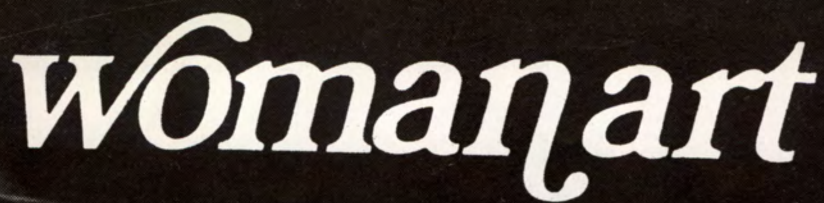

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13 Ways of Looking at a Portrait: *DOTTY ATTIE*

by Gloria Feman Orenstein

Dotty Attie's art is about the remaking of the woman artist. She uses the motif of the portrait and the self-portrait to suggest subtle ways in which we might reexamine art history and autobiography. So much has been written about female art and the confessional mode, about female art and autobiography, that by now we should be very wary of accepting any overly naive assumptions underlying such observations. It would be deceptively simplistic to presume that Dotty Attie uses the self-portrait only in order to reveal the self. It would be equally naive to assume that she uses portraits of the "great masters" Ingres, Rembrandt, Rubens, or Raphael, for example, only as glimpses of moments in the history of portraiture, innocently juxtaposed with images of her own, in an obvious critical comment upon the exclusion of women artists from art history. On one level this is a legitimate, if also superficial, reading of her grid pieces which display tiny pencil line-drawings of works by the great masters and by Attie herself, in a pattern that implies a new consideration of the women artist's place in the pantheon of the "greats." However, we may be missing an important dimension of her meaning if we take the portraits from the past merely at *face* value.

Just as in fiction where literary characters become metaphors for the most hidden recesses of the self, these portraits are often selected by Attie on the basis of the secret fantasies that they reveal. Like *objets trouves*, these "found objects" correspond to inner desires, and, on a deeper level, Attie, while referring to Ingres or to Leonardo, is also, metaphorically referring to herself and to her dreams of greatness. Thus, ultimately, the portrait may reveal more than the self-portrait, and the use of the self-portrait may deceive the viewer into accepting a falsely innocent portrayal of the artist. Autobiography as self-concealment, confession as the masking of inner truths—these are themes in Dotty Attie's art which provoke much speculation on the part of the viewer, for her art is most autobiographical when it is least literal.

Her works propose numerous ways in which we can begin to reconsider the level of disclosure of the images we confront in art. We are led to ask ourselves whether as women we can identify with those images of women that we find in the works of male artists of the past, or whether, in fact, it is not the image of the male artist himself that is most compelling for us in terms of our own dreams of self-fulfillment and our aspirations for recognition. Significantly, in Attie's pantheon of greats there is not one woman artist represented. This, of course, mirrors the exclusion of women from the chronicles of art history as they have been compiled by male art historians. Yet, we are also made aware of the fact that if they have been excluded, it was probably because

Dotty Attie. *Photo by Joyce Ravid.*

they did not corroborate the image of woman as the male desired to portray her. How would woman depict herself if she were to rewrite art history? If woman were to reveal her inner truth through art would we not have an art devoid of debasing stereotypes, devoid of the angel and martyr cliches, devoid of the demon temptresses, the femmes fatales and the mannequins, devoid of the virgins and the whores? What unknown art will yet be born of the woman artist? What will be the images woman creates in order to depict her true inner life? Would we choose Napoleon as our hero, Attie seems to ask, while casting a vote in favor of Ingres as her own role model. In her flawless copies of these art works from the past is she not also showing her dexterity and her ability to achieve the level of greatness of the masters, while at the same time revealing her desire to transcend them in more humanistic ways? These are only some of the questions that her art opens up for us, for hers is an idea-provoking art.

Dotty Attie once said: "My life is lived in miniature." This simple sentence, as insignificant as it seemed when I first heard it, has now come to represent another important clue to the reading of her works that stress scale and pattern as modes of meaning that are operative in her complex grid pieces. These miniature line-drawings from the great masters and from her own work are integrated into a mobile and expandable grid. They reappear as elements of an overall pattern through repetition in sequence. Only those motifs which were originally present in the basic design have the possibility of recurring as the pattern unfolds. Those miniatures then, gain in importance through exposure and familiarity (read here also "recognition," "critical attention in periodicals," "publicity," and "inclusion in art exhibits and art books"). By weaving her own work into the grid and including herself as one of the original motifs, Attie is altering the basic design, changing the pattern, restructuring the past, and rewriting art history through art. If what seems small in scale or relatively insignificant gains in stature when included in a pattern that guarantees exposure at fixed intervals, and since in art as in life patterns tend all too easily to repeat themselves, then the contemporary female artist must reinvent all basic patterns while simultaneously recreating all images on the grid.

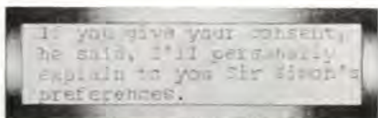
Dotty Attie has done precisely that, for her biography too, fitted easily into the one pattern that seems to have produced female artists of importance—that of daughters whose fathers were artists. A brief look at her life reveals themes that legitimize this more sophisticated interpretation of her use of the portrait and the self-portrait in her art.

Dotty's father attended art school but for financial reasons he had to leave the field. His love of art was transmitted to

The Curious Incident, *1974. Pencil on paper, 7½x7½". Photos courtesy the artist.*

his daughter, and she eventually attended the Philadelphia Museum School, now the Philadelphia College of Art. Her talent manifested itself early. She began drawing at two, and by the age of five had done an impressive copy of the frontispiece of *Heidi*. Her father took her to art school at Fleischer in Philadelphia, and bought books for her on Ingres, telling her that in order to become an artist she must first be able to execute as beautiful line-drawings as the ones Ingres did.

Attie was always interested in illustration, and when she attended the Philadelphia College of Art, she majored in art education. Upon graduation she received a fellowship to the Brooklyn Museum Art School in sculpture, but soon found herself drawing in her sculpture class. She finally acknowledged her desire to become a painter, and painted for 11 years thereafter doing self-portraits and painting from photographs. In art school from 1955-59 she continued to do realistic work despite the absolutist regime of abstract expressionism. Although her teachers put down her work for its realism, she persevered in her own style and by the time she entered the Brooklyn



If You Give Your Consent, He Said, *1973. Pencil on paper, 7½x9".*

Museum Art School, interest was waning in abstract expressionism and Attie's work began to be noticed. Reuban Tam, one of the teachers she admired most, inspired in her a confidence to do her own work with conviction, to remain faithful to whatever form of expression was best suited to her sensibility, to her strengths and to her personal vision.

The artist was married at 24. Her husband was an established photographer, and for at least six years she was totally responsible for everything domestic. After the birth of her two children and the impact of consciousness raising, however, she worked out a system whereby she and her husband would share equally in all household chores.

With more time to work Dotty Attie decided to shake herself up artistically, to give up painting and to do something completely new. Her idea was to do a book in which one could see through from one page to the other via holes in the images located in significantly appropriate places. The construction of multiple or hybrid images was thereby facilitated. This book (1971) was composed of seven sections, and each section ended up with a composite view of the artist, herself. Attie sees herself in different costumes, in different roles, and living in different ages and societies. The book portrays the fantasies of the woman artist of the seventies who dreams of entering the hallowed tradition of the old masters. It is a statement about the fantasy of her desire to be included in that great tradition and also about the reality of woman's exclusion from it. It is the dream of her life in art and also the first step into her new life as artist. The bodies in the book are both male and female and are all easily recognizable. The Mona Lisa for example, gets undressed in a visual strip-tease, which eventually reveals that under all the layers of costume and mask is Dotty Attie. Another sequence begins with an image of George Washington in which Attie's eyes peer out through two holes in his face. As we leaf through the pages of the book more parts of Attie's face appear through holes in Ingres' *Raphael and the Fiorina*; a portrait of a cat, a portrait of Napoleon, a Bronzino, a Greek sculpture, and finally more of the artist's body is exposed until she appears as Judith brandishing the head of Holofernes. The last image is a full portrait of Attie.

In yet another sequence, the heads of great masters are placed on Attie's body. Degas is seen in Dotty's painting smock. Her head is possessed by Mickey Mouse as well as by Gorky, Little Orphan Annie, Velazquez, Dick Tracy, Durer, Ingres, Gainesborough, and El Greco. Perhaps Attie is stressing the fact that the woman artist is part of a rich tradition, that her mind and her spirit are informed by a thorough grounding in the classics, a knowledge of both high and pop art, but that although she partakes of this shared

heritage and contributes to its ongoing creation, recognition has been denied her and limited to those works executed by male artists.

In another piece, her line-drawing *Mona Lisa* (1971), Attie proposes multiple ways of considering the role of women in art history, both as artist and as subject. It is instructive to examine this work in detail in order to reflect upon the numerous interrelationships and multi-layered connotations suggested by the interplay of images. Attie removes the face of the Mona Lisa and offers a series of possible replacements for it which, when inserted into her costume and setting, create a severe discordance between the content and the form of the new portrait. This linear strip of visages intended to replace the face of the Mona

Mona Lisa, *1971. Pencil on paper, 26x40". Inserted face: Charlie Chaplin.*

Lisa includes the portraits of a black woman, Grant Wood, Dick Tracy, George Washington, herself, the Mona Lisa, Charlie Chaplin, Blue Boy, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Marilyn Monroe, Andy Warhol, Primavera, and a dog. Is Attie asking us to think about the contemporary meaning of the Mona Lisa? Who is the Mona Lisa? Who is she for Leonardo, for Andy Warhol and for Dotty Attie? Who is the Mona Lisa for a black woman in the United States? Who was she in comparison with Marilyn Monroe, with the Primavera? Who was Leonardo da Vinci for her? Who was he in comparison with Rembrandt, with Shakespeare, with Warhol, Dali, and Duchamp? What did all these male painters have in common and what were they saying about women? How is Dotty Attie changing that male tradition?

Inscribing her work within a famous lineage of commentators on the Mona Lisa, Attie responds not only to Leonardo, but also to Duchamp, Dali, and Warhol. When the secret, seductive smile painted by Leonardo is removed from the face of the Mona Lisa, who is she but a costume and a symbol of a particular cultural ideal, of a specific race, era, milieu, and social class, its aspirations and its aesthetic? She is an icon of the mystery of womankind in the eyes of the male beholder. Both Dali in his *Self-Portrait as Mona Lisa* and Duchamp in his Rectified Readymade *L.H.O.O.Q.* alter the sex of the Mona Lisa, defiling her face by adding a moustache and/or beard. Duchamp's graffiti speaks for the common people, implying that art should be more accessible to the masses, but it sneers at the idealization of woman by turning her into a vulgar sex-object via his hieroglyphic graffiti L.H.O.O.Q. (Elle a chaud au cul) which translated means "She has a hot ass." Warhol reproduces her image in series. Dali paints his own face into the portrait, adds his characteristic handlebar moustache, and transforms her hands into his—hairy and overflowing with coins. The point that art is linked to a capitalist economy in this country and in this century, to a ruling class in others, or that it was created for one class alone and that both the artist and the subject had to pretend to belong to a class to which in reality they had no entree, still does not justify the misogyny of the attacks against the image of the Mona Lisa as a woman by a succession of leading male artists.

Attie responds by producing yet another distanciation effect. Hers is a characteristically female response. Does the Attie *Mona Lisa* not remind us that the entire history of art was closed to women, that women never had any say whatsoever in the depiction of their own image, and that they were constantly denied the right to express their authentic feelings in art? Behind the costume, who is the Mona Lisa and what was she really thinking? Was she not a woman with real problems, suffering the oppression of the female in her own society? Does her mysterious smile indicate a supercilious and critical attitude towards the portrait situation? Was the situation contrived to make her look contented when she was actually dissatisfied?

In her line drawing of *Mona Lisa* (1971) Attie, as a contemporary woman artist, must not only question the nature of the portrait as the illusion of a life-style and demystify the cultural myth, but she must also "defamiliarize" us with a now popular image by juxtaposing it with other more shocking and unexpected possible substitutes for it. Our attention is brought to the fact that the face of a black woman could never become the cultural icon of a society that oppresses blacks. We are reminded that as an artist she could never before have hoped to enter into the lineage of Leonardo because art history has excluded women from the category of the greats by writing them out of the tradition. Might we not even infer that the strange smile which appears to be the whole point of the portrait, discloses the secret shared by all women—the knowledge of what is being perpetrated upon them in the name of the creation by men of something known as the "feminine ideal?" Attie proposes that Marilyn Monroe is actually another version of the Mona Lisa—a woman whose true feelings had to be sacrificed to the cult of a certain kind of beauty dictated by men. Finally Attie underlines the theme of woman's search for identity. She seems to ask if she, as an artist, can aspire to rival Leonardo da Vinci if she puts into question all the values associated with a male-dominated society. At last, when Dotty Attie's face replaces that of the Mona Lisa, making the artist coincide with the art object, she makes her most potent and poignant statement, for she suggests that within the Mona Lisa might possibly lie hidden potential of a woman artist who was denied the fulfillment of her own creativity by the oppressive nature of her society.

Today women artists and writers are engaged in a quest for self-knowledge, in a search for new images of woman as creator. Attie's work also relates to the great tradition of the past as well as to the feminist avant-garde of the present with its emphasis on the self-portrait. In *Self-Portrait* (1972) Attie makes a grid work which teases and frustrates the spectator by presenting a series of flaps that must be lifted in order for us to peer into tiny images culled from the secret recesses of her real life both as woman and as artist. In the series of images that relate to her life, she portrays glimpses of herself at 17, eight, two, and as an infant. She shows her mother, her father, her sister, and her grandparents. Yet another series of images shows the evolution of the self as artist. Here we see details of paintings she has done in the past taken from landscapes and from other sketches. These miniature drawings of herself are suddenly lifted out of the realm of documentation and into the realm of art as we realize that they are self-portraits. The subject matter of her life is now transformed into the content of her art. Drawings are "portraits" and scenes are

Homage to Ingres, *series, 1971. Pencil on paper, 26x40". Collection Sydney and Frances Lewis.*

"landscapes" because the emergence of the consciousness of the woman artist declares itself as a creative presence aware of its place in the great tradition, not only on the level of fantasy, but in reality as well.

Taking Ingres as a role-model, Attie does *Homage to Ingres* as a kind of tongue-in-cheek self-portrait. Here the ambiguity of intention is heightened by the insertion of her own portrait into two grids out of nine that are devoted almost entirely to Ingres, except for one at the bottom, under whose flap is humorously concealed a portrait of Donald Duck. Ingres' own mortality is suggested literally (under one lid are the dates 1780-1867) and alluded to figuratively in the obvious rivalry of Attie's own draughtsmanship with that of the great master. Once again the portrait is revealed to be the mask. Whereas we feel it is Ingres who is hidden behind the visage of Mlle. Riviere, Dotty Attie paints herself in directly. She scribbles out the face of Mlle. Riviere, stressing the fact that portraits of others are self-portraits as well. She depicts herself wearing glasses, contrasting her own realistic self-portrayal with the idealized portrait done by Ingres, perhaps suggesting humorously that wearing glasses may have helped her to see reality more authentically.

When Attie takes on Ingres, she takes him on not only as a draughtsman, but also as a conceptual artist. It was said about Ingres by one of his contemporaries that "He is an artist who conceives more than he executes."[1] Attie's conceptual piece, again entitled *Homage to Ingres* (1971) removes the faces of 15 of his portraits and strings them along the top of the picture in little squares, inviting the viewer to match the faces with their costumes and gestures as they appear in the larger portrait grids. This format suggests a matching game that one might properly entitle "Art History" (another aside to the intellectuals). Naturally I succumbed to the temptation of playing it, but what I learned had more to do with me and the kind of games I play than it had to do with either Ingres or Attie. Portraits are often mirrors too. Attie makes the spectator realize that what we perceive reflects as much about our own values as it does those of the artist or of the subject. She shows us precisely how we see.

In yet another *Homage to Ingres* (1972) piece Attie scribbles out the faces and the costumes; she burns them, blots them, fingerprints them, whitewashes them, and writes over them with graffiti. In destroying Ingres, she overthrows the father figure and releases the power of her own self as female artist. If Ingres painted *The Death of Leonardo da Vinci* in 1818, was Attie not painting *The Death of Ingres* in 1975?

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1. Georges Wildenstein, "The Paintings of J.A.D. Ingres," New York: Phaidon Press, 1954. p. 17.

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DICTIONARIES of Artists, Women

by Lawrence Alloway

Clara Erskine Clement, **Women In the Fine Arts**. Hacker Art Books. 1904. Numerous black and white illustrations, 396 pgs. $17.50.
J.L. Collins, **Women Artists in America II**. Art Department, Univ. of Tennessee at Chattanooga. 1976. Numerous black and white illustrations, unpaginated, $15

If we are to discuss dictionaries we should begin with a definition. It is a "book giving information on particular subjects or on a particular class of words, names, or facts, usually arranged alphabetically" (according to the second sense in the unabridged *Random House Dictionary*). Dictionaries can be normative or exploratory in function. As an example of the first there is the labor of the French Academy "devoted to the hygienic fixation of language."[1] In the field of art dictionaries the equivalents of lexical freeze are the listings of male artists in standard star-patterns. The books to be discussed here are exploratory, done with the intention of correcting an existing bias of taste. The corrective impulse takes the form of unfreezing not freezing. One of the books is excellent—the old one; the other, the new one is terrible.

Clara Erskine Clement's *Women in the Fine Arts* was originally published in 1904, but owing to the suspension of women's studies after that it is still very useful. It is not the kind of book that anybody would have re-issued in the intervening years. It is anecdotal and emotional. For instance, Clement quotes the tubercular artist Marie Bashkirtseff, 1860-1884: " 'I have spent six years, working ten hours a day, to gain what? The knowledge of all that I have yet to learn in my art, and a fatal disease'." A great many of the contemporary artists that Clement deals with are unknown at present. Among these for example there are Louise Abbema (of whom it is said that she "wears her hair short, and affects such absolute simplicity in her costume that at first sight she reminds one of a charming young man"), Georges Achille-Fould, Quirina Apilli-Fabretti, etc.. The fact that these artists, many of whom showed at the nineteenth century *Salon*, are unknown now is a reminder of how much work is again necessary.

Clement discusses subject matter at some length but if she mentions visual characteristics it is in the vaguest, most general terms. Nonetheless consulting her dictionary gives one the sense of a network of artists just below the level of sustained public recognition. My impression is that women artists may have been acceptable in their own life-times, but rather than being remembered they are replaced by the next generation. Thus women artists, in their history, are made to appear rather flighty. It is only now that the entire recent history of art is being revised on a non-formalist basis that sexist prejudices can be identified for what they are. Iconographical studies and the revival of interest in realism and academic art are essential in the dismantling of sex bias in art history. It is notable that she uses the alphabetical ordering of names to mingle historical and contemporary artists. The nineteenth century artists are more numerous of course than earlier women but they are presented together, thus positing a continuity among themselves as a group, as a class.

Clement has no doubt of the reality of the humanistic tradition. Of the aged Sofonisba Anguisciola she writes: "Van Dyck who was frequently her guest, more than once declared that he 'was more benefitted by the counsels of Sofonisba than by all his studies of the masters of his art'." Clement remarks: "From a pupil of Rubens this was praise indeed." Compliments are not what art history is made of now, but 70 years ago they were a part of the texture of a humanistic belief in art. The point of the story is not gallantry; it assumes a realm in which Sofonisba, Van Dyck, and Rubens are comparable as artists. Thus as women produced art they entered a realm of enlightening and ennobling discourse. Clement has a conventional view of the history of art, seeing it largely as a succession of sunny points and great moments, with occasional halts and detours. To this benign evolutionary view, typical of the period, she adds the contribution of women, returning them to the pantheon. Feminists sometimes argue that the existing taste culture is identifiable with male taste, but this underestimates the signifying, the communicative, power of art. Clement's optimism about art in no way blunts her grasp of the situation in which, after all, she is doing pioneer research. She notes: "We find many names of Dutch women who must have been reputable artists, since they are mentioned in Art Chronicles of their time; but we know little of their lives and can [find] no mention of pictures executed by them."

Clement sent a circular letter to artists but unlike J.L. Collins in his dictionary, she scrupulously notes when it was not returned and draws on reviews and criticism. Even in a detail like this she is superior to Collins' *Women Artists in America II*, described as a continuation of an earlier book, *Women Artists in America, 18th Century to the Present*, not known to me. Collins describes his work method: "The information presented in this volume was furnished almost exclusively by the artists themselves." However this led to problems: some artists sent in detailed and coherent entries but others appear to have submitted bibliographically illiterate entries. Collins prints them in any state, without standardizing the information. The ordering oscillates wildly to produce erratic and hence more or less meaningless entries. For instance, Lily Brody's entry includes this: "Whitney Museum of American Art, 1972; New York Cultural Center, 1973." Both are listed under 'exhibitions', but the first was a one-artist show and the second, *Women Choose Women*, was a group show in which she had one piece. Most bibliographers, most dictionary editors, set great store on preserving such differences.

How did Collins decide which artists to circulate? That I do not know but it is clear that his method is pretty spotty for one whose aim is "a cross-section of contemporary women artists working in the US." Seven members of the SoHo 20 woman's co-op gallery are in, three of the woman's co-op A.I.R., and 24 of the 109 exhibitors in *Women Choose Women*. Even allowing for low returns from blanket mailing, something is wrong with a dictionary of women artists that ends up with 14 members of SoHo 20, 17 of A.I.R., and 85 from *Women Choose Women* missing.

It is clear in fact that Collins did not rely "almost exclusively" on the mails. There are numerous entries that have been invented specially for the occasion and are certainly not by the artists, such as: "Dorthea [sic] Rockburne. Sculptor. Cardboard floor and wall pieces which are based on a set theory." Not only is the name mis-spelled but the reference should be not to *a* set theory (something pre-planned) but to set theory, a branch of mathematics. Ann Wilson is described thus: "Painter. Doing abstract landscapes in the 1960s." Not the Ann Wilson I know. These one-liners can be as enigmatic as Chinese fortune cookie messages: "Freilicher, Jane. Painter. Worked with oils on canvas doing abstract expressionistic paintings in the 1950s and 1960s." Winifred Nicholson is described as "Painter. Most active in the 1920s and 1930s doing abstract figures in environments." She was a British still-life painter, married at one time to Ben

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1. James H. Sledd and Gwin J. Kolb, "Johnson's Dictionary and Lexicographical Tradition," in **Samuel Johnson**, edited by Donald J. Greene (Prentice-Hall, 1965). p. 117.

Gertrude Stein

and the Making of Modern Art

by Corinne Robins

In Part I, Robins discussed Stein's link to the art and artists of early 20th century France by examining her lectures and writings. Part II continues this discussion, starting with an analysis of Stein's book 'Picasso'.

The only way to come out from under Stein's wing is to understand and deal with her, to finally accept her large scale way of looking at things. Stein is willing to ask questions about the subject matter of painting, about the relation of subject to see-er, about the problem of resemblances and about the strength of the individual artist's vision. The point of montage and collage, and the uniquely twentieth century approach to art she sums up in these sentences discussing Picasso's way of seeing: "I was very much struck at this period...with the way Picasso could put objects together and make a photograph of them. I have kept one of them, and by the force of his vision it was not necessary to paint the picture. To have brought the objects together already changed them to other things, not to another picture, but to something else, to things as Picasso saw them."

For over 20 years, Stein identifies with Picasso. She and Picasso attack similar problems in their work, she serves as his model and uses him as a model in making her word portraits. Her essay-book *Picasso* is not about any of this. Rather it has the quality of being an official biography of his art, the emphasis being all on his way of working. As Harold Rosenberg pointed out, "There is no art talk in *Picasso*, no formal comparisons, no analytical weighing of qualities. The vision is all, though the vision is of forms." In Stein's two portraits of the artist and in the *Autobiography*, Picasso as a personality, short and strutting, reading the funnies and quarreling with his mistress, dominates. By contrast, the book *Picasso* opens with an evocation of nineteenth century painting "done in France and by French men" and closes with Stein's plane trip when she saw spread beneath her "all the lines of Cubism, the vision of twentieth century art created at a time when no painter had ever been up in an airplane." This is her final proof that above all else, "the creator is contemporary, he understands what is contemporary when the contemporaries do not yet know it." Understanding the evolution of Picasso's art for her amounts to understanding the nature of the twentieth century world. The twentieth century, "a time when everything cracks, when everything is destroyed, everything isolates itself...is a more splendid thing than a period when everything follows itself," and Picasso's need to empty himself, his various periods, all of which Stein describes in the simplest terms, becomes a paradigm of our era. Picasso the man is subsumed in Picasso the creator.

The book stresses continuity and seemingly follows Picasso's career in conventional historical fashion. Picasso's submission to the influence of French painting, his struggle to express only the immediate visual experience then follows and takes him through cubism, the influence of African sculpture, calligraphy using first the Russian alphabet, then musical instruments and signs. The artist moves from Montmartre to Montparnasse, vacations in Spain, and comes back with photographs showing cubism as part of the daily life in Spain, summed up in Spanish architecture which "always cuts the lines of the landscape. The work of man is not in harmony (there) with the landscape, it opposes it and it is just that that is the basis of Cubism," Stein says. The personal depression following the first world war, she relates, is lifted for Picasso by a trip to Rome with Cocteau to prepare *Parade*, "which was cubism put on stage." According to Stein, this is really the beginning of general recognition of Picasso's work because "when a work is put on the stage every one is forced to

Felix Vallotton, Portrait of Gertrude Stein, *1907. Oil on canvas, 39½x32". Courtesy The Baltimore Museum of Art, Cone Collection.*

look and since they are forced to look at it, of course they must accept it." Possibly here she is also echoing her own experience. *Four Saints in Three Acts* performed in Hartford, Connecticut, New York and Chicago in 1934 signaled the American public's acceptance of Gertrude Stein. The Stein revival began with new stagings of her works off-off Broadway in the mid-sixties.

The question of general acceptance of the new as well as this problem for the creator looms large in *Picasso*. Stein quotes the artist's remark that, in any case, people finally don't respond to the painting but to the legend of the painting, to underline her point that the same small number of people understand what the artist is trying to do after his work has received wider general acceptance as understood before. Stein, the most hermetic as well as the most original of twentieth century writers, spends the last 15 years of her life trying to explain to the larger audience why Picasso, who experts acknowledged could draw as well or better than Raphael, chose to paint in such an 'unpleasing' way, and why she herself chooses to put words together in such a unique and somewhat incomprehensible fashion. "Picasso once said," she reports, "that he who created a thing is forced to make it ugly. In the effort to create the intensity and the struggle to create this intensity, the result always produces a certain ugliness, those who follow can make of this thing a beautiful thing because they know what they are doing." It is the sense of discovery and the marks of the struggle that for her adds up to the splendor of twentieth century art.

Stein's relationship to painters and painting is a very complex one. Art, besides being her avocation as she described it, is also the direct inspiration for much of her own work. This now seems fairly common among great twentieth century writers. Mann's *Dr. Faustus* is a case in point. Even more significant is Proust's use of first the paintings of Vermeer and then later the character of Elstir, an impressionist painter who figures as one of the demi-heroes, in *Rememberance of Things Past*. To Stein, Proust is the end of something, and we can see from her point of view how his work—with its evocations of impressionism, Debussy, and Anatole France—becomes a summation of nineteenth century French culture. Stein takes her inspiration directly from contemporary artists. More than a dozen of them are subject matter for the book *Portraits and Prayers*, in which Stein writes, trying to create in her own way the thing itself rather than striving to describe what has been made to a larger public. The two portraits of Picasso in the book, titled respectively "Picasso" and "If I Told Him (A completed Portrait of Picasso)," her prose poem "Cezanne," the Matisse portrait and the two Juan Gris pieces have

Henri Matisse, Music, *1907. Courtesy Museum of Modern Art. This painting was part of Stein's collection.*

become some of the best known works in her 'difficult' style. Part of this, undoubtedly, is due to the notoriety of the subject matter. But this results in a confusion of what Stein herself has set out to do. Some of the portraits (the first Picasso, for example) are written to express the nature of each artist's kind of struggle with his work. Others ("If I Told Him") are trying to capture the essence of an individual artist's personality. This is especially clear in *Portraits and Prayers* where Stein deals with such artists as

Pavel Tchelitchew, Portrait of Gertrude Stein, *1930. Brush with india ink, 16¾x11¼". Gift of Mrs. Charles B. Goodspeed, 1947.792. Courtesy The Art Institute of Chicago.*

Lipchitz, Nadelman and Maugin, who are not giants of twentieth century art, a point she makes subtly and tactfully in "Maugin A Painter." This portrait begins: "To finish a thing, that is to keep on finishing a thing, that is to be one going on finishing so that something is a thing that any one can see is a finished thing is something." Stein here is recording a lesser achievement, a making of art on another level. This becomes even clearer in the next paragraph which begins, "To make a pretty thing so that anyone can feel that thing is a pretty thing is something." This is a far cry from her evocation of Matisse which begins: "One was quite certain that for a long part of his being one being living he had been trying to be certain that he was wrong in doing what he was doing and then when he could not come to be certain that he had been wrong in doing what he had been doing, when he had completely convinced himself that he could not come to be certain that he had been wrong in doing what he had been doing he was really certain that he was a great one and he certainly was a great one." Gertrude Stein captures here the essence of a creative struggle—possibly her own as well as Matisse's—in a unique rhythm.

The individual quality of an artist's personality, something very different, is sounded in her portraits of Lipchitz and others. Lipchitz' starts "Like and like likely and likely likely and likely like and like. He had a dream. He dreamed he heard a pheasant calling and very likely a pheasant was calling." Obviously, here it is the flavor of the artist himself rather than of his work that concerns her. The same thing is true of the completed portrait of Picasso with its famous opening, "If I told him would he like it Would he like it if I told him. Would he like it would Napoleon would Napoleon would would he like it." In both cases, Stein is no longer evoking the impersonal god-like "one doing something" but writing of an individual 'he.' Almost all these portraits, the abstract and personal ones alike, are also poems to be read aloud.

In *Portraits and Prayers*, there are two almost-prose pieces written about Juan Gris, one for a Gris exhibition and the other as an epitaph written after Gris' death. Stein says somewhere in the *Autobiography* that she feels her "Life and Death of Juan Gris" is one of the most moving things she's ever written. The epitaph is cast in as formal a mode as Stein's book on Picasso. But unlike the Picasso book, the epitaph is wholly devoted to Gris, who "as a Spaniard knew cubism and had stepped through it." She characterizes Gris as the exception among Spaniards—each of whom he said is a general—and relates the facts of his life in a dry, understated manner. "There was beside this perfection," she says. Finally, Stein celebrates the fact that "Juan Gris made something

that is to be measured"—his art, in relation to a life of "much illness, neglect and poverty." The portrait ends with her remembering Gris telling her "Kahnweiler (Gris' dealer) goes on but no one buys anything. And I said it (this) to him and he smiled so gently and said I. was everything." And, she concludes, "This is the history of Juan Gris." The portrait sums up Stein's feeling for Gris, for his work and for their relationship. And it is more than this. It is Stein's tribute to a great artist, done without ever using the word great.

Art historians are rather disturbed by the changing nature of Gertrude Stein's collection, by the fact that she kept on buying the works of Gris and younger artists after she stopped buying Picassos, and that the paintings she bought toward the end of her life are not in a class with the early cubists. There was of course the famous break with Matisse, but also, as Stein herself points out in the *Autobiography*, after Matisse and Picasso became established neither she nor Kahnweiler and Sagot, the original cubist dealers, were needed by or could afford Matisse and Picasso. The period of the discovery of their work was over. Her friendship of course with Picasso continued. But in the twenties, when the prices of his and the other artists began to soar, she still had a 10-year struggle ahead of her to get her own works, the writing of 25 years then, published. Meanwhile she became the center of a literary as opposed to an artists' coterie.

Her collection had long since brought her a certain reputation as high priestess of the painting avant-garde, and Gertrude Stein still went looking for pictures. She bought Masson and Picabia, didn't care for the surrealists and, as she wrote in the book *How To Write*, began to feel that "painting had gone back to being one of the minor arts." As an artist, she is interested in continuing, going on—something she tries but does not succeed in doing as a collector. She buys Picabia, she explains, "because he at least knows that if you do not solve your painting problems in painting human beings you do not solve it at all." Gertrude Stein, the writer, here is triumphing over Stein the collector and critic.

Even the writing of Stein's most abstract period, the book *Tender Buttons* for example, is closely tied to real objects. *Tender Buttons* consists of physical descriptions liberated by free association of specific objects, and is an extension of her and Picasso's aim to express only what is seen and nothing of what is assumed or remembered. "Picasso when he saw an eye, the other did not exist for him...the rest is a reconstruction from memory and paintings have nothing to do with reconstruction, nothing to do with memory, they concern themselves only with visible things," she explains. From this vantage point, of course the paintings of the surrealists are to her "vulgar," and the abstract works of the Bauhaus and De Stijl schools don't exist.

As her acceptance and celebrity grows, Stein becomes concerned with the nature of the public personality and the mass audience. Andy Warhol's remark "In the future everybody will be famous for 15 minutes," one aspect of the whole pop movement, is the theme that runs through her *Everybody's Autobiography* and the novel *Ida*. Picasso, she says, rediscovers Spain via the Spanish civil war and goes on to paint *Guernica*; Stein rediscovers America through her success paradoxically on the eve of the second world war. With the advent of the war in Europe, the art world moves from Paris to New York and, ironically enough—and very bravely—Gertrude Stein elects to stay in France. She had brought her sense of what modern art is to the United States in the thirties, and World War II brings America and the GI's to her. Her collection, hidden away in the cellar of her Paris apartment building, survives the war. And, surrounded by the great paintings of the century, Stein afterwards writes *Brewsie and Willie*, a perfect rendering of the speech and ideas of the American soldiers of the forties. It is her rounding off of the first half of the twentieth century.

Today we can go to Stein to find out about the quality of American life in the forties, or to learn about the nature of modern painting. She worked out a scheme of artists' subjects, which is to this day the most complete description I know of of where painters start from. "There are first of all three things, people objects which include flowers and fruits, landscapes which include the sea and complications of these things which may if you like be called painters' thoughts. Besides this there are all these things staying still and then there are all these things not staying so still even sometimes almost moving and somehow sometime almost any painter paints them all," she said. This catalog is also, perhaps not by chance, a good description of the wide extent of her own creative work.

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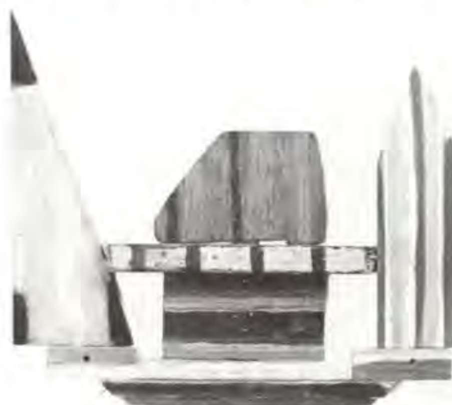

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LAURA KNIGHT
as a War Artist

by Sylvia Sleigh

Ruby Loftus Screwing a Breech-ring in a Bofors gun, *1943. Oil, 34x40". Imperial War Museum.*

World War II began earlier in England than in the United States, and in that country in 1939 a War Artists' Advisory Committee with Sir Kenneth Clark as chairman, invited the British painter Laura Knight to contribute to the war effort by her art. She was the only woman artist to do so. Her first commissioned painting was a portrait of Acting Section Officer J.D.M. Pearson, G.C., WAAF, the start of a series of paintings of women heroes. Corporal Pearson is shown on active duty, watching the sky, tin helmet on her head, gas mask in hand, her sensitive tapering hands taking easy and practiced control of the mask. She was the first woman in the WAAF to win the George Cross, awarded for valor. She stands in a meadow, with a wooded copse in the middle distance seen through a screen of curly barbed wire. The sky is cloudy; it is as if Knight is taking the traditional sense of light and movement in English landscape painting but giving it an undercurrent of menace as the corporal watches the sky for danger.

Later in the war Laura Knight was commissioned to paint an industrial subject. The title describes the action depicted: *Ruby Loftus Screwing a Breech-ring in a Bofors Gun*. Knight went to an armaments factory in Newport, Monmouth and began the portrait in January, 1943. The noise and dirt of the factory did not deter her from working on the spot; her experience of working in the Big Top with the circus in the 1920s and '30s certainly prepared her for distracting work-environments. Ruby is shown bent over the sparkling barrel, earnestly inspecting the breech as she regulates the complex machinery, with light reflected in her face, her hair bound in a fishnet turban. A frieze of workers runs along the top of the picture, behind Ruby; the painting is a convincing example of a kind of work-image that is rare in the West, the celebration of a production-hero. The war made the achievement of such a picture possible.

The artist made a group of paintings devoted to the barrage balloons which were used to prevent Nazi planes from low bombing. She worked on a balloon site at Coventry (later devastated by high-level night-bombing). One painting shows a team hauling down a balloon, which hangs above them, slightly deflated and ungainly in contrast to the fully extended balloons, floating like silverfish above the smoking chimneys of the factories that they are protecting. The setting sun casts a warm glow on the working WAAFs and gilds the underside of the balloons; it is another example of Knight's adaptation of the traditional English love of landscape to topical occasions.

Another of Knight's assignments as a war artist was to Bomber Command. She went to Mildenhall, East Anglia, to memorialize the Stirling bomber, which was approaching obsolescence (to be replaced by the Lancaster). She chose "the moment of take-off when the loaded bomber began its nightly flight to Germany. She was allotted a crew and spent hours inside the cockpit of a Stirling, studying the mechanism and later, the expressions on the young

Corporal J.D.M. Pearson, GC, WAAF, *1940. Oil, 36x24". Imperial War Museum, London.*

Take Off, *1943. Interior of a bomber aircraft. Oil, 72x60". Imperial War Museum.*

The Nuremberg Trial 1946. *Oil, 72x60". Imperial War Museum.*

airmen's faces when they climbed the bomber and prepared to go."[1]

It is a remarkable painting with a composition that spirals outwards from the white-gloved hand of the sergeant in the foreground, through the navigator plotting the course behind him, to the pilots in the nose of the plane, where, again, a raised hand catches the eyes and completes the spiral. Psychologically the painting is well controlled, too, as in the contrast of the tense face of the sergeant compared to the calm concentration of the navigator, deep, as it were, in the paper work of the mission.

After the war, in 1946, Knight was to see the terrible results of Allied bombing when she visited Nuremberg to record the War Crimes Trial. This was a subject that she had proposed to the War Artists' Advisory Committee herself; she felt that it was of such historical importance that it should be painted. She made hundreds of sketches and drawings as well as filling her personal diary. (These works, taken with her letters to her husband make a fascinating corpus, deserving of detailed study). She worked in a glass-sided press box high above the court, with the accused and their lawyers spread out below her. She wrote to her husband, "each man has his individual pose and action, by which one knows it to be him. If I wish, there is no need to paint a feature of their faces—by the shape of their skulls and neck their nationality is shown."[2]

The painting was started in March; she worked from her studies in a large room in the court building, so that she could return to her press box to check details when necessary. The composition is an unusual one, with the two rows of prisoners seen in steep perspective, flanked by their lawyers on one side and by American military police on the other. This part of the picture is a tour-de-force of descriptive realism, vividly factual. However in the upper third of the picture the courtroom fades and merges with a burning, ruined landscape. The scene of devastation makes it appear as if the landscape of Brueghel's *Mad Margaret* were to invade, suddenly, one of his high eye-level panoramas of real life. Knight considered this her most important work, one that has been unjustly overlooked in both its political aspects, as social realism, and as a woman's work.

When the war started Knight was 62 years of age and when she went to Nuremberg, 68. Who was this vigorous but little known painter? One reason for her neglect is her identification with a form of representational art that is only beginning to be looked at seriously. Her allegiance was completely to the Royal Academy and its president for many years, Sir Alfred Munnings, was a life-long friend. She was well known in the '20s and '30s for her scenes of the Russian ballet and the circus. It was this grasp of spectacle, in theater and Big Top, that culminated triumphantly in her war art.

In for Repairs, *1942. Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston.*

She was married to a painter, Harold Knight, who turned out to be her severest critic. She thought that when they married they would have long discussions about their work and ideas, but he refused absolutely to get into such matters except with male colleagues. Thus her painting, robust and confident as it is in conception and handling, was founded on values unlike her husband's. He was a subtle and conscientious portrait painter, with a strict sense of his limits, whereas she was ambitious and ebullient. His output tapered off in middle age, but Laura Knight kept working until her last illness in 1970. She died at the age of 93.

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1. Janet Dunbar. **Laura Knight.** London: Collins, 1975. p. 164.
2. **Ibid.** pp. 178-179.

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The Woman's Salon

On the eve of its first anniversary, co-founder Orenstein examines the origins and development of The Woman's Salon

by Gloria Feman Orenstein

The Woman's Salon, "A Tribute to Anais Nin," *June 30, 1976. Bottom row, left to right: Kate Millet, Erika Duncan, Gloria Orenstein, Nona Balakian, Joan Goulianos, Daisy Aldan, Valerie Harms, Sharon Spencer. Photo by Freda Leinwand.*

The literary and artistic Salon, a tradition that dates back to the seventeenth century and whose illustrious hosts have ranged from Mme. de Rambouillet to Gertrude Stein, is now being reclaimed by five women writers in New York. The Woman's Salon, founded in November 1975 by Marilyn Coffey (novelist), Erika Duncan (novelist), Karen Malpede (playwright), Carole Rosenthal (short story writer), and Gloria Orenstein (critic), is a forum for the presentation of new works by women writers. These monthly readings are held in artists' lofts and writers' apartments, and have welcomed audiences of up to 200 women authors, critics, editors and feminist readers for each salon event.

The concept of the literary Salon recalls that of the artistic Salon, and their social roles were often similar. Traditionally salons have served an important function for artists and intellectuals by promoting the visibility of new works and by providing a means of informal contact between creative individuals and their audiences. In a recent brochure Karen Malpede has expressed the unique orientation of The Woman's Salon. "While we make no exclusive esthetic judgments, the major commitment of our Salon is to work that seeks through its poetic and imagistic intensity and its structural innovation to alter individual consciousness and to change the social world. The Woman's Salon supports, encourages, and provides an intelligent and receptive audience for writing that generates the personal and communal transformations which are the essence of the feminist world view."

I believe that those who have steadily attended our Salons from November 1975 through the fall of 1976 must have been compelled by an ideal that I often refer to as the Salon Archetype. The Salon Archetype seems to have existed as a dream or a vision that many of us had been striving to realize in our own lives long before we ever met each other personally or conceived of beginning The Woman's Salon.

As I envision it, The Salon Archetype encompasses three separate concepts. On the one hand it embraces the idea of an extended family, a spiritual clan in which the members are passionately related to each other through elective affinity rather than through biological destiny. A second characteristic of The Salon Archetype incorporates the concept of the "artistic school" such as that of the impressionists, about whom Maria Rogers has written, in a study of the Batignolles Group, that "this achievement remarkable in art history was due, not to the genius of any one individual, nor of several individuals working more or less alone, but to a small peer-group of painters closely related by ties of friendship, whose group purpose was support of one another's efforts to solve new problems and to invent new methods to give plastic form to a unique esthetic vision and novel ideas of beauty held in common."[1] As an affinity group, the impressionists often worked in the same towns, lived together, and took painting trips with each other in order to share their experience of the creation of a new esthetic vision. Finally, The Salon Archetype conjures up most specifically the image of the salons traditionally hosted by women, particularly those which played so prominent a role in the intellectual life of France during the eighteenth century.

All of the founders of The Woman's Salon seem to have been inspired by some aspect of The Salon Archetype that related to their own individual artistic concerns. For Karen Malpede, the archetype of the salon was embodied in the spirit of the Abbey Theater, which led her to do research on the history of the radical theater tradition in America, resulting in her book *Peoples' Theater in Amerika*. Karen has extended that tradition in her own life by her work with the Living Theater and the Open Theater, and sees her own feminist theater troupe, The Rebeccah Company, as an extension of that family in time.

Erika Duncan had already created a salon in New York that revolved around the figure of Marguerite Young, where writers from the poetic-psychological tradition would gather together to listen to readings from *Miss MacIntosh My Darling* and to share their ideas on literature and the arts.

Carole Rosenthal and Marilyn Coffey both came to New York from out of town to be writers and to live the literary life that they had so often read about. They dreamed of finding a stimulating community of artists and writers in New York like the group that frequented the salon of Mabel Dodge, a group to which they could belong in a deep and meaningful way. The Salon Archetype became important to me as it manifested itself in the Surrealist Group in Paris, which I studied and respected for its energy, its exalted group spirit, and its intense personal and artistic affiliations.

Since for all of us some aspect of The Salon Archetype has been a motivating force in our careers and in our lives I think that it is not a coincidence that our quest for such a communal, non-hierarchical community of peers from which a transcending group spirit of sisterhood could emerge should have led to the creation of The Woman's Salon in New

1. Maria Rogers, "The Batignolles Group," in **The Sociology of Art & Literature.** Ed. by Milton C. Albrecht, James H. Barnett, and Mason Griff. (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 194.

York.

That the traditional salon was a creation predominantly of and by women should not be overlooked by those who are seeking a response to the question: Is there a uniquely female culture? Although there were several salons hosted by men throughout history, the most successful salons were always those hosted by women. Mme. Necker's Salon was the most important salon in Paris at the time of the French Revolution. Salon women had their own culture and transmitted it to each other through apprenticeships. Many were educated in convents—all female communities. These women became each other's protegees. These mentor relationships between women were fostered by the salon spirit. The salon was a place where women reigned in the positive aspects of their traditional locus of power. The salon was the *foyer* par excellence—the hearth and home of many an itinerant intellectual, artist or writer. If society had delegated to women the task of nurturing, Salon Women transformed that obligation into a high spiritual mandate. They sustained and nurtured many a generation of thinkers and artists, and a look at their guest lists alone convinces us that the tradition of Salon Women was a powerful sociological determinant in the evolution of western civilization.

It was the seventeenth century that witnessed the official creation of the literary salon as we have come to know it today. Mme. de Rambouillet, known as "La Divine Arthenice," (an anagram of her name, Catherine, composed by the poet, Malherbe), held her salon in the Blue Chamber of the Hotel de Rambouillet. She is credited with having originated the intellectual tradition of the salon and with having created the concept of the intellectual elite. It is illuminating to note that Mme. de Rambouillet was married at the age of 12, and that she had seven children. She invented a new lifestyle which would enable her to devote her time and energy to the creation of an elegant world of polite mannered society in France. Guests of her salon included Conde, Richelieu, Corneille, Mme. de Sevigne, Mme. de Scudery, the Scarrons and Rotrou. Malherbe was the great master of the Blue Chamber, and Mme. de Rambouillet joined him in his efforts to purify and reform the French language. Many of the founders of the Academie Francaise, whose attitudes towards the French language coincided with theirs also attended her salon—Chapelain, Voiture, and Vaugelas. Guests presented their manuscripts formally, and then received commentary upon them by the audience of intellectuals in attendance. Mme. de Rambouillet set the style of language of her time, a style which came to be known as "preciosity," but which she insisted upon in order to escape from the vulgarity and triviality of expression that was then prevalent in France. By asserting her tastes and her ideals she helped to change the shape of French literature and the course of literary history.

By the eighteenth century salons had become a tradition with the most educated women in Europe. The power of salon women to positively affect the lives of those attending their salons can be seen in the examples of those eighteenth century salon hosts Mme. de Geoffrin, Mme. de Tencin, Mme. du Deffand, and Mme. de Lambert who were responsible for obtaining chairs in the French Academy for Marivaux, D'Alembert, Montesquieu, and Marmontel. They exerted an important influence upon the literary and artistic styles of their times. They set the standards of taste and helped to mold the opinions held by the leading intellectuals of their day.

Across the Channel, eighteenth century salon life in England was taken up by the Bluestocking women, and later in the early twentieth century, Lady Ottoline became the patron of the Bloomsbury Group at her home in Garsington, where she received D.H. Lawrence, Bertrand Russell, Santayana, Katherine Mansfield, Aldous Huxley, Vanessa and Clive Bell, Meynard Keynes, Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, and T.S. Eliot. Here in America the Bluestocking tradition was carried out in Philadelphia in the second half of the eighteenth century. Then, as seminaries in upper New York State began to offer better educational opportunities for women, those women who received a seminary education and were trained in the fine art of conversation began to open salons in the East.

When we reflect upon the literary life of twentieth century France the great salon of Gertrude Stein immediately comes to mind. Stein's salon hosted Picasso, Matisse, Cocteau, Hemingway, T.S.Eliot, Sherwood Anderson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, and Edith Sitwell. Another American expatriate in Paris, Natalie Clifford Barney, held a salon that lasted for almost 70 years. Known as "The Amazon," the salon events that she sponsored, both literary and musical, were frequently restricted to women only. Those who frequented her salon included Colette, Valery, Ezra Pound, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Radclyffe Hall, Rilke, D'Annunzio, Gide, Apollinaire, Romaine Brooks, and Janet Flanner.

Feminist critic Wendy Martin has suggested that in judging the authencity of female fictional heroines we compare their lives with the lives of historical heroines such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Amelia Earhart, and Margaret Fuller in order to consider the loftiest image of "female reality" as an integral part of the norm for women.[2] This reasoning might be applied to women's lives as well. I believe that in the creation of the Woman's Salon we have been directly inspired by the historic role-models of those astounding salon women who turned their homes into a microcosm of the international intellectual community in order to positively transcend the limitations of the role that society had appointed them to perform. In the transformation of that role, in raising it to its highest and most spiritual level, salon women of the past have transmitted to us a distinct mode of relating to one another within the framework of an established social institution that must now be reckoned with as a basic paradigm in female culture by feminist sociologists and literary historians.

A brief look at the history of the artistic Salon in France reveals the importance of the Salon as a haven for experimental and vanguard tendencies in the art world. Before the official creation of the artistic Salon, artists like Chardin would exhibit their works in primitive sheds on the Place Dauphine in Paris. These exhibitions were known as the Salon de la Jeunesse. In 1673 the first regular salons, known as the

2. Wendy Martin, "The Feminine Mystique in American Fiction," **Female Studies II**, ed. Howe, p. 33.

The Woman's Salon, *September 10, 1976. Group socializes before readings. Photo by Freda Leinwand.*

Salon des Artistes Francais, were begun. Only members of the Academie Royale de Peinture whose works were accepted by a jury could exhibit in this Salon. By 1791 the competition was opened to all artists. However, at the time of the French Revolution, during the July Monarchy, the concept of an annual salon was inaugurated in response to pressure by artists and from those inspired by new ideas who were seeking to develop new artistic tendencies. These annual salons were held in the Grand Salon of the Louvre and began on March 1, 1833. Whereas the jury had previously been composed of museum presidents, directors, members of the Institut National and amateur artists, Louis-Philippe gave the power of the jury over to the Academie des Beaux Arts, a group which had a very academic artistic orientation and which was hostile to unorthodox esthetic movements. Painters whose works were rejected by these newly created official Salons decided to organize an independent salon and thus founded the Association des Artistes. Its 3,000 members included such illustrious names as Delacroix and Daumier. Although the idea of an independent salon took shape, that salon never actually materialized because a free salon, open to all artists, was finally inaugurated after the Revolution of 1848. It was held at the Louvre. The following year a jury was elected from among its membership, and those exhibitors who were selected were given the power to choose future participants in the exhibitions. The Salon then moved to the Palais des Tuileries. Works by Daumier and Courbet were among the many that were exhibited in this Salon.

By 1857 the Salon became so dominated by the Academie des Beaux Arts and by its rigid academic standards that the most gifted and original talents in France were being excluded from it. By 1863 so many artists had been refused by the official Salon that Napoleon III had to create a second Salon. It was known as the Salon des Refuses. Whereas the Academy's official Salon would accept second rate artists such as a Couture or a Cleyre, they regarded a Manet, a Courbet, a Corot or a Delacroix with suspicion. Manet's *Dejeuner Sur L'Herbe* had to be exhibited in the Salon des Refuses of 1863. However, soon thereafter the major impressionist painters gained entry to the official Salons. In 1865 Manet was admitted, but his *Olympia* created another scandal similar to the one caused by *Le Dejeuner Sur L'Herbe* two years earlier. Finally in 1866 Manet was rejected along with Renoir, and this event caused an even greater rift to exist between officialdom and the world of artistic experimentation and creativity.

In 1881 the state gave up control of the Salons and its power went to the Societe des Artistes Francais, another conservative group. In 1890 Meissonier had to secede from this group, and with Puvis de Chavannes, he founded the Societe Nationale des Beaux Arts, whose members included Rodin, Sisley, and Boldini.

The Woman's Salon, *September 10, 1976. Left to right: Gloria Orenstein, Erika Duncan, Karen Malpede, Nina Yankowitz, Susan Yankowitz. "It was the first Salon that gave critical attention to the work of an artist* [*Nina Yankowitz*] *as well as that of a writer* [*Susan Yankowitz*]*." Photo by Freda Leinwand.*

The Salon des Independents was ultimately created in 1884. It dispensed with all prizes and juries and was open to all artists. Unfortunately, the total lack of admission requirements caused an abrupt decline in the quality of works exhibited, and a need began to be felt for a new salon where a liberal jury could preside and conciliate the interests of the experimental and traditional tendencies, keeping the quality of the works on a consistently high level. The Salon d'Automne was established to fill this need in 1903. Matisse and the Fauves were important exhibitors at the Salon d'Automne. Since then, salons for more experimental and avant-garde tendencies have continued to be created as the need arose for them. An example of this kind of evolution was the creation of the Salon des Realites Nouvelles which met the need of the new abstract artists.[3]

The New York Woman's Salon has been inspired both by the traditional aspects of the literary salon and by the radical aspects of the artistic salon. On the one hand it takes from the literary salon a desire to partake in a traditionally female intellectual culture with a historical record of over 300 years, while on the other, it takes from the artistic salon a desire to create an alternate space for the presentation and reception of new works born of a new consciousness and thus not easily accepted by the official literary and artistic establishment.

The first Woman's Salon was held at my apartment on November 22, 1975. I presented a slide-lecture on *The Women of Surrealism*, and discussed the magical and esoteric imagery in the works of such women Surrealists as Leonor Fini, Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo, Meret Oppenheim, and Toyen. An understanding of the iconography of the works of these women artists reveals the image of woman as Alchemist, Scientist of the Sacred, Guide, Visionary, the Great Mother, and the Mother Goddess.

With over 75 women in attendance on a Saturday night, we were convinced that there was an authentic need in the literary community for continuing these Salon events. A second Salon was held which featured a reading by Lynda Schor from her newly published book *Appetites.* This Salon took on a new format. Carole Rosenthal led a discussion following the reading, and those present explored the symbolic resonances of Lynda's work. By the time of our third Salon we had decided to preface each reading with a critical essay relating to the work being presented. Erika Duncan's reading of "The Death of Clair" section from her recently completed novel, was introduced by critic Sharon Spencer. Erika Duncan's novel pleads for survival through self-affirmation rather than self-immolation and for the acceptance of that immensity which the artist comes to represent as one of the dimensions of reality that lays dormant in the secret recesses of every soul. A second reading of Erika's work was opened to a male audience as well. I introduced this reading with a critical piece exploring the close relationship between critic and writer. Another Salon event that was opened to men was a reading by West Coast poet, Lynn Sukenick from her collection *Houdini.* The Salon hopes to serve as a center for writers from every region of the country. If we are notified of a woman writer's plans for a trip to New York in advance, we will be able to receive her and possibly hold a Salon for her.

3. **The Encyclopedia of World Art.** (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968).

Our fourth official Salon took place on March 18. It was a reading of Karen Malpede's play *Rebeccah* by three actors from the Open Theater. Karen's *Rebeccah* reexamines history from a woman's perspective; its theme is the birth of the feminist imagination. Karen stresses that her play examines the changing consciousness of a woman, Rebeccah, who loses a son in the Russian pogrom of 1905, a daughter in the Triangle Shirtwaist fire of 1911, and becomes a shopping bag lady who founds a shanty town during the Depression. As Rebeccah sees how a community can be built out of the garbage of this civilization, the play changes in tone from grief to joy. The metaphor and the emotional transformation strike deep chords in women, particularly in those of us who are working to transform our lives. The reading was preceded by an introduction read by Salon co-founder Marilyn Coffey. On this occasion Erika Duncan read an essay she had written about the meaning of her work with women in the Salon and the feeling of trust she had begun to develop in communal creation.

With a growing collection of personal criticism from the Salon, some of us decided to put out our first independent Salon publication. This small blue booklet entitled "Personal Criticism from the Woman's Salon" with texts by Erika Duncan, Karen Malpede, Sharon Spencer, and myself, was available at the April Salon, where Carole Rosenthal read three of her short stories, "Inside/Outside," "Fusion," and "The Baby Tooth." Her stories, rich in irony and humor, explore aspects of the male-female relationship told from the perspective of the female character. The reading was held at the studio of Ellen Evjen, whose works were exhibited for the occasion. Here was the first Salon in which artists and writers collaborated. Marilyn Coffey introduced Carole's work and stressed "the ferocious precision of her language and the tremendous concentration of her imagery."

Our May Salon was held on the day before Mother's Day. We chose this occasion in order to honor those women writers and critics we felt to be our spiritual mentors. Barbara Deming, Adrienne Rich, and Catharine Stimpson joined me in addressing the audience of nearly 200 women. This was our first Salon in a series that we hope to continue through which we would like to establish a vital connection with women writiers of all generations, to reclaim our legitimate literary heritage and ultimately to rediscover those women writers who have been written out of literary history.

Later in May we received word that French feminist novelist Monique Wittig, author of *The Guerrilleres* and *The Lesbian Body*, would be in New York for a few days. We planned a small reception

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ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI

Her Life in Art

— Part I —

by Barbara Cavaliere

Artemisia Gentileschi, Self-Portrait. *Galleria Nazionale, Palazzo Corsini, Rome. Photo: GFN.*

Artemisia Lomi Gentileschi was born in Rome on July 8, 1593,(1) the first child of Prudentia Montoni and Orazio Lomi Gentileschi. Prudentia, a Roman, was 18 at the time of the birth; she was to bear five more children (all sons), three of whom survived infancy, before her death at age 30 in December, 1605. Orazio, aged 30, was of Florentine heritage; by this time he had found success as a painter (mainly in fresco in a Late-Mannerist style) in Rome, where he had come over 15 years earlier, to study with his maternal uncle, from whom he took the name Gentileschi. His father, a Florentine goldsmith, was living in Pisa when Orazio was born; his brother, Aurelio, became a painter of some success in Pisa. Two of his sons, Francesco and Giulio, also became painters under the guidance of Orazio, but his star pupil was Artemisia, who began working under her father's tutelage by 1609, at a time when Orazio was painting in his most tenebristic, Caravaggesque style.

Having lost her mother when she was only 12, Artemisia must have had a difficult adolescence in the company of Orazio and his compatriates; they are recorded as a rowdy and surly lot(2). Around 1611, Artemisia posed for one of her father's figures executed as part of the decorative frescoes for the ceiling of the Casino of the Muses at the Palazzo Rospigliosi-Pallavicini in Rome, then the pleasure garden of Cardinal Scipio Borghese. Orazio was working in collaboration with Agostino Tassi, early seventeenth century decorator and master of *quadratura*, who provided the architectural settings; Tassi was also teaching the art of perspective to Artemisia at this time. This portrait of the young artist, which appears under the last arch on the long side of the ceiling, depicts a stocky woman with dishevelled hair, double chin and thick neck and physique, dressed in elaborate gown and stylishly bejewelled. One hand on hip, the other holding up an open fan, Artemisia is caught in a pose of haughty directness; it is an image of a serious and mature young woman, already mature in the ways of the world. This same young woman was soon to enter the public eye in another way, under anything but the most pleasant circumstances.

Early in 1612, Orazio forwarded the following petition to the Pope:

"A daughter of the petitioner has been deflowered by force and known in the flesh many a time by Agostino Tassi, painter, close friend and colleague of the petitioner. Also involved in this obscene affair was Tassi's hanger-on Cosimo Quorli. It is known that, apart from the defloration, the said Cosimo has also, with his lies, wrung from the hands of said maiden several paintings by her father, and especially a Judith of considerable size. And since, Blessed Father, this is so brutal and depraved a deed, and has caused such serious and grievous detriment and damage to the poor petitioner, particularly since it was committed under the pretence of friendship, he feels as if all this had killed him(3)."

The rape had taken place during the spring of 1611; the trial was not held until several months later, because, Artemisia testified, she had been "kept quiet" by Tassi's promises to marry her, promises she soon realized were not to be kept. Under interrogation, Artemisia told of her vain efforts at resistance, efforts which resulted in wounds inflicted by the assailant; later, she was subjected to torture under cross-examination. "When the thumbscrews were put on she called out to Tassi: 'This is the ring you give me and these are your promises.'" (4) Among the several members of the Gentileschi household who also testified was Tutia, Artemisia's guardian, who told how on the day of the rape, Tassi had come into the house while she was modelling with her young son on her lap for Artemisia. One Giovanni Batista Stiattesi testified that Tassi had had his runaway wife murdered and that he had been prosecuted for incest during the year before this trial. Tassi, notorious for his involvements in a number of shady activities, was brought to trial several times throughout his continually successful painting career, other charges including sodomy and lechery. Although he spent over eight months in prison in connection with the rape, the case was eventually dismissed. It

Orazio Gentileschi, Woman (identified as Artemisia Gentileschi and Servant), *1611-12. Fresco, detail. Casino of the Muses, Palazzo Pallavicini-Rospigliosi, Rome. Photo by GFN.*

Artemisia Gentileschi, Judith Decapitating Holofernes. *Uffizi, Florence. Photo by GFN.*

would seem from the wording of Orazio's petition that he was as much concerned with the loss of his pictures and with his friendship with the attacker as he was with the act he alleged was committed (5). The trial ended in October of 1612, and, on November 29, 1612, Artemisia, in an honorable church wedding, became the wife of Pietro Antonio di Vincenzo Stiattesi, a Florentine and apparently a painter. Probably not too long after their marriage, Artemisia and Stiattesi moved to Florence where, in 1614, they were already using the facilities of the Academia del Disegno.

Perhaps even while the trial was in session, Artemisia was painting the first of her identified paintings, a *Judith and Her Maidservant* (now in the Palazzo Pitti), and shortly thereafter came her *Judith Decapitating Holofernes*, the first definite work from her Florentine period (in the Uffizi). The Pitti *Judith* is based on Orazio's work of the same theme (in the National Gallery at Oslo and suggested by Bissell as the work mentioned in Orazio's trial petition). The three-quarter-length figures of the alert, heavy-set women fill the composition, giving them a striking sense of physical presence. The strong side light which strikes them obliquely forms pockets of shadow and areas of brilliance, creating an emphatically three-dimensional space. The bright golden-yellows and vibrant whites of the maid's apparel, the luxuriant deep maroon-like reds and meticulously rendered brocades of Judith's costume, the dark Italian types with frowning expression, almond eyes and strongly-modelled lips—these are features well-learned by Orazio's pupil. But the earthy and untidy look of Judith in particular already sets Artemisia's art aside from that of her more lyrical and spiritual-minded father. This *Judith* is a vivid example of her early formulation of a Caravaggism stimulated mainly by her father's teachings, yet demonstrating the individual temperament of a young painter, who, for a time, came closer than Orazio to the forceful reality of Caravaggio himself. Her violent and bloody *Judith Decapitating Holofernes*, in fact, surpasses, in its vehement emotional impact and depiction of forceful action, Caravaggio's *Judith and Holofernes* (Rome, Coppi Collection), on which it is based. In this second on Artemisia's six known variations on the subject, the brave Old Testament heroine radiates with the impassioned strength of her cause; the fury of the deed for which she penetrated the enemy camp is in the very process of happening. Everything in the composition points to the partially dismembered head of the villain whose twisted and visibly agonized body moves obliquely into the mysterious tenebristi background. Judith's arms are taut, straining under the physical effort of killing the fierce, bearded adversary. The frowning concentration of her features and those of her servant, who is leaning forward and vigorously helping her mistress in the discharge of their righteous mission, also adds to the turbulence of the scene. The sleeves of both women are rolled up to avoid the blood spurting out from Holofernes' neck. The intense drama gains added materiality in the complex convolutions of the deeply folded, heavy draperies in the costumes of the two women and also in the velvet red coverlet and highlighted white disarray of sheets which surround the dying king; these are heightened by Artemisia's use of a harsh light raking in from outside the canvas on the upper left. Artemisia here demonstrates both her fascination for materials and her ability as a brilliant colorist in the tradition of the Gentileschi; she proves also her understanding of Caravaggio's use of space to evoke an active sense of participation in the viewer and her capacity to achieve a symbolic level by isolating the figures from a specific time and place.

Much has been said of the deep effects which the exhausting and embarrassing trial must have had on the young Artemisia, but it is sure that her commitment to her painting career was not affected. Coming so soon after her distasteful experience, her *Judith Decapitating Holofernes* especially raises undeniable thoughts of psychological implications which would easily be strengthened by the meanings imminent in the subject. Artemisia almost invariably achieved her greatest successes in her depictions of strong heroines of robust character and physique, and her predilection for such subjects was certainly spurred on by her experiences as a woman working in a man's domain. This factor should be regarded as one important component in an amalgam of forces which inspired her choices and affected her manner of execution. The theme of Judith, for example, was widely used in Baroque art; it served to satisfy both the interest in the representation of action and the newly revitalized desire to portray the triumph of Church dogma over heresy, by celebration of the courageous acts of a woman who overcame great odds through her convictions with no thought for her own safety. Artemisia found artistic sources in the work of Orazio, of Caravaggio, of other followers of Caravaggio, and even of Bolognese Classicists such as Guido Reni and Guercino whose versions further popularized the theme which recurs so often throughout Artemisia's career. However, her own life experience as a woman colored her interpretations of women with whom she felt an affinity, as with Judith, Susanna, Lucretia, Cleopatra, Bathsheba, and others, as we shall see.

Artemisia gained recognition quickly in Florence. In a letter of 1615 (which mainly discusses Orazio), Andrea Cioli,

Orazio Gentileschi, Judith and Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes. *Courtesy Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.*

Secretary of State to Grand Duke Cosimo II di Medici of Tuscany, implies that Artemisia was already well-known for her art in that city of her father's heritage (6). Most likely, she had begun to enjoy the Grand Duke's patronage by this time. During the same year, she received a commission from another patron, Signor Michelagnolo Buonarroti, to execute a painting as part of the ceiling decoration in the salon of his house in Florence. This nude figure, an *Allegory of the Inclination*, was partially draped later in the century by the painter Baldassare Volterrano, in the interest of "modesty". The large portions of the original figure which remain show a figure of lyrical and decorative charm, heightened by the wistful expression of the young woman who, although somewhat idealized, is obviously derived from a studio model. The illumination and pale coloring have a coldness which is almost neo-Bronzinesque—a distance removed from Artemisia's more starkly real contemporary Judiths. It was surely not a subject or situation which particularly suited Artemisia's artistic sensibilities. Although in retrospect, it is clearly not one of her best, Buonarroti paid generously for it, and it is apparent from the documents that he also helped Artemisia on other occasions (7). Artemisia's esteemed position is again reinforced by an entry in the Archives of the Academia del Disegno in Florence dated July 19, 1616; it records the receipt of a fee for matriculation from her, thus admitting her to the Academy—an accomplishment for any painter and doubly so for a woman painter.

Artemisia gave birth to a daughter, called Prudentia (after her mother, no doubt) Palmira, around the year 1618. (Her name and approximate date of birth have been substantiated by Bissell, using Roman census records of the mid-twenties which list a young daughter as part of Artemisia's household. Although nothing is known of her art, it is known that Prudentia was a painter and pupil of her mother from the contents of letters written by Artemisia to various patrons during the late thirties. Two were addressed to her old friend Andrea Cioli. On December 11, 1635, she promised to send him a "first work of her daughter," and on April 1, 1636, she wrote him of her plans to go to Pisa where she had some family holdings which she wanted to sell for a dowry sufficient to marry off her daughter. Twice in 1637, she implored the help of another faithful friend and patron, Cassiano del Pozzo (Roman patron famous for his role in establishing the taste of the period), to get money for her daughter's marriage which would set her free to do her own work (8). As the information stands, we are left with the intriguing possibility that, perhaps, some of the works wrongly attributed to Artemisia could well be by Prudentia.)

In addition to the Uffizi *Judith* and the *Allegory of the Inclination*, there are two other paintings extant which definitely belong in Artemisia's Florentine period, a *Susanna and the Elders* and a *Penitent Magdalen*. Her *Susanna and the Elders* (in the Schonborn Collection, Pomersfelden, datable 1619) represents this woman of the Old Testament story nude but for a thin drape over her left thigh, virtuously rejecting the advances of the licentious elders, her arms raised in expressive gesture. The figure is thick and voluptuous; the fleshy torso and limbs have little articulation. This Susanna is unromanticized and in no way dreamy or prettified. Although the scene is outdoors with puffy clouds in the pale blue sky, the lighting forms areas of soft chiaroscuro on the figures acting out their parts. Susanna is seated in a twisted position at the edge of a marble step in front of a carved wall. From behind this wall, the sinister duo huddle ominously, obviously plotting their strategy in whispered tones behind cupped hands. The composition is an inverted triangle, with the elders above tapering to Susanna's ankle. The elder at the upper left is looking intently at the second who is glaring down diagonally at the disturbed maiden; they are separated only by two animated hands. Beside the technical virtuosity of the picture, there is an emotional intensity in the depiction which evokes Artemisia's concern with the human predicament forestalling consideration of the moral issue. This heroine's situation, after all, recalls the artist's own unforgettable personal experience, and it is Susanna's body rather than her soul which seems here more at stake. This sense of the terrestrial, felt in her most powerful works, separates Artemisia's art from that of Caravaggio, who expressed concepts of spiritual truth in his mature art. The theme of Susanna was treated contemporaneously by Reni and Guercino, and there are affinities with their compositional schema and with their portrayal of the elders which connect them with Artemisia's painting. Yet her Susanna is nowhere near the sweetness and melancholy of theirs and is even farther from Agostino Carracci's idealized version painted earlier (9).

Artemisia's *Penitent Magdalen* is from the same period as this *Susanna* but is quite different in feeling. The *Magdalen* (ca. 1620) clearly originates from the same model used by Artemisia for her *Allegory of the Inclination*; the figure has a similarly meditative disposition, though here a degree more naturalistic in attitude in her earthly setting. Texture and color are brilliantly handled, particularly the shiny golden-yellow tones and orange-like shadows in the uniquely "Artemisian" silk gown of the aristocratic figure. The *Magdalen* shows our artist as capable of creating a figure of poetical charm, captious and imaginative without becoming overly dramatic or anecdotal. Yet it does not emit the potent strength of her more earthbound heroines. It has been suggested that it was done as a commission from the Grand Duke Cosimo II for his wife Maria Maddalena of Austria, and perhaps it took this form partially in compliance with his wishes.

On February 10, 1620, Artemisia, in a letter to the Grand Duke, stressed her firm plans to go home to Rome for a visit with her family (10). Most likely, she was back in that city by 1621 when Orazio went on a trip to Genoa, and it is believed that she accompaned her father north at this time. Bissell's convincing argument, with which I agree, is based on the attribution of two paintings, a *Lucretia* and a *Cleopatra* (both from Genoa), which are certainly by Artemisia. The

Cleopatra shares similarities with her *Susanna* at Pommersfelden in figural type, and the *Lucretia's* pose recalls that of her *Magdalen*. In addition, the facial features of the *Lucretia* are strikingly comparable with a *St. Catherine* in Florence recently attributed to Artemisia (11). The subtly nuanced tenebrist light bathes the sensuously reclining figure of the dying queen Cleopatra in a warm glow, creating a sculptural effect contrasting with the dark drape behind her. Her head is thrown back with chin up in a Caravaggesque pose, but the stout and lusty form unashamedly displayed by the unaffected woman, tense in the agony of the moment, clutching the indomitable serpent tightly in her fist—this is pure Artemisia! So also is the imposing Lucretia, whose inflexible will is portrayed by the firm rigidity of her body, by the grasping motions of her hands, one gripped around the sword, the other pressed on her full breast. Every detail of the facial expression, wincing in pain, every detail of the physique—the knuckles, the folds of flesh on the underarm—is remarkable rendered with sharp, linear clarity. These are the result of penetrating observation of the plebeian model by an artist of mature perceptive ability. These are also the result of a woman who has felt the hurt of Lucretia. The *Cleopatra* and the *Lucretia* powerfully demonstrate a strain in Artemisia's personality which is anything but spiritual.

By 1622 Artemisia was back in Rome after having spent over half of the teens away from Orazio and from Roman Caravaggism during its most active period. Having sought and found work outside Rome, Orazio was never to return there and he must have warned Artemisia of what seems to have been his lack of success in earning a living in Rome when he saw her in Genoa. Artemisia returned to the city of her birth at a time which marked the beginning of the decline of Caravaggism under the reign of Pope Gregory XV; surely she did not expect (or even desire) public commissions. She was, however, patronized by a number of important friends, ostensibly Cassiano del Pozzo. She spent most of the decade living on the Via del Corso in the parish of Santa Maria del Popolo, neighbor to a number of Northern Caravaggisti working there during these years. The parish census of 1624 records that there were two servants and a daughter named Prudentia in Artemisia's household at the time. (Interestingly, no reference is made to the presence of her husband, Stiattesi, who remains a mysterious figure. Thirteen years later, Artemisia asked Cassiano del Pozzo to inform her whether her husband was dead or alive (12). There is no information as to when or why Artemisia lost track of Stiattesi, but I would surmise that is was probably sometime during her stay in Rome, perhaps even as early as 1624.) In the parish records, there are also other events which corroborate Artemi-

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sia's place as an upright Roman citizen; she stood as godmother for a girl named after her in 1625 and for another girl, named after little Prudentia, in 1626. The recent discovery of some old verses written in praise of Artemisia in 1627 establishes her presence in Venice during that year (13). Three of these emotive and romantic tributes are descriptive of a *Lucretia Romana*; they transcribe with flavor and zesty appeal the seventeenth century writer's inspired response to Artemisia's painting of tortured love. Another is devoted to a *Susanna*, extolling the power of the theme as Artemisia portrayed it, imploring the heroine not to fear the slanderers or lose hope. Not only do they show most poignantly the strong reactions which Artemisia aroused in a contemporary poet, but they also suggest that there were other versions of these subjects which may yet be discovered.

An exquisite drawing of *La Main d'Artimise* exists (at the British Museum) which bears the inscription in French "Made at Rome by Pierre Dumonstier Parisien, this last of December, 1625// after the dignified hand of the excellent and knowledgeable Artemisia gentile Roman woman" written in careful script across the top (14). It represents a woman's hand poised in the act of painting, daintily holding a long, tapered and finely-pointed brush. On the back in written: "The hands of Aurora are praised for their rare beauty. But that which is here must be considered as even more worthy, for knowing how to perform wonders, which delight the eyes of the most discreet." The drawing is yet another testimony to Artemisia's appeal for her contemporaries (even Frenchmen of diverse style), and it implies also that there were self-portraits by Artemisia in Rome at this time which depicted this position of her hand in like manner.

A number of early sources have credited Artemisia as an active portraitist in Rome and have applauded the high quality of these works. It has also been recorded that her portraits of the royal family and the nobility in England (in the late 1630s) were more accomplished than those by her father (Orazio was in England under the patronage of the Royal Family of Charles I from ca. 1626 until his death in 1639) (15). Unfortunately nothing is known of her English portraits, and only one portrait, *Portrait of a Condottiere*, and one self-portrait as "La Pittura" are known as securely by Artemisia in all; one additional *Self-Portrait* which exists in Rome is attributable also to her (I am in agreement with Bissell). Artemisia's adroit and elegant portrayal of a personable little aristocrat called *Portrait of a Condottiere* is signed and dated at Rome in 1622. Here (as also probably later in England) the probable influence of Van Dyck, who was in close contact with Orazio in Genoa in 1621-22 (when Artemisia was likely there also),

Artemisia Gentileschi, Judith and Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes. *72½x55¾"*. *Courtesy The Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of Leslie H. Green.*

should be kept in mind. In both the *Self-Portrait* in Rome (in the Galleria Nazionale, Palazzo Corsini, also called *Portrait of A Woman Painter*) and the *Self-Portrait* as "La Pittura" (at Hampton Court and datable most likely ca. 1630), Artemisia has pictured herself hand raised and holding a brush, in a manner closely resembling the drawing of *La Main d'Artimise*. More animated and less affected than the Roman portrait, the Hampton Court *Self-Portrait* is one of Artemisia's most masterful paintings, and one of her strongest images of Caravaggesque reality. The monumental figure fills the composition, lending a forceful sense of presence; the mysteriously cut-off canvas which holds the unknown subject of her attentive focus suggests the continuity of space beyond the frame's limits. Her eyes intent and serious, her lips parted unconsciously, her hair unkempt, her thick arms held stiffly, her hands grasping the tools of her trade—Artemisia has depicted herself in a moment of acute concentration. The shimmer which illuminates the finely wrought satin of her gown and the radiant glow on her round, full-cheeked face, buxom chest, and raised right arm are created by a tenebrist light; la pittrice leans forward from the darkness which partially envelopes her form; the space is generalized except for the simple table on which her left arm, holding the palette, rests tensely. The picture is both a self-image and a reference to the profession of painting, based on Ripa's famous *Iconologica*, a combination only possible for a woman painter. As required by Ripa, a golden chain at the end of which hangs a tiny mask dangles askew from around the painter's neck (16). The Hampton Court *Self-Portrait* especially makes one regret that these few works are the only remains identified so far of what appears to have been one of her finest areas of achievement.

Few of Artemisia's safely identifiable paintings have been placed in this Roman sojourn, and we are lucky to have in America her *Judith With Her Maidservant* (at the Detroit Institute of the Arts) of approximately 1625 which is perhaps her most spectacular work of all. The grueling charge, the beheading of the evildoer, has been accomplished. This variation of the story alludes to that decisive instant of arrested motion when the two participants in the drama press forward, mindful of the portentious danger from some unseen force lurking beyond the picture frame; they show no sign of fear but only intelligent watchfulness. Both are Artemisia's distinctive types of dark, contemporary Italian women. In this moment of suspense, the maid, bending to wrap the bloody prize as proof to be carried home, has turned her head from the gory chore while the standing Judith, placed slightly farther back into the dark setting, rivets her attention in the same direction, swinging the upper portion of her heavy torso and thick-necked head with stately poise; her right hand (at the center of the composition) crosses in front of her skirt and still holds the sword; the other is held up before her as if to protect her vision from the light of the single candle set in a meticulously painted Aladdin-like lamp. This candle, the only source of the eerie light, casts broad passages of highlight and shadow on the alert women and on their lushly-colored garments. Artemisia had observed this use of artificial light sources from the Northern followers of Caravaggio such as Adam Elsheimer and Gerrit Van Honthorst who had worked in Rome not long before. The Detroit *Judith* also exemplifies reciprocal relationships with other Caravaggisti like Simon Vouet and Antiveduto Grammatica whose *Judith* of the same period shows some similarities. But in her controlled use of light and space and especially in her ability to arouse emotive responses and in her execution of textures and rich coloring in crimsons, golden-yellows, steel blues and liquid grape-purples, Artemisia has become fully independent of influence—the mistress of her own style. (A second *Judith Decaptitating Holofernes*, in the Capodimonte in Naples, has been dated near the end of her Roman period. It is a replica of her earlier work of the same title, the only noticeable difference being the lighter type of this Judith. It further attests to her continual fascination for this theme.)

The monumental *Judith With Her Maidservant* represents Artemisia at the height of her own special brand of Caravaggism, a style which soon changes as the result of a complex combination of circumstances, circumstances which led her to seek work in the city of Naples, a city termed the last stronghold for Caravaggism in Italy. Part II of this article will deal with the last two decades of her life, spent mostly in this southern

Italian city, except for a trip to England during the late thirties. The sketchy facts known about her life and the many beautiful and accomplished paintings extant from this second half of her forty-year long painting career will be examined in the next issue of *Womanart*.

FOOTNOTES

1. Roberto Longhi wrote the first substantial article on the Gentileschi; it is titled "Gentileschi padre e figlia," and appeared in **L'Arte** (XIX, 1916, pp. 245—314). It has been largely preempted by Raymond Ward Bissell, who has contributed the most important body of work on both Artemisia and Orazio Gentileschi. Especially relevant to the study of Artemisia are his **The Baroque Painter Orazio Gentileschi: His Career in Italy,** Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (University of Michigan, 1966), and his "Artemisia Gentileschi: A New Documented Chronology," in **The Art Bulletin** (L, 1968, pp. 153—168). Continual reference to these sources, particularly the latter, are made throughout my article; all of the documented information, attributions and dating, unless otherwise indicated, are from them, as are many of the ideas advanced. Most of the pictures which were unobtainable to be printed here can be found in Bissell's 1968 article.
2. The best source on these artists and on Caravaggism in general are: Alfred Moir, **The Italian Followers of Caravaggio** (Harvard University Press, 1967), which also makes a brief attempt at a chronology of Artemisia; and Richard E. Spear, **Caravaggio and his Followers** (Harper and Row, 1975).
3. Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, **Born Under Saturn,** (W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1963, p. 162). The Wittkowers give a translation and summary of the most important events surrounding the trial.
4. Born Under Saturn, p. 162.
5. Orazio's petition is the only place where the act is alleged to have been repeated several times; all other references refer to a single act, which therefore seems more truthful.
6. First published by Anna Maria Crino, in "More Letters from Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi," in **Burlington Magazine**, (102, 1960, p. 264).
7. For the best information and sources, see Ugo Procacci, **La Casa Buonarroti a Firenze**, (Milan, 1967, pp. 12-13, 177-178, 222).
8. See Crino, as in note 6 above, for the first two letters; and Giovanni Bottari and Stefano Ticozzi, **Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura**, (I, Milan, 1822, pp. 348-354), for the two to Cassiano.
9. Mina Gergori, in her article titled "Su due quadri caravaggeschi a Burghley House," in **Festschrift Ulrich Middeldorf**, (I, Walter De Gruyter & Co., Berlin, 1968, pp. 414-421), has tried with some success to affirm the attribution of a **Susanna and the Elders** in the Marquess of Exeter Collection at Burghley House in England to Artemisia (during the teens or early twenties). The picture, which does seem very possibly by Artemisia, is illustrated in this source, which should be consulted as a further source on Artemisia in general. She also discusses very briefly a **St. Catherine** in El Paso Museum in Texas which I believe, is a bit stiff for Artemisia. But how fascinating to speculate the possibility that it could be by her daughter Prudentia!
10. First published by Anna Maria Crino, in "Two Unedited Letters of Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi," in **Rivista d'Arte**, (XXIX, 1954, pp. 205-206).
11. See Evelina Borea, **Caravaggio e caravaggeschi nelle gallerie di Firenze**, Catalogue of the Exhibition, Palazzo Pitti, Florence, 1970, which also treats other works in Florence which are attributable to Artemisia and is an excellent source for further study. All the works discussed are illustrated in the catalogue.
12. See Bottari and Ticozza, as in note 8 above, for the text of this letter.
13. See Nora Clerici Bagozzi, "Versi in lode di Artemisia Gentileschi," in **Paragone**, (XXII, no. 251, Florence and Genoa, 1971, pp. 89-93). Bagozzi believes them possibly to be by Jacopo Pighetti, celebrated Venetian lawyer and writer who is known for having written the epitaph for the tomb of Tintoretto among other things.
14. See Pierre Rosenberg, "La Main d'Artimise," in **Paragone**, (XXII, no. 261, 1971, pp. 69-70).
15. The early sources are cited in Bissell's 1968 article, as in note 1 above, p. 157, n. 40.
16. See Michael Levey, "Notes On the Royal Collection II: Artemisia Gentileschi's Self-Portrait at Hampton Court," in **Burlington Magazine**, (104, 1962, pp. 79-80), which is the best source on this picture.

●

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Paintings by Three American Realists: Alice Neel, Sylvia Sleigh, May Stevens.

(*Everson Museum, Syracuse, New York, September 17—October 31*) This show was a manifestation of three women's different world views that could be basically characterized as psychological, historical, and political. All active in the cause of women artists, each illuminates the world through tangible objects in her own way, in separate rooms of the museum.

Ronald Kuchta, director of the Everson Museum, organized the show. "It happened that he knew the artists and they wanted to show together," said Peg Weiss, curator of collections. Kuchta and the artists picked the works to be exhibited.

Alice Neel, whose work is characterized by her psychological realism, had 24 works in the show. Her intense, usually unflattering personality sketch-paintings convey the universality of the human experience—peering out through frightened eyes. Each portrait is a "mirror of man" through which it takes courage to see ourselves. Her paintings reflect her own experience. They seem to refine the questions her sitters' hearts have always asked. I think they are immortal.

Neel paints individuals as she thinks they really are. The wealthy and poor, the young and old, the famous and unknown, the society people and those of the street are treated equally, for in essence they are equal. In complete contrast to Sylvia Sleigh's overwhelming environments, Neel's simple figures are silently struggling in an empty atmosphere. By leaving areas of the canvas unpainted she obtains luminosity, yet these spaces existentially claim the voidness of the universe.

She did her first pregnant woman in 1930. *Pregnant Woman* is of her daughter-in-law Nancy Neel sprawled out on a couch chock-filled with twins. Her husband's portrait is hanging over her shoulder. Nancy really did not want her portrait to be painted but the artist convinced her that it would not be shown, so her husband would never know of the painting. Ironically, it was the only of the the paintings from "Women Choose Women" at the New York Cultural Center to be publlished in *Newsweek*. *Mother and Child* shows Nancy again with stringy hair, in contrast to the strong body, clutching her dribbling baby whose indifference is less pointed than her mama's. "The madonna is an anachronism today—everyone gets abortions."

Her portrait of *John Perreault* is very innovative for its time. He is painted nude in a frontal, reclining pose, that was new at that point for males. He is depicted as covered with body hair, a favorite subject of Sylvia Sleigh as well.

Sleigh is best known for her unique combination of portraiture and nudes. She is the only one of the three to emphasize the backgrounds of the paintings. Her flowery environments are truly inviting. "Flowers are the most beautiful things next to people. It's difficult to draw them half as beautiful as they really are."

Sleigh is "committed to portraiture as a method. If I don't get a likeness of my sitter I consider it a failure of observation or drawing." She names the paintings after the sitter to confirm the factual basis of the work. To her, bodies reflect humanity by the juxtaposition of unique posture, form, expression, complexion, and hair. She sees body hair as "natural embroidery."

Sleigh contributed eight paintings to the show. *Walter Finley Seated Nude* is of a chic fashion model whose presence seems to imply "what you see is what you get!" He is portrayed as a sassy tease. She seems to have caught him in the moment of his flowering. He bursts with health, accented by blue floral William Morris wallpaper. This painting is a contrast to the *Pastoral* of Ira Joel Haber, whose hairless frail body exudes troubled sickness.

To Sleigh, "Old masters are a good place to start," and *The Turkish Bath* by Ingres inspired her painting of the same name. Whereas Ingres did not differentiate individuals, "I didn't want to humiliate my friends." Her six-figure painting includes oft-used model Paul Rosano and her husband, art critic Lawrence Alloway. One of Paul's positions in the composition, playing the guitar, is ascribed to the figure in Titian's *Venus with a Lute Player*.

Double Image: Paul Rosano shows him adorned with dense body hair. The flesh is beautifully painted. Sleigh prefers oils to acrylics, using seven coats to paint skin, allowing the undercoats to glow through. The untanned imprint of Paul's bathing suit is left because "that's the way most people look today." *Annunciation*, after Gabriel's visit to the Virgin Mary, is a beautiful painting of glowing Paul, his hair lit from behind by honeysuckles. In the flower garden, this god is surely in his natural habitat.

Inspired by *Pastoral Concert* by Giorgione, Sylvia undressed the models for her *Fete Champetre*. Artist Susan Kaprov, one of the models, is standing in front of laurel leaves, after *Laura*, also by Giorgione. Whereas Neel strips her subjects physically to reveal them psychologically, Sleigh's nudes reveal the sheer beauty of the body.

She sees *Napoleon I on His Imperial Throne* by Ingres as an example of "everything a man should not be. Men can be beautiful, gentle and loving; they're not always flexing their muscles. Men can be tender and women can be

Alice Neel, Mother and Child, *1967. Oil on canvas, 42x34".*

Sylvia Sleigh, Walter Finley Seated Nude, *1976. Oil on canvas, 56x52". Photo by Geoffrey Clements.*

May Stevens, Hats Go By, *1972. Acrylic on canvas, 72x72". Photo by Bevan Davies.*

strong." *Imperial Nude: Paul Rosano* is "the way a man should be."
Sleigh is currently working on individual and group portraits of the 13 women involved in The Sister Chapel project.

The artist who is most tied to symbols, May Stevens has a deep, heart-felt commitment to the issues of contemporary life. "I want to have an effect on these times. Politics interest me, but not more than art. It is a powerful conditioner and insidious persuader." Like Neel, in contrast to Sleigh, she makes use of the grotesque. "The iconography of the Big Daddy series is a fusion of powerful abstract forms with archetypal images of frightening impact. Brutality and chauvinism are painfully made understood."

For Stevens, stripping subjects is not a subtractive process; she adorns nudes with symbols. *Big Daddy Draped* is against a plain background. He wears a helmet to protect him, as opposed to *Pax Americana*, where the draped Big Daddy, against a stylized cloud-filled sky, wears a transparent one. He is hardened now; he even exposes parts of himself, especially his hand heavy with ostentatious rings and flab. The bulldog's ears are more developed, his body more relaxed, his eyes more solid, his chiding tongue grown larger. In *Flag Man* Big Daddy has no form. His impression on the flag is the proof of his existence. The bulldog is more distinct, but he too is fighting the losing battle of gluttony.

"Big Daddy 'The Buddha of the bourgeoisie' is a relative of mine who represented an authoritarian and closed attitude," Stevens explains. His ears are shrivelled up—they would not listen, now they cannot hear. "It was a middle-American attitude towards culture, towards politics, towards black people, and towards Jews. He was a person who had stopped thinking when he was 20 and had not opened his mind to anything since."

Are the Big Daddies and bulldogs laughing or about to vomit, are the faces so swollen that Big Daddy cannot open his left eye? *Head* explores these questions. In *Hats Go By* the hats, symbols of rank, are above the heads, suspended in a void. Stevens is involved in her symbols, which might be less subjective than Neel's and Sleigh's work, where if there are intentional "symbols" they are secondary. Closely tied to contemporary politics, May views women's liberation as a struggle the world has yet to win.

All three artists paint faces and bodies. "Beauty is from the inside," said Sleigh, who does them beautifully if not idealistically. Neel accents the head; the body is often part of its frame. She explains, "I don't think about who is beautiful, it's not important." Stevens shows how dependent the outward appearance is on the inside, which will eventually corrode the exterior. She paints detail—using fine lines and folds to make her figures more atrocious.

Similar and dissimilar, these women have interesting ways of relating important messages. Finally, there was a reason to get excited about Syracuse.

—Nancy Trachtenberg

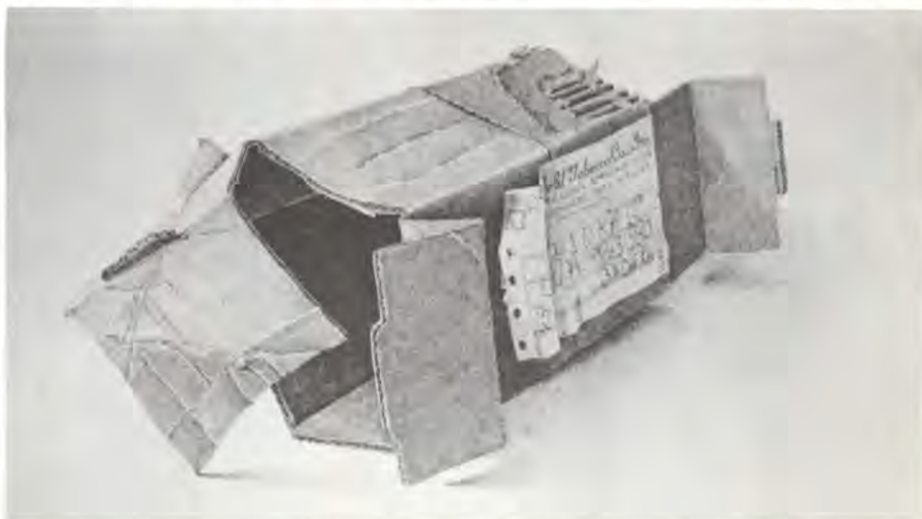
Close To Home

(Genesis Gallery, October 5—November 13) This exhibition of contemporary still-life works by 33 women promises to be an exceptional show. The credit goes to Phyllis Floyd and Lucy Sallick, the two enterprising artist-organizers (who are both represented in the show) and to Harriet Lebish, the gallery's director.

As suggested by the title, "Close To Home" is a celebration of the familiar, commonplace objects of everyday experience. The artists begin with visual perception of "things"—ranging from a single flower to conglomerates of mass-produced commodities. The resulting works of art demonstrate how varied individual approaches and stylistic preferences combine to resolve these objects in terms of pictorial definition. In many instances, the literal facts of the picture itself constitute the main preoccupation. A number of works also point up the artists' regard for particular articles as metaphors for place, role, state of being.

In her *Diagonal Still Life,* Martha Mayer Erlebacher alternates crisp, hyper-real apples and bananas on a carefully folded tablecloth in a coolly analytical spatial sequence. Idelle Weber's *Heineken* zeroes in on a pile of "found" refuse; her deadpan duplication of every detail defines a non-committal attitude. The physical properties of objects—abstract reflections, faceted surfaces—fascinate Laura Shechter in her thoughtfully composed arrangement of see-through bottles and jars titled *Ceramics and Glass with Orange Cloth.* Kay Kurt's *Weingummi II* is a cropped, close-up view looking down on a mound of milky-glass fish, watches and snakes (which look like "Jujyfruit" candies to me). It too is scrupulously precisionist in technique, but there is an evocative quality inherent in her choice of subject matter. Susanna Shatkin deals effectively with related formal concerns and simultaneously assumes an intensely personal vantage point. Her wonderful *Carnival Window* is comprised of an amusement park scene on a studio screen, a brief frilly costume hung over a chair, and a row of city stores outside the window—all explicitly rendered with equally sharp-focus. In *Telechron*, Margery Caggiano discloses a reflective disposition by distancing and isolating her clear-cut images of clock and bird which create hard shadows in the sharply-lit empty space. Using similar compositional devices, Harriet Shorr lends solemnity to a sprig of lilacs and delicate scarf in her airy *Still Life with Dresser Scarf.* Lois Baron's illusionistic *Paisley Scarf* displays a love for texture and pattern. Marion Lerner Levine is looser, less factual in her *Two Still Lifes in the Studio*, rather scattered groupings of collected items such as "Pope" and "Sclafani" brand tomato paste cans, round imported cheese wrapping with lovely landscape, and assorted jars and other containers. She notes in a statement for the show that such work is occasioned by a concern for spatial ambiguities, created by juxtaposing a painting of a can next to a painting of a painting of a can, for example.

Some of the works are more directly emotive, spontaneous, painterly. Alice



Dalia Ramanauskas, World Tobacco Carton, *1975. Pen and ink, 18x26". Photo by Bruce E. Jones, courtesy Genesis Galleries.*

Neel's welcome contribution, painted in her inimitable style of lively expressionism, shows a rather sparse, large split-leaf plant in a jar on a small round table in front of a window. Nell Blaine's spirited brushstroke enlivens her *Gloucester Night Still Life.* Perhaps the most high-pressure piece in the show is Pat Mainardi's swirling *Interior*, a fleeting glance at wildly distorted furniture, radiator, and mirror reflecting a wild-haired woman who might be the artist herself.

Although many of the works chosen are typical of the artists, the single offering by each participant is not meant to represent either their most prominent or most recent retinue. While Sylvia Mangold's *Golden Rule on Light Floor*, for instance, exemplifies her most concerted efforts, Audrey Flack's thickly-painted view of breakfast cereals comes as a surprise to those familiar with her photo-realistic paintings.

This Fall, we have the chance to see 33 distinctive still-lifes by a group of women artists, each in her own way, fascinated by the things around her.

—Barbara Cavaliere

Perle Fine

(*Tower Gallery, Southampton, N.Y., July 17—August 3*) Grid painters can be grouped into two sub-categories: those artists who employ grids as purely structural devices, armatures for other forms, and those for whom the grid is the basic subjective concern. People have a tendency to regard all artists in the second category as imitators of Agnes Martin. Because of this wholesale dismissal, I went to great pains in the essay I wrote for Perle Fine's New York show to distinguish her work from Martin's. Upon seeing Fine's exhibit on Long Island, consisting mostly of paintings and drawings not shown in the city, I was happy to find that the art itself could make clear this contrast.

The prominent characteristics of Fine's grid paintings are the emphasis on coloration and on the sense of the human hand at work. This sense is evoked by the irregularities of the lines themselves. Although straight-ruled, the lines are not mechanistically "clean." They are obviously lines drawn by the brush, fluctuating in intensity and width as they traverse the canvas. Also, they are rendered in color, in the sweet, restrained, somewhat pastel hues Fine favors. By alternating colors longitudinally from line to line, Fine establishes a second system of rhythmic incidence—the first based on spacing—that plays on our western tendency to "read"—and to conceive of the passage of music and time—horizontally. As often as not, Fine's color-rhythms are asymmetric, creating the rolling syncopation found in paintings such as *A Timelessness #5.*

These linear structures are rendered on fields of color as rich, tender, and obviously hand-rendered, as the lines themselves. The muted agitation of the brush is revealed in pockets where the color waxes or wanes in intensity. Brushwork is equally in evidence near the edges of the picture, where the color field has stopped short of the precipice in an uneven, delicate fuzz.

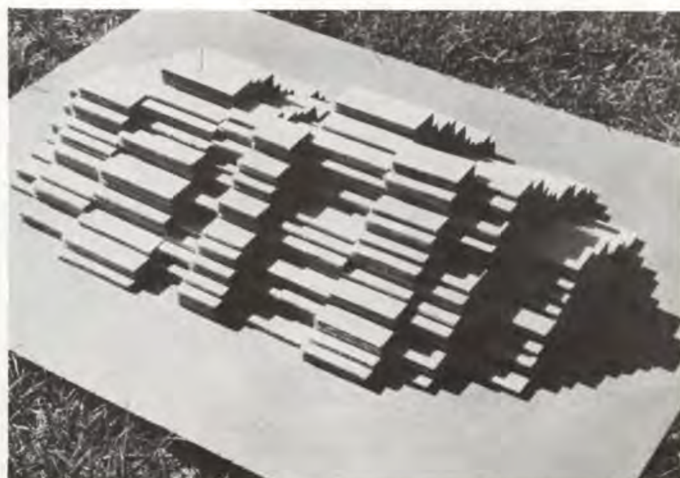
Fine's drawings and collages shown in Southampton were for the most part studies for paintings. There were several however which indicated Fine's attitudes with regard to minor media. In the collages, a vertical-horizontal network of rectangular strips is painted over with rapid, relatively coarse brushstrokes (again, the "handiwork") which extend only the slightest bit beyond the network that floats in the middle of the paper. In this manner a "cloud" of color hovers on the empty sheet, seemingly fracturing into a gridwork. Fine's drawings take two directions: one is *of* grids, the other *on* them. In the former, Fine inscribes vertical and horizontal lines in ink at very close distance from one another. Like the paintings, these drawings fade out irregularly before reaching the edges. The differing length of each line testifies to the involvement of the hand. The drawings *on* grids are game-like patterns inscribed (without any straight-edge) on graph paper. One might say that with these latter drawings, Fine locates herself in the other sub-category of grid artists, those who utilize the grid as supportive ground rather than as central focus. But, just as a game of Battleship emphasizes the significance of vertical-horizontal coordinates, Fine's drawings on graph paper bespeak rather than merely exploit the grid in their hand-rendered informality and their dependence on uniform, reiterated squares.

—Peter Frank

Site Sculpture

(*Zabriskie Gallery, June 30-July 30*) Three artists—Lloyd Hamrol, Anne Healy, Athena Tacha—showed models and plans for large on-site sculptures, and actual work in the gallery. Hamrol's seven feet high model of wood and corrugated cardboard was for a sculpture 16 feet in height. A series of large horizontal slats were pulled out alternately and formed the depth of the piece. The height increased to the center from both front and back. In a statement, the artist noted that when realized this piece could be climbed upon and crawled through, and could provide a surface for graffiti, much like his graffiti panel sculpture displayed at the C.U.N.Y. Mall in 1975. Slides of his work and of other models showed most to be centralized forms, cones, depressed spirals, cylindrical and circular pieces, ironically a format proponents of a female imagery like to point to as their own.

Perle Fine, Square Oval Collage and Linen Strips. *Collage with gold acrylic and oil on canvas strips, 22x28". Photo by Maurice Berezov.*



Athena Tacha, Greenwich, Connecticut Step-Sculpture, *1976 (model). Concrete blocks, 7x33x22'. 'Sculpture '76' Exhibition, sponsored by Bicentennial Commission. Courtesy Zabriskie Gallery.*

Healy's sculpture was created specifically for the gallery site. The work was a succession of triangular arches, formed by draping four rectangular lengths of fabric over a wire suspended from the ceiling to a point on the wall. The piece draped closest to the ceiling was the longest, and formed the widest based triangle; at the other end was the shortest and smallest. One was tempted to walk through these arches. Earlier works shown on slides were outdoor fabric sculptures, stretched and suspended, that filled and blew in the wind. Geometric shapes were those most frequently used, though one suspended work looked like a row of three breasts.

Tacha displayed models, plans, and photos of proposed, in-progress, and existing sculptures. She changes and/or creates the landscapes, land contours, and environments in which they are done. In addition, when realized, each work becomes an environment for the people who explore them. Most of the sculptures involve steps. Her sculpture proposed for a site in Canberra, Australia is intended to cover an area 350 feet in length, combining concrete retaining walls, earth, and natural vegetation forming cliffs and slopes. Similarly, her proposal for a Smithtown (Long Island) sculpture park involves series of rounded, irregular steps; one that builds up to a high central point is next to a series that descends to a central pool. "Site Sculpture" illuminated many aspects of the sculpture/exhibition process: gallery as site, with the actual work; gallery as facsimile of site, with models of the work; gallery as catalog and reference, with slides and illustrations of, and statements about past works.

—Ellen Lubell

Paperworks

(SoHo 20, May 22—June 16) Works on paper by seventeen women from various spots around the continent—from L.A. to Canada to Mt. Vernon, N.Y.—were brought together at this year's SoHo 20 Invitational. A potpourri of diversified styles and outlooks, ranging from the sedate to the outrageous, filled the upstairs gallery in an exhibition which exemplifies one unique contribution of a woman's co-op such as SoHo 20, where "the principle of non-stylistic homogeneity," to use Lawrence Alloway's phrase, is put into action. The lively visual display of art, chosen by the co-op's regular members (who themselves represent widely variegated modes of expression), unfortunately also showed an unevenness in quality range, some of the works remaining within the mediocre. Many , however, looked promising or even exceptional.

Minneapolis artist Sandra Bastien's two pieces, titled *Solitude* and *Reflection*, made up of sensuously curving layers of cut white paper, are rather dreamily pleasing in their mood of tranquil introspection. Dee Shapiro's untitled studies done on graph paper with magic markers demonstrate her ability to articulate the complex relationships of color and pattern with mathematical precision. Bambi Brown's three eye-catching pieces remind one of embroidery; paper is wrinkled and given depth by the formation of a circle, and relief techniques are used to incorporate embossed wriggling shapes, colored in browns and blacks. Holly Sigler's two watercolors, from her *Swimming Pool series*, are fluently rendered depictions of underwater divers; they vibrate with lovely tones of blues, giving them a cool and crisp appeal. Bea Kreloff's four larger-than-life pencil drawings, from a series of 100 renditions of women's heads, have a piquancy which almost overcomes their tightness; the crooked noses, thick, firmly-set lips and general signs of wear on the faces of these harried-looking women transmit her intention, to "confront our preoccupations of woman as model."

But it was the works of Tomar Levine and Ann Chernow, who, like Breloff, are concerned with representing the physiognomies of women, which particularly captured my admiration. Both artists successfully evoke wider connotations through keen perception of their subject matter combined with comprehension of their chosen media and methods of delivery. The women of both artists' scrutiny confront the viewer and captivate with their engaging personalities, personalities which differ widely in their approach to life and which reflect the divergent outlooks of the artists who have portrayed them. Levine's three delicate, linear pencil sketches of *Morgan, Sharyn* and *Self* retain the fresh simplicity of the traditional sketch for the portrait; correspondingly, her women are discreet and tranquil, rapt in somber meditation. Levine portrays herself peering straight ahead with a penetrating stare, engrossed in faraway thoughts while her hand pauses during the creation of the sketch. Her concentration on the details of the head adds to the intensity of the mood of the slightly rumpled self-image. A starkly contrasting mood is revealed in Ann Chernow's bubbly, animated women in the vogue of thirties movie stars. They are competently executed in exuberantly colored abstract patterns of oranges, peaches and yellows which enliven the starry-eyed, volatile women she calls *Hercules* and *Serpens*. *Serpens*, whose toothpaste-ad smile radiates with charm, closely resembles the artist herself (at least it looks that way from a photograph of Chernow); she is leaning toward us from a decorative chair on which she has casually flung herself, on hand on hip, the other holding up her dark, curly-topped forehead—the incarnation of provocative flamboyance. Chernow's work shows flair and originality which leaves one wanting to see more. She has been working along similar lines since 1968; in 1973, she did a series of billboards around her home state of Connecticut which included some "marquees with winged women as stars," and she is presently at work on a new series tentatively called "Interactions," depicting two women in daily situations and also based onscenes from the movie past which she feels relate to her own experience. Works similar to those at SoHo 20 were exhibited in Zurich this year, but Chernow has not yet had a one-woman show in New York. If this objective were to be stimulated from her participation in the Invitational (for Chernow above all and perhaps for some of the others), the co-op will have extended its contribution; it has already shown us the heterogeneity and vitality of women artists working in growing numbers all over the country.

Ann Chernow, Hercules. *Sepia pencil, 40x30".*

—Barbara Cavaliere

Suzanne Harris

(Battery Park City Authority Landfill Site, May 8—July 15) Imagine a small house in Mexico, fresh white, pristine, unmarked. Remove all the doors and windows, then place it in a perfectly round hole. Or, imagine, perhaps, the core of a pyramid. An impenetrable white box containing the secrets to happiness, success, wealth. Suzanne Harris' site sculpture, *Locus/Up-One*, was the embodiment of these fantasies for me when I

first visited it. It had the power to remove me, spiritually and mentally, from the city.

One approaced the site with the city behind and its concrete towering above. Standing and facing the river, one saw a sort of dune surrounded by a Cape Cod fence, the kind that holds back the sand. A rectangular entrance beckoned one into a tunnel through the mound that led into a place of mystery and tranquility. The tunnel ended at the corner of a white cube, which one could circle around: a curved white wall on one side and a straight impenetrable wall on the other. Following it around led back to where one began.

One of the many strengths of *Locus/ Up-One* was the variety of ways it could be viewed and experienced—from inside, circling the cube and looking up at the distant city; standing on the sand top of the mound and cube, looking down into it; from the observatory of the World Trade Center where one could see the site in simple geometry like a drawn pattern.

Harris used the site to create a sort of shrine, a retreat from the surrounding concrete confusion. She evoked in a contemporary setting a feeling of timelessness. Suzanne Harris' sculpture was minimal in its execution, but in its concept, the piece embodied this universal feeling.

Unfortunately, *Locus/Up-One* has been removed. It existed only during the period of its exhibition, about three months. Prior to that, there were three months of planning and construction with the assistance of architects and engineers, and the hurdles of building permits, unions, and the necessity of a guard. All that is left now are photographs, memories, and the emptiness of the site, designated for a mammoth future housing project.

—Vernita Nemec

Six Artists

(Graham Gallery, June 22-August 30) Anne Elliott, Alexa Grace, Cornelia Hice, Norma Jean Koplin, Martha Miller, and Phyllis Yampolsky were the artists brought together by Graham's Terry Davis for this summer show. Elliott's watercolored rice paper collages on board were like wall-mounted cut-outs. In each of the three landscape scenes, the painted pieces of paper were used as one would brushstrokes and line—to communicate, and to describe. Grace's series of porcelain sculptures were like small plates with caricature-ish figures in relief, accentuated with small amounts of color. Their small size and whimsical drawing made the figures and scenes look a bit muddled. Hice's small pastels were extremely gentle in ambience, displaying a sensitive use of color. The "scenes" were perhaps of mountains with a variety of mists and lights. Three of the seven pastels had a rising, central mountain that looked like a breast in silhouette, especially since the "peaks" were slightly accentuated and softly rounded, like nipples. In this context, two of the valley pictures were like cleavages with breasts rising on both sides. The artist's treatment and execution supports this view of her subjects. Koplin's colored pencil drawings were from her "Orchid Series." The flowers, one to each drawing, were floating and centralized, outlined, and only partially filled in. Miller's three still life drawings differed in methodology. One was done all in line, while the other two contrasted areas described only by line to dark, shaded areas. Here, the intensity, density, and dynamism of the lines ensured that we saw them as well as the shaded portions. Yampolsky showed small landscapes of watercolor, gouache, and crayon on paper that were cut out and adhered frontally to panes of glass. The scenes were sketchy, utilizing the crayon to emphasize line, outlining brushy, sketchy activity.

This half-dozen artists provided a quiet, consistent show, without great leaps or plunges in quality or competence. It seemed a reliable introduction to the works of the six women involved, and was a surprise addition to the summer gallery roster in New York.

—Ellen Lubell

Susan Kaprov

(Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., September 1—October 31) Once a new art medium has stopped being fascinating for its own sake, one of the first things one notices is that some artists approach the medium indulgently, playing with its native properties at the sake of more substantial exploration; some approach it argumentatively, trying to force it to their stylistic habits; and some approach it openly, seeking to grow with the medium and at the same time to advance the medium's potential. One of the newest media on the scene is color photocopography (if you'll pardon the neologism), and one of the most open—and thus most successful—explorers of this medium that I have encountered is Susan Kaprov.

Kaprov capitalizes on the distorting and obscuring properties of color Xerography (Kaprov uses Xerox's color machines to create her monoprints). The forms created by moving the photographed objects during the process, the ability of the machine to print multiple exposure, the rich range of eerie, incandescent colors, all have provoked Kaprov to establish a technique that is part careful manipulation, and part surrender to the natural (or, if you would, unnatural) tendencies of the apparatus. The results of this technique have been a continuing series of prints which are both virtuosic displays of the medium and self-contained pictorial expressions.

As expressions, these prints are rather

Suzanne Harris, Locus/Up-One, *1976. Site Photograph by Vernita Nemec.*

Anne Elliot, Nankoweap. *Rice paper collage, 37x61". Photo Otto E. Nelson, courtesy Graham Gallery.*

hair-raising. In fact, hair is a principal motif in them—as are all other parts of the face, plus non-corporeal items which yet relate to the body (jewelry, etc.). Each print is dominated either by a sea of hair, by the face of the artist (hands over her eyes), or most frequently, by both. Kaprov's mouth is often open in a kind of scream, or open partly in a moan. Her mouth becomes the focus of each picture's intense, bizarre spirit, expressing and even physiologically embodying both sexual ecstasy and nightmarish horror. This becomes acutely apparent in such prints as those in which the mouth floats disembodied, and even repeated, or in which Kaprov engages her mouth and hands in auto-erotic interplay.

Kaprov's whole face usually floats in its own hair, Medusa-like; her face also takes on the brightest colors in each print, orange, yellow, or off-white. Because of these aspects, and because of the tortured sexuality that the facial expressions exude, the prints recapture the overripe, violently ambivalent spirit of *fin de siecle* Symbolism, especially that of Munch, Toorop, and others preoccupied with the lure of the *femme fatale*. One can see Kaprov's work as making a feminist response to this male chauvinist fantasy: there is a strong sense of empathy with the *femme* herself, an expression of the pain and confusion that prompts her to consume others as a way of forestalling her own self-consumption.

—Peter Frank

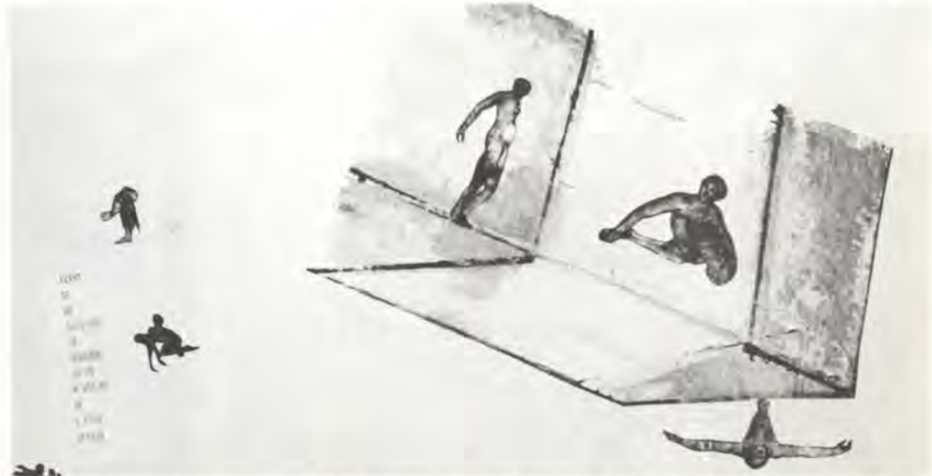
Drawing Now

(*SoHo Center for Visual Artists, June 3—June 26*) In the opinion of Corinne Robins, the fact that the Museum of Modern Art, in its exhibition called *Drawing Now*, had ignored the "arrival of a very new kind of romantic drawing sensibility," omitted the works of many women innovators in the medium, and shown bias toward certain dealers, was a cause for more than passive disdain. So she took action, organizing a counter-exhibition of ten seasoned artists, many of who work exclusively in drawing and all of who were left out by the Modern. Working with limited time and space, she obviously could not do it all. But her choices of works by Dotty Attie, Natalie Bieser, Blythe Bohnen, Nancy Grossman, Phoebe Helman, Howardena Pindell, Deborah Remington, Lucas Samaras, Nancy Spero, and Michelle Stuart are well-taken. The accompanying catalogue includes a fine introductory essay by Robins, artists' statements, and background and bibliographical references. The artists cover a wide range of styles from abstract to figurative, and Robins finds a unifying factor in her characterization that all the artists have demonstrated a move toward "idiosyncratic" personal expression. Every participant helped augment the show's overall strength (with the possible exception of the one "token male," Samaras, who seemed somewhat out of place), but, because the exhibition has already been well-publicized, and in the interest of space, I would like to focus briefly on three of the artists who most persistently entertain my thoughts.

I have been enthralled with Nancy Spero's distinctive and unorthodox art ever since I first saw it at the A.I.R. Gallery two years ago. Her hypnotic scrolls are both bizarre and beautiful. These unvarnished murals invade the mind, admonishing and guiding with a spirit of tortured rebellion. At the exhibition were portions of her series *Codex Artaud*, which incorporates phrases from Antonin Artaud's phantasmic poetry interwoven with random grotesque and sensual figure-symbols like snake-tongues, diabolical heads, or strange fetus-like babies. Art historical references are numerous and diverse—from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, to medieval manuscripts, to modern bulletin type, to collage elements. With all of these and more behind her ideographic system, Spero's work could not be more forcefully topical. She pieces parts of her work together from bits collected over a period of time and cogently portrays the continual presence of relentless stress within those haunted by internal struggles. The disjointed method of presentation forces one to read across the surface, searching for clues which might unravel the mystery. At one point, one is confronted with Artaud's plea: "Concede, I beg you, the reality of these phenomena, admit their furtiveness, their eternal renewal."

Very little has been written about the art of Howardena Pindell, although she has been viewed in a number of international exhibitions since 1969. Her delicate, evocative abstractions are intuitively conceived and executed, and she skillfully manipulates her materials with extraordinary results. The first two works on view show her using ¼" punchings from white paper which were leftover from work done four years earlier. She has suspended these circular "dots" on thread grids mounted on board, and, in the crusty, three-dimensional surface, they vibrate like microbes encased in a wax-like gel. Some of these little organic circles have numbers written in ink. Her interest in numbers, Pindell states, was aroused by a fascination with ancient and modern forms of visual writing and reinforced by her "sheer enjoyment" of shaping them as well as by their seeming symbolical pertinence. The numbers add further "dimension" and lend variety to the equally-sized paper dots which make up her instinctual cultures. Sometimes they are marked with winding arrows, and this symbol of directional force and motion makes random circles whirl around, in and out of the time-space continuum. In 1975, Pindell began

Susan Kaprov, Self Portrait, *1975. Xerograph, 8½x14".*



Nancy Spero, Codex Artaud XXIV, *1972. Gouache collage and typewriter collage on paper, 24x116". Photo courtesy SoHo Center for Visual Artists.*

hand-making transparent, subtly-textured paper and dropping dots of ink into the surface, creating freer, more airy variations on her theme, developing her preoccupation for added points of view through the medium. With varying degrees of grays and mass, they cluster or scatter, coagulating or breaking apart. At the age of 33, Pindell demonstrates mature understanding of the possibilities of materials, blended with a visionary's sensibility for meaningful free-association.

Michelle Stuart has penetrated even deeper into her personal world of visual poetry. Her large, subtly-nuanced fields of earth and graphite have an aura of unwavering authenticity. Her complex, active process for a work like *Niagara #46* begins with an assault on ground samplings found in a particular location which she beats into paper (backed with muslin) until it is fragmented and completely one with the surface. She then maneuvers graphite powder, working it into the surface with her hands. All of this laborious effort results in an intense yet peaceful atmospheric haze, extending onto the floor, inviting the viewer to step through the looking-glass. In the best possible way, she has learned from the sublime feats of abstract expressionism and exemplified the breadth and validity of its ongoing possibilities.

—Barbara Cavaliere

Nancy Genn

(*Susan Caldwell Gallery, July 1—30*) Genn's Handmade Paper Works consisted of compositions of diagonal, and horizontal and vertical stripings. Colored threads and yarns were stitched in and out, diving under the stripes and appearing at strategic intersections. At times the compositions were of one piece of paper, at others each stripe was a separate piece. On the whole, their look ranged from that of weaving to that of abstract, stripe paintings. The papers were richly textured, in pleasing, subdued colors and whites, and the pieces looked like they would have the feel of good flannel. Genn thoroughly exhausted the possibilities of her striping theme, and of using the paper as color rather that surface for color. Further manipulations with and on the medium are next steps.

—Ellen Lubell

American Salon Des Refuses

(*Contemporary American Sculptors not included in the Whitney Museum's concurrent "200 Years of American Sculpture" exhibition. The Stamford Museum, July and August.*) The idea of the counter-exhibition as a method of pointing out the mistakes of major museums has been further popularized at the Stamford Museum this summer. Wittily titled the *American Salon Des Refuses*, the resulting exhibition included 36 works by as many sculptors, all neglected in the Whitney's rather confused effort to portray the history of American sculpture.

The Stamford Museum is quite a beautiful place, surrounded as it is by the lush Connecticut countryside. As I entered the mansion, I was looking forward to what I felt sure would be a satisfying experience. Instead, I found that many of the works chosen were uninteresting, and the space completely unsuited for such a project, crammed and confusedly arranged. To add to my dismay, I found that there was no catalogue, but only a checklist.

Among the artists were seven women including Mary Bauermeister, Lynda Benglis, Lee Bontecou, Claire Falkenstein. Also to be seen were Chryssa's suggestive *White Relief* of 1960, and, next to Arman's famous *End of Romanticism* (1973), I located Marisol's charming *De Gaulle*, one of her best. In a small corner just through the entrance into the second room was Mary Frank's solemnly striking *Woman*, with its crumbling fossilized mysticism; behind and just above it, was Robert Arneson's *5 Splat*, and immediately to the left was John De Andrea's attention-getting nude figure of a *Man Leaning Against the Wall.* About *5 Splat*, I pass comment, but De Andrea's piece was certainly one of the best in the show. About the sound thought behind the placement of these three, need I say more? Amazingly enough, the power of Frank's work shone through even in these most adverse of circumstances.

By the time I had completed my rounds of the scene, my enthusiasm had waned to the vanishing point, and I left feeling sad that this *Salon Des Refuses* seemed to have nothing but its name in common with the Paris original of 1863.

—Barbara Cavaliere

Louise Kramer

(*Nassau Center for the Fine Arts, August 15—September 19*) Louise Kramer's work, exhibited at the Nassau Center for the Fine Arts, the former Frick estate, consisted of sculpture and monoprints. The monoprints are of inked silk marquesette. The silk is arranged and printed "so it will say something about itself," revealing the physicality of the cloth—its softness, its shape. One print, five feet in length, is in the shape of an arch. This architectural form is restated in the metal sculpture on the lawn outside.

Three formal, architectural elements, each of a distinct material formed a congenial group to be viewed as one work. The largest component is a post

Nancy Genn, Farnsworth Series (Blue). *Handmade paper with thread, 18½x22". Courtesy Susan Caldwell Gallery.*

Louise Kramer, untitled, *1972. Inflated latex, 6x8', 6x6', 6x6'. Photo by Henry Kramer.*

and lintel structure of anodized aluminum; it is broad and classical, inviting entry. It stands near another "doorway," of cold rolled steel, somewhat shorter with a narrower opening, sprayed with the palest "carnation pink" automobile lacquer. Slightly to its side stands a corten steel box approximately the size of the opening of the pink structure. The black stripe painted down the center of the box literally draws the space two dimensionally; the black stripe gives the illusion of a doorway none can enter. The solidity and solemnity of the piece is lightened by the surprising pink form—a color with connotations not associated with strong architectural work.

Farther down the lawn was another of Kramer's work, seemingly very different in tone. Three large inflated latex spheres casually glide and bump in the breeze. The mottled, almost rock-like surface gives the appearance of solidity yet the gentlest touch causes it to playfully roll away.

Superficially, there seemed to be little relationship between the formal, architectonic work and the informal, whimsical latex spheres, but both are about pure form, illusion, interaction and surprise.

—Karen Shaw

Midsummer Night Goat's Dream

(*Rabinovitch & Guerra Gallery, July 16—August 6*) Four of the nine artists in this group show were women: Carol Mager, Cynthia Mailman, Sylvia Sleigh, Sharon Wybrants. Mailman and Sleigh both showed paintings seen previously in their solo shows at SoHo 20 and A.I.R. Galleries, respectively. One was struck by how distinctive their works were when seen alone, without the milieu of their other paintings around them, as here. Mailman's cool treatments of her landscapes, and Sleigh's explosion of detail around her figures stood out most.

Mager showed five small square panels—*Body Parts*—paintings that were close-up sections of the anatomies of men (four) and women (one). In one panel, for example, a man's thigh, foreshortened calf, foot, tip of penis, and bit of other thigh and heel are seen. The other works were similar, views from various angles looking at various body sections. All were executed in painterly, multi-hued flesh tones on gray fields. Wybrants showed two powerful portraits. One of *Sylvia Sleigh*, is a simple depiction of the artist as determined, forceful, dynamic. Dressed in a soft blouse and seen against a blank background, the artist is placed off-center, a position which enforces much of the painterly dynamism. The *Portrait of the Artist in Anger* is a self-portrait, again with the subject off-center. She is looking out of the canvas to the left, her brow wrinkled, and lips and jaw pursed, set in the emotion. A strong light outlined the right side of her face with a thin line of yellow that looked bright compared to the dusky flesh tones. These paintings represented two of Wybrants' best, showing her painting styled and descriptive and narrative abilities to be maturing rapidly. Elihu Carranza, Art Guerra, Wilson Orr, Bill Page, and Bill Rabinovitch also showed one or two paintings each.

—Ellen Lubell

Bette Lang

(*Bowery Gallery, May*) Bette Lang's one-woman show was a memorial show, she was killed by a bus over a year ago. I thought it was a beautiful show, the paintings looked better than I had remembered. They were so luminous, a quality more important than just having beautiful colors. Her paintings were also permeated with a sense of intoxication with nature. I always felt that intoxication was a difficult quality for Bette or any artist to consciously develop. I spoke with Charles Cajori, one of her instructors 10 years ago at the New York Studio School, and he said that there had been a feeling there that she had the kind of emotional response to nature that shouldn't be put through the meat grinder.

Bette came to painting later, after having been a writer in what seems like another life in Colorado. She was from Brooklyn originally, and then went to Barnard College. She attended the Studio School, and joined the Bowery Gallery when it first formed in 1969. She had a show there with Lynda Caspe, but never had a show at the gallery's later SoHo address. She kept scheduling herself shows and then cancelling them later. We shall never know why, I suppose, though she certainly had plenty of good work. She did tell me once that as she got more abstract she felt odd about showing at Bowery, a co-op committed to figurative work.

She painted various subjects with a predominance of sunny warm places like Guatemala. Just before she was killed she did some cityscapes radically different in palette from her usual saturated color. I liked them. She was trying to work with New York City's grays.

One of her strongest subjects was portraits. A beautiful evocative one called *Lion Gate* remains one of my favorites. It is of a black man surrounded by white forms; the shapes are very generous and somehow wonderful. She also did some very large heads that command a lot of presence.

I was surprised to see how the color vocabulary changed in different paintings. We painters tend to use the same red or green for painting after painting, but Bette was one of the best colorists I knew. She had respect for individual differences of colors, especially warm colors; I think

Cynthia Mailman, In the Driver's Seat, *1975. Acrylic on canvas, 43x71". Photo by Silver Sullivan.*

Bette Lang, Alhambra. *Oil on canvas. Photo by Steven Sloman, courtesy Bowery Gallery.*

of a particular dusky red in a still life. She did some paintings of the Alhambra, that were bright white and tan with very small amounts of red that seemed like sunlight in a beautiful space. One almost has the sensation of musical chords because of he careful orchestration of color. One painting was of a still life in front of a Tibetan Mandala, where the values of all the colors were similar. Light red against light blue and gold—that seemed like the kind of object you would like to live with and glance at like a rainbow from time to time.

—Marjorie Kramer

Combative Acts, Profiles & Voices

(*An exhibition of Women Artists from Paris, A.I.R. Gallery, May 22—June 16*)
An Invitational of a different sort at A.I.R. afforded the unique opportunity to examine the art of nine women (not all of whom are French) who have been working in Paris during the last decade. It was coordinated by co-op members Dotty Attie and Nancy Spero and guest curated by Aline Dallier who wrote the accompanying catalogue. The works stem from two general tendencies—the "textile" and the "photographic"—and are relatable to two basic attitudes, the one more intimate and private and the other more overtly aggressive and public. Both of them relate to all people searching to discover and communicate their positions in the crises associated with contemporary social and political ideals. These artists have found their affinities with specific means and have been working to transmute their preferred subject matter through these modes of expression into valid works of art which relate to their socio-sexual roles, conditions and states of mind, and also contribute to the ongoing artistic tradition.

Maglione, Il y avait aussi cela dans ma maison (There were also these in my house), *1974. Fabric, threads, objects. Photo by Andre Morain, courtesy of A.I.R..*

Three have opted to concentrate on aspects of sewing, a craft customarily associated with the feminine, which also indicates a disposition embracing individualized skill over mass technology. Bernadette Bour superimposes layers of thin paper on canvas, painting over this soft, tactile surface with oils, often in fleshy hues of ochres and beiges; she then machine stitches rows of straight or zigzag lines across this atmospheric textural ground. Her type of message-making has a magical aura and near fixation with the sense of touch which evokes Klee's magnetic hieroglyphs. Hessie (who is from Cuba) primitivizes further by her use of hand-sewn needlework, stitching around the circumference of rows of holes punched out of large sheets and arranged rather randomly with varying degrees of emphasis. Her "Survival Art," with titles like *Masculin/Feminin* (1973) and *Trous a volonte* (*As many holes as you want,* 1974), suggests symbolic intentions in a form of cryptic "writing" resembling morse code. Maglione is for me the most successful of the "textile" artists. The "festa" flavor of her imaginative and visually exciting wall pieces has been aptly likened by Dallier to the traditional display of the Madonna's mantle, a sight common in the south of Italy, Maglione's place of birth. Such emotive dedication to the Madonna is transformed by the artist into a homage to the housewife and seamstress. Maglione's fetishism of shiny, metal objects, fake flowers and other decorations so familiar to the seamstress, and for child-sized kitchen utensils and other toy-like souvenirs, turns these feminine-associated paraphernalia into amulets and talismans. In works like *Naissance* (*Birth,* 1975), *Beaucoup d'heures de travail* (*Many hours of work,* 1975), and *Il y avait aussi cela dans ma maison* (*There were also these in my house,* 1974), she sews her "precious" little collectibles on large pieces of fabrics of white and black, and the blue of the Madonna, and places here and there chalk-drawn patterns of leaf motifs, outlines of scissors or a house around certain found-objects, sometimes evoking faces with smiling thread mouths. Her playful obsessions are disarmingly fresh and compelling; with honesty and understanding, they interpret the pleasures and problems which engulf the lives of so many women, and which effect a whole way of life.

The other six artists represented have actively embroiled themselves in the more violent and "official" activities of our complex society. Their sensibilities are amenable to more recently established artistic means—the "photographic," often combined with text, performance, video or drawing. Nil Yalter (from Turkey), Judy Blum (from New York), Aballea, and Croiset, together with Mimi, a woman who had been incarcerated in La Roquette Prison for Women in Paris for five months, have collaborated on a complicated and rather rambling multimedia work. It is about the physical and mental states of those unfortunate women who share society's proscribed punishment. One part consisted of an album of photos and text done in white ink on black paper, describing Mimi's memories like the making of key rings (for about $0.16 per 100), the smuggling in of a forbidden 2" candle in order to read, the practice of using ink and cigarette ashes to make tattoos (one was of five points symbolizing "alone between four walls"), and her chore of ironing for everyone. Other entries demonstrate that there are class differences even within this group, Mimi often scrounging the butts left in the yard by richer inmates. Another segment is a 10-sided screen of raw wood with photo-drawing-word collages on the prison and common attractions in Paris which surround their rarely-seen subject. The validity of their message and the directness of their appeal are volatile; however, some problems with the passage into art remain. The incisive pictures by Francoise Janicot are articulated with a high degree of lucidity; her inner dispute between reflection and action is expressed in photos of found-objects like crossed-out clocks, cancelled signposts, and finally of herself "hiding" her head and eventually her entire body in a cocoon of winding string. In her pictures of her studio floorboards or of those on the boardwalk at Deauville, she seems to be asking which is more real, the photo or the drawing elements, actions in public or thoughts hidden within.

—Barbara Cavaliere

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Dictionaries *cont'd from pg. 8*

Nicholson. What is she doing in the book at all?

Names get mis-spelled too: apart from Dorthea for Dorothea (Rockburne), I noticed Grilo for (Sarah) Grillo, Helen for Helene (Aylon), Inverne for Inverna (Lockpez), and Ilise Greenstein appears consistently as Ilisa, even in an erratum. Eva Hesse is included but her death seems to have escaped the editor's notice. Once he started adding names of his own it seems odd that he did not think of Louise Bourgeois, Audrey Flack, Agnes Martin, Catharine Murphy, Alice Neel, Nancy Spero, Pat Steir, but when you think of what he might have said about them they were probably lucky.

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Dotty Attie *cont't from pg. 7*

But what does all this tell us about her conception of woman, I asked myself as I witness the scribbled out Mme. Devaucay, the burnt out Mlle. Riviere and the finger-smudged Mme. Moitessier? Does this reveal anything about Dotty Attie? It occurred to me then that Attie had only attacked the image of clothed women. Yet, strangely, Ingres was said to have done his most sensitive work on the nudes. Why had she chosen to disfigure only the clothed women? I then turned back to her own self-portrait (the one in grids under flaps) in order to see if I could find the answer. When Attie is giving details about herself other than those relating to the image of her own face at various ages, she juxtaposes costume and nudity from a critical standpoint. She draws herself in various outright disguises—once as Little Orphan Annie, once with a beard and moustache (with a wink in the direction of Duchamp and Dali), and then draws the clothed torso alone as opposed to the nude torso. Could Attie be taking a stand against the perpetual disguises women have let themselves be subjected to wearing? Is she not asking that we discard the old masks and face ourselves as honestly and as unpretentiously as possible? If one image of woman is to remain, she seems to say, let it be the one devoid of all masks and costumes. As the face remains nude in the portrait, let the entire body reveal itself in its full truth, and let it be just as expressive as the face alone is. It is interesting to note that in her series *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1973), which are all art sins, she uses her own self-portrait half-heartedly cloaked as an aristocrat, to represent Vanity (another wink in the direction of Ingres), but then takes on another portrait by Ingres, that of a clothed woman, in order to attack (in a fit of violent penciling out of the face) the sin of Anger. In English we cannot fail to hear the euphonic resonance of the word Ingres in Anger.

A Dream of Love (1973) was the first set of small drawings that Dotty did. The small scenes, when they were placed in a horizontal sequence, depicted an erotic and violent dream or nightmare. She began with a self-portrait, then reappeared after several scenes in an idealized self-portrait, and a few scenes later, she began to grimace and sneer at the viewer. The series ended with an image of herself with holes burned into the eyes and mouth. This was significantly the last time that she used a self-portrait in her work. Suffice it to say that the next time she was to explore erotic or violent relationships she worked only with details from great works of the past and with snatches of a text taken from *The Story of O*. She eliminated an explicit and overt use of the self-portrait from her more recent works. The intensity of personal feeling can be more effectively rendered by using a symbol or metaphor for the self.

Attie conjectures that the hidden aspects of the artist's life can be known if one looks carefully at small details concealed in the corner of a painting. If a work is carefully scrutinized, often small sections containing images of the repressed sexual or erotic fantasies of the painter may be discerned. She thinks that one can actually come to know the psyche of the artist by discovering these buried images. Thus, for Attie, a kind of self-portrait is actually implicit behind the mask of even the most objective work. In *What Surprised Them Most* (1974) the drawings are taken mostly from Ingres, but details from other great masters are included as well. Some of the lines from *The Story of O* that are used to suggest enigmatic and erotic implications are: "She was on her knees, a position she managed by pulling herself up by her chain" and "In the small hours of the night just before dawn when it was darkest and coldest, Pierre reappeared."

Seven Deadly Sins—Vanity, *1973. Pencil on paper, 5½x7". Collection Mr. Kelley Rollings.*

In yet another similar work images are grouped in three horizontal sets. The first set of horizontally-displayed images is entitled *Consequences* (1974). It shows attack by knives, daggers, and swords. The second is called *The Curious Incident* (1974) and portrays human-animal relationships with some erotic implications suggested. The third set of images is entitled *An Error in Judgment* (1974). It emphasizes the theme of unveiling by showing the undressing of one person by another. By revealing the secrets of the unconscious of great artists of the past through these details taken from the masterpieces, Attie is also showing her own secret self. If, as in the "found object" the artist's choice of object discloses the artist's theme, then Attie's selection of details such as the attack by sword, arrow, and dagger (here often connected with the image of the crucifixion or with attack by men) is none the less revealing. The artist is depicted as a Christ figure, as an animal seeking a more equal relationship with powerful humans, and as the one who ultimately unveils the truth behind the disguise.

Her mobile book *The Power of Art* (1974) shows this unveiling of the other layers of the self. Here we see through one image to another and we construct a composite portrait as we flip from page to page beginning with Attie's head from the top to the bottom of the nose, moving on to a self-portrait of Ingres to the mid-chest, followed by an ape to below the stomach, and then appended by St. Sebastian to below the penis, succeeded by Ingres' Angelique to above the knee caps. Here Ingres is depicted as the consummate proud man—dignified, angry, strong, and brave. He passes through successive stages of unveiling and evolves from Ape-Man to the image of a naked, hurt, vulnerable, and sensitive human being. Attie's message can be read visually in this book. She is telling us through its pages that the artist often fulfills his/her vain dreams of glory in art, sees him/herself in terms of fame or fortune, and fulfills his/(now for the first time)her erotic fantasies on canvas, but is ultimately vulnerable underneath. The artist can be undressed and exposed. Everything about the artist can be known from the work, even when the artist masquerades as the Other. No matter how cleverly one is concealed within a grid or buried under a flap or lid, some secret aspect of the interior self is bound to escape. Moreover, what we discover only reveals what we, ourselves, see.

Dotty Attie has now shown that even the strongest are also the most vulnerable. Why then should the artist not reveal herself completely? Why hide any longer? Why the need for a mask? Attie proves that perception is selective. We determine our own grids; we create our own art history. We decide which spaces on the grid will be filled and which will remain vacant. We choose the motifs and arrange the patterns of the great design.

Dotty Attie's metaphor of the woman artist is not merely a personal statement, nor is it simply a statement about the exclusion of women from art history. On a broader and more universal level, the woman artist, in Attie's work, becomes the symbol of the artist in general. In extending the grid and remaking the great design, Dotty Attie is being inclusive rather than exclusive. Whether we read her work literally or metaphorically, we realize that her art brings to light a stunning new motif, one that sets off a new dynamic in the original texture of the tapestry of art history, one that provides for a non-hierarchical pattern as the figure in the carpet that is now weaving its way towards total visibility.

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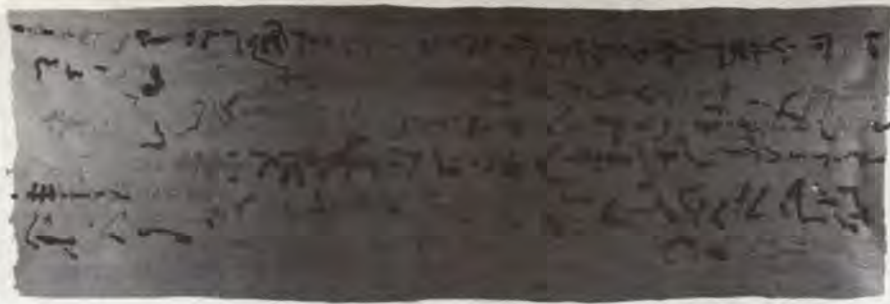

Nina Yankowitz, Untitled, *1975. Acrylic on unstretched canvas, 130x48". Nina Yankowitz was the first artist whose work was the subject of critical attention at The Woman's Salon of September 10, 1976. Courtesy Rosa Esman Gallery.*

Woman's Salon *cont'd from pg. 17*

for her, where experiences in the Women's Movement in France and America were shared. The Salon would like to establish a liason with women writers throughout the world. We have been receiving books from feminist presses in France and England for display at our book table, and we have received women writers and publishers from various countries over the past year. We hope to stimulate the translation of works by women into different languages so that we may communicate more deeply with our sisters in foreign countries.

On June 3 a Salon was planned for Marge Piercy, but illness prevented her appearance. She was replaced by her friend, Phyllis Chesler, author of *Women and Madness*. Phyllis read from her forthcoming book, *Lovers and Warriors: A Psychological Meditation on Men*. The reading was held at Janet Pfunder's loft where her paintings were on display. Once more the Woman's Salon had the opportunity to bring an artist's work to the attention of the literary community.

Our first season ended with a Salon tribute to Anais Nin in celebration of the publication of her sixth volume of the Diary and of her new book of essays *In Favor of the Sensitive Man*. Speakers and readers who participated in the Salon included Kate Millet, Daisy Aldan, Nona Balakian, Erika Duncan, Valerie Harms, Alice Walker, Frances Steloff, Viveca Lindfors, Karen Malpede, Joan Gouliano, Claudia Orenstein, and Gloria Orenstein. Erika Duncan's opening remarks set the tone for the evening. She said: "Anais Nin offers a challenge to the whole idea of creative isolation, a new view of art as profoundly connected with the most vital forms of communication... Because the existing literary establishment did not understand her work, she created around herself a whole movement that did, one which has profoundly influenced the place of impassioned writing in America, one which has brought us all into closer touch with Symbolism and Surrealism. It is this formation of a support system for a sensibility which had no previous place that we in the Woman's Salon must remember, this belief in the power of art to make an imprint on the world." It is the transformatory vision of Anais Nin that so many women identify with today, and that the Salon feels particularly proud to honor.

The Woman's Salon began its second season's programs in September. The first reading featured Susan Yankowitz, and celebrated the publication of her first novel, *Silent Witness*. Her sister, Nina Yankowitz, an artist, had photographs of her art works on exhibit for this occasion. It was the first Salon that gave critical attention to the work of an artist as well as to that of a writer. May Swenson introduced Susan's novel, and made us aware of the insensitive readings contemporary novels receive at the hands of establishment reviewers. In my own critical piece comparing Susan's writing to Nina's art, I pointed out a criss-crossing between the two bodies of artistic work in which we can observe a definite complementarity and mutuality in the sisters' sibling division of talents. Susan writes about the visual experience while Nina paints about the experience of reading. Each one seems to take the other's talent as a metaphoric tool for the exploration both of human reality and of her own artistic medium. Karen Malpede gave a very moving talk about Susan's relationship with the Open Theater, and discussed her importance as a playwright. Forthcoming Salons of this new season will feature Marge Piercy and Robin Morgan.

The Woman's Salon sends a monthly newsletter to all those on its mailing list. Members who subscribe to the Salon will receive all publications free of charge. We urge women writers and artists to send announcements of their publications, exhibitions and readings to us in advance so that we can include them in the Newsletter.

Throughout its many manifestations and karmic rebirths over the last three centuries, the Salon Archetype has evoked a dream that has long been associated with the sacred vocation of the writer and the artist that the academic and commercial market places, by virtue of their competitive and consumer-oriented structures, make impossible for us to otherwise fulfill in our lives today.

Contemporary society does not facilitate the intellectual's search for a spiritual community of peers. Settings such as the cocktail party, the conference, and the seminar, important as they may be, are too formal, rigid, and competitive for the kinds of exchanges that the Salon permits. The Salon is free of those constraints. It has traditionally provided a forum for informal contact in which new works could be presented and new ideas could be aired. It has served an important function for creative individuals in the past, for it bestowed recognition upon them, it introduced new talent to professional networks, and created new audiences, new esthetic tendencies, and new ideas. It helped to destroy stereotypes by providing fresh new role-models and by putting artists in direct contact with each other as well as with their critics and their audiences. It brought together talented creators and thinkers from all social classes and educational backgrounds who might never have met in more restricted or exclusive settings such as the conference or the private party. It mitigated against the isolation and alienation of the artist, gave writers entree to new channels of communication, launched careers for some, promoted interest in others, and protected the rights of free expression of those whose works might have been restricted by censorship or rejected for reasons of propriety or for their revolutionary nature. Salon women promoted the cross-fertilization of ideas and created a feeling of group solidarity and moral support for new works which led to the writers' intensified dedication to living the passionate life of the mind.

Although the talents and powers of salon women have traditionally been oriented towards serving the aspirations of the male intellectual, the Woman's Salon can now set these forces to work for women. In fostering mentor-protegee and peer relationships among women writers and critics, the high literary vocation of the gifted women of our time will become a new source of inspiration for future generations of women writers to come.

If institutions shape the ideas of their time by making them visible, it can probably be said that the idea of the passionate transformation of our lives through our creative work is one that our Salon embodies. By making this Woman's Salon a group creation and by devoting ourselves exclusively to women we have made the Salon a more feminist institution. If, in reanimating the Salon Archetype, and in our emphasis on personal criticism we have been able to affirm our commitment to each other and to the ancient transformative power of the Word and the Image, I think that we will have truly accomplished our original purpose which was to create, as Karen Malpede so beautifully expressed it, "an extended family through time."

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report

WOMEN IN THE ARTS:
Artists' Choice

Women in the Arts, an organization of women artists, has assembled a traveling show, entitled "Artists' Choices," which opened at Chatham College, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania September 20, and will travel to SUNY at Binghamton, New York, opening November 22 and remaining on view through December 31. The exhibit is of works on paper, and has been funded by the individual artists.

This is WIA's seventh exhibition of members' work shown outside of their SoHo headquarters.

Women in the Arts was started in March 1971 as an open, unformulated organization to help support women artists. Although originally conceived to include all the arts, it settled into support of and control by the painters and sculptors who had joined. At the beginning an amorphous, non-structured organization, it has recently turned into a structured group similar to the National Association of Women Artists.

WIA's concept was to help support the woman artist. Although exhibitions were never intended to be an important function, they were adopted as a need by the organization's members, and are supplied to interest and maintain the membership. Past exhibitions include those at The Stamford Museum, 1971; C.W. Post College, 1972; The New York Cultural Center, 1973; Fairlawn, New Jersey Library, 1973; The Brooklyn Museum, 1975; Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1975.

In a series of meetings in 1971, it was decided that one of the functions of WIA was to stage protest actions against institutions which discriminate against women artists. The first action was held in front of the Whitney Museum of American Art on November 20, 1971, to demand inclusion of more women in their annuals (now called their biennials). The second action was at the Museum of Modern Art, April 12, 1972. It was called a celebration, and was complete with helium balloons, and banners and love signs, such as "MOMA loves PAPA." The celebration was for the birthday of Women in the Arts. She was one year old, and she celebrated by having the event in front of MOMA to call attention to their discriminatory practices (which still exist).

On December 15, 1973, a gallery demonstration, to protest the minute number of women artists represented in the New York galleries, was held in front of galleries uptown and downtown, to no avail. The most recent demonstration, again to protest the unfair representation of women among exhibited artists, was held on May 22 of this year, at various galleries around the city.

Women in the Arts is occupying space donated by the owners at 435 Broome Street, and has established a rotating exhibition there of four artists each month chosen from the membership by names pulled out of a hat. Membership in WIA is open to all women artists; dues are $20 per calendar year beginning in January. Members are also required to donate time. Write to: 435 Broome Street, New York, N.Y. 10013.

—June Blum

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book report

KATHE KOLLWITZ: WOMAN AND ARTIST—by Martha Kearns (The Feminist Press, Old Westbury, N.Y., 1976)

I first read about plans at The Feminist Press to publish a new biography of Kathe Kollwitz about two years ago. After a number of delays (due to financial difficulties), *Kathe Kollwitz: Woman and Artist* by Martha Kearns has finally been released.

Kollwitz' starkly emotive message art is intimately linked with her experiences as a deeply concerned woman living through an era in twentieth century German history marked by massive socio-political upheaval. Her strong will, her empathy for the lower-classes' struggles (particularly by its women), her commitment to produce art which communicated this dilemma, are facts central in her life. With such volatile material as a basis, her biographers have often overindulged in various kinds of impassioned dramatization at the expense of a more analytical investigation. Kearns' stated purpose—to examine the life of Kollwitz from a "contemporary feminist perspective"—raised my hopes for the possibility of a fresh and more vigorous approach, one that would both broaden interpretation of her role in twentieth century graphic art and document her feminist beliefs and activities. Unfortunately, the new book, although it does raise some interesting ideas and insights, does not succeed in the first issue and deals only spasmodically with the second.

Kearns depends basically on the artist's *Diary and Letters*, which surely constitutes the richest source for any student of Kollwitz. But the author's numerous and lengthy direct quotations become so pervasive that at times one begins to feel as if this were a book of annotated excerpts rather than biographical literature. Often (usually at chapter beginnings) there is an insertion of some dramatized story loosely based on the diaries, and beefed-up for theatrical effect.

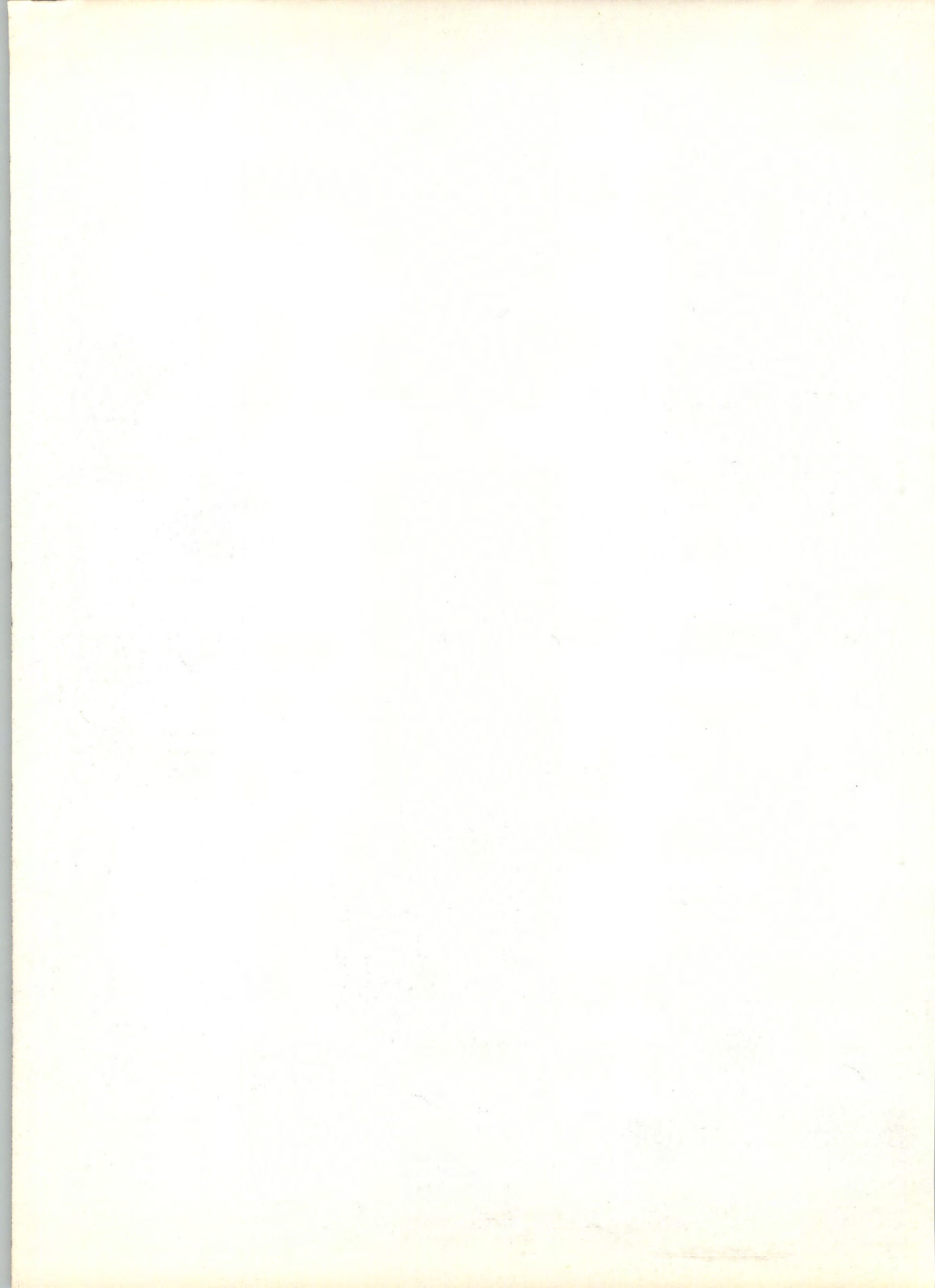
Although Kollwitz' writings have been published in English, they have become exceedingly hard to locate. As of a few months ago, they were still out of print, and the only copy I could locate came from a California book search company with a bill for $75. Kearns makes better use of another fascinating source, *Sixty Years of Friendship with Kathe Kollwitz* by Beate Bonus-Jeep, a lifelong friend of the artist. (It is published only in German.) In one instance, for example, Jeep's reminiscences provide the basis for a good discussion of Kollwitz' milieu as a woman art student in Munich.

Kearns is more adept at descriptions of Kollwitz' compelling and masterfully rendered etchings, lithographs, and woodcuts, and her treatment of the subject matter is comprehensive and sensitive. But there is a lack of analysis of Kollwitz' artistic sources; Courbet, Rubens, Michelangelo are just names mentioned in passing, and comparisons with Rodin, Die Brucke artists, and especially Barlach deserve fuller attention. And despite the number of quotes from the *Diary*, the author omits those in which Kollwitz records thoughts on art. A similar situation exists in the matter of Kollwitz' literary preferences, high on the list of important sources for her thoughts and art as well. Goethe, a continual source of inspiration for the artist, is rarely mentioned.

The strongest sections of the book are those that deal with the social and political situations of Kollwitz' lifetime, which claimed her attention so strongly. Many of the important activities of groups which fought for sexual equality are documented throughout the book. The political struggles in which Kollwitz and many of her family and friends were entrenched are also described clearly and thoroughly, giving a good idea of the context in which Kollwitz' powerful depictions were created. And Kearns does remind the reader that although Kollwitz was concerned with women's rights, she fought mainly through her art and never was a "joiner," remaining throughout her life an independent socialist.

Among the entries in the well-composed annotated bibliography is a comment on Zigrosser's work on Kollwitz pointing out the "usual art history bias of sex and class." While inclusion of the factors of Kollwitz' feminism are necessary to help remedy such trends, omission of art historical analysis can only be a hindrance. Kearns has established the important truths on Kollwitz the woman, but has not adequately established the ingredients of Kollwitz the artist. The two are inseparable of necessity.

—Barbara Cavaliere



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Sylvia Sleigh is a painter, a member of A.I.R. Gallery, a woman's cooperative.

Reviews and Reports by **June Blum, Peter Frank, Marjorie Kramer, Vernita Nemec, Karen Shaw, Nancy Trachtenberg.**

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