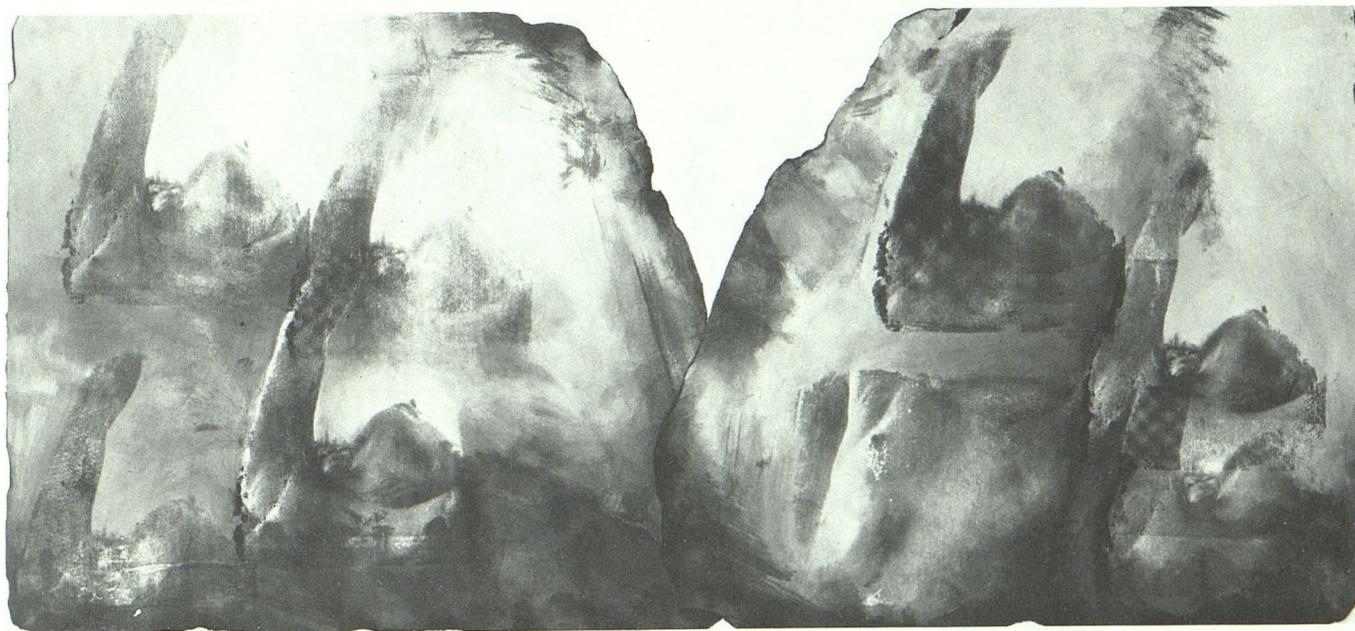
⁴Carmen Abrego, *Women in My Lost Dreams* (Chicago, self-published, 1985).

⁵Rina G. Rocha, *Eluder* (Chicago, self-published: 1980).

⁶Published in *Contemporary Chicano Poetry: An Anthology*, ed. Wolfgang Binder (Verlag Palm und Enke und Erlangen, 1986).



Ana Castillo is a writer living in California. Her books of poetry include *My Father Was a Toltec* and *Invitation*; she has also published a novel entitled *Mixquiahuala Letters*.



JOSELY CARVALHO *She Is Visited by Birds and Turtles*, 1987, silkscreen and acrylic on burnt paper, 30" × 70". Josely Carvalho, a Brazilian visual artist living in New York, works with printing, painting, installations, performance, book art, and video.

PHOTO: SARAH WELLS

PARA CONCEBIR

MARTA
MARIA
PEREZ

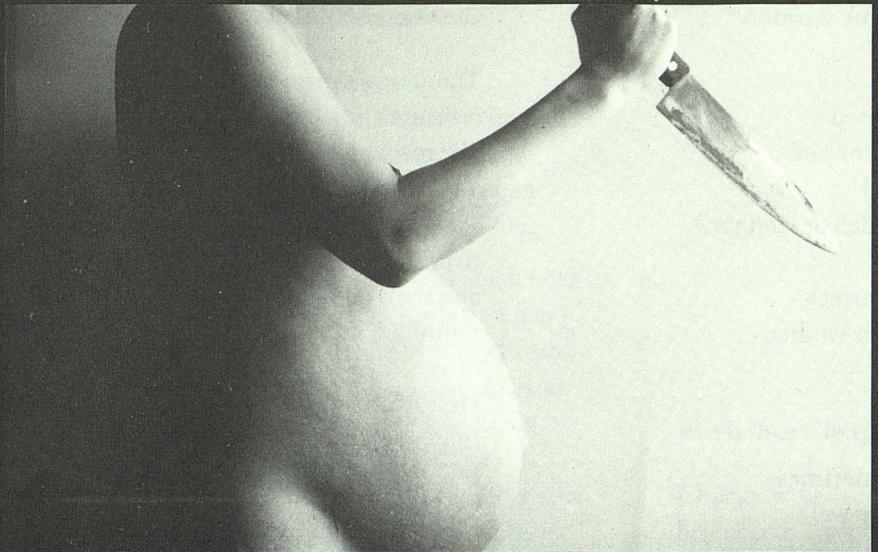
Para Concebir es una obra realizada entre 1985 y 1986, a partir de la experiencia personal de la maternidad.

Esta obra se vincula al pensamiento, las supersticiones y algunas creencias populares acerca de la concepción, donde se relacionan texto e imagen de manera complementaria.

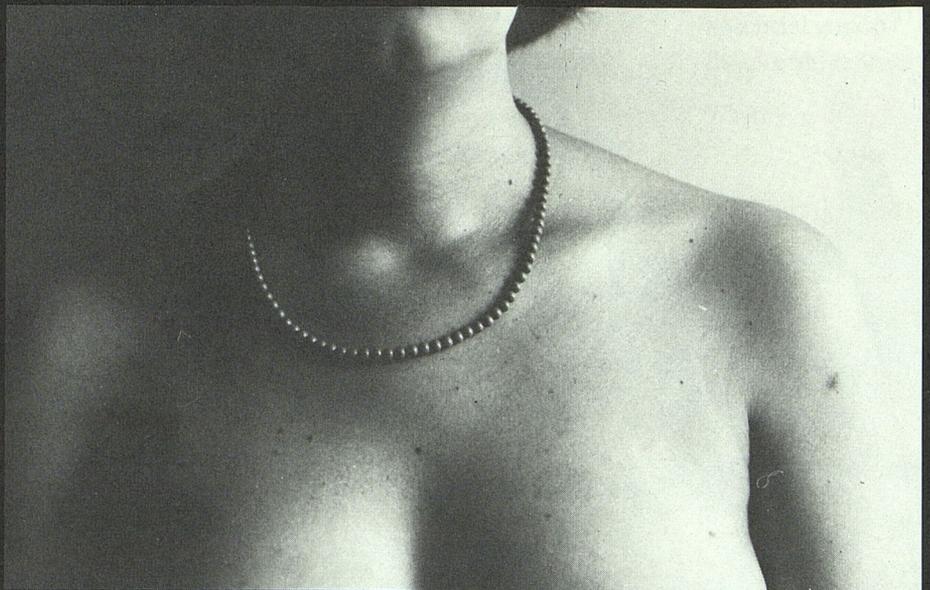
De acuerdo a estas creencias, por ejemplo, una mujer encinta no puede usar collares, ni ningún otro objeto alrededor del cuello, porque puede provocar que su hijo nazca estrangulado con el cordón umbilical; no puede matar ella misma ningún animal, ni ver que se sacrifique uno en su presencia, porque puede provocar que su hijo nazca muerto.

Estas supersticiones se vinculan a la santería como producto de la mezcla de creencias religiosas africanas y católicas. Por ejemplo: el cinturón ceñido al vientre que protege a la criatura de malos pensamientos, venganzas o odio de enemigos del padre o la madre, se lleva oculto bajo la ropa y es un elemento de santería así como el convencimiento de que las criaturas nacieron gracias a los poderes mágicos de la ceiba, árbol sagrado al que se le rinde culto.

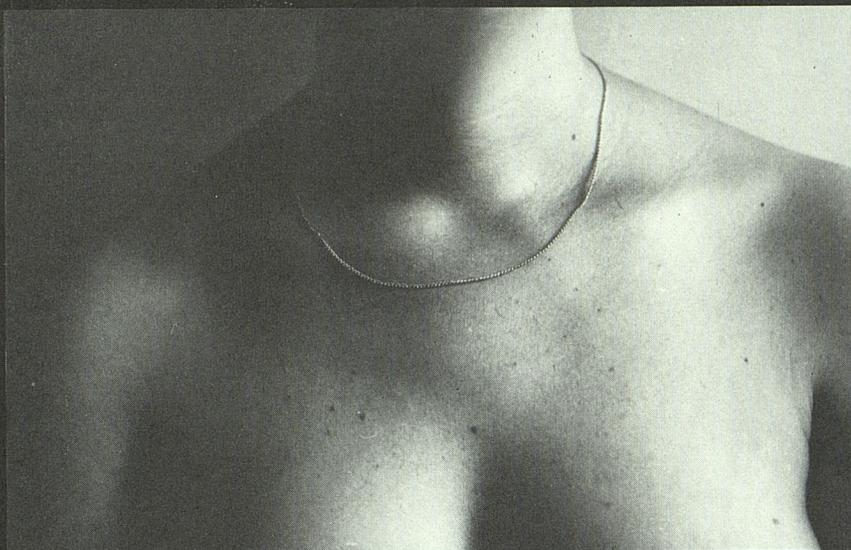
La práctica conciente de estas creencias, por una parte, y la actitud irónica o de negación de las mismas, por otra, son discursos paralelos que determinan la lectura de la obra. Esta dualidad será disuelta de acuerdo a la visión y posición que asuma el espectador



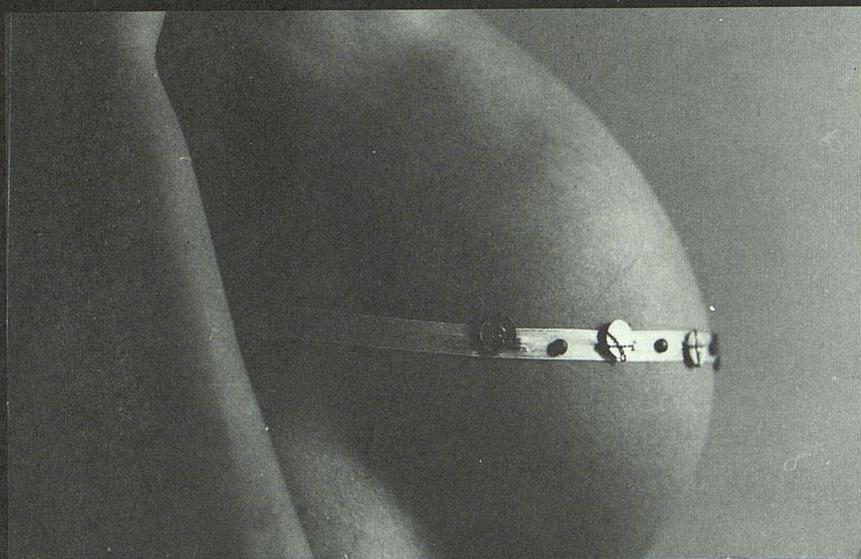
*Para Concebir.
No matar, ni ver
matar animales.*



*Te nace ahogado
con el cordón.*



No podrá moverse más.



Muchas venganzas se satisfacen en el hijo de la persona odiada.

TO CONCEIVE

MARTA
MARIA
PEREZ

To Conceive is a work that was made between 1985 and 1986, based on my personal experience of motherhood.

This work is based on the thought, the superstitions, and some popular beliefs concerning conception, with text and image forming a complementary relationship.

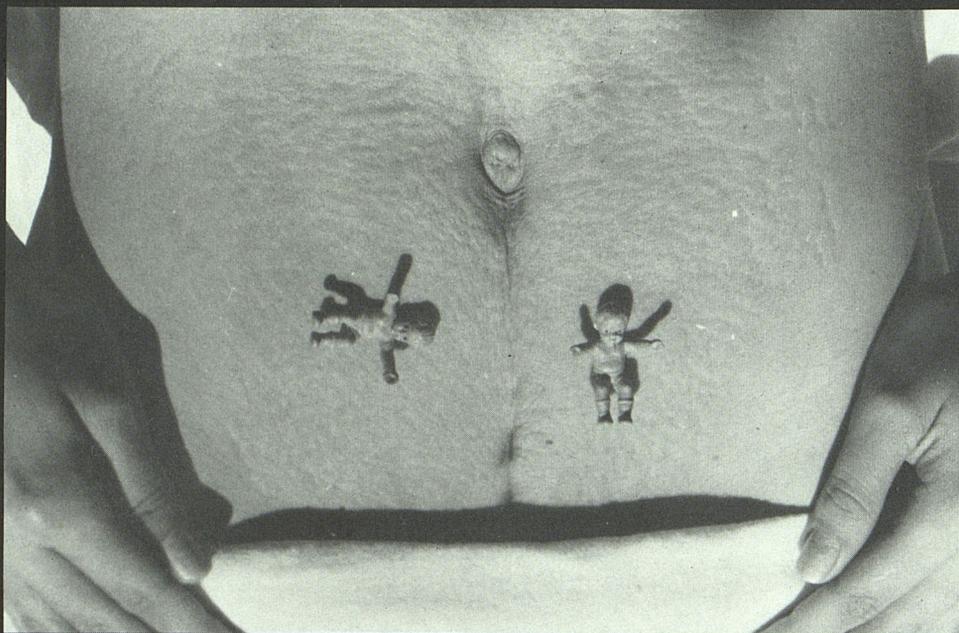
According to these beliefs, for example, a pregnant woman cannot wear necklaces or any other object around her neck, because this could cause her child to be born strangled by its umbilical cord. She cannot kill any animal or witness its being sacrificed, because this could cause her child to be born dead.

These superstitions are drawn from Santería, a mix of African and Catholic religious beliefs. For example: the belt around the womb that protects the being from evil thoughts, vengefulness, or hatred from the father's or mother's enemies and is worn, hidden, beneath the clothing, is a practice pertaining to Santería, as is the conviction that creatures are born thanks to the magic powers of the *ceiba*, the sacred tree, which is worshipped.

The conscious practice of these beliefs, on the one hand, and the attitude of irony or negation or both, on the other hand, are parallel discourses that determine the reading of the work. This duality will be dissolved in accordance with the vision and position assumed by the spectator, because "whoever believes in these things does not play with them"



7.45 a.m.



*Estas me las dió la ceiba,
su savia y sus aires
dan vida.*

ESPAÑOL

porque, "El que cree en estas cosas, no juega con ellas"—siendo ésta una de las dos posibles actitudes del espectador—y al que no cree, no le preocupa ironizar o manipular estos valores—la otra actitud a asumir.

Establezco una especie de distanciamiento entre el espectador y estas dos alternativas paralelas, utilizando mi propio cuerpo, además de que quizás alguna otra mujer en las mismas condiciones, ya sea por superstición y miedo o simplemente por pudor no hubiera aceptado ser fotografiada en semejantes actitudes.

ENGLISH

(this being one of the spectator's possible attitudes). For those who do not believe, ironizing or manipulating these values presents no trouble.

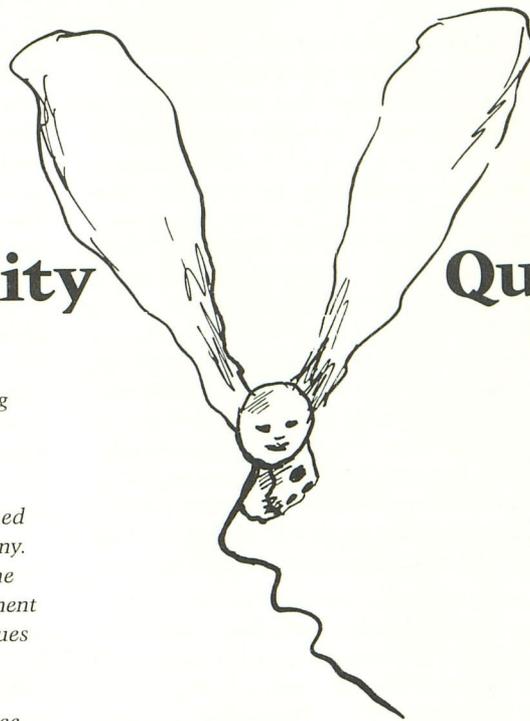
I establish a kind of distance between the spectator and these two parallel alternatives by using my own body, perhaps more so than another woman who, though in the same condition, due to superstition and fear, or simply shame, would not have allowed herself to be photographed in the same situation.

Marta Maria Perez is an artist living and working in Cuba.

Story-Box:

The Spirituality

Question



To frame the questions for this project, I spent over a year noting my thoughts about how spirituality, new paradigm thinking, ecofeminism, and ecology (or simply, for the purpose of these questions, "spirituality") have developed from the early '70s Goddess spirituality to the present. This evolution has broadened and deepened into a philosophic world view now shared by many. By including many voices I have tried to present a sampler of the current dialogue and indicate the thinking of many of the prominent writers whose books and teaching have helped to articulate issues of spirituality. (A list of books is included in this issue.)

For this anniversary issue of *Heresies*, I used my "Story-Gathering Boxes," a participatory process in an ongoing art piece that began in the early '70s. The boxes contain cards with questions stamped on them, and the gallery-going public is asked to write responses on the cards. For this project I mailed the cards with questions to women around the country who are most actively speaking out on these issues. Nearly all of them responded—often very generously and fully.

Here are the questions and a selection of the responses.

Gathered Responses
and Illustrations by
Mary Beth Edelson



1 NEW PARADIGM/SPIRITUALITY. Assuming that there is a new paradigm emerging in our world, do you think there is a spiritual dimension to it? How would you discuss it?

With great care and concern! What I mean when I say "spiritual" and what most white feminists mean by the term are so breathtakingly different that any conversations about it become a frightening or hysterically funny exercise in dis-communication. After many years of trying to talk about it personally I give up! One person's "new paradigm" is another community's "traditional belief"—same old white man's rag with pretty new rationales for white Western ideological, intellectual, and political supremacy.

Paula Gunn Allen

The emerging paradigm involves, among other processes, a resymbolization of experience; one that reexamines, thereby revalues, segments of social and natural reality that were cast out as shadows. And I don't mean to imply that this revaluing will mean bringing that which has been shadow into light. I prefer dusk and dawn, times of shadows. All of us spent our first nine months in the shade. I perceive the spiritual dimension of this new paradigm as an *embracing* of shadows; inviting unknowing—that which is beyond direct physical, emotional, and mental manipulation—to serve as guide and source of power, rather than treating it as an illness to be denied, feared, or fixed. **Rachel Bagby**

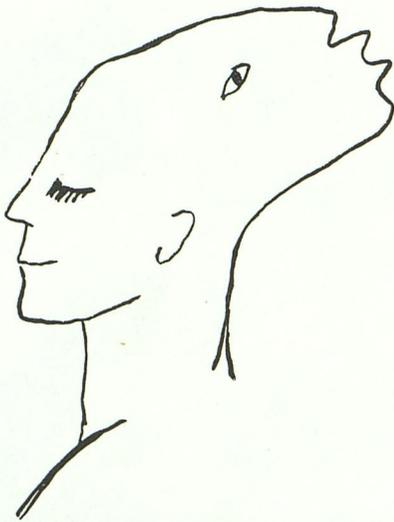
Very difficult to discuss. Our description of reality is so fractured. We do not have a vocabulary that allows us to speak directly about the wholeness of experience. Think how absurd it is that one must write "wholeness of experience." All dimensions, for example, are spiritual. Matter and spirit are not separate. Many aspects of the "new paradigm" point to this, but not all who see this paradigm grasp this significance, nor the political implications. (Of course, just as everything is spiritual, it is also political.) In the new paradigm what is "spiritual" no longer belongs in a separate "untouchable" category, nor is it alienated from sensuality, sexuality, ordinary life, sustenance. **Susan Griffin**

I just heard Helen Caldicott speak. Her talk was called "If You Love This Planet." For me (and others too), the new spirituality involves an awakening of our sense of responsibility for the fate of the earth. The sense that everything we do counts; the willingness to give up old patterns of confrontation, the animus *against*; the return of feelings of reverence and awe; a feeling of belonging to a larger pattern; a commitment to transpersonal levels of reality. *Heightened AWARENESS*. Contact with something beyond the busy-ness of our lives, our own relentless interests, concerns, hopes, fears, frustrations. **Suzi Gablik**

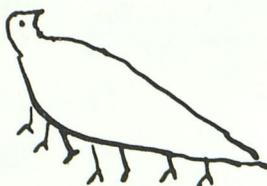
2 SPIRITUALITY/POLITICS. *How does spirituality affect your political involvements? Do you feel it galvanizes you toward social action? Do you think they enrich each other? How do you balance your spiritual side with your political side?*

I find it difficult to separate spirituality from my own politics. If spirituality is our link to the entire universe, and the higher consciousness is concerned with the survival of the planet and respect for all life on it, then actions on these concerns are spiritually motivated. It is only when we perceive these actions as separated from the underlying motivations for them that we are able to refer to these actions as purely political. On the other hand, if actions are motivated solely by individual greed, ego and the desire for power, those actions may also be regarded as political but stemming from a desire for individual gain. Perhaps we should begin to define the word "politics" in the context of its source of motivation.

Merlin Stone



Lately there is a great deal of confusion about this. A sort of equation of "spirituality" and social apathy, or worse "forbearance." Truth telling and the refusal to collaborate with wrong-doing are essential spiritual acts. In order to engage in these one must be able to tell right from wrong, to judge. To be silent in the name of "spirituality" can aid and abet terrible and cruel acts. To be silent, for example, in the face of U.S. aid to the Contras, or when witnessing abuse in a family. Real spirituality galvanizes toward political action, and also sustains through difficult times, not as a balance, but as a path, a way of living. **Susan Griffin**



I work now with individuals and small groups as deeply as is possible and at the organic pace each particular process requires. The purpose is to become responsibly all that one can be. This work has given me experience and trust that such intense and even painful, personal transformations may be as "catching" as disease, fear, mayhem. As each of us learns to metabolize and to be responsible for our own negativity and power-shadows, we may help the collectives in which we live to become less toxic.

Struggling through to mutually respectful communication, cleaning up a polluted stream, working with the abused and homeless (psychologically, physically, politically), writing and teaching, protesting destruction or supporting life in one person or a nation are equivalent symbols and actions to me. From this depth perspective every action and every relationship is potentially a social/political and spiritual action and relationship. Thus, I find no imbalance; only the problems of allocating time and accepting tasks according to my personal capacities. **Sylvia Perera**

My spiritual and political "sides" are the same. All the work I do—writing, teaching, ritual-making, organizing, taking direct action, living collectively, blockading, etc.—is a direct outgrowth of my understanding of the earth as alive. I do a lot of resistance work—from blockading nuclear weapons tests to going to Nicaragua with Witness for Peace. I have found that actively resisting systems of destruction is enormously creative and spiritually empowering. Actions I've taken part in have taught us the skills and processes and generated the structures we need to live in alternative ways. What I have trouble balancing is my time—figuring out what to do when and how to rest (that four-letter word!). **Starhawk**

My first political acts were with the Episcopal Church. Black-white race retreats in the '50s. Marching on Washington. Teaching on the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota in the '60s. In the '70s in the feminist spirituality movement I learned that there once were cultures in which power was inner connection was social bonding was communal action. Today my sense of that which is bigger than my self catalyzes and enriches my political action. It hasn't always. In the Vietnam days I identified with that which is smaller than me—my anger and rebellion. I was young, and my Sioux blood brother had been killed at DaNang. What I lacked in my own sense of power I conveniently gained from group energy.

Last week I testified at a hearing to stop a nuclear-processing plant in San Miguel county, New Mexico. I spoke of the psychology of impending disaster and its manifestation in the Spanish community there. When one of the Alamo's scientists cross-examined me, I sent heat energy to him and felt my own chakras vibrant and strong, rooting me in the life energy and activating my potential.

I do not know if we will survive or not.

What seems most important now is that we live holy.

Chellis Glendinning

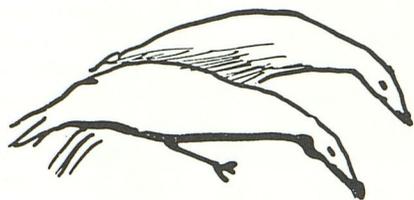
The evolution of ecofeminism, which weds spirituality and ecology, would not have been possible without the grassroots practices of feminists who, turning away from traditional religion, found a spiritual home in the Goddess and nature. Women's spirituality has been politically aware, revolutionary rather than reformist, addressing a range of contemporary issues that are informed by spirituality, our attitude toward life on earth. **Elinor Gadon**

3 RELIGION/THREATENING. *Those who are eager to put down spirituality often try to equate it with religion. Can you comment on this? Why do you think spirituality is so threatening to some people?*

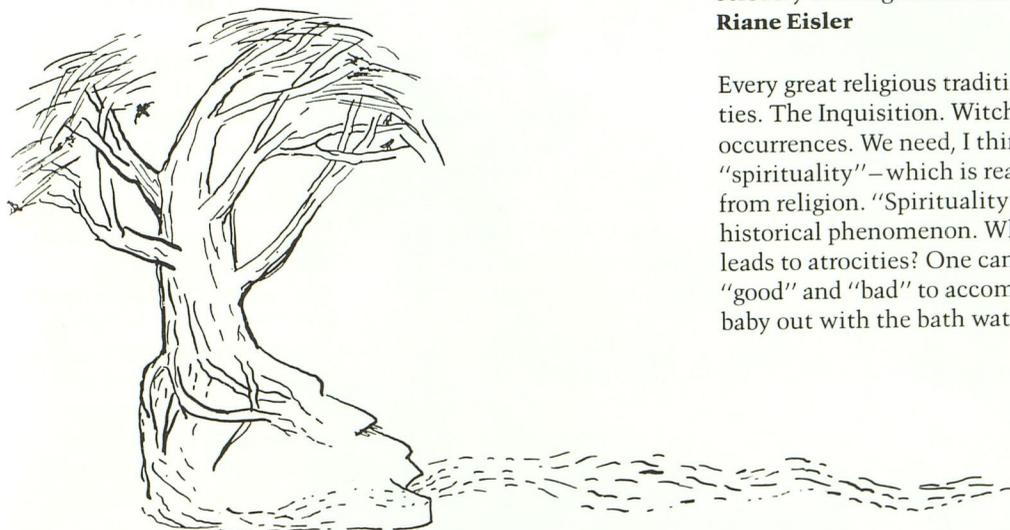
Religion and family are most often equated: "pray together/stay together," etc. Spirituality is unique—the individual and her/his search. It does not necessarily exist within traditional confines, under arches, at the foot of altars. So, that search which equates the individual with accessibility to the spiritual rather than organized religion as housing the spirit is dangerous to those who have carefully built that foundation, written those texts, hewed the stones that house us. In spirituality there is no house but the human, no ethos but that which emanates from our spirit, and the text is still being written. To the rigid, to the fundamentalists, to those comfortable in their particular context, this is very dangerous.

E.M. Broner

Trying to put down spirituality means two things to me: 1) the person is terribly afraid of being out of control; 2) the person is anxious to deny or even destroy the spiritual equilibrium reached by another person. **Ntozake Shange**



My "spirituality" IS a religion—the Old Religion of the Goddess. Actually I'm beginning to like the term "spirituality" less and less—it implies some separation of body and spirit, which is *exactly* antithetical to what the Old Religion teaches. A *religion* makes demands on us, gives us a set of ethics to live up to, and implies a community to whom we are accountable—all of which I think are good things. But people often confuse religion with dogma or belief systems and think it means obedience to authority, which they rightfully don't like. All those things are often true of various religions but not of the Goddess traditions, which if anything promote anarchy, irreverence, and bad attitude (all of which I also think are good). **Starhawk**



Women are sloughing off and ignoring—or courageously confronting—the patriarchal elements in religions, which, after all, are based on the most ludicrous assertions, having no basis in fact: that the universe is ruled by some distant, judgmental Old Nobodaddy on a throne in the sky; that the male, being the same sex as the sky-god, is supreme; that nature and female sexuality are lowly but dangerous and must be transcended; and that life can be understood in terms of dualistic projections. This kind of thinking, pervasive as it is today, is simply a product of human history's "lost weekend," circa 4500 B.C. (in Europe) to the present. For far longer, the locus of the sacred was Earth—the Earth community, the Earth processes, and the Earth cycles. That orientation has remained alive in indigenous cultures, including the Native American nations; in Taoism; and in the contemporary revival of Goddess spirituality. **Charlene Spretnak**

Many people identify religion and spirituality with authoritarian forms of, as Mary Daly so aptly put it, "necrophilic nothing loving." Christianity in particular, but certainly not only Christianity, has defined the spirit in opposition to the flesh, teaching us to despise our bodies and our sexuality, to deny our finitude and inevitable death, and instilling fear of eternal condemnation by a judgmental God in the minds of children and adults. Moreover, many people have experienced Christianity as an authoritarian system in which they are told what to believe, rather than guided to acknowledge and articulate the presence of the sacred in their own lives. Spirituality is threatening to many people because it conjures up images of authoritarianism and escapism. In addition, many people fear the sacred, because it challenges the presuppositions of modern life, especially the assumption (particularly dear to liberals and Marxists) that human beings with their rational minds can resolve (control) all of the world's problems. For these people (many of them feminists) even nonauthoritarian and life-affirming forms of spirituality and religion are viewed with suspicion, at best as a diversion from "real" problems, and at worst as threatening the hegemony of the rational intellect. **Carol P. Christ**

Today, as we reclaim our rightful place as women, we are also reclaiming our spirituality. This threatens the very foundations of the dominator system, which is everywhere buttressed by religious dogmas of male (and "masculine") supremacy. In terms of the most fundamental sexual politics, a feminist spirituality is therefore intensely political—and hence the ultimate taboo for those consciously or unconsciously seeking to maintain the dominator system.

Riane Eisler

Every great religious tradition has its own history of atrocities. The Inquisition. Witch burnings. These are not isolated occurrences. We need, I think, to scrutinize our idea of "spirituality"—which is really in the long run not separate from religion. "Spirituality" is the essence, but religion is the historical phenomenon. What in our idea of "spirituality" leads to atrocities? One cannot simply throw out the idea of "good" and "bad" to accomplish this. This is throwing the baby out with the bath water. **Susan Griffin**

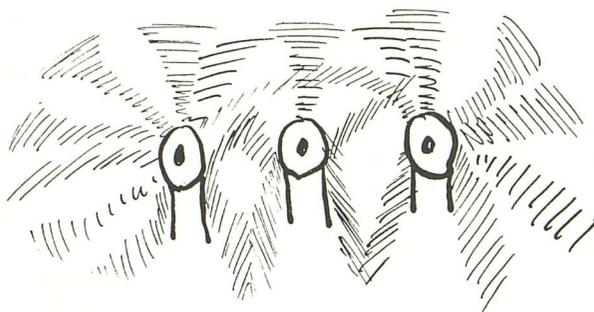
4 FEMININE PRINCIPLE. *What does "feminine principle" in the universe mean to you?*

In the history of our gender, our longings were in the context of the familial and the communal and that separates us from males and gives us a very different ethos.... I don't know if we are more nesting, but we do not have the principle of fighting for the sake of its own heroics, nor are our women heroes those who make earth into a carnage. We genderize the universe as naturally seasonal, naturally interconnective and linked. We are not so obsessed with finding the "missing link," for it is all linkage. **E.M. Broner**

"Feminine principle" doesn't mean much—it's one of the many terms that makes us *think* we know what we're talking about when we don't. I think we should declare a moratorium on its use. **Starhawk**

The word "feminine" is problematic because it is a cultural construct and its qualities differ from culture to culture, from historical period to historical period. Does it not become an essentialist universalization of qualities that may or may not pertain to women—depending on the culture, epoch, etc.? Yet, to abandon this adjective is to return to a purely biological, or anatomical, definition of *women* (a word that Monique Wittig would claim is also a patriarchal construct). Some feminists are currently strengthening the word "feminine" to include the concept of "empowering," but it is still an adjective that is loaded, charged, and burdened by patriarchy's stereotypes. **Gloria Orenstein**

Not a term that I personally relate to. I know feminists now use it, but I still feel it encourages dualistic thinking. I would prefer a new language. **Irene Diamond**



The term "feminine principle" in the universe is not one that I use, though I find that the symbols of the Goddesses (which I no longer use exclusively) powerfully image our participation in the cycles of birth, death, and transformation, and our connection to all beings in the web of life. I firmly believe that all beings in the web of life are connected and that men as well as women are capable of recognizing that connection. In my experience it does seem that many women recognize and affirm that connection more easily than most white men. But I am wary of attributing to women as a group capacities which name us as essentially different from men. For me the term "feminine principle" lacks concrete meaning if it does not refer to qualities or capacities more associated with women than with men. **Carol P. Christ**



5 TABOO. *If you are active in the art world, or if you are not, do you think spirituality has become the last taboo—especially feminist spirituality?*

Yes, our icons, goddesses, body images, and organs are continually derided or minimized. Ana Mendieta's work as well as Mary Beth Edelson's and Wopo Holup's are instrumental in "tending our mothers' gardens," as Candace Hill-Montgomery and I used to say in response to Alice Walker's words. **Ntozake Shange**

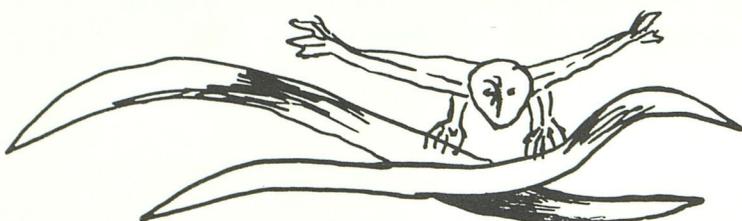
Whose art world? In the Native American (including Hawaiian, Eskimo, Indian) worlds you seldom do art without Spirit! Ethnocentrism is the last law and order of the white world. I can't wait till it's over. The *last taboo* is the white world—art, politics and spirituality is noticing that white is not the equivalent of universal, or even the most important. **Paula Gunn Allen**

Not really. It was a few years ago. I don't think it is now. Perhaps in the art world, which is not my world. I think the art world is in love with cynicism. That makes sense in a limited way as a reaction. But it is just a reaction. A rebellion. Not really a shift. Not a vision. Artists make possible a new kind of seeing. Cynicism is tired and the old, deadened and deadening way of seeing. The lens is opening up now, in any case, despite the art world. Art doesn't always obey the art world. **Susan Griffin**

Certainly NOT. It's the next BIG WAVE. **Suzy Gablik**

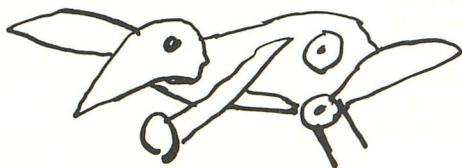
If we recognize that the art world is a marketplace, and if we push spirituality to its ultimate conclusions, then—in a world where all of life and its activities are sacred—those pieces we now sell as art objects would no longer be created to function in a secular society. Art would be used for sacred ceremonies, rituals, etc. Art would be judged by its energies; it might even be given as a sacred gift or offering. Thus, ultimately, the art business would be sacrilegious. If art takes on a sacred, spiritual function, it threatens big business! **Gloria Orenstein**

Everytime I name the "last taboo" another one seems to pop up. But yes, with my present view and interpretation of the world, it does appear that the roar of the female and the boundlessness of the spirit present the most compelling challenge to technological civilization—and to each and every one of us in it. **Chellis Glendinning**



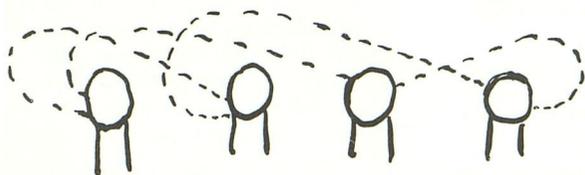
6 PROCESSES. What has your experience been with "new processes"? Do they really work? Can you give specific examples or an anecdote?

Yes, I am the leader of a group called the "Seder Sisters." Each year for 13 years now we have had alternative services at Passover, with the Haggadah of making exodus, of women with their own spirituality and political history addressing ourselves to the themes of our lives—loss, continuity, our mothers, justice, our political commitments, our spiritual commitments. It has been for most of us the real spiritual event of the year. The very fact that we seriously prepare for this occasion has made this a paradigm. This is what feminism, spirituality, and politics is about—the song on the tongue, the vision, the practical, the familial, the individual, and the communal. **E.M. Broner**



I believe that the networking that has evolved in feminist practice is a viable grassroots process for the transformation of our culture—inherently political and humanistically oriented. I am less positive about the transformative possibilities of ritual, even though when they develop out of the needs of the group and are repeatedly enacted by the same community, they are transformative and empowering for some, if not for all. Many rituals in which I have participated seem jerry-made and lack the awesomeness and mystery of what I have experienced in India, where they were part of a long tradition in which the participants were fully grounded. The rituals that have most affected me were those of Starhawk, who I feel is a natural and pastmaster at the ritual process. I spent Beltane with a pagan community in Mendocino who have been together a long time, and their nightlong ritual was absolutely magic, scary and unforgettable.

I wish the Women's Spirituality Movement had a home, a sacred place of residence where we could come for retreats and where we could meet together and work both experientially, and in dialogue, on the problems of creating effective ritual. **Elinor Gadon**

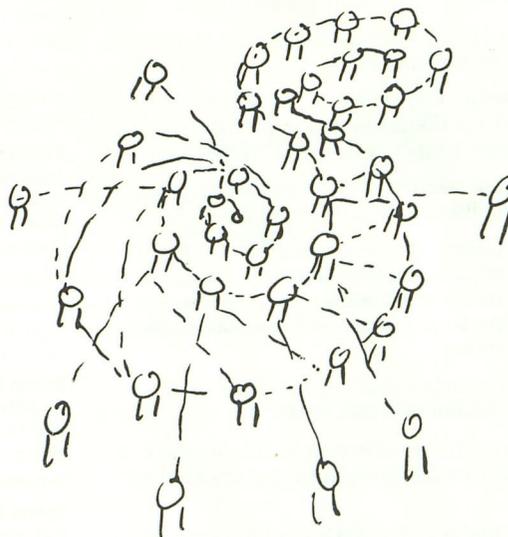


I see art as an important means of accessing feminine spirituality. It is a way of reawakening in us archetypal ways of feeling and thinking, and perhaps most important, of imagining. For it is a way of perceiving ourselves and our world in ways that honor our linking, our essential interconnectedness. In short, it is a way of accelerating the transformation from a dominator to a partnership world in all aspects of our lives.

The way we think, feel, and act is profoundly affected by myths and images. We are only now beginning to fully understand how dominator myths (such as the hero as killer) and dominator images (such as the equation of sexual pleasure and brutal domination in pornography) have influenced our lives. **Riane Eisler**



This is much like our confusion about politics. If the aims of members of a group are based upon a planetary concern and respect for all others, the process of group decision and action enriches the work being done. If members of a group still cling to ego needs and desire for individual power, this becomes evident in the group's process and usually results in arguments rather than discussion, rifts between segments within the group, or even the eventual dissolution of the group. It is certainly a learning process that reflects some of the difficulties of this transitional period. **Merlin Stone**



While I was rehearsing "Take Off from a Forced Landing" by Dianne McIntyre's Sounds-in-Motion, I had no child care. Not one company member looked annoyed or denigrated me. We wove my four-year-old into warm-ups and rehearsals as best we could. At the finale, she came in her rehearsal garb and pacifier to take her bow. The whole company applauded her. **Ntozake Shange**

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- Paula Gunn Allen is the author of *The Sacred Hoop*, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, and several collections of poetry, including *Shadow Country*.
- Rachel Bagby's compositions, performances, and writing embrace all of life. Her first solo recording, *Reach Across the Lines*, is available from Box 11066, Stanford, CA 94309.
- E. M. Broner, a novelist/ritualist, is at work on *The Repair Shop*, a mystical political novel.
- Carol P. Christ is the author of *Diving Deep and Surfacing* and *Laughter of Aphrodite* and co-editor of *Womanspirit Rising* and *Weaving the Visions*.
- Irene Diamond teaches in the political science department at the University of Oregon. She is co-editor of *Feminism and Foucault* and *Reweaving the World*.
- Mary Beth Edelson is an artist living in New York City whose work actively engages political and spiritual levels of consciousness.
- Riane Eisler is the author of *The Chalice and the Blade* and co-director of the Center for Partnership Studies, Pacific Grove, California.
- Suzi Gablik's book *Has Modernism Failed?* will be followed by a sequel entitled *The Reenchantment of Art*.
- Elinor Gadon is an ecofeminist and art historian interested in analyzing images and symbols in a cross-cultural context. She is the author of *The Once and Future Goddess*.
- Chellis Glendinning, a psychologist and the author of *Waking Up in the Nuclear Age*, is writing a book on modern technology.
- Susan Griffin, the author of *Woman and Nature*, *Pornography and Silence*, and *Unremembered Country* (a collection of poetry), is writing a book on nuclear war.
- Sylvia Brinton Perera is a Jungian analyst, teacher, and author of *Descent to the Goddess*, *The Scapegoat Complex*, and *Dreams: A Portal to the Source*.
- Gloria F. Orenstein, a professor at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, has recently written a book on reclaiming the goddess in contemporary women's art and literature.
- Ntozake Shange is the author of *Sassafrass, Cypress, and Indigo*; *Nappy Edges*; and *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf*.
- Charlene Spretnak is the author of *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece*, *The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics*, and *Green Politics* (with Fritjof Capra).
- Starhawk is the author of *The Spiral Dance*, *Dreaming the Dark*, and *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority and Mystery*.
- Merlin Stone is the author of *When God Was a Woman* and *Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood* and director of the CBC radio series *Return of the Goddess*.

ERRATA

Heresies 23: Coming of Age

Pages 12–18. In Lucy R. Lippard and Mary Mizenko's article, "Right Now Is Always the Best Age," the contribution by Frances Clark was inadvertently omitted. It is as follows:

Francis Clark (75): I'm the same age I always was. I've known people in their teens and twenties that were dead. It depends on your outlook. I worked with a teenager who I took for about 30. She was the oldest teenager I ever saw. She was an old lady, ready to die... Society treats women differently anyway, whether or not they're older. May not as much, or blatantly, as they used to do, but women are different anyway. They're physically different. They think differently. Why would they want to be a carbon copy of somebody anyway?

The last line of the article was also omitted:

Jennifer Albert (21): ...I won't have to worry all the time that I'm going to go back and be incompetent... So I guess I do still care what people think about me!

The authors would also like it to be known that Lucy R. Lippard is a 50-year-old activist living in New York and Boulder, Colorado, and that Mary Mizenko is a 27-year-old artist living in San Francisco.

Page 61. Hettie Jones' title and byline appeared over a poem by Carole Rose Livingston, and vice versa. The middle poem is *45 in the Washroom Mirror* by Carole Rose Livingston, and the poem at the bottom of the page is *The Empty Nest Syndrome, or Sing a Song of Solitude* by Hettie Jones.

Page 68. In the article "Coming of Age: Words Where It Counts," the four names below Eleanor Wachtel's portraits were transposed. Reading from the left, the portraits are of Adele Wiseman, Jane Rule, Dorothy Livesay, and Audrey Thomas. The photographs should not have been cropped by the designer but were.

Page 73. In Helene Aylon's article, "On Common Ground," the ninth line should read "marked with truck prints." The woman in the photograph is not the author, as may be implied by the layout.

Our apologies to the authors and artists.

Patricia Spears Jones

Gospel

for my mother

She's been crying now
for hours
singing old songs
She is a blues song
8 bar 12 bar
blues song
long
long
past the last chorus
and it is midnight
or later
and there's a whiskey
or maybe just a beer
and it's quiet
so quiet
except for the music
of her tears

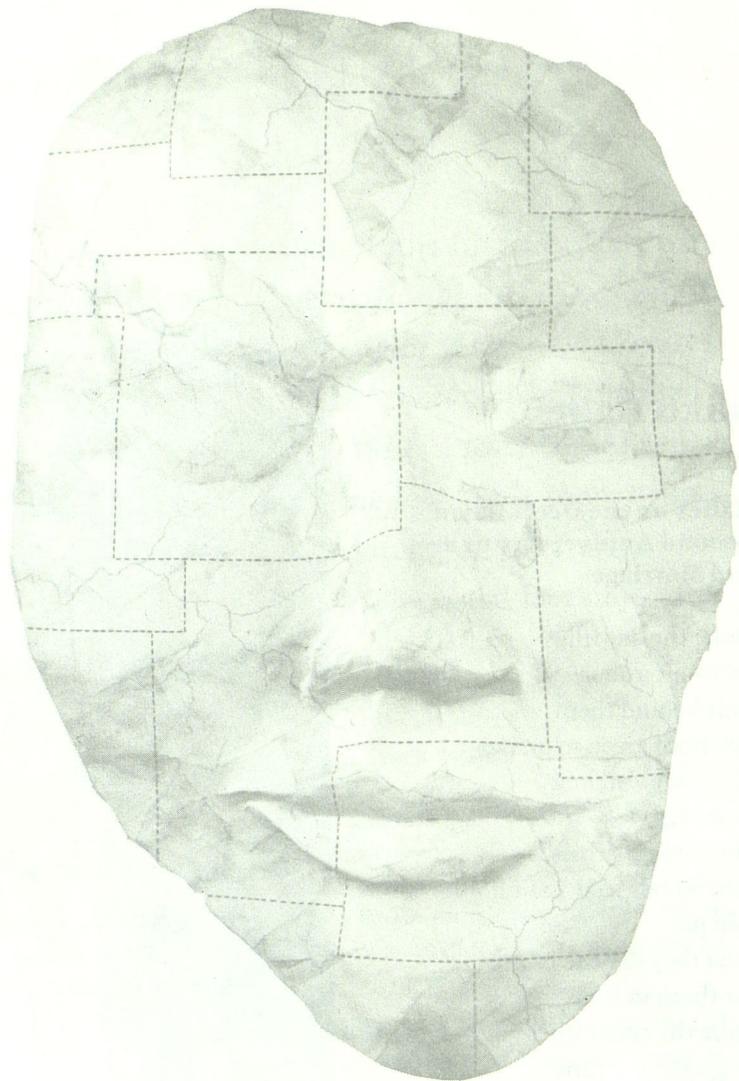
The sounds in her
throat
start waves of memories
suddenly
there is an echo
of a chorus
of a gospel pearl
about returning
to the temple
to be cleansed
to be cleansed

White uniformed sisters
stand guard 'round their
weeping comrade
and all the pain
goes away
In the shout
In the holding on of hands
In the sweat
sweet water
Scent of cheap cologne
and talcum powder
Returning to the temple
to be cleansed
to be cleansed

There are stars in her tears
Lightyears have crossed her brow
She has traveled with this knowledge
of pain

of rape
of pain
for too long

and that gospel song
comes like a blessing
beautiful
black
loving
Returning to the place
of mercy
of mercy on me/She
stops her weeping
stops her dreaming
stops this silence
with the clenching
of her fist
with the opening
of her heart
much like a rose
under arkansas sun



SHARON GILBERT *The Look*, 1986, mixed media. Sharon Gilbert is an artist working in several media. Her artist books have been widely exhibited.

She has made her blues song
gospel
She has made her gospel
real
She claims all her powers
perhaps curses the darkness
and waits to generate new heavens
in her eyes.

Patricia Spears Jones, currently living in Boston, is a poet, a student at Vermont College in the MFA in creative writing program, and the author of *Mythologizing Always*.

Kimiko Hahn

Day Lilies on the Occasion of the Second Anniversary of my Second Marriage

Watching the day lilies
shrivel by afternoon
the buds behind them
swollen from green to orange,
I think of our wedding
two years ago.
Mother brought armfuls
from the woods near their home.
She told me
in China they dry the blossoms
and eat them in soup.
I imagine the spent lilies
opening a second time
in the hot broth.

Untitled

Georgia O'Keeffe died yesterday at 98.
All day I think of her adobe house
and orchids. The years without Stieglitz.
I think of heat so hot
the lips are always dry.
And air is air.

Kimiko Hahn is the mother of two girls and
the author of two books: *Air Pocket* and
We Stand Our Ground (with Susan Sherman
and Gale Jackson).



ELLEN LANYON *Bomarzo Cascade*, 1987, acrylic on canvas, 72" × 54". Ellen Lanyon, who is represented in major museum and corporate collections, came from Chicago to New York and now teaches at Cooper Union.

ONE PLUS OR MINUS ONE

A woman within or in juxtaposition to a patriarchal system; in the first case, left-wing politics; in the second, the military. In *The Second International* Rosa Luxemburg penetrates the unity and sameness of the world leaders of socialism at the 1904 Congress in Amsterdam. In *Eden Hotel* the waitress serves the wine to the killers of Rosa Luxemburg who celebrate the day following the murder, January 16, 1919. Presence. Absence. Substitution. Proportion. Quota. Power. Powerlessness. One less. One more or less. Rosa Luxemburg flared across the European dark like a meteor, an aberration. Her murder restores the usual dark. The waitress brings her tray. The usual faces look out. Order is restored. In Berlin. In Chile. In El Salvador.

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

The Congress of the Second International in Amsterdam in 1904 with 33-year-old Rosa Luxemburg attending as delegate from Germany and Poland. She is surrounded by the leading figures of world socialism, including August Bebel and Karl Kautsky, also from Germany; Jean Jaurès, France; Sen Katayama, Japan; Georgi Plekhanov, Russia; Keir Hardie, England; Morris Hillquit, U.S.A. When the great French socialist leader Jaurès attacks Rosa Luxemburg and the German delegation for, among other things, continuing to support Dreyfus, there is no one present to translate his fiery speech from the French. Rosa Luxemburg adds to her triumph by spontaneously reproducing his polemic against her into equally vigorous German.

In 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War, Rosa Luxemburg is convicted of anti-war activities, having urged German workers to resist the war, to refuse to kill workers from other countries. She spends the duration of the war in prison, sending out a continuous flow of letters, articles, and plans for the development of international socialism. She writes:

The present World War, whether it brings victory or defeat for anyone ... means the defeat of socialism and democracy. ... Today's World War is thus developing all the preconditions for new wars.

Released from prison after three years and four months, she returns to Berlin, where she is murdered by a death squad serving as an unofficial arm of the military.

EDEN HOTEL

A celebration by soldiers and officers of the Garde-Kavallerie-Schützen-Division (Division of Cavalry and Riflemen) in their temporary military headquarters at the Eden Hotel in Berlin on January 16, 1919, the day following the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

Rifleman Otto Runge, who administered the two riflebutt blows to the head that killed Rosa Luxemburg, and First Lieutenant Vogel, officer-in-charge, who finished her off with a revolver shot and ordered her body thrown into the Landwehr Canal, were brought before a military tribunal May 8–14.

Soldier Runge was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for attempted manslaughter. In 1933 he applied for financial compensation for unjust punishment, citing his early contributions to the Nazi cause. The government of Adolf Hitler awarded him 6,000 deutschmarks.

First Lieutenant Vogel was convicted of committing a misdemeanor while on guard duty, of illegally disposing of a corpse, and of filing an incorrect report. He was sentenced to two years and four months. However, provided with false passport and visa, he escaped to Holland the day after sentencing. There he awaited the inevitable amnesty.

On January 25, 1919, a symbolic funeral took place in the streets of Berlin: Rosa Luxemburg's coffin was empty. Her body floated to the surface of the canal on May 31.

MAY STEVENS



THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

ONE PLUS OR MINUS ONE

was presented by the New Museum of Contemporary Art in February 1988 as an installation in its main gallery. The two photomurals were each approximately 11' x 17'.



EDEN HOTEL

MAY STEVENS

Her recent installation at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York was torn off the walls of the main gallery at the end of the exhibition. It was, as Carol Jacobsen wrote in her February 1988 article in *Art in America*, "entrusted to the mind."



PHOTO: SABRA MOORE

MICHELE GODWIN *Unmasked*, 1986, hand-colored print, 14" × 18". Michele Godwin is a visual artist who lives and works in New York.

AND THE HERESY OF BLACK FEMINIST CREATIVITY

MICHELE WALLACE

In short, the image of black women writing in isolation, across time and space, is conduced toward radical revision. The room of one's own explodes its four walls to embrace the classroom, the library, and the various mechanisms of institutional and media life, including conferences, the lecture platform, the television talk show, the publishing house, the 'best seller,' and collections of critical essays.

—Hortense Spiller, "Cross-currents, Discontinuities: Black Feminist Fiction"¹

In the past seventeen years, or more, black women writers have begun to produce a literature that transcends its intrinsic political boundaries of invisibility to address the world. Yet despite the commercial success of some books by some black women writers, most black women writers are not well known. Their creativity—especially if it doesn't fit the Book-of-the-Month Club/NY Times Best-Seller mold—continues to suffer the fate of marginality. Perhaps the most persuasive evidence of this predicament is the way black feminist interpretation has been all but extinguished in mainstream and academic discourses, despite the omnipresent mechanical reproduction of interpretation through electronic media. Meanwhile, the highly visible success of a few works—including my own *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* in 1979—sometimes obscures the revolutionary challenge black feminist creativity could pose to white male cultural hegemony.

Sadder still is that nobody in particular and everybody in general seems responsible for this situation. Universities, museums, and publishing houses, what Ishmael Reed calls "cultural detention centers," run by white men and their surrogates, remain the unrelenting arbiters of cultural standards, which exclude or erase the diverse creativity of nonelite populations. Post-modernists, new histo-

ricists, deconstructionists, Marxists, Afro-Americanists, feminists, and even some black female academics, for the most part, fail to challenge the exclusionary parlor games of knowledge production.

While I will focus on black women writers, my overall concern is with black feminist creativity in general and with the manner in which, in fields like popular music, opera, and modeling, media visibility may be allowed to substitute for black female economic and political power, whereas in more politically articulate fields such as film, theatre, and TV news commentary, black feminist creativity is routinely gagged and "disappeared."

From the black woman whose face is featured on the cover of *Vogue* to the recordings of black female rappers to Sue Simmons interviewing rhythm n' blues singer "Wicked" Wilson Pickett on the New York TV talk show *Live At Five*, at some level, all black feminist creativity wants to make the world a place that will be safe for women of color, their men, and their children. Nevertheless, I will refer to black feminist creativity at its most profound—in the novels and poetry of writers like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Ntozake Shange; in the performances of singers like Nina Simone, Miriam Makeba, and Betty Carter; and in the work of artists like Faith Ringgold (my mother) and Bettye Saar—as the "incommensurable," or "variations on negation," in order to characterize the precarious dialectic of a creative project that is forced to be "other" to the creativity of white women and black men, who are "other" themselves.² You've probably heard a great deal of talk about the "other"—lately the problem of choice in culture and politics. The question being posed here concerns the "other" of the "other" in public discourse: the culture's potential for the Rainbow Coalition in general, black feminist creativity in particular.

For Marxist historian Hayden White, the tropological—or the tendency of all written argument to rely on figurative language to persuade—is a good name for the perpetual gaps in that discourse which ordinarily describes itself as rational, logical, and therefore universally true. I would add that these tropes or gaps in the dominant discourse become a kind of road map of where the bodies—the bodies of those who have been ignored or negated—are buried. "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism," Walter Benjamin once pointed out. Moreover, as feminist philosopher Alison Jagger has said, "the myth of dispassionate investigation bolsters the epistemic authority of white men," a procedure that results in their "emotional hegemony." Therefore, in a subversive critical process, "outlaw emotions become a primary motivation for investigation," which is another way of saying that the personal becomes political yet again.³

In this light, what interests me is the problem of a black female cultural perspective, which for the most part is not allowed to become written in a society in which writing is the primary currency of knowledge. How then does black feminist creativity finally surface as writing? Moreover, can it be self-critical?

Hayden White uses the tropological to diagnose the discontinuities in white male cultural hegemony, while reconsolidating precisely the same hegemony. (This move is habitual among white male theorists, which continues to be the problem in using their work to other

ends.) In *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature*, Afro-American literary critic Houston Baker borrows the tropological from White to construct a black male cultural hegemony. Neither White nor Baker is concerned to read into the apparent gaps the disorderliness of sexuality.

Baker's key trope in describing the work of Richard Wright is a black hole, an area in which gravitation is so intense that no light can escape. Contrary to what we might expect, black holes are full not empty. They are unimaginably dense stars. "They are surrounded by an 'event horizon,' a membrane that prevents the unaltered escape of anything which passes through," Baker writes.

"I wanted them to deal with the problem of being a black woman writer."

"Light shone into a black hole disappears," it converts energy into mass that is infinitely compressed, and "all objects are 'squeezed' to zero volume."⁴

But a feminist physics major at the University of Oklahoma told me something else about black holes. Physicists now believe black holes may give access to other dimensions. An object or energy enters the black hole and is infinitely compressed to zero volume, as Baker reports; then it passes through to another dimension, whereupon the object and/or energy reassumes volume, mass, form, direction, velocity—all the properties of visibility and concreteness, but in another dimension. The idea of a black hole as a process—as a progression that appears differently, or not at all, from various perspectives—seems a useful way of illustrating how I conceive of incommensurability, or variations on negation, as characteristic of black feminist creativity.

The point in using the analogy of the black hole is not simply the obvious sexual one—nor even that if you add up all the cases of successful creative black women, you'll arrive at only a small fraction of black women engaged in creative acts—but rather that even successful creative black women have next to nothing to say about the nature of commentary

and interpretation in their respective fields. So to the extent that the arts exist as a byproduct of diverse acts of interpretation and analysis, black feminist creativity is virtually nonexistent. Moreover, it is nonexistent precisely because everybody (including many black women) agrees that black women have no interest in criticism, interpretation, and theoretical analysis, and no capacity for it.

In other words, the black hole represents the dense accumulation, without explanation or inventory, of black feminist creativity. Prevented from assuming a commensurable role in critical theory and the production of knowledge by a combination of external and internal pressures, it is confined to the aesthetic

and the commercial. To compensate for ghettoization, black feminist creativity's concentration in music and now literature has become provocatively intense. And yet it is still difficult, even for those who study this music and literature, to apprehend black feminist creativity as a continuous and coherent discourse.

What most people see of the black woman is a void, a black hole that appears empty, not full. The outsider sees black feminist creativity as a dark hole from which nothing worthwhile can emerge and in which everything is forced to assume the zero volume of nothingness, the invisibility, that results from the intense pressure of race, class, and sex.

Even when a media production is passed off as a translation of black feminist creativity—as in Steven Spielberg's translation of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*—it is crucial to speak of its inadequacies and failures. To those of us hypnotized by the dominant discourse, as Ntozake Shange put it in *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Unraveled*, black feminist creativity sounds like "half-notes scattered/without rhythm/no tune."⁵



When I wrote "The Myth of the Superwoman" in 1977–1978, I tried to subsume a lot of smaller, historically specific cultural myths about the strength of the black woman—such stereotypes as "mammy," "Sapphire," "matriarch,"

"Aunt Jemima"—under the rubric of one large, all-purpose myth. In the process, of course, I was defeating the very purpose of myth, which is to obscure contradiction and drown out history and the dialectical in a superficial (marketable) binary opposition. But that was not the way I saw things then.

It seemed to me that the evidence was everywhere in American culture that precisely because of their profound political and economic disadvantages, black women were considered to have a peculiar advantage. Not only did this premise seem basic to representations of black women in the dominant discourse, it was also becoming characteristic of a lot of Afro-American discourse.

No doubt, as Alice Walker said in her essay "To the Black Scholar,"⁶ I thought my ideas were more original than they were. Moreover, while my role models for cultural criticism in 1978 were Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer, Hunter Thompson, Joan Didion, and James Baldwin, an emergent feminist cultural studies approach has been instrumental in persuading me that style, or strategies of public address, has profound political implications in dealing with material concerning women of color because of their limited access to mainstream, academic, and "avant-garde" discourses.

Specifically, few black critics understood the rhetorical imperative—imposed by the combination of "white" media/marketplace and "black" audience—which produced *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*. A black woman writer who wants to write seriously about contemporary cultural issues and how they are socially constructed is faced with an almost insurmountable communication problem: if she takes a scholarly approach, she will be virtually ignored because black women have no power in that context; if she takes a colloquial "entertainment" approach—as I did in *Black Macho*—then she will be read, but she will be attacked and ostracized. Either way can cut the possibility of constructive commentary—in the work itself or in the criticism of that work—down to zero.⁷ The trick may be to fall somewhere in between the academic and the entertaining, as did Walker in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*. Yet her plain-spoken, "commonsense" style has its limits as well.

As for Walker's discussion of "The Myth of the Superwoman," she does not significantly disagree with my general thesis in her essay, originally written in 1979 as a letter to *The Black Scholar*. This issue of *The Black Scholar* respond-



PHOTO: ERIK LANDSBERG

VIVIAN E. BROWNE *Pinacea* ("Trees of the desert have arms, all of which always point up."), 1987, oil on canvas, triptych, 60" × 169". Vivian Browne is an artist living in New York.

ed to the controversy over the publication of my book and the connection between it and Shange's *For Colored Girls*, which was then on Broadway. Briefly, the controversy had to do with the problem of black images, and whether or not my work and Shange's work helped to perpetuate stereotypical images of the race. In a short prologue to the essay, Walker says that *The Black Scholar* refused to publish it because they considered the tone too "personal" and "hysterical."

What Walker takes exception to is my assertion that "the myth of the superwoman" is "unquestioned even by the occasional black woman writer or politician." "It is a lie," she reports having written to my publishers. "I can't speak for politicians but I can certainly speak for myself. I've been hacking away at that stereotype for years, and so have a good many other black women writers.' I thought not simply of Meridian, but of Janie Crawford, of Pecola, of Sula and Nell, of Edith Jackson, even of Iola Leroy and Megda, for God's sake. (Characters of black women writers Ms. Wallace is unacquainted with; an ignorance that is acceptable only in someone not writing a book about black women.)"⁸

I agree. But it wasn't true that I hadn't read Walker's second novel *Meridian* or Toni Morrison's *Sula* or Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, although Frances Harper's *Iola Leroy* wasn't generally available then (and Megda and Edith Jackson I still don't know). Like many other black women of my generation, I eagerly awaited the publication or reissue of black women's books. But as a young black woman who was in search of feminist solidarity and a writ-

ing career, I wanted something very specific from the black women writers I read. I had grown up in Harlem, not in the rural South. My family had lived in Harlem for three generations. To me, the South these writers recollected was fragmented and nostalgic. My mother Faith Ringgold was an artist, my grandmother Willi Posey was a fashion designer, and I had been the beneficiary of a private school education, purchased with greater difficulty than I was then capable of understanding—an education that had acquainted me with the extent to which black women were customarily denied cultural participation. I felt rebuffed by the unwillingness of black women writers to deal with a contemporary urban context. Moreover, I wanted them to deal with the problem of being a black woman writer, which seemed to me overwhelming, and I wanted them to do so immediately and explicitly, to cease their endless deflecting in their lyrical way about a rural Afro-American purity forever lost.

Of course, this view was unfair in that it did not take into account the work of Louise Meriweather, Ann Petry, Toni Cade Bambara, and Paule Marshall, although I had read the black feminist anthology *The Black Woman* from cover to cover when it was published in 1971, and I had also read Petry's *The Street*, Meriweather's *Daddy Was a Numbers Runner*, and some of Bambara's short stories.⁹ Yet none of this work had any particular impact on my misgivings about black women's fiction, because I saw this work, as well, as fundamentally continuous with the kind of mysticism about the power of "roots" that characterized their fictions in rural settings.

I read *Mules and Men* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston in 1971 and 1972, while I was a student majoring in English and writing at the City College of New York. Fascinated as much by Jane Austen and George Eliot as by Hurston, and already thinking of myself as a "black feminist" thanks to the encouragement and support of an actively feminist mother, I was in the front row of the first Women's Studies classes at City College.

I read *The Bluest Eye* in 1974, while working as a secretary at Random House, where Toni Morrison was then an editor. That summer Angela Davis often came to see Morrison to work on her autobiography. When it was published in 1975, I read it immediately. In 1975 I also attended the first conference of the National Black Feminist Organization in New York, at which Shirley Chisolm, Eleanor Holmes Norton, and Florynce Kennedy were keynote speakers. Alice Walker led a workshop discussion together with Faith, my mother, on black women in the arts.

It was around this time that I read Walker's first book of short stories *In Love and Trouble*, as well as the essay "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens," which immediately became essential reading for black feminists, but which

struck me then as afflicted by the same nostalgia for and valorization of the rural and the anonymity of the unlettered that I considered so problematic in the work of black women novelists. In particular, the premise of the article—that black women writers should speak for previous generations of silenced black women—posed certain conceptual difficulties for me. First, no one can really speak for anybody else. Inevitably, we silence others that we may speak at all. This is particularly true of “speaking” in print. Second, there was an implicit denial of the necessity for generational conflict and critical dialectic, which I found totally paralyzing. Anyhow, my mother was a prominent artist, well educated and active in the Women’s Movement. So how could I pursue Walker’s proposal? Moreover, didn’t it imply that black women writers would always “speak” from the platform of a silenced past?

Faith was then (and still is) involved on a daily basis in making a politically engaged black feminist art out of quilting, soft sculpture, sewing, painting, lettering, and performance. My interest in visual art and art criticism—which was shaped by Faith’s involvement with artists on the left organizing to protest the Vietnam War and the racism and sexism of establishment museums—was perhaps the largest influence on my notion of what black feminist creativity could mean at that point.

So when I completed the manuscript of my book in 1978, my decision to make

the statement that black women writers were reinforcing “the myth of the superwoman” was no accidental afterthought, nor was it made because I didn’t think art was important, or because I didn’t know of Pecola, Meridian, and Janie Crawford. Now I realize that I was reading too narrowly. My sense of these matters has changed mostly because of black feminist reinterpretations of Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* that foreground Janie’s ascension to the posture of articulate storyteller, despite the obstacle of a twisted sexism coming from a black community besieged by racism.¹⁰

Moreover, the interpretation of deconstructivist critic Barbara Johnson makes the point that polar or binary oppositions are crucial to the logic of our culture’s rhetoric about race and sex. That Hurston occupied the wrong end of each of these oppositions made inevitable the continuous splitting of the difference (it’s sometimes called “waffling” in Baldwin’s work) that marked Hurston’s narrative and expository style. Johnson divides the field of the dominant discourse into four realms: white men make statements of universality; white women make statements of “complementarity”; black men make statements of “the other”; and black female discourse is identified only by the lowercase “x” of radical negation. “The black woman is both invisible and ubiquitous,” Johnson writes of the often paltry efforts of black men, white men, and white women to include her in their progres-

sive political formulations, “never seen in her own right but forever appropriated by the others for their own ends.”¹¹

While Johnson’s thesis is meant to be illuminating and suggestive rather than precisely sociological, there is no question in my mind that the unrelenting logic of dualism, or polar oppositions—such as black and white, good and evil, male and female—is basic to the discourse of the dominant culture and tends to automatically erase black female subjectivity. The “on the one hand/on the other hand” logic of most rational argumentation works out fine if you happen to fit neatly into one of the following categories: (1) the unified, universalizing subject, usually claimed by white men, or (2) the “other,” usually spoken for by white women or men of color. But if you happen to have more than one feature disqualifying you from participation in the dominant discourse—if you are black and a woman, and perhaps lesbian and poor, as well—and you insist on writing about it, you’re in danger of not making any sense, because you are attempting speech from the dangerously unspeakable posture of the “other” of the “other.”

It was my view that black women writers were verifying “the myth of the superwoman” by creating perverse characterizations, which displayed inordinate strengths and abilities as the inevitable booby prize of a romanticized marginality. The problem with the myth of the superwoman, as I saw and still see it, is



VIVIAN E. BROWNE *Metasequoia*, 1987, oil on canvas, triptych, 70" × 1132".

PHOTO: ERIK LANDSBERG

that it seems designed to cover up an inexorable process of black female disenfranchisement, exploitation, oppression, and despair. Even more important than whether black women believe the myth or whether some black women engage in superlative accomplishments (which they obviously do) is the way the dominant culture perpetuates the myth, not to celebrate the black woman but as a weapon against her. "She is already liberated" becomes an excuse for placing her needs last on every shopping list in town. Also very important is the way in which otherwise liberal or marginal constituencies, such as white progressives, white feminists, and ordinarily enlightened black male intellectuals, benignly consent to or actively conspire with the dominant discourse in this process.

The "other" of the "other," or incommensurability, is another approach to the same problem. Whereas the myth of the superwoman was a concept designed to describe the culture's general misapprehension about black women, the "other" of the "other" is an attempt to diagnose the black woman's relationship to the dominant discourse. It is more important to talk about the "other" of the "other" at this point, not because there is no longer a problem of myths (or stereotypes), but because myths are not dispelled by revelation. Rather the revelation of myth simply continues the process of myth. Or, as Claude Lévi-Strauss's reading of Freud's encounter with the Oedipus myth would imply,¹² the "revelation" becomes yet another version of the myth by not focusing on the politics of who speaks and who doesn't, which ultimately determines the power of knowledge and the knowledge thus derived of the world. At the same time, the "other" of the "other" is resistant to theoretical articulation—hence the black feminist fear of theory, the invisibility of black feminist interpretation in the realm of the dominant discourse, and the way black feminist literature prioritizes variations on negation.



Another way of describing variations on negation would be to call them "negative images." But I prefer the phrase "variations on negation" because "negation" seems indispensable to a dialectical critical process. My liking for the term "variations" is more whimsical, based on an idea of musical performance. To me,

"variations" suggest experimental approaches that delay closure almost indefinitely. Billie Holiday used to sing "The difficult I'll do right now, the impossible will take a little while." Variations on negation confront "the impossible," the radical being and not-being of women of color.

The capacity for rendering the negative substantial and dialectical has been

"Variations on negation confront 'the impossible,' the radical being and not-being of women of color."

a particular strength of fiction by black women writers—a point that Barbara Smith, Deborah McDowell, and other black feminist critics, in their pursuit of programmatic concerns, have minimized.¹³ The way these variations on negation occur is twofold, as can be seen in Toni Morrison's *Sula*. On the level of content, the reader can't help but notice that the black community, called "The Bottom," comes to dislike Sula, even as Sula's best friend rejects her for "stealing her man." Neither Sula, nor her mother Hannah, nor her grandmother Eva fits anybody's notion of a good guy. But Nel, her mother Helene, and her grandmother are hardly positive images either. Rather, their characterizations seem a direct response to the imbalances of Sula, Hannah, and Eva, which bears upon the second way of reading variations on negation.

It is the relationship (or gaps) between items in the text—description, character, plot, dialogue—that gives this book its force. The book's power lies in its willingness to contradict itself. In particular, one must look for moments that directly oppose one another in their construction of "reality."

The various oppositions of race, class, and sex only support the paramount opposition between Sula—the epitome of the "negative being," who will not marry or settle down and who breaks all the conventions of adult behavior by living, unhyppocritically, for pleasure—and the "Bottom," whose sentiments are ultimately personified by Nel, who marries and settles down while Sula goes off to college. The tension between Sula and Nel is the level at which Morrison is problematizing issues of black feminist creativity. Sula's and Nel's individual characterizations are less important than the roles they play in the novel's larger problem of working out how black feminist creativity will become written.

Certainly, the undermining of facile

dualisms or binary oppositions of class, race, and sex is a priority in fiction by black women. One intriguing possibility is that there may be a systematic disorder within language itself, which helps to explain the perpetual invisibility of women of color to the dominant discourse. Another provocative possibility is that the very process of radical negation, or doubling and tripling the differ-

ence, may provide a way to reformulate the problem of black female subjectivity and black female participation in culture.

Perhaps the most important book to look at in this regard is Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. When I first read this book, I was deeply troubled by Pecola's characterization as a victim of incest and by her subsequent loss of the ability to communicate rationally. It seemed to me such a story was hopelessly negative, not transformational or transcendent in a manner I considered essential to creative acts. Now, however, I think that in the relationship between Pecola and Claudia, who serves as narrator for much of the book, we find a problematization of the conditions that plague the discourse of the "other" of the "other."

Pecola illustrates the path of those who will never recover, the ultimate victim who will never be able to speak for herself. Claudia is the survivor, who sees color and variety even in the somber, severe circumstances of her childhood. Her narration moves smoothly from childhood reminiscence to the occasional adult/editorial reflection of "the author," incorporating the pain and victimization of Pecola as a crucial factor in her need to be articulate, or to write. In the end—which is also where the book begins—Pecola is living on the edge of town, permanently isolated from the black community by her inability to rise above the crimes committed against her.

Without Claudia's and Morrison's storytelling, Pecola's marginalization and social death become a distinct possibility for anyone who challenges the

present invisibility of black feminist interpretation by speaking the unspeakable hell of Pecola's real-life counterparts. Yet there isn't a character in *The Bluest Eye* who doesn't have more psychological resources than Pecola in combatting an internalization of self-hatred that might be considered routine in the black community.

Indeed, as much as this book is about the plight of the individual incest vic-

“... we must choose and take responsibility for what we will emphasize in ourselves and others.”

tim, it is also about the collective internalization of self-hatred, the cultural erasure of a people and their mostly unconscious battle with what Western civilization calls “madness.” That political, economic, and cultural process of negation, which the sociologist Orlando Patterson calls “social death,” and which we date from slavery, is where *The Bluest Eye* starts. It is announced by Morrison's use of the “Dick and Jane” primer text:

*Here is the House. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy. See Jane. She has a red dress. She wants to play. Who will play with Jane!*¹⁴

Countless American children have encountered this text—which lays out the world as classless, lily-white, sexually stratified but sexless, timeless and without history—as the single path to learning, to the achievement of knowledge. Morrison announces that the meaninglessness of this official text (and perhaps all unitary models) will be a primary focus in *The Bluest Eye* by repeating it a second time without punctuation—the law of the Father, or dominant discourse—and a third time without space between the words, undercutting the very basis of the alphabet's power to signify. In the process Morrison suggests that Pecola's madness originates less in her individual psyche or the psyche of anyone else in the ghetto; rather, it is socially and linguistically constructed by the dominant discourse. The book then de-

tails the social construction of that “otherness” to Dick and Jane's world by systematically contrasting houses, families, mothers, fathers, siblings, and play in Pecola's community. Pecola's family is extremely dysfunctional; Claudia's family is much better. And there are other examples, although all belie the reality of the Dick and Jane model. Yet, everyone and everything is powerless to protect Pecola from tragedy.

Through Soaphead Church, Morrison designates one culprit as the European Judeo-Christian patriarchal tradition. When he takes God's place by pretending to grant Pecola blue eyes—the book's symbol of whiteness, safety, and madness—Morrison seems to be saying that Soaphead Church is all the God that one can expect in a world that believes in binary oppositions.

At the same time, I haven't done justice to the compositional complexity of *The Bluest Eye* if I've given the impression that this novel explicitly advocates black feminist creativity as a corrective for what ails the black community. The richness of its variations on negation lies precisely in its unwillingness to advocate anything but the circular progress of its own logic. Perhaps the difficulty of identifying the novel's opinion of feminist engagement is clearest in the depiction of Marie, Poland, and China, the three prostitutes who live over the storefront occupied by Pecola's family. In distinct contrast to the variety of maternal images in the book, these women neither nurture nor protect children. They engage in (mostly pointless) resistances to local male authority, yet fail to understand victimization or the fact that Pecola is in danger. Their inclusion in the text seems to question the self-involvement of traditional modes of black female creativity, as well as posing a general critique of more recent feminist strategies of “man-hating” and self-love.



I now see that like many other people who read *The Bluest Eye* and other books by black women writers, I focused too much on the extent to which they mirrored certain obvious sociological realities.¹⁵ This, too, is part of invisibility and the peculiar limitations of the

“other” of the “other.” From the perspective of dominance, a woman of color who insists on functioning as a speaking (writing) subject threatens the status of Truth itself. The indirection of fiction that seems essential to override reader resistance is, in fact, the shortest distance between two ideological points. Thus the Afro-American woman's talent for fictional narrative is steeped in what Susan Willis has called “the changes wrought by history.”¹⁶ As she suggests, black women writers show an uncanny ability for rendering a collective black history of migration, poverty, segregation, and exploitation singular and readable.

Further, black women writers not only make it possible to understand how a convergence of racism, sexism, and class antagonism marks the Third World woman's peculiar position in discourse, but their work calls into question the truth value of any unitary or dualistic apprehension of the world. Not only is it necessary that we focus on difference rather than sameness or universality, but also, at every conceivable moment, we must choose and take responsibility for what we will emphasize in ourselves and others. And we must respond to Michel Foucault's question “What matter who's speaking?” with the recognition that it matters mostly because there's no variety.

I was struck by these issues most forcefully when I attended a performance of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* about two years ago. The first time I saw *A Raisin in the Sun*—indeed, the first time I saw evidence that black women were capable of literature—was when I saw the movie in 1961. I was nine years old and I remember it well because my entire family went to the theatre together. Like the movie of *The Color Purple*, it was a historic occasion.

Every time I see *A Raisin in the Sun* my attention is drawn to how the female characters—the mother, Walter Lee's wife, and Beneatha—represent more thoroughly than most other works of American literature the archetypal choices available to black women (except lesbians) in this culture, as well as the nature of those obstacles blocking critical self-expression. And it is interesting to me that what critics have considered inherent shortcomings in Hansberry's attempts to re-create Chicago tenement life realistically really have to do with her depicting her own complex relation to American intellectual and cultural life. In a family drama, and therefore conventionally, Hansberry explores the myriad tensions of race, class, and sex that plague the black community.

Nevertheless, there's no question that conventional form and conventional gender roles are a handicap in Hansberry's attempt to grapple with who Beneatha is/can be, and that conventionality, in general, limits black feminist explorations. I am also well aware that I lay myself open to the charge of elitism when I proceed as though cultural criticism were as crucial as health, the law, politics, economics, and the family to the condition of black women. But I am convinced that the major battle for the "other" of the "other" will be to achieve a voice, or voices, thus inevitably transforming the basic relations of dominant discourse. Only with those voices—written, published, televised, taped, filmed, staged, cross-indexed, and footnoted—will we approach control over our own lives.

¹Marjorie Pryse and Hortense Spiller, eds., *Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction and Literary Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 250.

²See my "Female Troubles: Ishmael Reed's Tunnel Vision," *Village Voice Literary Supplement*, Dec. 1986, pp.10-11.

³See Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

University Press, 1978); Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books [1955] 1968), p. 256; Alison Jaggar, "Love & Knowledge: Emotions as an Epistemic Resource for Feminism," delivered at SUNY-Buffalo, Nov. 11, 1987.

⁴Houston Baker, *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 145

⁵See my "'The Color Purple': Blues for Mr. Spielberg," *Village Voice*, Mar. 18, 1986, pp. 21-24, 26; Ntozake Shange, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf* (New York: Bantam [1976] 1980), p. 1

⁶Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1983), p. 322.

⁷Obviously, this is too broad a generalization and black women have engaged in constructive written commentary before. One could point to June Jordan's *Civil Wars*, Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider*, Barbara Christian's *Black Feminist Criticism*, Bell Hook's *Ain't I a Woman* and *Feminist Theory*, but this work remains marginal to every academic establishment except Women's Studies.

⁸Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, pp. 324-25.

⁹Toni Cade Bambara, ed., *The Black Woman* (New York: Fawcett, 1971); *Gorilla, My Love* (New York: Random House, 1972); Paule Marshall, *Brown Girls, Brownstones* (Boston: Beacon, 1960)

¹⁰See my "Who Owns Zora Neale Hurston? Critics Carve Up the Legend," *Village Voice Literary Supplement*, 64: Apr. 1988, pp. 18-21.

¹¹Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 166-71.

¹²Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," in *The Structuralists from Marx to Lévi-Strauss*, ed. Richard and Fernande DeGeorge (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1972), p. 181.

¹³Barbara Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," pp. 168-85; Deborah E. McDowell, "New Directions for Black Feminist Criticism," pp. 186-99, in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature & Theory*, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

¹⁴Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1970), p.1.

¹⁵Sociological misreadings of black women writers are legend. See, for instance, Mel Watkins, "Sexism, Racism and Black Women Writers," *New York Times Book Review*, June 15, 1986, pp. 1, 35-36; Darryl Pinckney, "Black Victims, Back Villians," *New York Review of Books*, Jan. 29, 1987, pp. 17-20; Marlaime Gicksman, "Lee's Way," *Film*, Oct. 1986, pp. 46-49; Stanley Crouche "Aunt Meda," *New Republic*, Oct. 1987, pp. 38-43.

¹⁶Susan Willis, *Specifying: Black Women Writing the American Experience* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), p. 3.

Michele Wallace, a faculty member of the Center for Workers' Education in New York, is the author of *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*.

KATE COLLIE *Held Up*, 1986, oil on Masonite, 13" x 15 1/2". Kate Collie is a Canadian living in Charlotte, North Carolina, whose paintings on resisting violence include the widely shown series *Soldier's Heart: A Portrait of a Vietnam Combat Veteran*.



Aran Dance



Begin at the beginning.

In a sense knitting is like
drawing with a long piece
of wool.

It's finger weaving.

From the fleece to a warm
pullover.

A jumper, a jacket,
a waterproof coat.

And where do the
patterns come from?

From the woman's head. Did
you make that out of
your own head now?

And if knitting is like
drawing with a long piece of
wool then women have been
drawing with wool for quite
a long time.

Weaving their dreams and
fantasies into garments.

For their children, for
themselves and for
their menfolk.

I'll spin you a yarn, I'll weave you a
tale, and as the lines weave in and out
of each other they produce a pattern.

And where do the patterns come from?

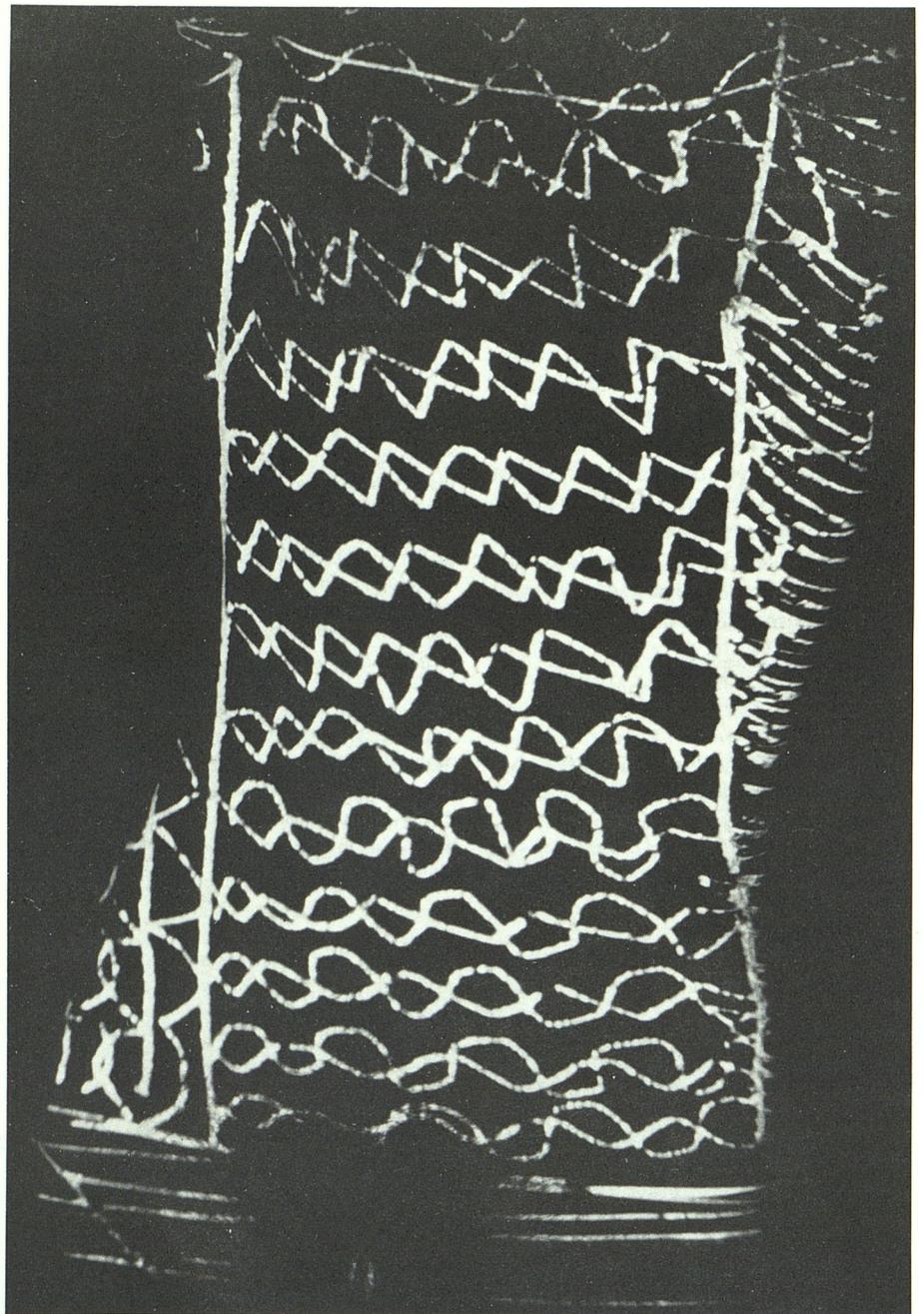
From the woman's head?

Ploughed fields.

Waving sand.

Weaving water.

And what are the berries?

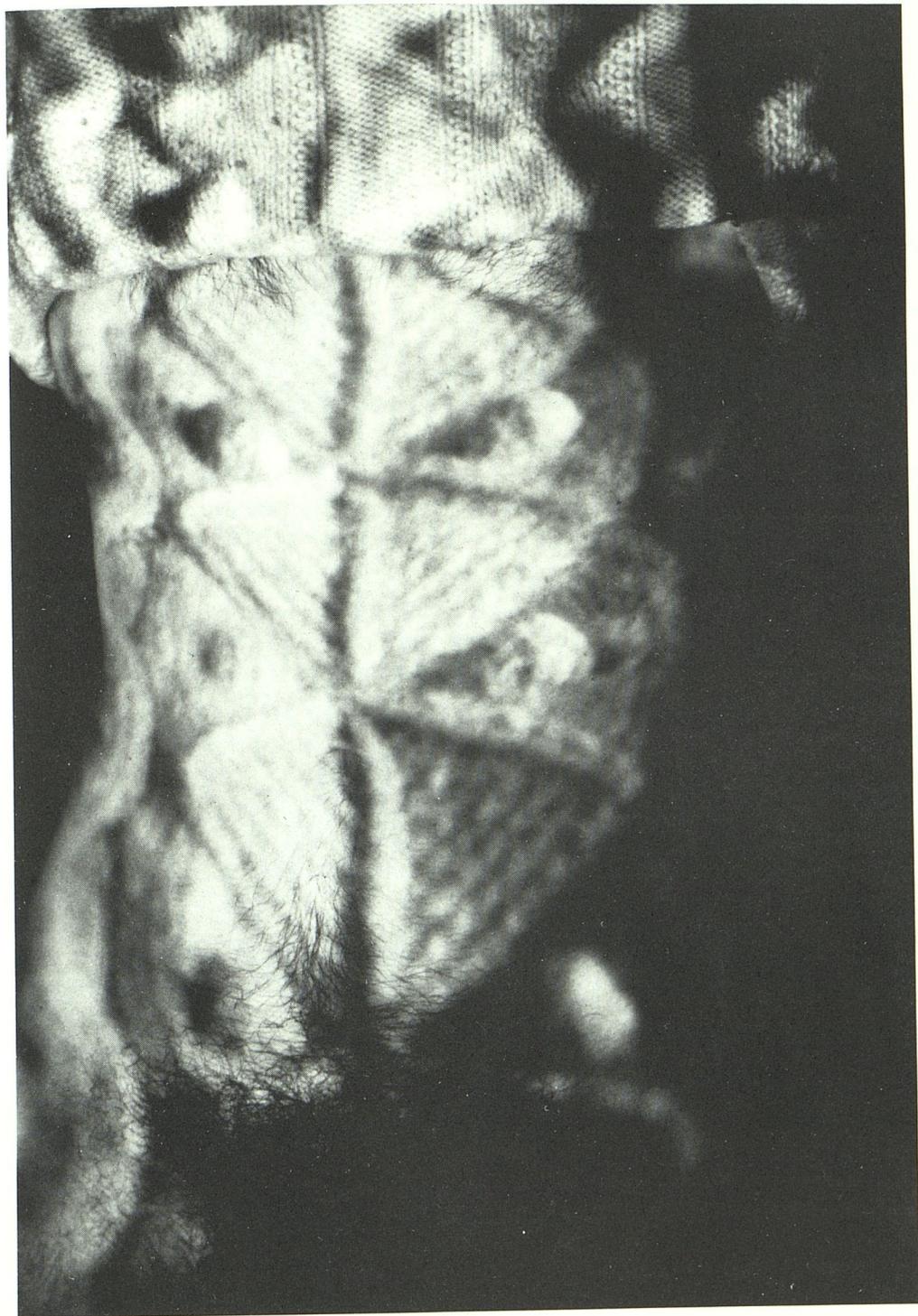


They look like nipples to me.

But they're like berries too.

Or little houses, set in walled fields
with the sea on either side.

— *Text from*
Ines t'Oirr



Pauline Cummins

Pauline Cummins, an Irish artist, explores sensuality, sexuality, pregnancy, and motherhood in her work. Her piece *Unearthed*, commissioned by Projects U.K., deals with her reaction to Northern Ireland.

Buried.
Suppressed.
Touch the hip
Into the waist.
Squeeze.
Rub up.
The back.
The movement in.
The spine bending.
Extending.
Joining.
The shoulders. Broad, wide, thick.
Arms.
Hairy, sinuous, strength.
Thighs, joining, apart.
And the butterfly motif.
The balls, what a name!
The sac, holding the sperm.
Secreting the sperm.
Soft, outer layer, slowly hardening.
Expanding.
Filling the pouches, raising
the penis.
And the liquid, the fluid.
Seminal, spreading, glistening,
slipping, sliding, pushing out.
Deseminating.
Tipping the navel, pressed against
the belly, his belly.
Rubbing, pressing, raising,
standing, ejaculating.
Thousands. Hundreds and
thousands. Spilling.
Subsiding.
The swelling shrinking. Sinking.
Back to size. Back to place.
Hidden.
Buried.
Always there.

NANCY SPERO. Top: *Sky Goddess* (detail), 1985, handprinting and collage on paper, 20" × 64" (whole).
Bottom: *Fleeing Figures/Sky Goddess/ Death Figure*, 1988, handprinting and collage on paper, 20" × 55½".
Nancy Spero, a feminist artist who is one of the founding members of A.I.R., recently had a retrospective at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York.

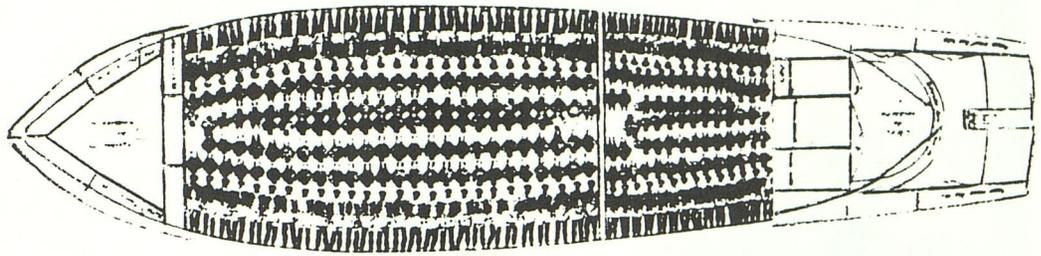


PHOTOS: DAVID REYNOLDS



FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

HOWARDENA
PINDELL



My country 'tis of thee, [On board our ship] I saw pregnant women give birth to babies while chained to corpses which our drunken overseers had not removed. /1/

On board our ship, on a day on which we had a great storm, a woman about to give birth and unable to deliver under the circumstances, was pushed through one of the portholes into the sea. /2/

Sweet land of liberty, Since the Indians were better woodsmen than the English and virtually impossible to track down, the method was to feign peaceful intentions, let them settle down and plant their corn wherever they chose, and then, just before harvest, fall upon them, killing as many as possible and burning the corn. /3/

Of thee I sing; And if any slave resist his master, or owner, or other person, by his or her order, correcting such slave, and shall happen to be killed in such correction, it shall not be accounted felony; but the master, owner, and every such other person so giving correction, shall be free and acquit of all punishment and accusation for the same, as if such accident had never happened. /4/

Land where my fathers died, ... if the master [should] attempt the violation of the slave's wife, and the husband resist his attempts without the least effort to injure him, but merely to shield his wife from assaults, this law does not merely permit, but it authorizes the master to murder the slave on the spot. /5/

Land of the Pilgrims' pride, Hull whipped and kicked him, till I really thought he was going to kill him; when he ceased, the Negro was in a complete gore of blood from head to foot. /6/

From every mountain side, I went to my master after my children and he ordered me away; he told me if I did not go he was going to shoot me; he says before I shall have my children he will blow my brains out. /7/

Let freedom ring. /8/ The instruction of the [medical] student is the immediate object, and if the professors can accomplish it best by protracting the operation, pausing to explain the different processes, etc., the subject is only a Negro and what is his protracted agony, that it should restrain the professor from making the case as "interesting" as possible. /9/

/1/ Quoted in Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 104. /2/ Gottlieb Mittelberger going from Germany to America (1750), *ibid.*, p. 43. /3/ Powhatan to John Smith (1607), *ibid.*, p. 13. /4/ Virginia statute (1705), in Leon Higginbotham, *In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 55.

/5/ Anti-slavery pamphlet (1839), in Theodore Dwight Weld, *American Slavery As It Is* (New York: Arno/New York Times, 1969), p. 148.

/6/ Virginia newspaper account (1838), in Weld, p. 64. /7/ Henretta Clayton (1800s), quoted in Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon, 1976), p. 408. /8/ Samuel Francis Smith and Henry Carey, "My Country 'Tis of Thee."

/9/ South Carolina Medical College bulletin (c. 1838), in Weld, p. 170.



Howardena Pindell is an artist who lives and works in New York.

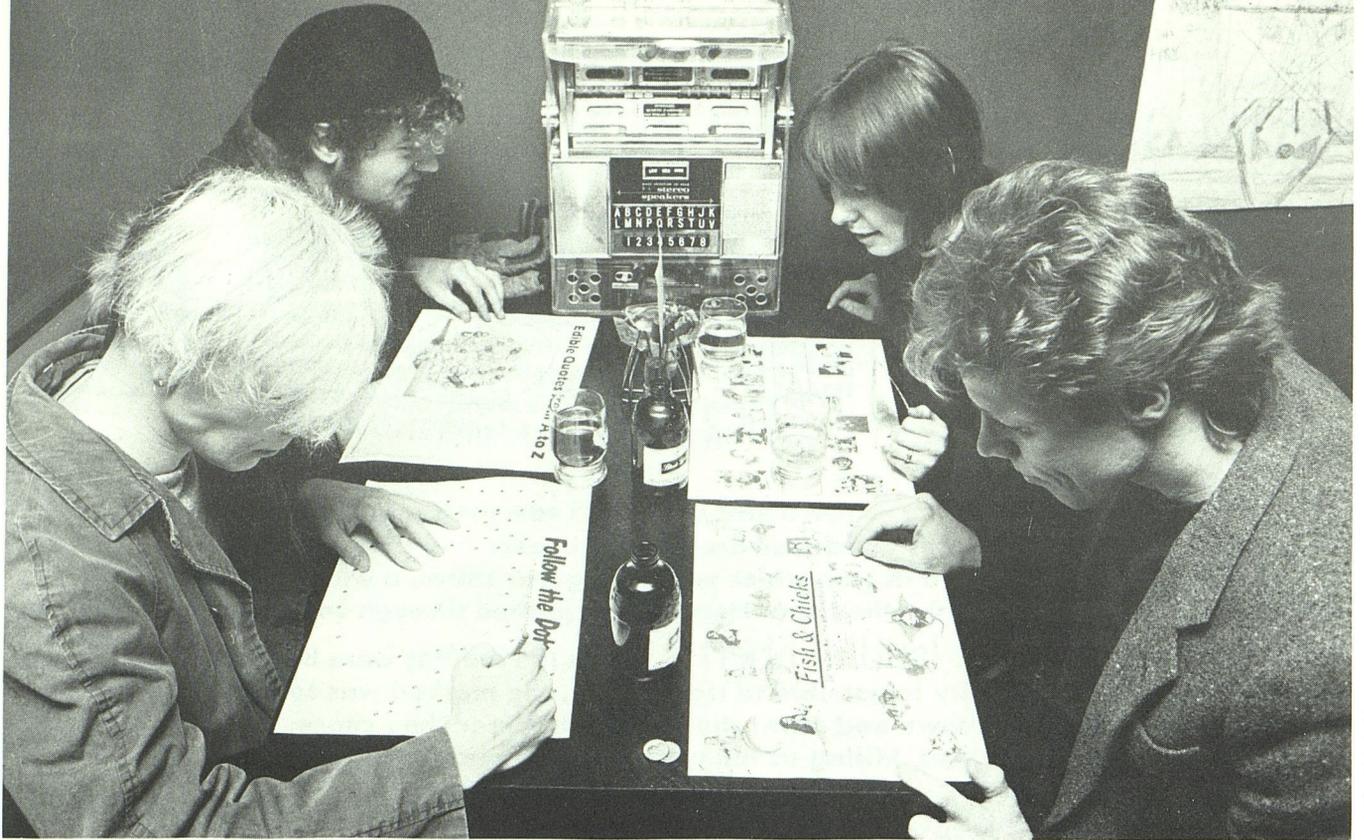


PHOTO: TED RICE © 1988

AMERICAN DINING

A WORKING WOMAN'S MOMENT ▷ JERRI ALLYN

The boys I work with are non-stop sexual verbiage. I haven't worked like this in years.

I make conversation.

They make sex.

I say, These peppers are hot.

They say, Just like me. You wanna go home and ball?

I say, A strong guy like you shouldn't care if I knock your arm.

They say, Anytime you hit me darling, I cream.

I say, You quit smoking. I'm proud of you.

They say, Yeah, I wanna eat [beep!]. All night long and not get winded.

I say, You know I'm into women.

They say, Tomorrow I'm wearing a dress. Then maybe you'll be into me.

I say, That woman's tall.

They say, She's perfect. I'm so small I'll snuggle into her [beep!]. And when she says, 'What's happening?', I'll say it's me, honey.

I say, A woman is stunning. I can't figure why she's with that shrimp.

They say, Women like that don't need big [beep!].

That shrimp needs good hands. Play her two to three hours. Jesus, think of that. Hours eating [beep!], just coming up for air.

A **customer** asks, Where you'd get this classy waitress?

They say, She was working Lexington Ave.

I say, I can't get this tune out of my head and I don't even know what it is.

They misinterpret and say, Tuna? You know tuna.

If you don't have a girl at hand, why not do it yourself?

I pet and kiss the restaurant cat.

They say, Uh, huh. I know you like pussy.

They say, Ever since the girls are here, the cook's back's been out and I want to know what they do with him every night.

I say, That guy's huge. At least six foot eight in both directions.

They say, If I was that big, chicks wouldn't want me. They'd be afraid I'd split them open. This size I'm cute and cuddly.

They say, I lost weight 'cause I ate [beep!]. All weekend and that ain't no calories. You get to eat all you want.

They say, I'm trying to convert you for one night. You know I'm the best tongue on the bus.

I say, You trying to give me a hard time?

They say, I'd love to but you don't want my hard time.

They say, There's one advantage with girls. When it's slow, if you can't make money, at least you can make time.

They are live performance art. **Improv** on any line I got. I am no longer mad. Nor pissed. No longer ignore. A feminist with no longer any of the old reactions. I am completely amazed these men still exist.

That there's lots of these men. Lots and lots of them all over.

I served a union, the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union, nine years of my waitress life.

We paid \$30 a month, over \$300 a year, and the best I could figure was you got to visit the union doctor at discount medical rates.

The doc notoriously broke appointments, and the last man who saw him complained of chest pains, was sent home to take two aspirins, and died of a heart attack that night.

I feel sacrilegious badmouthing the union, yet I'm upset.

The Hotel and Restaurant Workers have one of the best contracts. \$4.50 an hour.

Unless you've waitressed, you don't know it's common to get \$10 for an 8-hour shift. Some places pay nothing. You live strictly on tips. So \$4.50 plus is a great deal.

Yet I'm upset.

Aside from lousy doctors, there are hotels in New York women cannot work.

Today, we're talking! 16, 18 years into the women's movement, we cannot work certain hotels.

The food industry is 78% women, yet men are the top chefs and waiters in all the best joints.

Some study revealed waiters raise families and people tip them more, wherever they're working, and I'm not making that up!

The truth is mostly women raise families—alone, waitressing nights and weekends as a second job to make ends meet 'cause their husbands ditched out on child support.

So what does the union give me?

They give me this lousy union doctor. They give me \$19 off on my \$100 glasses. And they give me no hotel jobs.

So I'm upset.

I have to give the union credit for one time they helped me, though.

One day a guy just up and grabbed my breast. Cupped his hand right over. Like he had a right. "I want to see what size you are," he says. "I'm going to buy you a bra for Valentine's."

My face was so appalled, he dropped his hand. I backed off into the dining room, and started setting up for dinner, trying to figure what.

From across the floor I heard him start to crack jokes about it with the cook. And then I knew from what.

I screamed across the restaurant, not even caring who heard, "You think it's such a joke to grab my breast, Paul? I'll tell you what's such a joke. That women don't hate men 'cause men don't get it that women hate being grabbed."

"I'm taking this to the union, Paul. I'm filing a sexual harassment complaint. Let's see how funny you think it is. We're going to union court!"

He didn't know the union wouldn't do jake for me. He didn't know I'd have to go to C.L.U.W., the Council for Labor Union Women—the agency that agitates the union to do jake for me.

But that threat cooled his heels. Those boys quit laughing right away.

The one time the union helped me out.

And there's lots of agitators working unions. There's lots and lots of them all over.

American Dining is a multidimensional, interactive artwork, in which Allyn programmed and transformed diner-booth jukeboxes with audio pieces about money, food, and work and designed a set of four placemats. The installation was sponsored by the New Museum of Contemporary Art and premiered in Gefen's Dairy Restaurant in New York City from November 19, 1987 to January 2, 1988. It has traveled to five other restaurants—in Ohio, Washington, Maine, and New York State. The photo on the opposite page is an installation shot from the Press Grill in Columbus, Ohio, January–February 1988. The photo on this page shows Allyn in a live art performance of the stories on the jukebox audiotapes. The text is excerpted from the audiotapes.

Jerri Allyn is a conceptual and performance artist who strives to create humorous art that includes political insights and esthetic integrity.



PHOTO: ELLEN PAGE WILSON © 1987



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**AN INTERVIEW WITH WALTER ADKINS
LAS VEGAS, 1984**

CAROLE GALLAGHER

Baneberry, an underground detonation of a nuclear warhead at the Nevada Test Site, was an explosion gone awry in December 1970. Walter Adkins, at that time a bus driver at the test site, owed his physical condition to his experience of fallout during that incident. He developed a tumor on his larynx, many skin cancers, then had a cancerous lung removed. Months before I interviewed him in May 1984, he found it difficult to breathe at all without a portable oxygen unit. He and his wife, Marvel, who in an economic crunch moved to Las Vegas from Oklahoma so he could work there, lived in a tiny trailer on the Boulder Highway, on the outskirts of Las Vegas. When I first arrived to interview Walter Adkins, I heard from the owner of the trailer park that moments before Adkins had been rushed by ambulance to the hospital because he couldn't breathe at all. I visited again a month or so later, and this is his story of the **Baneberry** accident.

When Baneberry went off, I went back up there [to the medical outpost at Mercury, a small town owned by the Department of Energy in the southeast corner of the test site], and the doctors went over me with a fine-tooth comb. My hair, my eyes, my heart—a cardiogram. They were saying there wasn't a thing wrong with me, and I was strong!

I went to work there in '61, off and on. Work was slack, and they'd call me back, then laid off, up until **Baneberry** went off. Then I worked for a while after **Baneberry**, and then we got laid off. I don't know if it was because I was loaded with radiation, or what it was. They knocked me out of my union pension, and I went to goin' down. A downgrade after they laid me off . . . seemed like it took all the sap out of me. I didn't have no more energy. Or nothing. I'd get to burnin' inside the skin. Seemed like I'd start to ache, and my bone would burn down inside me.

He pointed to the skin cancers all over his body. You can see right here where it burnt me a little bit. Just kept breakin' out all over me, right around the hairline and all over. This is the characteristic manifestation of heavy exposure to radiation: a severe burning rash, intense lethargy, and body pain.

I'll tell you about **Baneberry** for a minute. Now that's where I got my big load of radiation. I went down to the mess hall with my bus to take a load of men to work and bring 'em back that morning, and I'll swear it seemed like it was seven, or before eight o'clock that the bomb went off. I had to go take the men up to T-Tunnel [one of the access tunnels to the underground excavation where the nuclear bombs are detonated]. I was sitting there drinkin' my coffee, waitin' for the boys to get through eatin' and git on the bus. We was sitting in the mess hall, up on the mountain, and down on the flat here, not quite six miles we was from it, it blowed plumb out of the ground.

Boy, it shook. A blast, sounded like 40 sticks of dynamite went off. It popped! I mean it sounded like a clap o' thunder . . . ka-POW!!! And that turned our coffee cups over, we thought the mess hall was comin' down, and we run outside, and look right down the hill, and a big red flame and black smoke was going up just like that bomb did during the war at Iwo Jima. Just like that!

And so they made me take that load of men, get a load of men on the bus, and go on up to T-Tunnel, and I had to go right down there towards where the bomb went off!!! We went up and the men said, "Go into T-Tunnel and

stand by, and let the men go in. We don't know what we're going to do yet. We'll call you . . . you stand by." So pretty soon it seemed like I was there about 30 minutes. I was sitting on the bus. I never did go into the tunnel . . . 'cause they told me that radiation would never hurt you, back then. It was comin' over, boy, it was thick.

It came comin' over, and pretty soon they called to say, "Bring the men back to [Area] 12." I took 'em back, and they stood around there, and everybody went crazy! They didn't know what to do! They just went screwy! We were just covered up out there, standin' there waitin' for them to make up their minds what they were going to do. I could just see it, on my hands. Pink, kind of pink-lookin' stuff. Like a pink dust, my car inside was just covered with it. The 18th of December, 1970, that was the **Baneberry**.

So they took us up to the bathhouse, and it was snowin'. When we got there, that guy run that monitor over me. And it like to flew out of the box! "Oh, man," they said, "get out of that car and get in that bathhouse!" And I went in there, and the damn hot water had broke down. We all had to take baths in ice-cold water. And I'd step in there and take my bath, I'd step out, he'd run that [geiger counter] over me and shove me back in there to take another one, till that happened nine times. I took nine of them, and I still don't think they got it out of my hair. The thing would just keep a'clickin' when I'd step up and I thought I was going to freeze to death in the ice-cold water. That's enough to kill a man, right there! In the wintertime and snowing!

They just ruined my car. Steamed it for nine weeks. Yep, that's how they got the radiation out of it. After they did all that, anyway, they took us out to Mercury. Had medics up there, and they tested us until four o'clock in the morning. I'm not kiddin' you. They just kept coming. We was settin' on the bus there and they'd run us in, and test us, test us, test us all night. And finally they sent us home with a pair of coveralls, paper coveralls on, and paper shoes. At four or five the next morning we got home.

Two years after **Baneberry**, Walter Adkins still suffered from a dry, hacking cough. "I always thought I had a cold workin' on me." Since the accident, he always noticed that anything he drank would be "foaming a bit" when it hit his windpipe, which set off a coughing fit. "I thought I had a cold all the time, but it was that tumor workin' on me. Then I went to breakin' out with skin cancers." Indicating tumors and growths on his arms, legs, back, nose, in his nasal cavity, in his ears and eyes, he continues, "All that stuff on me since the **Baneberry** blew off up there. Can't you see I got one right here in my eye?"

Since **Baneberry**, Walter Adkins has had a malignant tumor removed from his windpipe. A heart bypass was performed to allow for the future removal of his lung. Three weeks after the bypass operation, Adkins coughed up a cupful of blood and was immediately hospitalized and a tumor excised from his lung. Two months later his entire lung was removed. He died in the autumn of 1988. For years Adkins had attended the monthly meetings of the Nevada Test Site Workers Radiation Victims Association, accompanied by his wife, Marvel, and a portable oxygen unit. He was, in body size, two-thirds of himself in the photo he showed me. In it, he is seen cutting the hair of a fellow test-site worker in the warm Las Vegas air, before the **Baneberry**.

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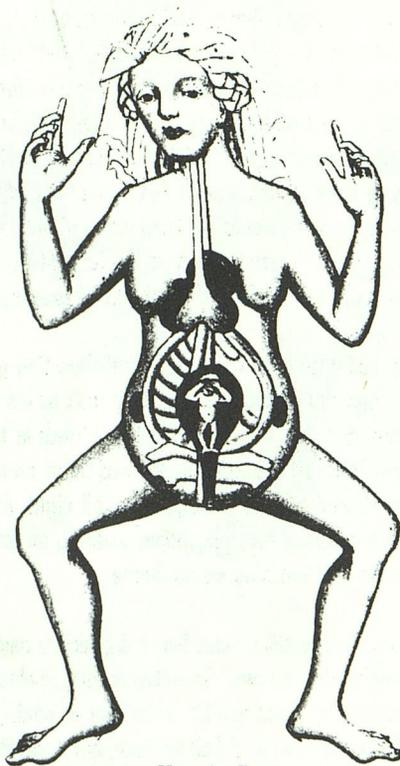
Carole Gallagher's documentary on the lives and deaths of people living downwind of the Nevada Nuclear Test Site received an award from the MacArthur Foundation. The collection of photographs and interviews will be published by Doubleday in 1990.



Theodora Skipitares, *Heresies* 17.

MOIRA ROTH

the



Heresies 7.

"Artists can't change the world alone. Neither can anybody else, alone. But art is a powerful and potentially subversive tool of consciousness."

Lucy Lippard, *Heresies* 15

In the end, the tangled skein remains just that—we followed one line through but no great unraveling of the knot took place. Here are the voices of many women, saying who they are and what issues deeply concern them and what they are doing to change their lives and the lives of others. This magazine is a celebration of these women and the work they have done.—Editorial, *Heresies* 20 (1985)

Although the authors of this editorial for the *Heresies* issue on women activists are tracing the political, intellectual, and emotional ups and downs they experienced editing that issue, their account also aptly describes my own impressions after recently re-reading all of the *Heresies* volumes published since it first appeared in January 1977. The twenty-three issues, individually and collectively, suggest a marvelously tangled skein of contradictory images, ideas, and points of view, rather than a sustained attempt to identify and unravel a central knot of feminist thought, practices, and goals.

I have never been a member of a *Heresies* collective, nor have I written for the magazine, but, since 1977, I have regularly read each issue as it has appeared. When I was asked to write about my impressions of the journal's first twelve years, I initially thought that as a California-based critic and historian I would study the content of *Heresies* from the viewpoint of an outsider examining the publication's past. Now, however, after an intense re-reading of each issue and much thinking about *Heresies*' historical context and collective structure, my mind is on the present and the future; I feel almost as though I were an insider.

Most of the *Heresies* issues have a curious, sometimes wonderful, sometimes depressingly familiar immediacy for me. I am less aware of sharp distinctions between one volume and the next as they shift from topic to topic—women and ecology, women and music, women

and sex, women and violence, etc.—and more absorbed by the overall sense of hearing diverse women's voices speaking loudly and clearly. This time around, I have focused less on the design experiments, images, and information per se and more on the difficult issues expressed in the editorials and on the range of voices and tones of the contributions.

Thinking about *Heresies*' unique collective process has made me mull over once again the pros and cons of the classic feminist collective mode of thinking and working, for *Heresies* developed within the context of early feminist commitment to the collective process. The content and structure of *Heresies* over the decade have provoked many thoughts about changes in circumstances and attitudes toward feminism between 1977 and today. Finally, my re-reading has encouraged me to reflect on the situation of *Heresies* in the present and the need for future changes if it is not only to survive but also to succeed in its "heretical" role.

The years 1976–77 saw several landmark events in the history of writing and feminist art, and a general shift in mood and concerns in feminist art circles. In 1977 Martha Rosler wrote an article for *Artforum* on California feminist art in which she described the early 1970s as a time when "the unity and the energy of the women's movement seemed to obviate the need for fine distinctions." She then commented that "the moment has passed and renewed theoretical activity has begun."¹ Among the significant events in this moment of shifting interests were the publication of Lucy Lippard's *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art*, Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf*, and Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born*, as well as the exhibition "Women Artists 1550–1950," organized by Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin. It

tangled skein

ON RE-READING HERESIES

was in this atmosphere of "renewed theoretical activity" that both *Heresies* in New York and *Chrysalis* in Los Angeles were born.

Even though memories are now vague as to exactly how it all began, it is clear that the concept of a feminist publication slowly emerged in New York City in 1975–76. Joyce Kozloff remembers the initial exchanges about the need for some new sort of action at a lively meeting at her house celebrating Miriam Schapiro's return to the city. May Stevens recalls a heated discussion after an A.I.R. Gallery panel, on which there were only male critics, and a later gathering for Schapiro at Dorothy Sieberling's. Shortly thereafter, a group of women artists, critics, and historians began meeting regularly to discuss the current situation of women in the art world and where to go next. Their discussions soon turned toward two main topics: the formation of a feminist school and a feminist art publication. All agreed that the early energy invested in aggressive protests and the creation of alternative spaces needed to be supplemented. What they felt was needed now was a feminist art forum for the new issues they had been discussing in private and wanted to explore and develop further in a public printed medium under their own control.

One member of the original collective recalled those days: "My favorite meetings were the early ones, when everyone was shouting at the same time, as the ideas came tumbling out."² There were classic consciousness-raising moments, including a memorable weekend meeting at Joan Snyder's farm, where everyone talked freely and vulnerably about their own lives. Each meeting ended with an intense critique of that session. As ideas for *Heresies* were thrashed out, there were arguments over its title ("Pink" was a serious contender at one time, "Emma" at another) and the format (wild ideas of round and square



My name is Linda Nishio. I am 28 years old. I am a third generation (sansei) Japanese/American. I grew up in L.A. in a household where very little Japanese was spoken,



except of course by my grandmother, who spoke very little English. During those early years I picked up some Japanese phrases, a few of which I still remember today. Then



I went to Art School on the East Coast. I attended classes in an environment where very little art was taught but where iconoclastic rhetoric (intellectualism) replaced



"normal" art education. Before long I realized I, too, was communicating more and more in this fashion. Ho hum. Upon returning to L.A. I found myself misunderstood by



family and friends. So this is the story: A young artist of Japanese descent from Los Angeles who doesn't talk normal.



Photographs by Mark Clair

KI-KO-E-MA-SU KA
(Can you hear me?)

Linda Nishio, *Heresies* 15.

"Careful, honey, he's anti-choice."



Sharon Niemczyk, *Heresies* 14.

"What importance is a poem, after all, compared to all the things people need? What good is a poem going to do a suicidal nine-year-old? ... I do not honestly know the answers to these questions. ... All I can say about this is that if you are a poet or an artist, if you are a storyteller, these questions will not stop you."
Paula Gunn Allen, *Heresies* 9

Goddess Yakshi, *Heresies* 5.



pages and loose pages in a plastic tube were reluctantly discarded). Much time was spent developing the collective structure and planning the topics of the first few issues.

In January 1977 the first issue appeared with the title *Heresies* boldly printed in black across the plain red background; the subtitle *A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* was handwritten alongside. A few pages into the issue came the statement: "The editorial collective of this first issue of *Heresies* shares not a political line but a commitment to the development of coherent feminist theory in the context of practical work." The editorial collective ended by saying, "We look to the larger feminist community for participation, response and criticism. Together we can work toward some answers. We have nothing to lose but our illusions." Subsequent issues explored such topics as "Patterns of Communication and Space among Women" (no. 2), "Lesbian Art and Artists" (no. 3), "Women's Traditional Arts/The Politics of Aesthetics" (no. 4), and "The Great Goddess" (no. 5).

Heresies celebrates diversity. Central to the philosophy of *Heresies* since its inaugural issue has been the conscious desire to recognize and celebrate a wide range of information and viewpoints, and, through this, to maintain a network and base of appeal to different audiences. There has been no desire to submerge strife when it appears or to summarize and try to reach a consensus of opinion.

From the start, a commitment to a broad range of views was built into the structure of *Heresies* through an ongoing mother collective (a term introduced officially only in *Heresies* 20) and a separate editorial collective for each issue. In January 1977 the first *Heresies* began with a statement from the mother collective (which, with only a few changes, has been reprinted ever since in each issue); it called for "an idea-oriented journal devoted to the examination of art and politics from a feminist perspective. ... It will be a place where diversity can be articulated. We are committed to the broadening of the definition and function of art." This united editorial from the mother collective was immediately followed by statements from each member of the editorial collective in which they ardently and tersely voiced their differing stances. They also wrote a collective editorial in which they argued, "By confronting the very real differences in our own attitudes towards art and politics, which reflect those in the wider

feminist community, we have uncovered networks connecting a broad range of forms and ideologies."

The diversity of opinion and debate in *Heresies* is expressed in a range of voices—passionate, cool, angry, jubilant, despairing, dogmatic, weak, strong, and subtle. It centers on the relationship between politics and art, theory and action, art-making and criticism, as well as between groups of women: white women and women of color, heterosexuals and lesbians, older and younger women, women who believe in a timeless Great Goddess and those who turn toward contemporary socialism, and others.

These, too, are my concerns and debates, and they are as unresolved for me as they are for *Heresies*. Many of us brood over such complex issues and agonize over the rifts, anger, and profound disagreements that so frequently characterize them. We continue, as do the *Heresies* contributors, to analyze our private/personal, racial/racist, and cultural histories, and the agendas, subtexts, and unconscious motives that shape us. The collective decision-making of the mother and editorial collectives encourages such a range of analyses and leaves channels of communication open to many voices; on occasion, though, the many different voices in an issue collective risk canceling one another out editorially.

Collectives and collective processes pose challenges. One does not turn to *Heresies* looking for a set of rules establishing a fixed point of view from which to look at feminism and the history and situation of women. In *Heresies* there are always many viewpoints and multiple readings of our history and identity. There are various reasons—some intentional, others not—for this consistent lack of resolution within the individual pages of an issue, as well as in the collected volumes of a decade. First, there is human error. Reading the editorials, it is obvious that often a particular collective did not fully conceptualize what it wanted in its issue. As a result, certain volumes seem highly unfocused in both text and images. Second, there have been disagreements within individual collectives and/or with the main collective on ideological and esthetic issues. Third, and this is key, it is obvious that most members of *Heresies* collectives do not want a single point of view to emerge because they are trying to respond to a multitude of voices. Whose voices?

In the original mother collective of 1977 there were no women of color; moreover, this group of white women

represented a definite bias toward heterosexuality. That “voices” of women of color and lesbians were missing would soon be protested vigorously; in the editorial of *Heresies* 3, “Lesbian Art and Artists,” the issue collective wrote: “Because of our position within a predominantly heterosexual feminist journal, we had to struggle against the desire to make *the* definitive lesbian art issue. We resisted this pressure and created an issue which quite frankly reflects the political and esthetic bias of the majority of the collective. . . . We are all lesbians, white, college-educated, and mostly middle-class women who live in New York.” A letter from a group of black lesbians in the next issue questioned the nature of this collective. The white lesbians responded apologetically, stating that all the *Heresies* issues so far had “had a similar problem. Most of the editors and contributors have been white women.”

In *Heresies* 8, “Third World Women: The Politics of Being Other,” the editorial collective confronted head-on the question of the lack of women of color in the main *Heresies* collective. Stating that they had been plagued throughout the production of their issue by the relationship with the main *Heresies* collective, they wrote of “double messages that we felt were racist and paternalistic . . . [and] communications [that] were frequently awkward, confusing and presumptuous.” This lack of a balanced representation of women of color in both the mother and the editorial collectives continues today; indeed, this anniversary issue collective consists entirely of white women, despite the editorial collective’s committed attempts to involve women of color.

In general, the editorials in *Heresies* are surprisingly frank, even self-confessional, with occasionally too many *mea culpas*. Reading them and scanning the content of the issues, it is clear that there are problems within *Heresies* apart from the lack of women of color and the somewhat reserved acknowledgment of lesbianism. Frequently, editorials refer to confusion over initial purposes, to arguments over direction, and to inequalities of work loads. In *Heresies* 4, the editorial collective wrote wryly, “Collectivity and deadlines make strange bedpartners. Like any revolution, any revelation, collectivity was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” A little later (ironically in the issue “Women Working Together”), the editorial collective wrote about its own problems in working together. “Although we are not happy with the way we worked together, we do like what we produced,”

they concluded. What *Heresies* has produced between 1977 and 1989, however, is astonishing; though uneven in quality on occasion, the overall richness in the range of its vision, the beauty of its ideas and images, and the breadth and quality of its contact with movements, countries, and individuals are remarkable achievements.

This anniversary issue of *Heresies* is being produced in a world very different from that of 1977.

In 1989 novel and successful alternatives in feminist structures, tactics, and language are being explored. The Guerrilla Girls, who have been in action for several years, offer a highly successful model for anonymous guerrilla art attacks on sexism and racism in the art world.

There are younger groups of feminists who appear, for the most part, to be little connected with *Heresies*. (For example, during the heyday of the East Village art scene, women artists there regularly dressed up stylishly to dance and wheel and deal among themselves at a monthly Girls Night.) Currently, neither the mother collective nor the editorial collectives seem to attract a sufficient number of younger women or, as stated before, women of color. For the most part, it is no longer possible—because of new publishing alternatives and better financial rewards elsewhere—to bring in powerful radical writers. Generally, *Heresies* does not seem to have the radical edge it once possessed. And yet . . . *Heresies* is publishing in 1989, and so many of us do treasure its existence and look forward to its having a viable future. *Heresies* continues to attract members to its collectives and contributors to its pages.

What *Heresies* clearly needs, as do all organizations and structures after a certain length of time, is reassessment.

There are the perennial problems, for example, of general funding, adequate payment of contributors, a sufficient outreach for distribution (surely it is time for a subscription drive?), and a more realistic evaluation of production schedules. (*Heresies* is described as a quarterly publication, but between 1977–89 there have been twenty-three rather than forty-eight issues.) However, I sense that there are even more profound problems that need to be studied—the current collective structure through which *Heresies* is produced, as well as the content and format of the publication itself.

Admittedly the collective process is a difficult one, and it has become



Domestic Workers Association, *Heresies* 7.

“Social activism is not a question of courage or bravery for me. . . . It is as natural to work for the things I believe in as it is to brush my teeth in the morning. Part of the psychology of oppression is to mystify these activities so ordinary people think they can’t participate.”

Flo Kennedy, *Heresies* 20



Suzanne Opton, *Heresies* 18.



Margaret Finch, *Heresies* 3.

"A socialist and feminist analysis of culture must be as careful as it is angry—fierce and responsible."

May Stevens, *Heresies* 9

"... there is a fundamental interconnectedness between women's struggle and what is traditionally conceived as class struggle."

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Heresies* 1



Abigail Adler, *Heresies* 9.

increasingly so in the latter half of the 1980s. By all accounts, the relationship between the *Heresies* mother collective and the various individual editorial collectives has been uneven in terms of sustained contact and degree of guidance and control. The composition of the mother collective has varied over time as has its level of energy and creativity. Aside from variations in the success of particular collectives, however, there is a question about the current success and appeal of the collective process generally.

At the beginning of the women's movement there was a great longing for and commitment to the collective process, and many women seemed able to tolerate temporarily both the almost inevitable stress it seems to invoke and the peculiar nature of its demands on time. As the movement developed, it became obvious that only certain temperaments (political and personal) could sustain the commitment to a collective structure. Feminists came to adopt the collective mode less frequently. It would thus be advisable to take a stringent look at the composition and overall activity level of the *Heresies* mother collective, its relationship to the editorial collectives (originally at least two members from the mother collective were meant to be on each of these), and the editorial collectives' own membership and structure. What, for example, are the roles of the associate members or the advisors, who began to be listed in issue 21? Reexamination of these and other aspects of the collective structure appear to me to be necessary. By reexamination I am not suggesting that *Heresies* abolish the collective structure but rather radically rethink it and, if necessary, introduce new models.

One of the appeals of *Heresies* in the past has obviously been the range of its single-topic issues, but I wonder if the time has not come to reexamine this structure and perhaps consider radical new ideas of format and design. A profusion of topics has already been covered; maybe it is now time to reconceptualize the issue themes with an eye toward more complex discussions of contemporary concerns—one such example might be how the current interest in French theory may differently affect the situation and art of women of different cultural, racial, and class backgrounds, or of older as opposed to younger artists.

Heresies is clearly at a crossroads in its development. It faces a dilemma common to social movements that have risen up in certain historical circumstances and then face new conditions to which

they must respond if they are to survive. Some movements and organizations have a natural lifespan, and should not continue indefinitely; others can survive and thrive, if they continue to fulfill a need and are capable of change and growth.

I have focused here on the problems and dilemmas of *Heresies*—despite my great affection for the publication—because I think they need to be aired publicly at this time. I hope my comments will be read in the spirit in which they were written: that of my strong commitment not only to the past splendor of *Heresies*, but also to its successful future. Over the years *Heresies* has played a major role in the shaping of my feminist consciousness and in the widening of my knowledge and interests, as it has for so many others. Each time I immerse myself in the rich fare of *Heresies*, I feel a deep sense of gratitude to so many collective members and contributors.

The more I try to analyze the journal's continued appeal for me, the more I focus on five basic factors: first, its investment in the collective process as well as in the production of a publication; second, *Heresies*' bewitching bombardment of information, images, and ideas; third, the vociferous presence of a wild diversity of voices; fourth, the adamant determination of the collectives not to resolve debates or establish a single point of view; and fifth, the longevity of *Heresies* as an "alternative" publication.

Above all, in my recent re-reading of *Heresies* I have heard a multitude of women's voices. Sometimes it is a cacophony, at other times a chorus of celebration. Sometimes an individual voice is heard clearly; at other times women speak in unison or argue so loudly that it is hard to hear a single voice or even one's own. Emotionally and intellectually, it has been a deeply touching experience to hear these heretical voices again. They are voices we need to listen to and protect. I hope that in the future *Heresies* will continue to help create a sanctuary for feminist heresies.

¹Martha Rosler, "The Private and the Public: Feminist Art in California," *Artforum* (Sept. 1977), p. 66

²Heresies Collective, "True Confessions," *Heresies* no. 7 (1979), p. 96.

Moira Roth, feminist art historian and critic, teaches at Mills College in Oakland and is the author of *The Amazing Decade: Women and Performance Art in America, 1970–1980* and *Connecting Conversations: Interviews with 28 Bay Area Women Artists*. She is working on a large multicultural project about women artists.

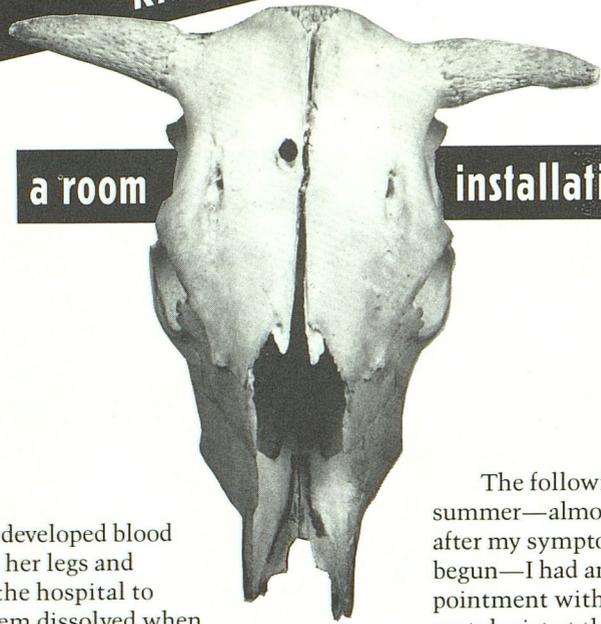
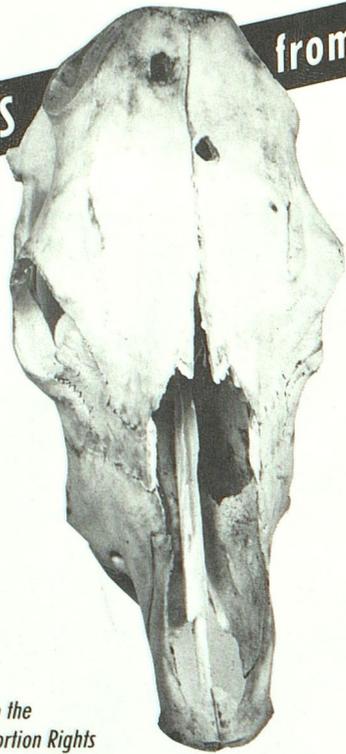
LETTERS

from PROTECTION

RACKET

a room

installation by



Dedicated to the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), the installation documents fifteen women artists' experiences with birth control devices or methods that damaged their health and lives.

She developed blood clots in her legs and was in the hospital to have them dissolved when she died. She was 36. Her youngest wasn't even in kindergarten.

—Artist Dianne

The following summer—almost a year after my symptoms had begun—I had an appointment with a rheumatologist at the U of M. His first question to me was: "Are you on the pill?" When I said yes, he said, "Get off it. I've seen scores of young women with this problem. It's an epidemic." It seems that Lupus is one of the side effects of the pill, but no one

She was my best friend. As well as my older sister. We laughed and talked while I helped her with the kids after school. With six children and an extreme weight problem (she was over 300 pounds), she needed me.

She had such a great sense of humor. Having tried every kind of birth control, she jokingly referred to her kids by the name of the method that had failed when that child was conceived. She couldn't have her tubes tied, the doctor said, because of her weight. He had also told her not to have any more children after the first three, because her health couldn't stand it.

Her husband wouldn't have a vasectomy. He believed it would alter his masculinity. His friends had told him so.

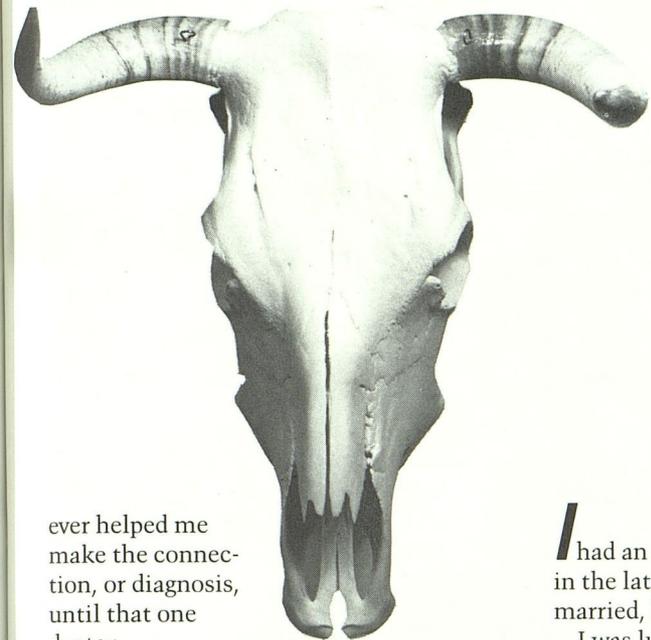
The pill was the only 100% sure thing for her, but it was a risk because of her weight. The doctor never should have prescribed it. But it was her husband I wanted to kill.

Life is a prick!

I was a senior in college in the mid-70s. I had been taking birth control pills for a year and a half, with no ill effects, until suddenly my left knee began to swell. I couldn't bend it. It got so bad I was tripping all the time, and finally, when I fell down a flight of stairs, I decided to do something. Thus began my lifelong odyssey with lack of knees. It certainly ruined a budding softball career!

I went to loads of doctors, going through all kinds of tests, was on crutches, exhausted and in pain for over six months. By this time my right knee was swollen and also hurting. Through the whole thing I learned to distrust the medical establishment. No one could tell me what was wrong, and I was scared and worried because I had no idea what was happening to me.





ever helped me make the connection, or diagnosis, until that one doctor.

I went off the pill and quit going to doctors at all, and I started getting better. There was already permanent damage to my right knee. The pain has never gone away.

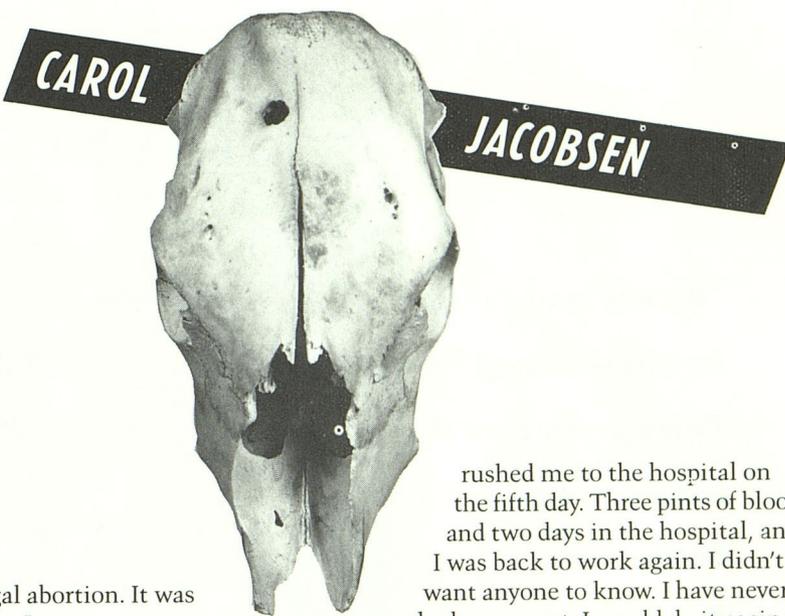
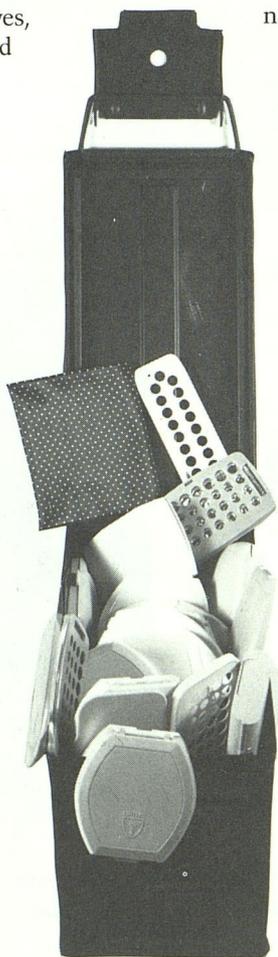
I get really angry when I think about women dividing over the abortion issue instead of banding together to demand that the male medical establishment come up with safe birth control methods. We continue to suffer broken bodies and messed up lives, while we (not males) are being used as guinea pigs.

—Artist Pi Beua

Several months after my child was born I had an IUD inserted by the same physician who had delivered my baby.

About a year and a half later, when I went to have it removed, it had become imbedded in my uterus. My new doctor (I had moved in the interim) said I would have to go into the hospital to have the IUD removed. She told me that some physicians had made the mistake of trying to remove imbedded IUD's in their office and had broken them off. She herself had found broken ones imbedded in patients who were sent to her for a D and C.

—Artist Donna



I had an illegal abortion. It was in the late '60s. I was seventeen, married, battered, and pregnant.

I was lucky because I had somewhere to go. Home to my folks. I didn't tell them I was pregnant—I was planning to abort myself.

Again, luckily, my parents found out. From the boy, who insisted he had a claim on me because of it. When they confronted me, I told them I was determined not to have a child. And I was willing to risk my life. I will never be able to repay my parent for their support—throughout the battering, the desperation, the fear, and the abortion—though I did repay the money. They never said we told you so. Which they had.

My dad phoned a business associate while I stood by listening. He got the name of two doctors. The first one gave me injections. They didn't "take." The second one was a doctor whose tiny, dark office was located over the Michigan Theatre in Detroit. He had no nurse, no receptionist, but was alone when we arrived unannounced. He looked like a survivor from Dachau. His face was death itself. I will never forget it. He agreed after asking my father who had sent him, and my father refused to tell, saying he would never reveal the doctor's name either if there were any problems.

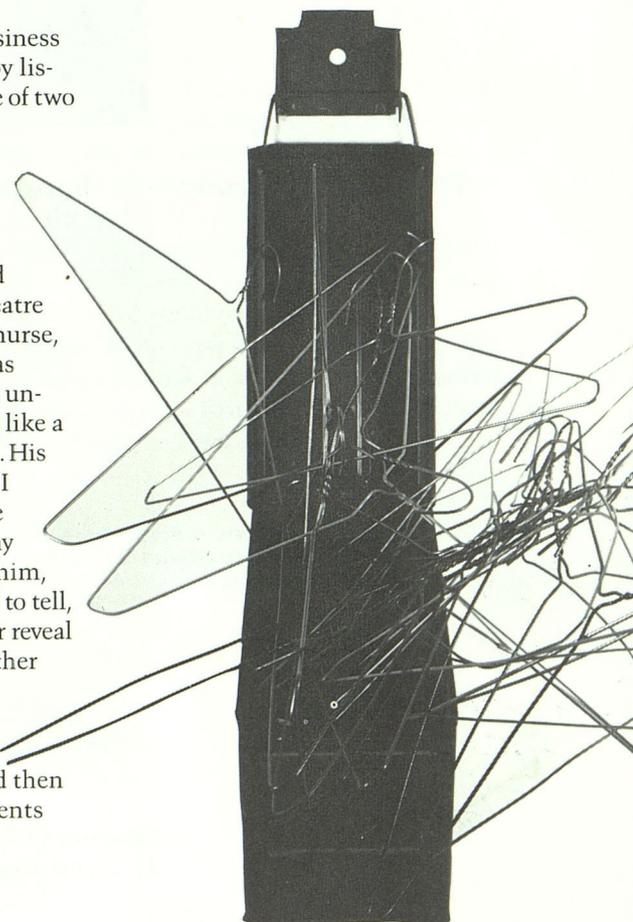
I was sick for days afterward, bleeding and then hemorrhaging. My parents

rushed me to the hospital on the fifth day. Three pints of blood and two days in the hospital, and I was back to work again. I didn't want anyone to know. I have never had one regret. I would do it again.

But I will never have to. Nor will any other woman in this country. I, and other women with me, will fight with every means available to keep legal this human right for women's lives. We've now got to fight for women worldwide.

—Artist Carol

Carol Jacobsen is an artist working with video and installations.



BASURITAS CHILENAS IN NEW YORK

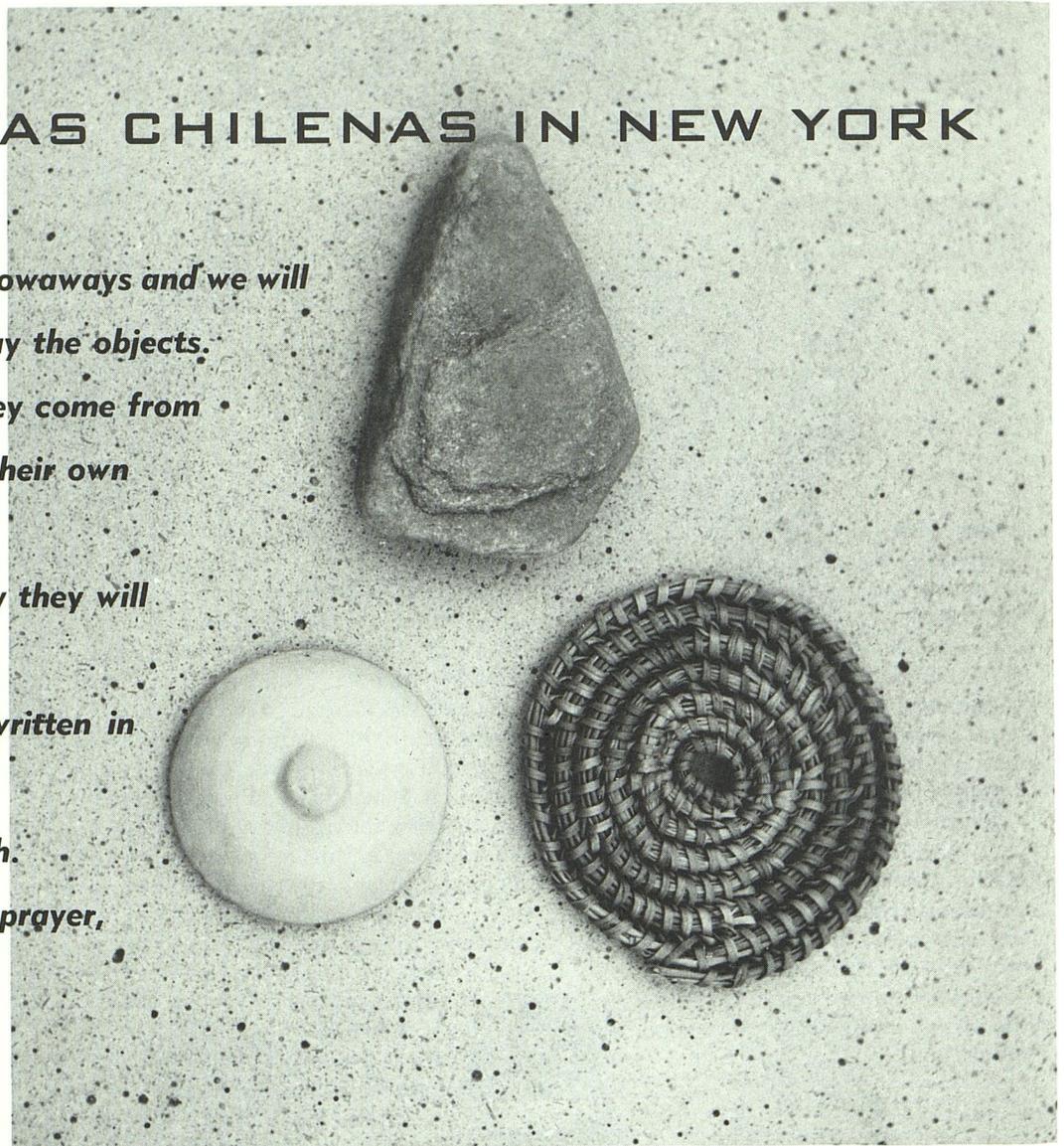
"We are made of throwaways and we will be thrown away," say the objects.

Twice precarious they come from prayer and predict their own destruction.

Precarious in history they will leave no trace.

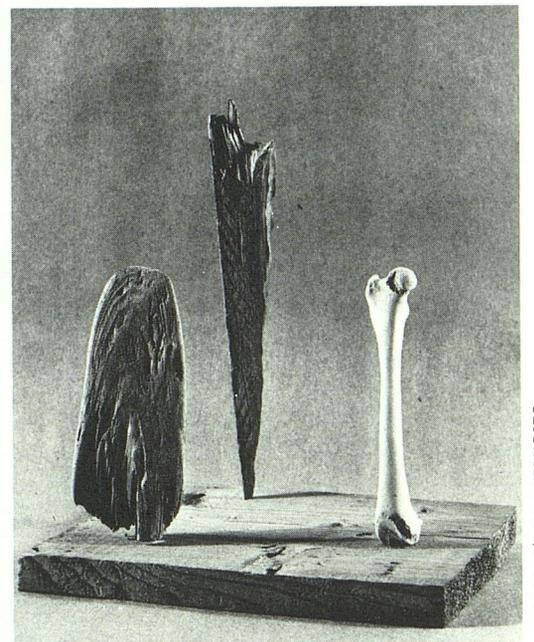
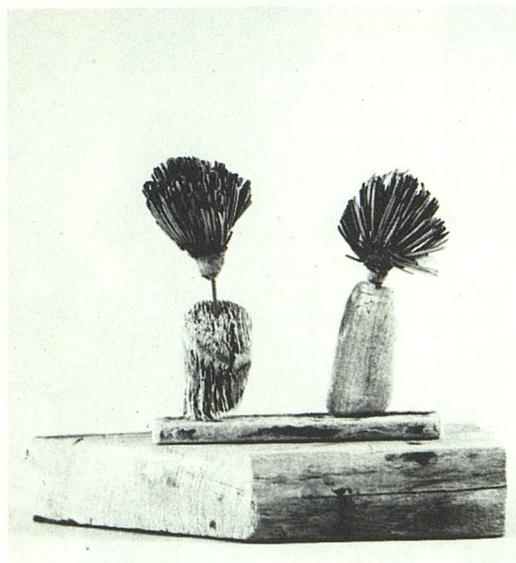
The history of art written in the North includes nothing of the South.

Thus they speak in prayer, precariously.



Text by Cecilia Vicuña

Translated by May Stevens



Basuritas Chilenas in New York, literally little pieces of Chilean garbage, tenuously juxtaposed by Cecilia Vicuña, Chilean poet and artist living in New York.

Adelaida Lopez

The Trapeze-Girl

The net below brings back thoughts
of fishermen. Her frenzied audience
claps like a pack of seals.

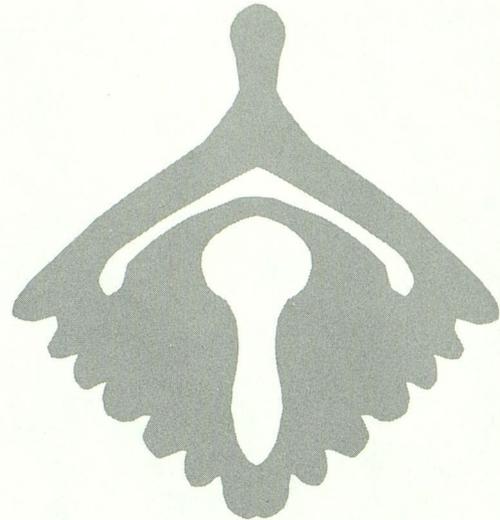
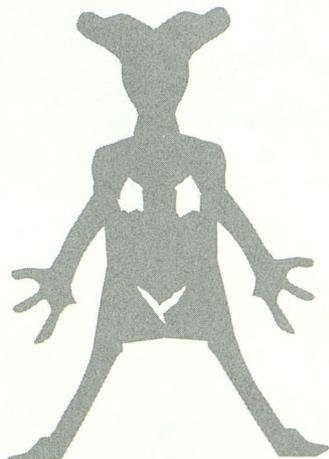
When she was thirteen she became
a trapeze artist. Day in, day out,
her routine never faltered. The ringmaster
brought her steaming broths at lunchtime.
Sweat poured down her shoulders like rain.

When she turned eighteen, her bones
became syrupy. Her stomach was
tight; she moved like a Discobolus.
Everyone paid to see what came after:
he used her backbone like a swallow in flight.

It was one long wait in front
of illuminated mirrors. Her face was framed
by evil's light-bulbs.
In the van, after the show closed,
she watched him shoot heroin.
They sneaked out at dawn
and camped down by the water's edge.
The circus-hands watched her body
wrinkle and turn into gold-dust
when the sun came out.

The moon hangs beyond the tent.
She'll turn away from the arms
stretched out like a hawk.
Dressed in sequins like a fly's head,
she'll try the noisy air. A searchlight
cuts circles like a foghorn through the dark.

—Verse translation of prose poem by
Adelaida Lopez and Andy Brumer



La trapecista

La malla me recuerda un trajín de pescadores. Abajo los espectadores aplauden como focas. Conozco el vértigo; trato de esconderlo, también el desdén.

Fui trapecista contigo; a los trece años empecé a entrenar. Sé lo que es la rutina, mi única placer la comida. Me traías un caldo cuando el sol estaba en el cénit. De mis axilas chorreaba el sudor.

A los dieciocho años tuve los huesos de almíbar, el estómago duro como el del Discóbolo. Vino luego lo que no repito, tu uso de mis vértebras como una golondrina. En las caravanas después del aplauso te vi sedar fieras, inyectarte heroína. Viví en expectativa frente a un espejo iluminado, rodeada de bombillas como la luz del mal.

De madrugada salíamos y acampábamos siempre a la orilla del agua. Tu circo vio ajarse mi cuerpo en la luz más temprana, la verdaderamente dorada.

Ahora más allá de la carpa brilla la luna. No quiero mirarte más, no quiero más tu cara como halcón encima extendiéndome los brazos. Vestida de lentejuelas como ojos, un faro reflector penetra en círculos la noche.

Adelaida Lopez, a poet and short story writer from Colombia, received the 1987 Linden Lane Magazine Poetry Prize and teaches Latin American literature at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee.



PHOTO: EVA-INKERI

JOYCE KOZLOFF *Lobster and Croquembouche* (from *Pornament Is Crime* series), 1988, watercolor on paper, 22" × 22".
 Courtesy Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York. Joyce Kozloff, an artist who lives in New York (and sometimes LA), is an
 associate member of the Heresies Collective.

A TO-DO OR NOT TO-DO

LYNN PHILLIPS

Here in America, you can be anything you want. All you need is a positive attitude and a dash of moxie. But I want to be so many things, I'm having trouble getting started.

On the one hand I yearn to be elegant, really elegant, one of those social paragons with flawless, surgically stretched skin and an orthodontically impeccable smile. I'd wear a Lacroix gown accessorized with jewels as big as meteorites. My shoes would cost a typist six weeks' wages; my hair would be tipped by a man you'd swear was Botticelli in a former life. At my elbow would stand a tuxed-

out older gent, one who's earned his money the hard way—sucking up to the right people. My amusing escort would steer me bullishly into a drove of Page Sixers at an eat-your-heart-out charity feed thrown on Trump's lovely yacht, or in the cultural penumbra of the costume wing of an otherwise public museum. There, I'd be envied for my villas and van Goghs, admired for my unflinching generosity, my discreet charm, and my brilliant lawyers. Outsiders, reading about me in *W*, would feel comforted to know that any civilization that produced me couldn't be all bad.

On the other hand, those smug, snitty socialite bores make me want to throw up. How dare the privileged Few flaunt their fortunes before the destitute? Oh to see those doges and their dowagers blown to bits in a great, booming explosion. Wouldn't it be gratifying?

Imagine: ruby schrapnel and shards of diamond ricocheting off the shantung walls, whizzing through Porcini-shaped clouds of Opium-scented smoke while poached eyeballs spin giddy, bubble-chamber trajectories through a galaxy of waxed legs and imploding centerpieces. Picture severed heads of once vain and

What lethal disorder, previously considered a sex-linked virus affecting only males, now threatens to strike a growing number of women artists, crippling their commitment and endangering the feminist art movement as a whole?

Learn to recognize these early-warning signals:

A public service announcement prepared by

NANCY BUCHANAN

an artist and teacher living and working in Los Angeles

CREEPING CLASSISM:

Does the thought "I've paid *my dues*" enter your mind when you are asked to participate in collective effort?

COVETOUS COMPETITIVENESS:

When another woman is granted an exhibit or other career opportunity, is one of your first emotions a rush of jealousy?

CULTURAL COMMODIFICATION:

Do you find yourself considering "marketing strategies" for your art?

CREATIVE CAPITALISM:

Have you considered using the feminist art network to raise funds for your own advancement?

Learn to identify the big "Cs" —
Fight **TERMINAL CAREERISM** on your own home front!

mighty men zooming through the air, a hail of comets, flumes of consommé trailing each in its parabolic wake, while roasted wags, untrussed, soaring, rocket through the widening gyre of after-dinner salad—shredded brocade, puréed pace-makers, blood-red raddiccio—clear to the shattered chandeliers and on!

Such a festive conflagration would surely revivify fashion and the Arts, yet I balk at what it might do to the ozone. Besides, I detest violence. It won't pay the dentist. It won't melt the heart of a bureaucrat, pull a daddy off crack, or wean the lower-middle classes from their dependency on Spanish Colonial decor. No, violence breeds nothing but more violence. So I don't know what to do.

Even in the middle, muddle rules. Should I renovate a basement in a travesty of Anglophilic taste, hire bodyguards, and cultivate a self-satisfied throng of vapid celebrities? Or is the life of a demi-mondaine club-owner too frivolous? Maybe I'd better become an insurance adjuster, making sure that nobody collects unless her injuries are documented? Is this what I want? Or that?

One way or another, questions nag: Should I earn more than I need? Spend more than I earn? Seek fame on talk shows as an achiever, or as a victim? Should I weekend in the Hamptons or gentrify Harlem? Truly Mother? Or merely reproduce? I can't even decide if I should draw my sense of community from Ted Koppel or from Snoopy. I've too darn many options, and just thinking about them all makes me hungry!

But what to eat? If simple fare, then macro or Roy Rogers? If complex, Chez Panisse or Tex-Thai? Should I cook, order in, or eat out? Maybe I should run down to the soup kitchen and ladle out some slop for those beggars and moochers who skulk around my neighborhood rubbing our noses in our own heartless hypocrisy. Should I? Are crumbs of mercy filling? Or merely degrading? Both, obviously, but which? Perhaps I should go on a fast.

Most likely I'd have been happier in simpler times when a person had only to ride the great American West, cheating bellicose Indians of their land, shooting gold-crazed Chinamen for their mining

claims, or bilking cattlemen who'd pay *anything* to get the railroad routed through their small-minded frontier towns. It was easier once, no doubt, to choose between being a Wobbler organizer and a Pinkerton goon, to husband vain dreams among the polygot factions of the oppressed, or to bash in their anti-American skulls with one's truncheon. Easier, but tricky.

Our cultural past is just as hard to figure. Would I have said yes to Walt Whitman's transcendental muse, or to Walt Disney's transcendent mouse? Better yet, starting as a prohibition-era talent agent, maybe I'd have risen hook by crook to head a major studio, be-guiling the minds of my generation with dreams of G-men, warriors, and the women who love them. But that's all moot. One must stay in one's own time and skin; live in the Present!

No, no more procrastinating! I will triumph over indecision. But how? Should I channel mummies through a housewife's larynx? Get in touch with my body, or opt for out-of-body bliss? Should I invest my savings in therapy, summon the Furies of childhood, then learn to croon them to sleep with self-absorbed lullabies? Hmmmm. Jogging might do as well. Or sitting *zazen*, or lifting weights. Any disciplined routine to get me into the rhythm of decisive action without the distractions of content or consequence. Perhaps I ought to join an Anonymous Society and entrust my life to a Higher Power? The Higher Power can be anything I wish: Moscow, Mary, Elvis, you name it. At any hour of the day or night if Elvis wills it, my fellow-sufferers—the stymied, the scattered, and shirkoholic—may ring me up. And I them. A tight support system—is that the solution?

Deep in my heart I know that prodding and poking at my problem won't solve it. The only way to defeat lethargy is to *do* something, anything. Sign a personal check to help science test a new cancer drug, albeit on innocent monkeys and bunnies? Support groups opposed to such cruel practices, thus slowing the metastasis of hope? Maybe I ought to write a note, admonishing my congressman to ignore all those munitions lobbies and xenophobic voters who put him in office? No, I'd be more useful sending blankets to the baked plains of Ethiopia, or shipping medical supplies to the armies of Nicaragua to abet that noblest of causes—a small nation's struggle to choose which superpower to owe. Oh dear.

Perhaps it would be more effective to teach just one teenage mother to read.

After a few years of patient work and sacrifice, for which her children (once they're successful word-processors) will no doubt thank her, she'll be able to read *this*. Or something more upbeat, a fashion mag, or supermarket romance. She'll be able to make her own choices then. She'll be free as I.

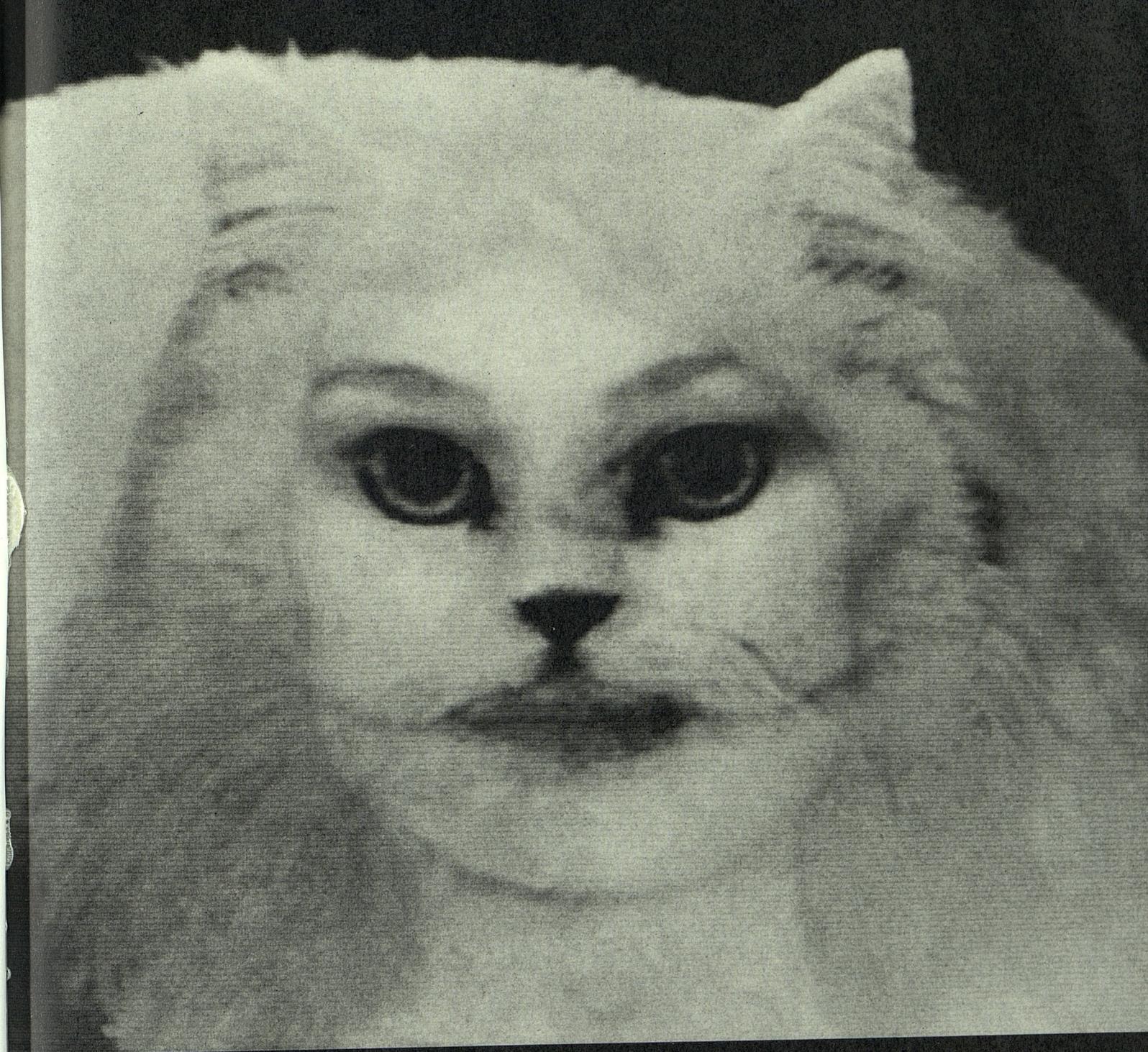
I know sloth is a sin. Still, reviewing all the viable alternatives wears me out. I'm sleepy. Time for a nap.

I curl up and my cat, Purina, jumps up on the futon for a cuddle. What a creature! She is not at all confused! She has no job. She has no social ambitions. No social conscience. She has much to teach me.

Watching her, I can see what I must do. I must find a Higher Power to take care of me, a Higher Power who'll scratch my back and leave me alone with a full dish on weekends. I will learn to clean myself with my tongue and go to the bathroom in a box of gravel. I'll hunt mice and catch them; I'll regale them with tales of tigers, leopards, and the rodents who love them. I'll bat my little Mickeys and Minnies around like hockey pucks or Pinkerton men or Latin refugees. Then I'll experiment on them scientifically with my teeth for awhile before presenting my empirical results to the Great One. If I get bored or lonely I'll crawl into a paper-bag and rattle up a childhood trauma or two, then scamper forth re-born. And should the Almighty seek to soothe Her conscience by writing a check, I'll bite the hand that grips the pen or nibble a leaf of grass to make myself spit up on Her signature. No teenage mothers are going to read while I'm around! I'll stand on their books and stick my sphincter smack in their faces! In such behavior lies truth, simplicity, and honesty.

But alas, I am no cat. I am only a confused good-for-nothing, fated to flatter and praise the go-getters and never-sayers, the movers-and-shakers, the can-do and did-ers, those whose lot it is to build, build, build, for better or worse, in sickness and in health upon this earthly paradise a temple of marvels, a monument to the dovetail fit of demand and supply, factory and shopping mall, of tyrant and jester, killer and nurse, and to bequeath their creation with love everlasting to their cherished offspring that they may build and bequeath in turn, hand over fist, mind over matter, *Life uber alles* and a pox on laggards!

Lynn Phillips has written for "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman" and has contributed to *Ms.* and *Premiere*, among other publications.



NANCY BURSON *Cat Woman*, 1983, computer-generated composite photograph. Courtesy, David Kramlich.
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