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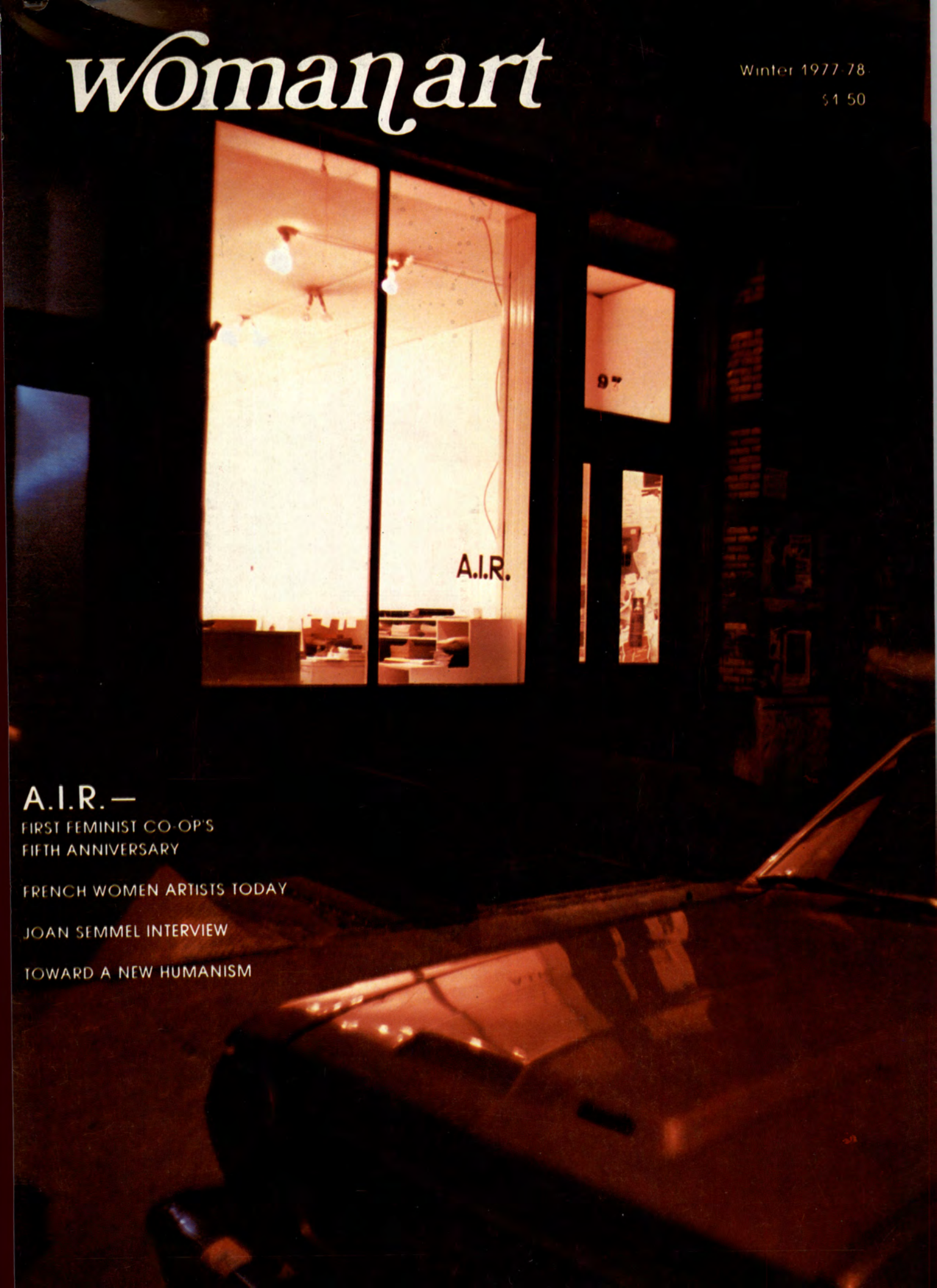
Winter 1977-78
$1.50



A.I.R.—
FIRST FEMINIST CO-OP'S
FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

FRENCH WOMEN ARTISTS TODAY

JOAN SEMMEL INTERVIEW

TOWARD A NEW HUMANISM

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Womanart Magazine welcomes the contribution of feature articles, reviews, reports, book reports, etc., pertaining to women and art. Manuscripts should be typewritten and accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Address all contributions to Editor, Womanart Magazine, P.O. Box 3358, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017.

Vol. 2 No. 2 **womanart** Winter 1977-78

A.I.R.'S FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

FRENCH WOMEN ARTISTS

JOAN SEMMEL

'ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE': The First Five Years
Five years ago, the A.I.R. feminist co-op gallery opened its doors, determined to make its own, individual mark on the art world. The first co-op organized out of the women artists' movement, it continues to set high standards of service and commitment to women's art
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Cover: A.I.R. feminist cooperative gallery, located in the SoHo section of New York. *Photo: Gyorgy Beke*

WOMANART MAGAZINE is published quarterly by Womanart Enterprises, 161 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn, New York 11215. Editorial submissions and all inquiries should be sent to P.O. Box 3358, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017. Subscription rate: $6.00 for one year (individual); for multiple and institutional rates, see insert. Application to mail at second class postage rates pending in Brooklyn, N.Y. and additional mailing offices. All opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors. This publication is on file with the International Women's History Archive, Special Collections Library, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60201.

'Artists In Residence': The First Five Years

The first feminist co-op gallery born out of the women artists' movement in New York, A.I.R. has maintained high standards of talent, professionalism, and service to the art community in its five years of existence

by Corinne Robins

Sylvia Sleigh. A.I.R. Group Portrait, *1977. Oil on canvas, 76x82". Standing, left to right: Daria Dorosh, Nancy Spero, Dotty Attie, Mary Grigoriadis, Blythe Bohnen, Loretta Dunkelman, Howardena Pindell, Sylvia Sleigh, Patsy Norvell. Seated: Sari Dienes, Anne Healy, Agnes Denes, Laurace James, Rachel bas-Cohain, Louise Kramer. Front row: Pat Lasch, Maude Boltz, Kazuko, Mary Beth Edelson, Donna Byars.*

It is hard now to remember back five years to the beginning, even as it is easy to see that the A.I.R. gallery has since become, very much in its own way, an institution. That 20 women artists could found an institution whose whole corporate personality is housed in a long narrow room (70 ft. long by 21 ft. at its widest), smaller than most gallery spaces, seems absurd. Nevertheless, A.I.R.'s reach and its many extensions have become important factors in the art world, going far beyond its Wooster Street address. A.I.R. has acted as both a gallery and a service organization from its beginnings—a service organization committed to maintaining on-going dialogues among women artists, writers and critics, and between New York-based women artists and women artists all over the world.

The gallery was born out of women's consciousness-raising in the early 1970s, and it was born professional and elitist. Its first press release stressed the fact that its membership was made up of women artists generally in their early 30s, who "have been working for a number of years, some in total isolation, others exhibiting extensively." The emphasis was on quality and selectivity as opposed, for example, to the Women's Interart Center, which opened the same year (1972) and was devoted to exhibiting, by turn, any woman artist who wanted to show her work.

Women's liberation, in general, reached the official New York art world late, beginning in 1970 almost as an off-shoot of the anti-Vietnam War protest movement. W.A.R. (Women Artists in Revolution), one of the earliest women artist organizations, used the Art Workers' Coalition premises for its meetings, meetings which took place after the larger groups, both Art Workers and the New York Art Strike, had their sessions. "X-12" and "Mod Donn," two exhibitions organized by W.A.R. members, "X-12" at "Museum" and "Mod Donn" at the Public Theatre, began the tradition of all-women shows that were to change the composition (both numerical and esthetic) of the art world in America by the mid-'70s. In the fall of 1970, Lucy Lippard started the Ad Hoc Committee, which continued the picketing and protests begun by W.A.R. members, all of which were aimed at getting women artists greater representation in exhibitions and decent jobs within the art world proper. As part of this program, Ad Hoc founded the Women's Slide Registry, which by 1971 contained slides of the work of over 600 women artists. The women, who began by attacking the male art establishment, soon began to think in terms of creating alternate spaces for themselves. Looking back, it's clear now that while many women artists took part in consciousness-raising at the end of the '60s, it wasn't until the '70s that we began to apply what we had learned through this experience to our personal and professional lives.

Barbara Zucker and Susan Williams met in a woman's consciousness-raising group in 1969, and subsequently attended Ad Hoc Committee meetings. In 1971, after several attempts to find dealers willing to handle their work, they decided to start their own 55 Mercer Street type cooperative gallery, and they contacted two other artists, who agreed to join them. It was while looking over prospective gallery locations on Wooster Street and feeling very discouraged that Williams suggested as long as they were organizing their own co-op, why not go the whole way and make it a woman's co-op gallery. Zucker agreed and that night they called the two other artists and told them they couldn't be in the new gallery because they were men. Next, Barbara Zucker called Mary Grigoriadis, whose work she had seen and liked two years earlier, and invited her to join. They then contacted Lucy Lippard for the names of other women artists. Six women, Barbara Zucker, Susan Williams, Dotty Attie, Maude Boltz, Mary Grigoriadis and Nancy Spero came to the first meeting of the new women's co-op at Barbara Zucker's studio. The next step, to choose the remaining 14, went to a committee of four. Dotty Attie, Grigoriadis, Williams and Zucker began to assemble a list of names and spent the next two months looking at work. Using the Women's Slide Registry along with personal recommendations, they chose from the slides of 650 women artists, actually visiting 55 studios. The committee had decided that if they looked at 200 artists, they wouldn't choose the best of the 200 but would keep on looking until they found work they really liked. As Attie explains, "When I started calling up these people, the first thing I would say is, it's a woman's gallery, but the most important thing is the work should be really beautiful." At the first full meeting on March 17, 1972, everyone brought slides of their work and many met each other for the first time. Three of the selected women dropped out, and a committee was selected to choose the three additional requisite members. In April 1972, its membership complete and the name A.I.R. (Artists in Residence) decided upon, Nancy Spero wrote the following for one of the early press releases: "The gallery is being planned with a strong feeling of optimism. There is mutual confidence in each others' work and there is the knowledge that we are letting fresh air into the current scene."

After a series of anguished meetings, the women found a space and divided themselves into four work committees: a building committee, a legal committee, a grants committee, and a video committee, which later became A.I.R.'s publicity committee. Dues of $21 a month were established, and it was agreed that each member also had to contribute $150 and 50 hours of work toward the renovation of the 97 Wooster Street premises, which once had been a machine shop, and was full of rusting pipes and radiators and in a

"...There is mutual confidence in each other's work, and there is the knowledge that we are letting fresh air into the current scene..."

Photo: E. Lubell

1977: *A special Woman's Salon was held as a Monday night program at the gallery in Spring, 1977, featuring artists whose work involved literary or book-like components. Here, Rita Meyers performs one of her pieces while panel members and audience look on.*

state of total disrepair. "It may be more difficult for our new members," Anne Healy explains, "because they don't have the experience of the camaraderie of when we started. It was one of the best times in my life. Everyone had to do 50 hours during the summer, fixing the gallery up and for me it was really a good experience because I had been pretty much cut off from other women artists and now suddenly there were 20 women to exchange ideas with." At the time that they were working on the building, the grants committee began making applications and writing up proposals for funding the video program and the Monday night discussion program, which have been integral parts of A.I.R.'s philosophy from before the gallery had doors that would open. "A.I.R. has opened up new avenues of communications between its members, A.I.R. will change attitudes about art by women... A.I.R. offers women artists a space to show work which is as innovative, transitory or unsaleable as the artist's conceptions demand," its opening brochure proudly announced. And, during its first year, the gallery in a demanding two-and-a-half week exhibition schedule managed to mount 20 two-person shows for its members, three group shows and three large scale invitational shows of other women artists whose work the members admired. The order of members' exhibitions was decided by lot. Ten women, half of the gallery artists, participated in A.I.R.'s opening show in September 1972. They were the 10 women scheduled to have their own shows during the second half of the first year.

From its opening day, September 17, 1972, A.I.R. was a success. Opening day people, over-flowing from the gallery, filled the street. A photographer from *Ms.* hurriedly rounded up the members for a group portrait. The male art world turned out in large numbers, one man telling Barbara Zucker, "Okay, you did it: you found 20 good women artists, but that's about it"—a remark that today, in the light of A.I.R.'s own many activities and the scores of women artists who have since emerged, would be considered so absurd as to be off the wall. But back to 1972. The 10 artists in the opening show were Judith Bernstein, Maude Boltz, Rachel bas-Cohain, Daria Dorosh, Loretta Dunkelman, Laurace James, Nancy Kitchel, Rosemary Mayer, Patsy Norvell and Nancy Spero—artists who made drawings and sculptures, including wall pieces, artists who worked with rope, pencil, plexiglass, paper, with one watercolorist among them. Indeed, to date, A.I.R. has had only two oil painters among its members: Mary Grigoriadis from the beginning, and Sylvia Sleigh, who joined the gallery two years later. A.I.R.'s opening esthetic mix of highly individualistic artists seems to have anticipated the idiosyncratic personal art that was to dominate the art world at large for the five years following the gallery's inception.

1972: *Founding members renovating space at 97 Wooster Street prior to opening of gallery.*

The opening show was reviewed in both *Arts* and *Art News*, and every subsequent two-person show the first year received serious critical attention both from the weekly newspapers and regular monthly and bi-monthly art magazines. By the beginning of 1973, A.I.R. and its founding members became a subject for interview articles in *Arts* Magazine, *Ms.* and *The Art Gallery*, while, with the help of their first grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, the Monday night programs of lectures, films, showings of slide registry painters, and women's art panels—all free to the general public—had become regular weekly events. The members' commitment to A.I.R. was two-fold; the gallery must exist not only as a way of fulfilling their own personal esthetic ambitions, but must also serve as a means of doing something about the movement. "The whole of that first year," Loretta Dunkelman remembers, "there was a kind of cohesiveness and caring. There was a kind of support from within. Everyone wanted everyone's show to be a success. It was always a thinking about the gallery. We wanted the gallery to come on showing really strong work and, caring about this, we wanted each show to be a real success." Also, aside from the quality of the shows, "there was from the beginning a general feeling about A.I.R.," Blythe Bohnen explains. "Everyone sees it as an entity, an identity apart from the members' work." Which is why the women spend time and energy working on A.I.R. projects, projects that relate to women's art past and present. For example, at the beginning of its second year, in 1973, the members felt there was a need to build a heritage for women artists in a historical context, that the time for revisionist exhibitions had come. The grants committee, accordingly, went to work to enlist the support of the New York State Council and the National Endowment for the Arts and succeeded in obtaining funding for a show on women artists of the depression decade. They commissioned an art historian, Professor Karal Ann Maring, to curate the exhibition and write the text for a catalogue that A.I.R. would publish. The gallery could not, however, get enough insurance at its own space to cover the value of the works borrowed from museums around the country, and was also unsuccessful in persuading a New York City museum to house the exhibition. It took three years, but the exhibition "7 American Women: The Depression Decade" finally opened at the Vassar College Art Gallery on January 17, 1976, and at one of A.I.R.'s regular Monday evening programs, Minna Citron, one of the seven artists in the exhibit, showed her slides and spoke about her own work and what the experience of being a woman artist in

1977: *Mary Beth Edelson.* Memorial Performance to 9,000,000 Women Burned as Witches in the Christian Era. *October 31, 1977. This was the first performance by an A.I.R. member at the gallery.*

the '20s had meant.

This was very much in keeping with the general format of A.I.R.'s Monday nights, which are devoted to serving the larger feminist art community. One such Monday evening panel, "First Experiences of Organizing a Co-Operative Gallery" was chaired by Marilyn Fine and Sylvia Sleigh, one of the original members of the SOHO 20 Gallery before becoming a member of A.I.R. From its inception, A.I.R. has actively worked with women's co-op groups around the country, exchanging slides and information. On a more personal level, other Monday panels this year included "Insuring Yourself and Your Work," "The Myths and Realities of Art Careers," and "Women Critics Look at Women's Art"—all aimed at opening up areas for discussion as well as disseminating information.

During its third year, several A.I.R. members had shows in Europe and came back with the idea that there was a great deal of work being done in Europe that wasn't being seen in New York. The result, after writing up grant proposals and finding a European critic/curator, was "Combative Acts, Profiles and Voices," A.I.R.'s show of French women artists that took place in 1977, and their upcoming exhibition of contemporary Japanese women artists, scheduled to take place in 1978.

Because most of its members are self-supporting (mostly at art-related jobs), from the beginning A.I.R. has always paid a part-time coordinator to sit in the gallery. As the scope of their own personal ambitions and plans for the gallery increased, the members realized that they would need outside help. First, individual members obtained assistants through the CAPS and Urban Corps programs. Then, the gallery as a group began contacting local colleges for volunteer help, and the A.I.R. apprenticeship program began to take shape. Today, women art students sit in the gallery, assist members with their shows, attend the Monday evening programs, hear special lectures by A.I.R. members, write up their A.I.R. experience and, in exchange, receive academic credit from their various schools and colleges. A.I.R.'s current coordinator, Joan Snitzer, first came to the gallery three years ago via the apprenticeship program, which is proving to be a training ground for young women artists and critics. One apprentice, to date, has shown her work in several group shows in SoHo, and another has written for *Women Artists' Newsletter* and has had an article and reviews published in *Womanart*.

As an alternate structure, A.I.R. has its own set of built-in problems. As member Pat Lasch observed, "At most galleries there is one figurehead that is really the mainstay of the gallery, who can build confidence in collectors. What happens in A.I.R. is the work has to get by on its own credibility because we have no high-pow-

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Jeanne Socquet, Penelope, *1977.*

EXORCISM/PROTEST/REBIRTH

Part I: FRENCH WOMEN ARTISTS TODAY — Modes of Feminist Expression in France

by Gloria Orenstein

Denise Aubertin, Burned Books.

The clenched fist raised in protest has traditionally been the symbol of power and revolution. For the newly emerging woman artist the gesture of the hand that protests is now slowly becoming identified with the gesture of the hand that paints.

One of the most beautiful stories I heard in France this past summer about a woman's entry into the world of artistic expression was told to me by Francoise Eliet, a feminist anthropologist and psychoanalyst, who is now the central figure of a group of women artists coming together for the purpose of sharing their creative work and founding an alternate space for women's exhibitions, events and publications in Paris.

Francoise's breakthrough to creativity was that act of actualization which transformed the icon of the clenched fist from the revolutionary posture of insurrection to the celebratory gesture of creation.

During a long trip away from Paris that Francoise undertook several years ago, she found herself seated on a train next to a young child who was madly engrossed in writing long lists of numbers in a *cahier.* Francoise, struck by the obsessive repetitiveness of the lists, decided to speak to the child, and she suggested that a drawing, a poem or tale might prove to be more diverting. The child was so delighted with the "permission" to explore the world of the imagination that within a few short hours the *cahier* was filled with such fabulous images and stories that Francoise promised to send a magnificent box of paints as a gift from Paris in order to encourage the development of the creative talents of this budding young artist.

Upon her return, Francoise Eliet, whose life until then had been centered upon purely academic and political pursuits, visited an art supply store and purchased the largest box of assorted pastels she could find as a present for the child on the train. When she returned home she was so dazzled by the brilliance of the colors that she could not resist experimenting with the medium. Crouching over the floor, she took them in her fist and began to knead, grind and rub them into the paper that she had spread before her so that the grain of the wood might give texture and design to the colorful imprints of the pastels. Once she had begun she could not cease. For three days and three nights she continued to express herself in gestural hieroglyphic movements of the hand and the arm that created shifting and undulating forms which were to result in the discovery of her own authentic artistic style, one in which the pressure, the stroke, and the surface of the paper evoke gestures as traces and imprints made by the woman-artist-in-evolution.

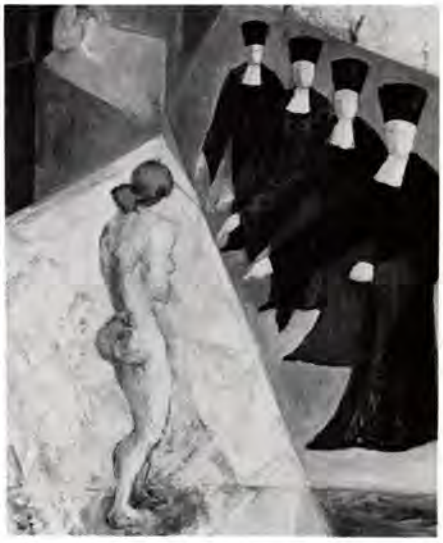
In works which vary from art-events of political impact to esthetic acts of exorcism, contemporary French artists who participate in or support the feminist movement are giving visual expression to the revolutionary cry for liberty and

"...Several women artists...seemed to be united in their outspoken protest and sense of outrage..."

book-works which explode the false boundaries between poetry, painting, collage and sculpture. These violent acts which reintegrate life into art and art into life relate the story of her obsessions and fantasies in a non-linear, multi-dimensional mode which orchestrates visual and verbal imagery in a kind of lacerated concrete poetry. Her living novels combine past and present, personal journal and literary text in an art-form she calls the "unpublishable book" which permits her to present everything simultaneously. As acts of psychic exorcism, these books also serve as political statements reminiscent of "art brut" and of the art that sprang up spontaneously upon walls of buildings anc barricades during the upheavals of May 1968.

Another artist whose works are acts and rites of exorcism is Aline Gagnaire, who participated in the exhibitions of the Salon des Surindependents in Paris during the '40s and has been shown in many surrealist exhibitions in Brussels. She is a member of the College de Pataphysique and of the Oulipo group. During a period of desperation, feverish revolt against society, and extreme rage, Aline Gagnaire created her rag-paintings, which are masks and heads made of cloth remnants, pins, string, nails, fringes, and upholstery that express a tormented vision of interior desolation and spiritual numbness in such faces as those of Pere and Mere Ubu. Many of her portraits of women are devastated and tortured shells formerly inhabited by thinking, feeling, dreaming members of the human race. Most recently Aline Gagnaire's work has taken a more culptural, yet also more meditative turn. Her white plaster totems, emerging godeads, and invisible essences take on eeting form and then dissolve into a niversal energy field, making the invisible ible for a moment and illuminating the otle distinctions between spirit and tter. These new works are spiritual ocations calling forth the beneficent es of the universe for protection. They evocations of sacred powers and ntations to divine energies which begin anifest form through a play of light hade upon the white plaster shapes. Gagnaire is outspoken in her femi- The materials of her art come from aterials of her life. Having worked as olsterer, she wrenched the fabric of rk by which she earned her living, nsmuted it upon the canvas into the d body of those empty beings who n sacrificed by our society to the nizing forces of the alien gods, of By giving artistic form to the of her oppression as a worker and an, she has created poignant and fabric-portraits which today embraced as feminist statements in the traditional media of expression of women's art.

Helene de Beauvoir, the sister of Simone, is a painter whose most recent works are strong feminist statements of protest against the horrors and injustices of a world in which woman and the earth, whose forces she has traditionally upheld and revered, are endangered by the brutality and violence of a civilization that is plummeting toward ecological and political destruction. Her commitment to the cause of liberation moves her to paint works that are an outcry against the symbols of authoritarian oppression in our society—the judges, the cardinals, the bishops, and the military.



Helene de Beauvoir, Les femmes souffrent, les hommes les jugent, *1977. Oil on canvas, 195x130 cm.*

Helene's earliest works, which depicted women rice-pickers, had originally aspired to celebrate the natural beauty of the women that worked in the rice fields, but the ominous presence of "the master" who exerted a tyrannical power over them, caused her to revolt against the conditions both of workers and of women. These were her earliest political paintings.

The case of Gabrielle Russier, the young French school teacher who fell in love with one of her students and was so brutally treated by the authorities that she was driven to commit suicide, inspired her to paint *In Memoriam-Gabrielle Russier*, a work in which her feminist consciousness asserts itself as a guiding force in her artistic development. After the events of May '68, Helene de Beauvoir did a series of political works in which she committed herself uncompromisingly to a position of rupture and dissidence. Her gallery became so threatened by the revolutionary nature of her work, that at the last minute they refused to open the show they had planned. A sculptor friend found a space

Aline Gagnaire, portrait.

near the Moulin Rouge in Montmartre where her new work could be exhibited, and she enjoyed a 'succes de scandale' in an alternative setting, attracting admirers who might never have come to a show in a more conventional location.

During the '70s Helene read a great deal about the torture of women in Chile and was inspired to paint *Chiliennes Mes Soeurs*, a work that links the world of male oppression to the horrors of a technological society in which the machine comes to symbolize the bestiality of a patriarchal rule and its political implications. Both women and the earth are shown to be threatened by similar structures of oppression.

La Grand Peur a Fessenheim (1977) depicts the fear of disaster that will begin to spread upon the planet when Nuclear Power Plants, like the one projected for Fessenheim, are constructed in areas where natural vegetation has flourished, and where men and women have lived in harmony with the cycles of nature. Helene's concern is for future generations of human, animal and plant life. Most of her works have two kinds of psychic and visual space. Her nostalgia for a pas. where men, women and animals lived in close contact with the earth bursts forth in fleeting images of a natural setting cast as a dream-time or memory-space upon a harsher, more bleak and solid area depicting the injustices of contemporary reality. Helene de Beauvoir's work cries out to put an end to massacre and desecration. It is a refusal to concede or to succumb, a plea to struggle in order to redeem life on a global level during our lifetime.

Most recently her paintings such as *Les Femmes Souffrent, Les Hommes les Jugent* (1977) (Women suffer, men judge them) and *La Chasse aux Sorcieres est Toujours Ouverte* (1977) (The Witch Hunt is Still On) have expressed a rage against the cruelty of patriarchal authority figures and their acts of terrorism and violence.

Moved by the case of a young French woman who had become pregnant and after the clandestine birth of her child that was found dead was accused of infanticide, Helene de Beauvoir took to active social protest through her militant participation in *S.O.S. FEMMES BATTUES*. It was at this point that she began to create works which would plead the cause of women before the tribunal of the world. In a new series of paintings, women's solidarity is depicted as the one means of salvation through which liberation may be attained. Women who had formerly been bound, wrapped like mummies, or buried, are seen freeing each other from their bandaged burial vestments. Helene's total oeuvre parallels her sister's in commitment to the cause of freedom, to the defense and definition of women's rights, and to creation of a female reality that combines imagination with intellect, passion with reason, and revolution with vision.

A painter who synthesizes the political and the personal in a profoundly psycho-

Francoise Janicot, Negatif, positif. *1977. Encocomage.*

logical feeling wedded to a potent social statement is Jeanne Socquet. Marguerite Duras has written about her work:

> "What is there in this painting that takes me to this point and plunges me each time that I see it into a sort of organic reflection—How can I explain it otherwise—a sort of mood to receive, to be melted, to be dissolved, to be confused without a priori, without reticence, without defences in the seeing, in the Hearing and the Seeing?...The great and stupid nostalgia of women in front of a male reflection—she knows nothing of it, she knows that woman has her own reflection and that it suffices to begin to tell it in her own language in order to exist. This sort of Northern peasant solid, calm, is like a primitive intact, a species of first woman unleashed by nature, itself, into the ancient city of man."

Suzanne Alexandre, Deesse de la Fecundite.

Jeanne Socquet, co-author with Suzanne Horer of one of the earliest and most important books in France on women and creativity, *La Creation Etouffee* (Stifled Creation), is a painter of enormous force whose series of mad women strapped into chairs, bound and gagged and waiting for electro-shock therapy, or rendered unconscious from drug therapy, tamed of their visions, their desires, their dreams, their truth, and victimized by the authorities, are metaphors for the stifled creativity that her book analyzes. They are also realistic images of women deprived of their voice, their energy, their strength, and their will, that plead for deliverance and the inauguration of a new order. Her paintings are perfectly balanced in their abstract, constructivist elements and their narrative, figurative components. It is ultimately this balance which permits her to depict madness with supreme lucidity, and it is this lucidity that creates this intensity of the field of impact and awareness.

The image of the female body is being used by today's French feminist artists as a means of exploration of female reality both in its political and sexual dimensions. The events and interventions of Francoise Janicot, where she has bound, roped, and wrapped herself into a mummy, recall the iconography of the most recent paintings of de Beauvoir and Socquet. Woman enchained, woman incarcerated, woman bound, woman brutalized, woman tortured, woman mummified—these are the breakthrough images that ushered in the first phase of feminist consciousness through art. More recently themes of liberation, celebration, and exultation in our bodies newly reclaimed from the world of medical male (mal)practice are emerging. The work of Monique Frydman experiments with a new female body-consciousness that has arisen from a desire to express the full range of female physical awareness. If our bodies are the houses of our spirit, then surely this new exploration of the physical self prepares the way for a new investigation of female spirituality as well.

The works of French women artists, in a more collective sense, address themselves to the female search for meaning through the metaphor of the mark that women will make upon the world. Where can the traces of our passage be found if we are mummified during our lifetimes? Where are the burial mounds, the tombs in which we have been interred? Eliza Tan's paperworks concretely and visually evoke the erasure of our traces from the delicate and fragile forms which were our only accessible means of self-expression. Martine Aballea's secret mail-art happenings, such as the receipt of a sheet of paper which inscribes the bearer as one of the Survivors of the Pig Symphony Disaster, or her calling card on which is printed: "With the

Compliments of The Universal Spy" relate to women's natural inventiveness for subterfuge and survival. It is through such clandestine acts of sabotage and intervention that women have been trained to infiltrate society in order to survive.

On a more mythic level, however, the image of the Goddess of Fecundity comes to mind as the image, not merely of birth, rebirth, fertility and creation, but of the transcendent principle that permits women to reinvent their meaning in history and give birth to themselves on a cultural level through art and politics. Suzanne Alexandre's surrealist dolls clearly depict our mythological and psychic rebirth as we emerge from the confining strictures of our oppression.

Where will this new direction lead? Charlotte Calmis,* poet, artist and coordinator of the group La Spirale, who has organized an exhibition entitled "Utopia and Feminism" (1977) wrote:

> How is one to explain with words an experience of feminism that has become a practice? And what is La Spirale if not this experience and this practice of a search for ourselves.
>
> Perhaps a new faculty of creative thought, a new being-knowledge, an 'other' living-knowledge, action in the feminine and its possibility of investing beauty.
>
> Our feminine psyche exists, but does it know itself?
>
> Experience...practice, by each of us, and together, deconditioned. Approach towards our true desires, our true motivations, against all 'isms' of the phallocratic society that continues to occult and recuperate, to stifle our energy and our liberty. To learn to listen to each other, to hear ourselves each one, together, can become Revolution and a new militantism of women.

These few highlights of a summer in France do not purport to survey the totality of women's work at the present time. From surrealists to neo-realists, women express themselves in all media and in all styles. What is important is that we become familiar with the overall thrust of creativity of women around the world. In an effort to establish a close relationship between women artists in France and America a second part of this article will be devoted to women artists-in-exile in Paris. As our dreams and desires become clearer through our art and our writings, women from all parts of the globe can begin to see beyond the barriers of separation to the strong bonds that unite us in our struggle for liberation.

Part II will appear in the Spring 1978 issue of Womanart.

**See tribute by Charlotte Calmis to French artist Seraphine Louis in this issue.*

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SERAPHINE DE SENLIS

by Charlotte Calmis

On a certain morning, January 31, 1932 to be exact, in front of the music pavilion on the broad Avenue Montmorency in Senlis [France], there appeared a strange heap of things: paintings, blankets, rugs, all sorts of possessions...to whom did they belong, who was moving? A servant by the name of Seraphine Louis.

Quite mysteriously, she had decided the night before to get rid of all of her things. They had been dearly purchased thanks to her favorite pastime—painting.

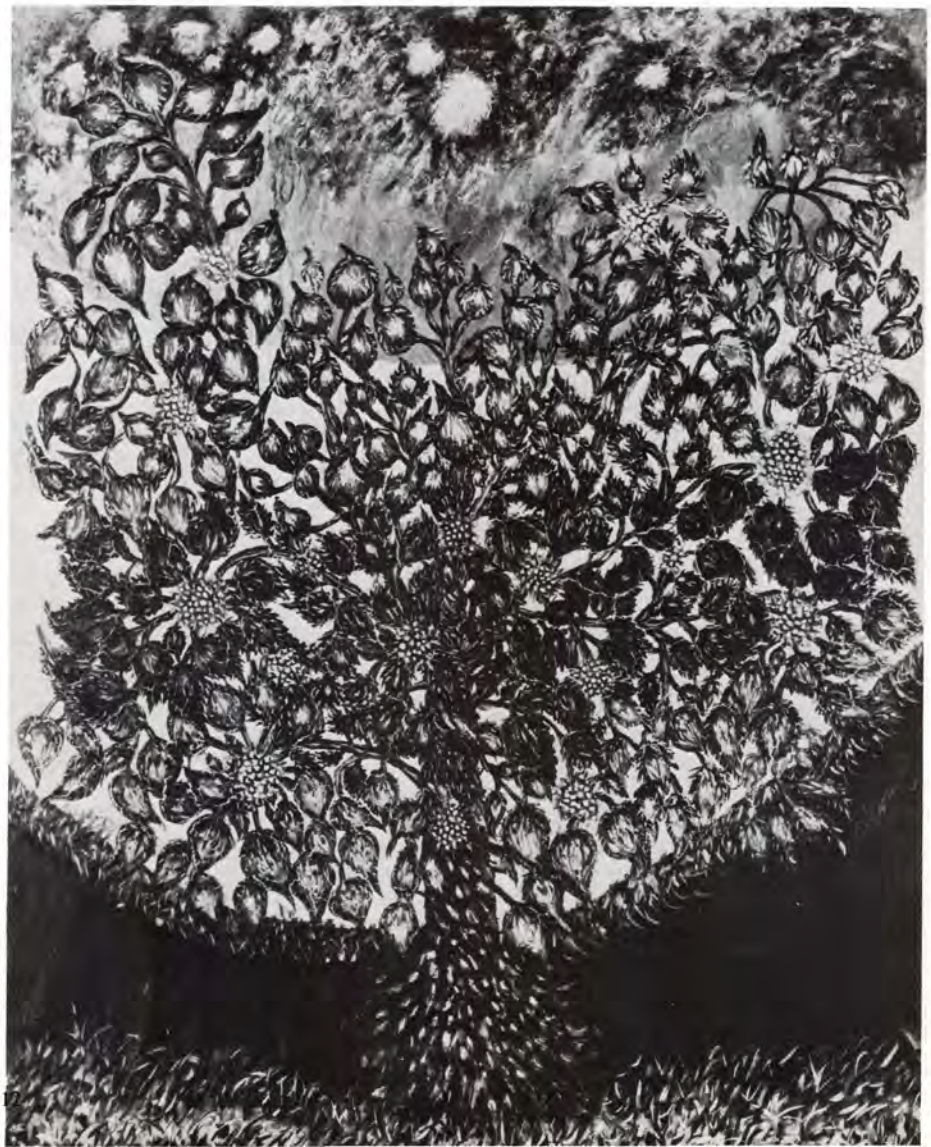
Seraphine Louis had just assumed one of the last transmogrifications conferred upon her by society. She had become a "legendary figure afflicted with mental illness." Locked in a mental institution, she vegetated in silence for some 10 years, *guilty* of having awakened one of the most powerful and unrecognized forces in the world—female creativity.

Splashed with light, eyes closed, head raised, Seraphine Louis posed to have her picture taken by Mademoiselle Uhde. What an astonishing photograph! She seems to be inspired "from above." Her short little hand rests delicately on her palette like a flower, her paint brush held at an angle. Her sweet smile radiates a peculiarly vital energy. Her face is infused with a strong cosmic current.

It is an amazing face. We feel centuries of hidden secrets have burst forth from passivity and submission. The long silence of women's muteness..."All is at an end," she was wont to repeat mysteriously during her years of incarceration.

Seraphine's oeuvre explores the unknown. Her creative force was so strong that it literally overflowed from this 42-year old servant who had never painted before but who was endowed with a native capacity and technique.

We are presented with a pictorial memory, a repertory, as it were, of paradise lost where everything—symbols, leaves, stars, sky, tree trunks, glances, eyes—is archetypal, moving from the unconscious to a consciousness finally liberated from guilt.



Seraphine elicits from the senses a kind of visual tactility, a visual appetite for more than the imagery of things (the usual technique of the primitive painter). Seraphine's pantheist painting has the majesty and sacred feeling of certain Byzantine pictures. She knew herself to be "one of the elect."

This artist represents one of the most significant break-throughs of the female psyche into forbidden creativity. She made a gift to the art historian Wilhelm Uhde* of the understanding of his own androgynous psyche. "I myself," he wrote, "had a role to play in this magnificent adventure. Fate reserved for me the great task to which I had aspired all my life."

As of 1927, she signed her great paintings, without doubt as important as Van Gogh's, "Seraphine Louis Maillard 'without rival'." The photograph of Seraphine upsets us because it is a photograph of *consciousness*, of *awareness*. Van Gogh, for whose suicide society was responsible, found interior light in the bursting of stars, of sun and sunflowers, in his mind inundated with brilliant flashes, his paintings bursting with light.

Seraphine explores the mythic silence, the secret of night, of mute female creativity. From these shadows she drew forth treasures and mysteries buried under silence and submission—the submission of a housemaid condemned to "black tasks" as she termed her work as a domestic. At the age of 42, flooded with her mysterious "vocation" she abandoned these black tasks. "I was a servant in a convent for a very long time," she said, "and I was happy there!"

She did not want to change the world, she never questioned it, *she simply changed worlds*, sank into a magic universe, listened to it, explored it, recreated it and found a way of expressing it. Uhde was to say: "I never so intelligently discussed painting with anyone as with Seraphine. It was a never-ceasing joy to talk to her (an absolute impossibility with Vivin and Bombois). She spoke freely and with a critical spirit that always seemed completely accurate. She was perfectly aware of what she wanted to do and how to go about it."

In 1972, the town of Senlis finally organized an exhibit of her work and

**She was the domestic servant of Uhde and his sister during the time they lived in Senlis both before and during WW II.*

printed a catalogue. Homage was paid to the art historian Wilhelm Uhde and Seraphine's work was finally recognized. The two of them had been inseparable in this great painting adventure.

The sumptuous canvases she created using enamel paint and lacquer: materials whose color resonance is akin to vibrations of sound and act upon our organic centers awakening archetypal memories. Some critics have found a close resemblance between her paintings and certain windows in the cathedrals of Chartres and Bourges. A mysterious dialogue takes place between the universe and ourselves through the magic of her color. Everything once more becomes *apple, sex, flower... eye...soul.*

"People say," Seraphine complained, "that there's something wrong, that it's presumptuous for a servant with no training to paint." Her work nevertheless stood apart, independent of her in its splendor.

In 1931, she went from door to door making prophecies of cataclysm, of the war to come. The following year in a fit of delirium she was admitted to the hospital in Senlis and later transferred to a psychiatric facility in a state of apathy from which she never recovered. She died on December 11, 1942.

Uhde wrote: "I gave a small still life from my own collection to Jean Cassou. I was utterly fascinated by this work and I sent a few lines along with it to this effect: ...Dear friend, I am sending you this painting at the command of Seraphine who appeared to me in a dream. She told me that she was very happy in heaven where she no longer had to do housework! But as there are no earthly flowers there she is now doing abstract painting..." Abstract painting through which so many women today are discovering the way to creativity, finding a language and a means of expression, perhaps a specifically feminine creativity stemming from sacred and cosmic energies.

Surrealism...Neorealism. All the "isms" of modern as well as past art history have neither accepted nor helped women painters to realize their own creative identity.

No "historicism" underlies Seraphine's search. She was a visionary inhabited by voices. Uhde tells us she spoke to the birds. "It was a real joy to hear her improvise for she was also a true poet, totally free in her gestures, animalistic in her impulsiveness."

Does a transgression of all social phallocratic laws underlie this burst of mystical creativity? Is sanity the price paid for this creative explosion in which all the faculties of genius pour forth in pantheistic creation that is both physical and spiritual?

Seraphine is a part of twentieth century art by virtue of work that poses the problem of rediscovered identity. "She was," Uhde tells us, "totally convinced of the greatness of her work." Where did this conviction come from?

> ..."Near Donremy, there is a tree called the Lady Tree or the Fairy Tree. Sometimes I used to go there to play with other girls and to decorate it with flowers in honor of Our Lady of Donremy. With my own eyes I saw flowers burst into bloom on its branches for the maidens and I myself often put them there with the others..."

I could never read these words said by Joan of Arc more than four hundred years ago without seeing Seraphine's tree of life, a painting in which a ball of light seems to open and close within a cluster of leaves in the form of a cupola and the sky is seen inside this mass of flowers and fruits. An explosion of stars, an outspread peacock's tail against the fleshy trunk of a tree, a burst of sparkling light on a background of moss. This tree is the burning brazier of cosmic "exploration" that finds the means of communicating with us through its own vivid language.

Translated by Mary Guggenheim.

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JOAN SEMMEL

INTERVIEW

After a number of one-artist shows in New York where her monumental, intriguing nudes stirred discussion and controversy, news of a planned book on women's imagery, and finally, her curatorship of the recent *Contemporary Women: Consciousness and Content* show held in conjunction with *Women Artists: 1550—1950* at the Brooklyn Museum, the time was right to interview Joan Semmel.

Here she discusses her life, her work, her involvement in the women artists' movement, and the development of her thematic exhibition of contemporary women artists.

by Ellen Lubell

PART I

WA: Before we discuss the development of your work, and your other activities, could you please briefly describe your background?

JS: I was born October 19, 1932, in New York City, and went to school here in New York; I studied at Music and Art High School, Cooper Union, Pratt and the Art Student's League. My MFA and BFA both come from Pratt. Cooper at that time gave a certificate for a three-year course. I graduated from Cooper in 1952. Then I went back to Pratt much later; I got my degree there in 1963. In that year I went to Spain, and when I returned I got my MFA at Pratt in 1972. I went to Spain because my ex-husband had a job there.

WA: When did you start showing professionally?

JS: In Spain, in 1965. I showed in Spain and South America between 1965 and '70. I came back to New York in 1970, that's when I went back to Pratt for my degree because I wanted to be able to teach. At the end of my MFA I did a show at Pratt [1972]. That was my first show in New York.

WA: Could you describe how your painting developed, in terms of imagery and what you did with it?

JS: I was an abstract expressionist for many years, and the paintings I showed in Spain and South America were abstract expressionist paintings. There was a kind of overlay of surrealism in them, I would say, because of my European experience. So that when I went to Spain, from the very gestural kind of thing that I was doing here, there was a slight closing up of form. I think you can see what I mean by that by the paintings that you see [in her studio] although I still use the gesture very strongly. Still, the kind of forms that evolved had certain psychological overtones. And for lack of any other word, I call it a certain kind of surrealist influence, in Spain and Europe.

By the time I came back to this country, I had established a definite look that was particularly my own. When I came back to this country, though, my whole life changed. My whole pace, everything was completely different, it was like a complete opening up of my head. And my identification as a woman became much stronger. Just living in a country like Spain...I lived there as a separated woman with two children for a long time. There were a lot of ideas becoming current here in 1972, '71, '70 that I had lived through alone, without knowing that I was a "feminist." I didn't know what it was called. I just knew I had to work through certain things that made it almost impossible for me to exist as a person in that particular environment.

When I came back, the excitement of having other women to communicate with, to be able to really express those feelings, to have them understood and to relate to other women was for me very, very

important and very exciting. The work then started to change, too. I started going around and seeing the explosion of everything in New York. And what I saw at that time was lyrical painting, the spray, wall-to-wall painting, and that left me very dissatisfied. I felt a kind of sameness, an elegance I didn't like at all and couldn't identify with. I felt that my own work in no way was current with any of the feelings of New York. What I had been doing before was a certain kind of introspective painting that had much less to do with my life here than the kind of isolated life that I had lived in Spain. I needed another vehicle, another way of expressing what I had to say, but I couldn't find it anywhere in terms of what I was seeing.

That's when I decided to go back to the figure. I had always drawn from the figure; even through my abstract period, a lot of the paintings were take-offs from the beginning of a figure drawing.

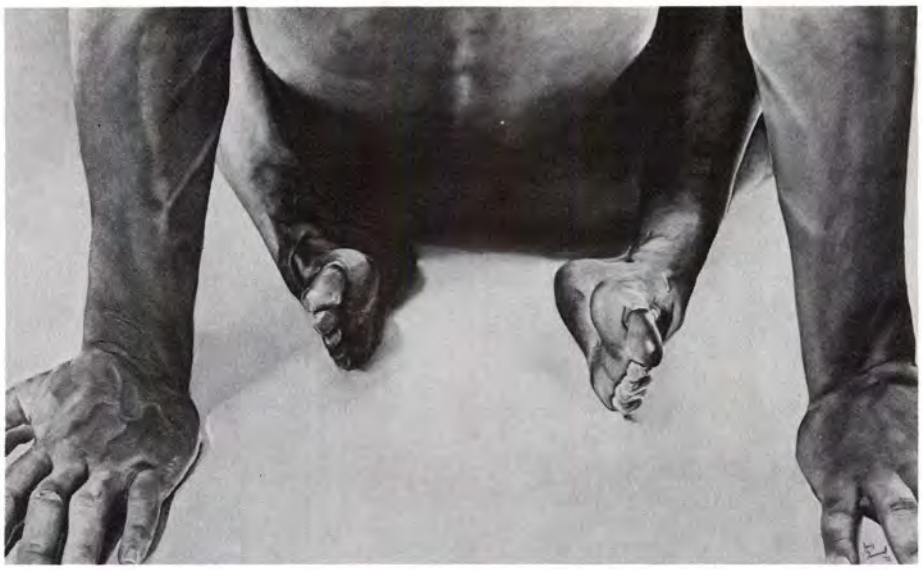
My first feeling was, how do I use the figure in a way that has any meaning for me? Because I'm certainly not going to go back to doing academic nude studies, studio studies. That's when I decided to use the figure as a vehicle for an erotic kind of theme. The figure in the present context had to be thought of in those terms more directly. I was just feeling my way. The first paintings I did that way were abstract and expressionistic. They looked like German expressionist paintings because they came right out of the abstract expressionism. It was only as I started working that I realized I got a lot more impact from the three-dimensional modeled form than from activating the paint. So gradually the forms started to build and then I started looking for another way of working, rather than from models, because I needed more information. I went to photographs, and that's when the work changed again.

WA: How did you use the photographs exactly?

JS: I used black and white photographs. I learned how to take them and I used them as you would a drawing. I worked from them. It was a slow process of learning, how to do a kind of work that I had never done before, and it was a little bit scary. I had already established a name and a reputation, not here, somewhere else, but still, in work that I was very sure of. This was the beginning of something that was completely new for me.

I was looking for not only an erotic kind of thing, but the erotic with a particular kind of feel to it. The reason I wanted to use an erotic element had to do with what I was seeing on the newsstands. When I came back to New York, the girlie magazines, the sexploitation all over was a shocker. Living in Spain for seven or eight years I hadn't seen any of it. When you've been away from it, it hits you very strongly. I was seeing all this stuff that for me wasn't even sexual, it was just hard sell. And hard sell in a way I found demeaning of women. In the past, women's sexuality had always been used against them. I felt very strongly the sexual issue was crucial in terms of real liberation. So I started to work in the erotic theme, but I was very conscious of it being erotic from a woman's point of view, rather than from what is normally a man's point of view.

WA: Something that has always interested



Untitled, *1973. Oil on canvas, 48x69".*

A Cat Called Che, *1974. Oil on canvas, 50x68".*

Fleshscape, *1976. Oil on canvas, 50x68". Courtesy Lerner-Heller Gallery.*

me about your work, is that the artist's, or photographer's point of view is part of the theme. It's obviously autobiographical just from the way you're looking at it.

JS: It's very deliberate. What happened was, the very first paintings [at Pratt] that I did were still expressionistic and highly sexual; they were couples making love. I tried to capture the feeling of how I experience the act of making love, of what I would see, of how I would feel. But I couldn't really do it. I didn't have enough knowledge in terms of drawing from the body, I didn't have the experience of working with that kind of material.

I abandoned that aspect of it and started drawing from models. I had to let go of myself in that situation. I went through that whole series of paintings that were shown at 141 Prince Street [in SoHo], that were essentially looking on. The artist's vision was not in the first person. I did that whole series because I really wasn't able to do it any other way. Then, after I made the statement, I didn't want to just go on, making more of the same kind of thing. I wanted something else.

That summer, I was teaching in Baltimore at the Maryland Art Institute. I knew nobody down there, so I would sit and would look out over myself and I remember always seeing that same view: my hand, the coffee cup, the dungarees, looking over at the paintings. It was constant. So the first painting I did was that, of myself in that situation, contemplating the last painting.

And from there, I went into the idea of myself as I experience myself, my own view of myself. What I was trying to get there was first of all, the self, the feeling of self, and of the experience of oneself; secondly, the feeling of intimacy, of how one really relates to another individual, to another person, to another situation. The real quality of contact, of touch, of the eroticism of touch. When I came back to this country, I felt very much a lack of reality in people's relationships with each other and with things. Even when you go into a supermarket, you don't realize that any of that stuff ever grew out of the ground. Everything's wrapped, and people are wrapped in the same way. There's none of that real feel of contact. I was trying to get through some of that, and get more of a feeling of real touch, of real contact with whomever or whatever it was that I was touching, or seeing or whatever, in my most intimate contacts, with my children, with a pet, with a lover. At that point I wasn't interested in my relationship with the outside world so much as I was with that most direct and intimate situation. And that was the whole autobiographical series I did that was first shown at Lerner-Heller Gallery in 1975; that's the work in Houston right now.

The latest show was one with just single nudes of myself, at Lerner-Heller in Spring 1977. That's the most recent work, the single nudes. It was as if I was coming back to a strong sense of self at that point.

But also the paintings have gotten somewhat abstract in a funny sort of way: less specific in terms of what they were saying, but all of it still there. I think the sensuous and erotic nature of it was still there, certainly the intimacy was still there, the self, the looking for self was still there, but the authority was much stronger, because it's all said in a less narrative way.

WA: Eliminating just about everything else, as you did in those canvases, focuses you on just that.

JS: That's what I was looking for. Of course, I don't make a plan in my head, it evolves in the work itself. As I see it happening, I find something, and I know that that's what I'm looking for. That's how, basically, the work has developed.

WA: Do you see this development, especially the search for self and the expansion of that theme, do you see that as a particularly female-related concept?

JS: Yes. The self that I look for is a woman who understands first, that her sexuality and sensuousness is a power, not a commodity for exploitation. It's not something that should be repressed, it is natural and part of what a woman is in herself and is not in any way demeaning. Second, I felt the self thing for other women, in the sense of rejecting the male fantasy of what a woman is. If you look at the history of art, the kinds of images of women that are projected to us, are the idealization of the two grapefruit breasts, the hour-glass figure, presented always in terms of availability, delectability, not in any way as a mover, a person who comes from herself in any sense. This is very much a part of what I was feeling, and again, I didn't set up a plan that I was going to say this to other women. I think it's a process of internalization. When an artist is able to internalize all those feelings, when something really means that much to you it comes out in the work, somehow. It's not a question of making propaganda, or proclaiming an ideological position in any way. It's very much a part of who I am, and what I am and what I think and what I feel, and so that whole thing comes out in my work. It's there, and it projects itself in a way that I feel is unavoidable.

WA: You had troubles finding a place to to show.

JS: Originally, yes. The first paintings, that group that I showed at 141 Prince Street, were very large paintings of couples making love.

WA: In orange and green and other colors.

JS: I went to every dealer in town, where I could get past the secretary. I really tried to get a dealer, and I couldn't. I might have tried getting into a cooperative gallery, but at the time the only co-ops that were functioning were A.I.R. and 55 Mercer, and I don't think the kind of imagery I was using was one that either of those galleries would have responded to, even if I was really willing to get involved in what a cooperative gallery entails. It left me very little alternative. I felt very strongly about my work, that it was good, and that it should be seen. Somehow, with the little funds that I had, I gambled in a sense of staking myself. I paid for the space. At that time the 141 Prince Street space was rented to Sachs gallery and some of the uptown galleries when they had a big show come down. They screened people, and obviously you had to have a certain professional level to show there, but you did do your own show.

What that did for me was to make me visible. Nothing really happened from the show itself. I remember how depressed I was afterwards because I had felt, 'Well, least I'll do it and then I'll get a gallery, and there will be reviews and there will be something.' Of course you know how it is in New York, nobody chases you. But what did come of it was there were several people who came in who were interested in doing photo stories, etc., one of whom was a good art photographer, Gianfranco Gorgoni, and I suggested that he see some of

the other women who were also dealing with sexual imagery. This is one of the things I learned by going to meetings with other women. When I first started doing this kind of thing I thought I was the only one who would be doing it. I said, 'Wow, no woman's ever done anything like this before,' and then I started going from one meeting to another, one studio to another, and I found there were so many women who were involved with some kind of sexual imagery. Some of it was more political, it had all different forms, but there were an awful lot of women working with that kind of thematic material. That really opened me up also in terms of the political connotations of the imagery: what it meant, why it was happening. I started putting a book together, because I realized that there was something more than my own personal reactions to my own life and my own situation, that it had to do with certain social conditions that were producing these kinds of reactions in a lot of women.

Gorgoni did the article on women doing erotic art and a lot of those pictures and a lot of articles were picked up by various magazines: *New York, Viva, Changes.* I was very dissatisfied with most of the articles. I felt I had given interviews for two hours and then two sentences would come out of the context that would lead into some sort of sexual liberation thing that would get somebody's audience off.

I just got very aggravated with that whole thing, and decided to do the book. I wanted the subject to be approached from a serious point of view, primarily from an art context, not just a social point of view. What I had wanted was to have it done from within the frameworks of an art critic, an art historian, an anthropologist, a psychologist, an economist. I couldn't get all of those people, frankly because the work has never been done, the research necessary in those areas, and of course there was no money involved.

But I did get some of that done. Lucy Lippard did a part on abstract erotic imagery, Carol Duncan did the historical piece, Eunice Lipton did a piece on contemporary women, April Kingsley did a whole section, a photographic essay on all the work, and so on. I had a very solid book. Roz Schneider did a piece on film and people in film and performance, and Elizabeth Weatherford did an anthropological piece. I did the introduction. Before I had the book together, when I just had an outline, I got a contract to do it. That's how I got all of the writers and paid them; I got an advance. That was from Hacker Art Books. What I didn't know at the time, I know nothing at all about publishing and had no contact at all in that world, is that he's a small firm, and once he does a book, he wouldn't go ahead and publish it until he had a distributor, and the distributors are the big companies. The whole thing was together, and he was overjoyed with it, he loved the book, but he couldn't get a distributor to back it. It was at the time of the ERA defeat, the depression, the publishing business was kaput. It was an expensive book to produce, and he tried, and he sat on it for awhile.

Now, after about two years, I have the book back here and have to start taking it around again because I feel that now, even though my ideas have changed and it needs editing and updating, the book would be right. It's almost as if it had been too early. Now the book is very marketable. I think that the ground has been prepared, that all the years we've been working here in New York has made it acceptable out in the country. I will take it around again. It's the most quoted non-published book. It was done four years ago. A lot of people in the book have surfaced and come up higher and higher.

PART II

WA: Do you think you could detail your involvement in the women artists' movement? When you joined what group, who you've worked with, and what you thought

of the whole thing?

JS: When I first came back to New York I got involved pretty quickly, just by going to meetings, which were just starting up at that point. I went to both Women in the Arts and Ad Hoc Committee meetings. Women in the Arts meetings tended to be enormous gatherings, with a more formal way of presenting themselves. I ended up meeting people I had gone to school with, and hadn't seen for 20 years. The Ad Hoc meetings were much smaller, more intimate, and what I liked about them was that you got to go to different women's studios as we met in different places all the time. You got the feeling of the work that people were doing that hadn't been seen. That was very important for me because when I first came back I still had a feeling that 'I'm as good a painter as a man,' with a little trepidation about being classed with the women. I had shown with men in the best galleries in Spain and in South America. I had made it, not in New York, maybe, but wherever I had been. And nothing could be worse in those places than to be called a woman painter. *Salon feminino* was the kiss of death, even though I had sent work to it, so that I still suffered from that a little bit when I came back. You put your foot in the water very gently, and the thing that was most important for me was going around from studio to studio and seeing the work and having it absolutely blow my mind, that it was so good and it hadn't been seen; nobody knew about it.

These were the experiences that were the most meaningful for me, as well as the ability to communicate with the other women, the feeling of support that we had, the loss of the isolated feeling, the possibility of having friends on a professional level; you could communicate about what you did in a real way. Women were really isolated from that. Men wouldn't talk to you about your work except in a very patronizing way. It was occasionally a one-to-one situation, seldom a peer kind of situation. So it was exciting to have that kind of possibility, to have other women who were involved in the same kinds of concerns you were, who went through the same struggles you did. You couldn't have that with personal friends who weren't involved in art, they wouldn't understand what that kind of involvement was all about. This was a whole opening up of that kind of possibility.

WA: Was this a common experience?

JS: I think it probably was.

WA: So from there on...?

JS: After that I went less and less to the larger meetings, and more of the Ad Hoc meetings where I felt more comfortable. For me there wasn't any specific purpose that it served more than the bonding. Then I got involved in doing the book, which again opened me up to a lot of women's work, as I had to actively seek out people. It gave me a wider range of people whom I might normally not know. It broadened me, it radicalized me a lot, it

made me feel more strongly about things I had been feeling—political implications of what the women were doing, political nature of art, and so on.

WA: Was Heresies *the next thing you got involved in? Are you still a member of any group?*

JS: No, I'm not a member of any group at this time. I support whatever I can whenever I can. A lot of us who used to sit around and commiserate have gone out and gotten shows, gotten jobs, and career demands have gotten so intensive that there isn't time for that kind of activity. Until the beginning of *Heresies* the feeling was that women were finally getting a little bit, but women getting into things somewhat was obscuring the fact that there was a great deal left to be done. I think that was the reason for beginning *Heresies*. So much of the first part of the activity of the feminist art movement had to do with the feeling of being left out so completely, having such a hard time getting any representation anywhere. As soon as some women's art started getting seen and there was some representation, that pressure to make things change slowed down a little bit, but essentially many things had not changed. Like in any movement, there's a little bit of a buy-off, a bit of tokenism, but the realities on a wider scale have not changed.

The art world is a reflection politically of what's happening in the rest of the world. In each profession, people are attacking it in their own way. In my own way, with the book, I began to feel more strongly about the concept that women in art had something special to contribute that was not being fed into the mainstream culture, because of the resistance of the culture to that kind of input. I was interested in seeing not only women's art, but a particular kind of input coming into the mainstream. I think men have to become more feminized, not that women always have to become more like men, and I felt that culturally this would only happen when women have input into that culture. If the women who were granted access to that culture were only the women who produced the kind of work that the men produced, then nothing had really changed. And this essentially was happening to a large degree.

WA: It's obvious from your statement accompanying the "Contemporary Women: Consciousness and Content" show that you believe to some extent that there is something to the idea of a discernible female content.

JS: Yes, I do. I don't think it is a straightjacket in a sense that women have to show they're women in their work.

WA: Do you mean consciously or unconsciously?

JS: I mean consciously. There's a fear that some women have that they're going to be called upon to have something specifically female in their work. It's very divisive, and it comes from a false presumption, that that's what is expected. There's always that kind of funny defensive motion. I don't know who's ever attacked in that area, I never said that women should make this or that. I don't think anybody has ever said that. But I don't think you can deny that many women have used certain kinds of imagery, and that doesn't mean that all women should, or that women who don't aren't bona fide feminists if they want to be. Nevertheless, when you start looking at the work, one thing after the other, it's unavoidable to see certain kinds of things in several different areas. The areas I set out [on the back of the poster published for the show by the Brooklyn Museum, see box] are the way I happen to see it; somebody else might set up a different formal structure. Obviously there are plenty of people who don't fit into the structure, who don't make that kind of work. Also there might be some men who do certain things like that. The point is, first of all, there are many, many people saying these kinds of things in a particular area; it has some kind of importance. Secondly, a lot of people who are saying those things are specific about what they're saying. They reinforce their art by the positions they've taken politically in the feminist movement, and are activists in that area.

The show at the Brooklyn Museum was to put two things that I saw together: the kind of imagery that I saw occurring, together with people who had been active in the movement. They were both criteria in the selection of the work.

WA: Do you think that ultimately, there is something that crops up unconsciously, or is put in unconsciously, that can identify a woman's work from a man's work?

JS: There are a lot of things that are put in unconsciously. I don't think all of the artists are conscious about what they're doing at all. But I don't think you can automatically identify a woman's work by it. There are certain tendencies, and those tendencies are identifiable, but I don't think it's an automatic one-to-one where you can look at the work, and say, yes, this person is this and this person is that. It's not that automatic. It's just that those of us who have been deeply involved with it and who have been exposed to a lot, know there are a lot of things you can recognize that keep cropping up and usually you're able to recognize it.

WA: It seems to me that, for example, certain critics' attempts at defining what it might be, get so broad and include so many different kinds of work and ways of doing things that it's almost too open.

JS: They tend to look for certain esthetic things that hold together, whereas my feelings may be less precise and have more to do with the content of the work. Now content is also esthetic, but it's a different orientation. I see it as a focus on different kinds of work, certain kinds of areas. I wouldn't attempt to schematize it

Semmel based the exhibition *Contemporary Women* on specific areas which she has found recurrent in women's art. The following are excerpts from the statement she wrote to accompany the show.

"...This exhibition focuses on four thematic ideas which occur with uncommon frequency in women's art: sexual imagery, both abstract and figurative; autobiography and self-image; the celebration of devalued subject matter and media that have been traditionally relegated to women; and anthropomorphic or nature forms...

"...Women's sexual art tends to stress either the strongly positive or strongly negative aspect of their experience. Feelings of victimization and anger often become politically directed, especially in the more recent works. When female sexuality is celebrated as joyous, liberating and creative, the influence of feminist ideals is strongly sensed...

"...The constant recurrence of self-images and autobiographical references in women's art has paralleled feminist preoccupation with the connections between the personal and the public...The depersonalization, anomie, and alienation, so much a part of men's world, are balanced in women's by an emphasis on intimacy and connectiveness...

"...The ties of family and community are evoked in women's art by the use of skills traditionally passed from mother to daughter, like sewing, weaving and cooking. The result has been some very unconventional art objects: soft and poured sculptures, diaphanous fabric constructions, embroidered and beaded paintings. There has been a conscious effort to attach affirmative meanings to subject matter and media formerly avoided as unsophisticated and unsuitable, or worse yet as decorative...

"...Biological processes, so central to woman's nurturing role, are inextricably bound up with the rhythms and forms of nature. Flower and bird images with varying degrees of anthropomorphic connotations, abstract biomorphic forms, process art, all are indications of women artists' identification with the unity and continuity of nature."

by saying it's grids or spirals or circles; I don't relate that way to the work.

WA: What do you think of Linda Nochlin's view, which is basically, that women and men are different, and because there's a difference biologically and experientially in this society, there has got to be some kind of difference that shows up in the work. She hasn't been able to define it really, but she thinks that because there's this experiential difference, there's got to be something.

JS: I would pretty well agree with that, except that there are an awful lot of women who try to be like men. So they try very hard to mask what they're doing. It's a process that starts from a very early age. If one could get beyond the mask that would be true.

One of the reasons I've worked so hard to try to establish some of these ideas is because if women no longer feel that they need the mask then we have a chance to get to a more authentic kind of thing. What will happen then I don't know. Some women may genuinely operate in a way that has been defined as masculine. Fine, if that's how it works out.

WA: The definitions haven't been very good, either.

JS: Right, the definitions aren't very good, but nevertheless, I do think that the cultural experience is so different for men and for women. The experience of an American man and an American woman is much more different than that between a French man and a German man, in terms of what their life experience is about, in the way they relate to touching things, to doing things, to thinking about things, to analyzing things, completely different. Nobody questions that you can see a difference between French art and German art, but everybody questions if you can see a difference between men's art and women's art. They're both differences in cultural experiences. So why is one so questionable and the other not questionable at all? The reason is because it's threatening, men feel very threatened, and some women do too.

PART III

WA: Could you outline the "Consciousness and Content" show? Explain how it came about?

JS: Accidentally. I was hired at the Brooklyn Museum Art School last year to teach, and this year they had a reorganization in which they created a position called full-time painting instructor, which is me, and part of the duties of that position would be to have some tie-in with some of the things that were happening in the Museum, to try to have the Art School and the Museum have a little more to do with each other. I would have the opportunity to put together one show in the Art School exhibition space. When the job was outlined for me and I accepted, I said okay, the show that I would like to do is "Consciousness and Content," and the dates that I would like to do it in are the dates that would coincide with the opening of the historical show ("Women Artists: 1550-1950).

WA: So you made that decision.

JS: Right, I made that decision, it came from my own incentive in taking what they had offered to me as part of my job and using it for that purpose.

WA: What was your aim in doing the show and timing it with the "Women Artists" show?

JS: Obviously, there isn't a single museum in this city that is willing to do an exhibition on contemporary women. It's perfectly all right to treat women as a group when you're excluding them, but if you try to treat them as a group to include them, that's reverse discrimination and you have a blocky situation where you can't have women's shows, you can't have sexual segregation for an exhibition. The only exhibition in an institution we've ever had as a group in this city is the "Women Choose Women" show, at the New York Cultural Center. That was an enormous show, and it got very good mention and it was the city's token gesture to women. The kind of energy it takes to pressure for that kind of one-time thing is very difficult to keep up. My purpose for doing this show was that it was an ideal situation for doing something. It would receive attention because it coincided with the historical show, it wouldn't just be lost as another little show somewhere, another women artists show, like the "Works on Paper" thing that had been done at the Brooklyn Museum a while back, a women's show. That got a little bit of attention but it didn't have the impact because of the fact that it was an isolated incident.

I felt that obviously, with the big women's show that had received so much attention all over, it would be getting all that attention again, and it would be an ideal time to try to get contemporary women some representation. I wasn't in any position to try to pressure the museum for a large contemporary women's show, because obviously the answer was no, that was pretty clear.

I thought at least this way there would be something coinciding with it in terms of contemporary women. The problem of course, and some people misunderstood this I think, was that I didn't presume to make a survey of contemporary women from 1950 to 1977. There was no intention on my part to do anything like that. It was a very particular point of view, my own, a feminist point of view. There are many women who may not associate themselves with a feminist point of view. I did not want to include anyone in that show who did not feel comfortable in that context. I tried to pick only women who in some way had been supportive and whose work fit the kind of tendencies that I personally felt were out there.

I knew that there would be some resentment. Obviously the space was so small I had to leave out people unless I wanted a show of miniatures. It was a very selective process of using people who I felt put forth a certain viewpoint in one way or another.

WA: You said earlier you responded directly to the opportunity of mounting a show with your proposal for "Consciousness and Content." Does that mean that you had been formulating the idea for this kind of show in your mind previously?

JS: I have wanted to see this kind of show for the last two or three years. As I was working with this material I kept seeing all

Panel discussion at the Brooklyn Museum, October 23, expounded on issues and questions raised by Contemporary Women: Consciousness and Content, *curated by Semmel. From left to right, panelists are: Semmel, artist Harmony Hammond, critic Carter Ratcliff, artist May Stevens, artist Joyce Kozloff, critic Lawrence Alloway.*

of these kinds of things, and I wanted to start doing some exhibitions around this. At the very beginning of the women's movement it was fine to have these great, big, all-inclusive shows to show that women make good art.

Basically there is much more acceptance of women as artists at this point, but what I'm interested in is something more than that. I'm interested in coherent presentation of the art so that women's contribution in the culture is recognized. Not simply that women make more art, but that women contribute a certain kind of thing and that women have something to say with their art. What happens then is not that what women have to say is picked up by men and brought forth in another form that then becomes another male mainstream movement. Unless we clarify, and start defining, and making some of these statements, that is what will happen, it will filter in and become part of the whole other thing. Which is fine, let it become part of a whole other thing, but don't write us out of history again.

WA: How do you feel that the content of your show demonstrates what we've just discussed?

JS: I think that anyone, frankly, walking through that show feels very strongly the impact of *woman* in it. In an isolated situation, any one artist, stylistically, could be included in any other grouping of that style. But when these things are put together, one very strongly sees the viewpoint of women as a whole.

In the case of sexual imagery for instance, Marisol is an example of someone classified stylistically in another area. She generally came out at the time of the pop artists, and never quite fit, was always a little bit off to the side. One of the reasons she never had the same kind of impact on the mainstream culture, as someone like Warhol did was that her work had a very different feel to it, a very personal viewpoint. If you look at her imagery and what she's trying to say, it's overwhelming, in terms of a woman's viewpoint. But that was never picked up on. She was just another artist. So her position in terms of being an innovator, and in terms of establishing a mainstream kind of following and so on was undercut because of that.

When an artist is discussed simply as an individual, without a context, her work may hold up as an individual's over the centuries, but the force of what she had to say is lost, and that's what happened consistently to so many women. That's part of the reason I had wanted to use women in the show whose work had been acclaimed in other contexts. I had to do it that way, so one could see that these were not disgruntled women who haven't been able to make it in the art world, and who haven't been able to achieve the kind of thing they wanted to achieve. They all have feminist things they want to say, but have been put away in stylistic categories.

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TOWARD A NEW HUMANISM

CONVERSATIONS WITH WOMEN ARTISTS

by Katherine Hoffman

Professor Hoffman's conversations not only touch on many questions and topics of interest to all women artists, but demonstrate their relevance to the creation of a philosophy of human (encompassing both masculine and feminine) values.

> Assume that time as we now know it does not exist, that instead there is continuous, eternal change, an indivisible entity underlying all existence.
>
> Assume further that change, this constant growing, not time, is irreversible and the ultimate reality.
>
> Change is the fourth dimension, time is but a measuring device.
>
> From *Studies of Time*, Agnes Denes, 1970

This statement by Agnes Denes is representative of new and individual modes of expression voiced by a growing number of contemporary women artists. As Agnes Denes suggests we live in a world of constant change, and the life and work of some of these women are part of that change. Such women are expressing their individuality as women and as human beings through working in various media and in living various life styles, in what might be considered a step toward a new humanism.

Humanism in the past has dealt frequently with what Webster calls "polite learning or cultural impulse, imparted by those who brought the Greek and Roman classics into new vogue during the Renaissance." Through the years stereotypes have arisen concerning forms of masculine and feminine expression in art and in everyday living. Concepts of humanism are changing from this traditional definition to encompass the needs and expressions of modern man and woman. Women such as Agnes Denes are pushing toward analysis of our human situation, and seem to be reaching toward a new sense of humanism and humanity, where some of the now opposing forces of masculine/feminine, strong/weak, feeling/intellect, body/-mind, etc. become reconciled onto a continuum where ***human*** virtues are important. (1) For a number of women artists working today, the push toward a new humanity seems equally important as the production of a masterpiece, as part of the process and product of artistic expression. As Alice Neel states, "...the greatest thing in the world is humanism...wouldn't it be great if everything in the world related to humanism."

Recently I spent many hours talking with women artists about their work, their ideas about art education, in particular the education of women, and their position as women artists. The women interviewed lived and worked primarily in the Philadelphia, New York City and New England areas. They represented a wide variety of ages from 30 to over 80. Their work reflected involvement in various media: painting, print-making, sculpture, jewelry and weaving, performance and conceptual pieces. Many of them had had various expreriences teaching. When possible I talked with these women in their homes and/or studios, feeling it important to gain as much information as possible

about the artist as a whole person. The settings were very different for each interview, but each place reflected the importance of a space to work, to have a "room of one's own."

A few examples of the variety of working and living spaces, are the tastefully decorated, well-lit condominium overlooking the Hudson River belonging to Audrey Flack, where beautiful art objects and an exotic parrot spoke along with the articulate artist. An older, New York apartment on the West Side whose high ceilings and chipped moldings told of a glorious age gone by, was at once Alice Neel's studio and home. Her prolific work crowded the darkly lit halls. The figures in the portraits cry out for human conversation, reaching into the depths of their own and the viewer's psyche. Isabel Bishop's studio overlooking Union Square in New York, has been a window on the world below for over 30 years. Her well articulated moving figures in her paintings often reflect that view and her very personal vision of it.

Often the artists' work space and work are integral parts of their living space and energies. Ann Schaumberger's intricate quilted pieces and ceramic houses lining her furniture and walls seem to be real extensions of her personality. Miesie Jolley's poignant woodcuts cry out in both pleasure and pain from the walls of her turn-of-the-century-decorated apartment. Even the woodcuts in process in the adjoining studio space become alive, often subtly reflecting Miesie's early experience in Nazi Germany. Faith Ringgold's masks and soft sculpture that occupy her living room want to tell you the story of Bena and Buba who are part of Ringgold's Funeral Tableau, the Wake and Resurrection of *the Bicentennial Negro*, where Buba, the son dies of an overdose and Bena dies of grief. South of Chambers St. in New York, the loft spaces of artists such as Alice Adams, Laurace James, and Tina Girouard indicate the need for large, inexpensive working space and the move of artists southward in the city to get that precious space.

Each artist's space reflected a very different personality but each artist seemed to be reaching toward a deeper meaning for her life and work, making new maps for a new humanism in this world of change. As Elizabeth Janeway writes, "What is happening to women involves a sudden enlargement of our world; the sky above us lifts, light pours in. Certainly that illumination reveals fear, anger, frustration, doubt, uncertainty...No maps exist for this enlarged world, we must make them as we explore..."(2) And says Mary Daly, "Women are struggling with the tensions between remembrance of the past and experience of the present, which contradicts our old beliefs."(3) "To this we must add a third factor—our hopes and aspirations for the future, which also tend to be aggravated by the realities of our daily lives."(4)

In the following pages I would like to share some of the ideas and aspirations of these women artists. Some of the following incredible statements written about women give us a sense of roots, as well as some sense of the climate in which some of the older artists began their work:

> 'What else is woman,' says this medieval antisubversive activities manual, 'but a foe to friendship, an unescapable punishment, a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic...' By the eighteenth century, Rousseau, one of France's most prolific proponents of democratic equality, could write with impunity, 'Women have in general no love of any art; they have no proper knowledge of any; and they have no genius...Schopenhauer's indictment of women as 'that undersized, narrow-shouldered, broad-hipped, and short-legged race,' denied women even their beauty...(5)

Early steps toward reform in women's rights in America perhaps officially began with the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. The struggle for suffrage had its peaks and valleys in the 53 years that passed from the first state suffrage referendum held in Kansas in 1867, to the final ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. The women's movement does not seem to have appeared so strongly again until recent years.

In art, William Gerdts describes the general development of American women artists' subject matter and manner of expression. He speaks of women artists before the twentieth century as involved with miniature and still-life painting, branching out to figure painting and portraiture in the late nineteenth century. He writes:

> ...as one might have expected, our earlier women artists chose those themes in which delicacy, lyricism, intimacy, and sentiment abound, rather than complex ones requiring monumentality and power...In recent years, however, women artists have turned from the more fragile aspects, approaches, and themes to a total participation in contemporary painting...(6)

"...It is difficult to validly link women artists' work together to fit a particular meaning of feminine..."

It is difficult to validly link women artists' work together to fit a particular meaning of feminine, but until the twentieth century much of the expression of a "feminine experience" seemed to stick to a definition of feminine relating to daintiness, delicacy, or preciousness. Women's work often reflected the popular style of the time or circle in which the women artists moved. As Linda Nochlin writes, "In every instance women artists and writers would seem to be closer to other artists and writers of their own period and outlook than they are to each other."(7)

In very recent years, though, women have become very supportive of one another and some feel themselves related to one another not only through emotional support or collective organization, but also through the expression of a "female imagery" or female sensibility. The validity of the notion of a female imagery is somewhat controversial and an issue explored in my conversations. Some artists such as Edna Andrade spoke of the inevitability of a woman expressing a woman's sensibilities. Said Andrade, "That's the only sensibility I have." Other artists such as Joan Semmel have come to deal with the female body as female imagery, in ways quite different than the traditional use of the female as sex object,

Photo: © Joyce Ravid.

Audrey Flack. She "seems to counter the harshness and hardness of some of the other photo-realists with the sensual and very personal content of her work."

temptress, or goddess. In talking about her paintings, Semmel refers to the progression from sexual to sensual in her work. [See article elsewhere in this issue.] Another concern for the sensual can be seen in the alluring and vibrant colors, as well as in the deep sense of space in Dorothy Gillespie's work, in both her paintings and sculptural paper pieces. Gillespie, a founder of the Women's Interart Center, spoke of the importance of a sense of flow in her work. "We women are trained to get 'all set' then to do certain things, [then] instead of doing them, getting in a flow of things, doing, letting the day's varied activities flow."(8)

Other women spoke of feminine imagery in terms of the use of traditional craft materials, yarn, etc. that were once considered to belong only in a woman's domain. Faith Ringgold has elevated sewing and the use of fabrics to an art that draws upon her interest in African art and the need for women to draw upon their own culture. She stated, "It's a highly political and explosive issue to relegate crafts to art. But all other forms of art were developed by men. The culture of a woman cannot be fully developed simply by imitating men. Women should not have to deny their own thing or be taught to feel their culture is inferior."(9)

Some of Miriam Schapiro's collages not only employ fabric in a beautiful and significantly decorative way, but also connect women around the country. Schapiro wrote of her work in 1976:

> Often when they were in an audience when I was talking about my work and explaining my idea of 'connection' to them, I asked for a 'souvenir' —a handkerchief, a bit of lace, an apron, a tea towel—some object from their past which would be 'recycled' in my paintings. I saw this as a way to preserve the history of embroidered (often anonymous) works which are our 'connection' to the history of a woman's past.(10)

Alice Adams. "...feminine imagery is an invention..."

"...The culture of a woman cannot be fully developed simply by imitating men..."—Ringgold

Tina Girouard has done a number of powerful pieces using what she calls "Solomon's Lot," eight pieces of silk given to her by her mother-in-law who had received them from an Arab relative in the early 1940s. The pieces inspired a great visual interest in pattern.

The idea of a collection of items with very personal significance is seen in Audrey Flack's luscious still-lifes such as *Jolie Madame* or *Solitaire*. Flack seems to counter the harshness and hardness of some of the other photorealists with the sensual and very personal content of her work. As Flack states, "These still-lifes all have to do with me. I made model airplanes. I wear Jolie Madame, my family gambled, I play solitaire amidst china coffee cups and after I set up *Banana Split* my daughter Hannah and her friends sat down and ate it."(11)

The use of flowers and plants has often been viewed as feminine imagery, although some artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe have vehemently denied such an association. However, other artists such as Buffie Johnson have consciously chosen the life cycle of the plant as the content imagery related in some ways to the life of a woman. Johnson's work and personal research also reflects her interest in the importance of the Great Goddess and the history of matriarchal societies. She feels the early matriarchal society "represents the roots of the women's movement whether they know it or not." Johnson feels that our society will one day return to a matriarchal system. However, she points out that she is a feminist, not a separatist.

Some artists' work is more conceptual and political in its relation to "feminine imagery." Of interest as a very direct statement is the early work of Minna Citron, now over 80 years old. Citron has shown herself to be a very independent spirit throughout much of the century. Her *Feminanities* series is both critical and satirical. Of her work Citron says, "I just drew the people closest to me, and they were women mostly. I felt women were making jackasses out of themselves by being hausfraus, homemakers, and nothing else. I didn't take my children to the park (couldn't stand vapid mothers). So I was rather critical...satirical...made a little fun of them and myself too. But I've leveled at men, too." Of interest, too, is Mierle Ukeles' "Maintenance Art" where the ideas of maintaining buildings, the home, oneself, etc. provide the basis for her pieces such as *I Make Maintenance Art One Hour Everyday*, involving the use of the maintenance staff at the 55 Water St. building in New York City. Ukeles' *Maintenance Manifesto* involves the delineation of:

> Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?
>
> Development: pure individual creation; the new; change; progress, advance, excitement, flight or fleeing.
>
> Maintenance: keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight.

Madeleine Burnside describes well some of the essence of Ukeles' work:

> ...her art is an enactment of the idea that house work and maintenance work of all kinds are art as well as tasks, affirmations of life through protecting, renewing, and preserving that which exists. This is not a completely new idea. Gaston Baston Bachelard gave an excellent intellectual exposition of it in *The Poetics of Space*: 'The minute we apply a glimmer of consciousness to a mechanical gesture, or practice phenomenology while polishing an old piece of furniture, we sense new impressions come into being beneath this familiar domestic duty. For consciousness rejuvenates everything, giving a quality of beginning to the most everyday actions.(12)

Ukeles' concept of maintenance as art and pieces such as Tina Girouard's *Maintenance Tapes* seem to correspond to Simone de Beauvoir's principles of "immanence" versus "transcendence" in *The Second Sex*. The principle of transcendence is associated wth the masculine—with autonomy, power, self-directedness, etc.,

Tina Girouard (in performance). Her Maintenance Tapes *correspond to two of de Beauvoir's principles in* The Second Sex.

while immanence is associated with feminine—with a concern for ritual, maintenance, nurturing, continuity, etc. De Beauvoir's argument is actually concerned with dissociating these principles from a particular sex. But she believes in the superior value of the transcendent, that men and women are "brothers" in obtaining this state of transcendence. She quotes Marx and adds her own comment on this brotherhood:

> ...'the relation of man to woman is the most natural relation of human being to human being. By it is shown, therefore, to what point the *natural* behavior of man has become human or to what point the *human* being has become his *natural* being, to what point his *human nature* has become his *nature*.'
>
> The case could not be better stated. It is for man to establish the reign of liberty in the midst of the world of the given. To gain the supreme victory, it is necessary, for one thing, that by and through their natural differentiation men and women unequivocally affirm their brotherhood.(13)

De Beauvoir's argument is well taken but it seems important to also begin to value the principle of immanence as well as transcendence, and find a meaning in the rituals of maintenance, nurturing, etc., as artists such as Ukeles have done.

Some artists interviewed denied any type of association with feminine imagery, some wanting to be seen first as an artist, then as a woman, or that one's sex not be considered at all. For example, Isabel Bishop: "I never would join any woman's things. I don't see the point. I don't feel I'm a woman artist. I'm an artist!" Some considered themselves feminists, but their work need not contain specific feminine imagery. Or others such as Alice Adams felt "that feminine imagery is an invention," although "a legitimate field for research," and that "men can do feminine imagery as well." All of these various viewpoints concerning feminine imagery seem to have their own validity.

Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of women's contemporary art is the rich eclecticism that is resulting from these very personal and individual statements. It seems important not to define the whole concept of feminine too narrowly or absolutely, for as Cindy Nemser has written:

> In the past we subjected women to phallic criticism in that women's work was only to be taken seriously if it looked like that done by a man. But if it looked too much like a man's then the woman was accused of denying her feminine nature. It would be tragic for us to fall into this stereotyping process again today in our desire to discover and define a feminine or even a feminist art...A feminist art can only be an art in which women are free to bring all their individual ideas,

attitudes and concerns to every possible content and style. (14)

Thus women's art reflects in some ways a state of "becoming," of defining individualities and new realities. June McFee addressed this very issue of exploring one's individuality, of abolishing masculine and feminine stereotypes:

> To be full persons, we don't need to have the male goal as our goal—but as people, find what is our most natural way to define our individuality. What this means, of course, is a redefining of the nature of what society can be. It is the fear of this in ourselves and in society at large that keeps us back. (15)

The role of education seems crucial in the changing of stereotypes and in developing individual potentialities. Many of the women interviewed had very interesting ideas concerning education in the visual arts, and in particular the education of women. Some artists, particularly those who had become established early, felt there was nothing particularly special about education of women in the arts. Isabel Bishop has such a view, but feels there is a real need for very energetic teaching and a need to push students toward new content, one content area being an image of man. She commented, "We don't have any image of contemporary man. We say a person looks like an eighteenth century man or a Roman, but we don't have an image of man today."

Instead of dealing with the education of women separately, some artists dealt with issues that they felt should be used for both men and women students, that man's consciousness needed to be raised as well as woman's. Buffie Johnson spoke of the need for "encouraging," not only criticizing, of "individualizing," of accenting what is "right" in a student's work. A number of artists mentioned particular teachers who had influenced them, citing the importance of personality and individual attention given the student, rather than the success of a particular teaching method. To some, the teacher's attitude toward being a human being and toward the making of art was as important as learning new skills. A slightly different focus on the influence of a teacher came from Alice Neel, who spoke of the need for learning self-awareness and basic skills from a teacher, in order to ultimately follow one's own vision. "...Actually what art is to my mind, is a search for...your own way. A search that you carry on. And the people who teach you, all have a certain importance, but just to a certain extent...You have yourself around your neck for life...You know what it takes to make an artist? Hypersensitivity and the will of endeavor."

Concerning the issue of skills building, some felt there should be a return to more academic skills building after recent trends toward abstract expressionism in some schools. Cecile Abish suggested the

Buffie Johnson. The early matriarchal society "represents the roots of the women's movement..."

format of short six week courses to learn basic skills, in order that more "ideas" be taught and considered. Abish further suggested the idea of individual tutoring for those interested in special topics. Once certain skills were mastered, some felt that more time should be spent on the content of the work and motivation of the student, as well as on composition and technique.

Also important for these artists was contact with the "real" art world—museums, galleries, private studios, community organizations, etc. in addition to learning from a textbook or in the classroom. Perhaps most important for those interviewed was an emphasis on the development of the "whole" person, as Minna Citron states:

> I'm very much interested in the *whole* person—male or female or whatever —and I think it's sinful for anyone to try to prevent anyone from becoming

Cecile Abish. In art education, suggests shorter terms to acquire more basic skills.

a whole, mature person. To become a whole person, one has to be hitting on all cylinders—mental, physical and emotional. Our political and educational system often tends to inhibit people from their greatest possibilities.(16)

Along with some of the issues cited above some women felt that there were aspects of education in the visual arts that women needed in particular. One was the need to overcome the stereotyped notion of a woman as passive, timid and delicate, that a woman need not be afraid to achieve, and to use her greatest energies. As Lillian Lent stated, "I no longer waste energy concealing what energy I have."

A study done by I. and D.M. Broverman in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 1970, vol. 34, indicated the somewhat drastic effects of cultural conditioning, which was implied in Lent's statement. Seventy-nine men and women clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers were interviewed concerning the definition of a healthy person. The Brovermans found: the unhealthy person = an unhealthy male = a healthy female. The healthy female versus the healthy person was more submissive, more dependent, etc. Margaret Mead's study *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* indicated that "any idea that temperamental traits of the order of dominance, bravery, aggressiveness, objectivity, maleability are inalienably associated with one sex (as opposed to the other) is entirely lacking,"(17) and that cultural conditioning, as in our American society can be very deep. Mead further states:

> There can be no society which insists that women follow one special personality pattern defined as feminine, which does not do violence also to the individuality of many men...the potentialities which different societies label as either masculine or feminine are really potentialities of some members of each sex, and not sex-linked at all.(18)

To help students, and in particular women, overcome the burden of these sex stereotypes, the importance of role models was mentioned frequently, both historically and in contemporary society. Importance was given not only to historical significance and content of women's work, but also to the lives of women. Personalities, life styles, and issues such as the balancing of career and family, were seen as some of the areas to be studied. The increase of female role models would help women students take more risks and help them strive toward their fullest potential.

Many of the women artists felt that survival techniques in the art world should be taught, particularly since some indicated they had suffered real discrimination in the past.

Along with role models and survival techniques, the establishment of a sup-

portive community was frequently mentioned. The existence of such a community was felt to be important for both men and women, but of particular significance for women of our time, in order to share problems, connections, and establish identities. Concerning such a community, Minna Citron strongly stated, "I think it's very important. I think it's something that's missing here in New York, which is also missing in Paris right now." A statement by Martin Buber perhaps capsulizes the essence of what a supportive community might be:

> True community does not come into being because people have feelings for each other (though that is required, too) but rather on two accounts; all of them have to stand in a living, reciprocal relationship to a living center [in this case an involvement with art], and they have to stand in a living, reciprocal relationship to one another. (19)

In some of the conversations, the atmosphere of Alfred Stieglitz's galleries was mentioned as a good example of a supportive community whether for women alone, or for both men and women. Stielglitz was a dynamic combination of artist, teacher and "seer." He fought for "an American Place," an American culture where the artist was free to develop his potential and associate with other artists who frequented the Stieglitz galleries.

Stieglitz commented about himself in his last years, "At least it can be said of me by way of epitaph that I cared."(20) It is this ultimate care and concern that seemed to have lasting effects on Stieglitz's surrounding circle. Such care, concern, sharing and support seems important for students as well as established artists.

"...For many, art and life are constantly intertwined in a creative dialogue..."

Some women voiced the need for separate women's courses, feeling that as for other minorities, separatism was a necessary step in establishing the identity of women's art. Some suggested the need to read feminist writings by women and men (i.e. John Stuart Mill) and spend a lot of time looking at women artists' work. Some felt it necessary to deal with consciousness raising before a specific art content. One example of a felt need for a separate content for women was Judy Chicago's and Miriam Schapiro's "Womanhouse," part of the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of the Arts. Schapiro and Chicago wrote of the project in the accompanying catalogue to the course:

> Female art students often approach artmaking with a personality structure conditioned by an unwillingness to push themselves beyond their limits; a lack of familiarity with tools and artmaking processes; an inability to see themselves as working people; and a general lack of assertiveness and ambition. The aim of the Feminist Art Program is to help women restructure their personalities to be more consistent with their desires to be artists and to help them build their artmaking out of their experiences as women. (21)

Separatism may not be valid for some, but for others it is a necessary step in establishing an identity, for reaching toward a wider humanity. Its only danger may be in the creation of a reverse chauvinism, if carried to an extreme.

Thus these women artists' ideas concerning education are as eclectic as their work. But almost all of them seemed concerned with the importance of finding and following one's own road, of establishing one's identity as a woman, as an artist, and most important, as a person. For many art and life are constantly intertwined in a creative dialogue as these artists seek and find creative solutions to problems such as balancing a career and family, or other close human relationships. These women's art, ideas and life styles seem to be constantly striving, and growing, dealing with the continuum of change that Agnes Denes refers to. As stated earlier, their endeavors also seem to point to the rise of a new humanism, a humanism where some of the established polarities will be erased, and become part of a flowing continuum. As Betty Roszak writes, "This male habit of setting up boundary lines between imagined polarities has been the impetus for untold hatred and destruction."(22) The work and ideas of many of these women, such as combining traditional and new methods of expression, or reaffirming the value of nurturing, maintaining, in a new sense, seem to be a part of the continuing Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, leading to new historical forces. Ultimately this state of becoming will perhaps reach a new plane where there are only *human* virtues rather than masculine and feminine virtues.

> Courage, daring, decisiveness, resourcefulness are good qualities in women as much so as in men. So, too, are charity, mercy, tenderness. But ruthlessness, callousness, powerlust, domineering self-assertion...these are destructive, whether in man or woman. At this juncture in our history, it is the compassionate virtues that need desperately to be given a new public dignity. But what an act of hypocrisy it would be to pretend that these virtues are to be honored in women! Rather, they are to be given reverence *in all of us*, for they *are* there. (23)

FOOTNOTES

1. Betty Roszak, "The Human Continuum," in Betty and Theodore Roszak, ed. **Masculine/Feminine** (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1969), pp. 297-306.
2. Uta West, "Introduction," in **Women in a Changing World**, ed. Uta West (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1975), p. x.
3. Ibid., p. xi.
4. Ibid.
5. Roszak, "The Human Continuum," p. 298.
6. William Gerdts, **Women Artists of America, 1707-1964**, *Exhibition Catalogue*, (Newark: Newark Museum, 1965), pp. 9-10.
7. Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in **Art and Sexual Politics**, ed. Thomas Hess and Elizabeth Baker (New York: Collier Books, 1971), p. 4.
8. Mary Vaughan, "Dorothy Gillespie," (Coral Gables, Fla.: Miller and King Gallery, 1975), p. 1.
9. Leslie Johnson Clevert, "Her Art Reflects, 'I am a Woman'," **The Milwaukee Journal**, 23 October 1975, p. 32.
10. Miriam Schapiro, Written Statement, 18 September 1976.
11. Cindy Nemser, "Audrey Flack: Photorealist Rebel," **Feminist Art Journal**, Fall 1975, p. 8.
12. Madeleine Burnside, "Politics as Analysis," **SoHo Weekly News**, 20 January 1977, p. 27.
13. Simone de Beauvoir, **The Second Sex**, in Alice Rossi, ed. **The Feminist Papers—From Adams to de Beauvoir** New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 705.
14. Cindy Nemser, "Towards a Feminist Sensibility: Contemporary Imagery in Women's Art," **Feminist Art Journal**, Summer 1976, p. 23.
15. June McFee, Address to the National Art Education Association, Miami, Fla., April 1975, in **Art Education**, Nov. 1975, p. 8.
16. James Saslow, "Still Hitting on All Cylinders at 80," **The Advocate**, 17 November 1976, p. 33.
17. Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament*, in **The Feminist Papers**, p. 662.
18. Ibid., p. 664.
19. Martin Buber, **I and Thou**, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 94.
20. Dorothy Norman, **Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer** (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 229.
21. Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, **Womanhouse**, 1971, p. 2.
22. Roszak, p. 304.
23. Theodore Roszak, "The Hard and the Soft: The Force of Feminism in Modern Times," in **Masculine/-Feminine**, p. 102.

All other quotations, unless indicated are from interviews with the artists quoted.

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JOAN SEMMEL *cont'd from pg. 21*

That's why I was careful to use some of these people in the show to establish that connection between the various women.

WA: I don't know what response you've garnered to the show so far, but are you satisfied that the show is doing what you intended it to do?

JS: Yes, I am. I think if there is any dissatisfaction or differences of opinion they will probably surface Sunday [at the panel discussion at the Museum October 23 to discuss various aspects of the show, see Report in this issue] when I'm up there personally. I think that's fine, it's important for women to have differences in opinion. They don't all have to think about things the same way. All of these things are open to discussion, as long as people don't feel in any way that differences in opinion are threatening.

I've heard certain kinds of things, like, why didn't we have a better space, and well, why weren't this one or that one or the other one included? That was part of the conditions I had to work with and it was that or nothing. To be perfectly honest, I would have loved to have the Museum of Modern Art do it. We are still operating in a situation where everyone is still a little nervous and uneasy on all sides. Women are still a little bit nervous about things hardening in terms of their recognition, of being left out or forced into a box. Both of these things are there. Men are uneasy for the same reasons, that some women are making things theirs that now they can't touch. The uneasiness is there simply because definitions are being made. I don't think any of the definitions are meant as cages, they're meant as clarifications, they're flexible. Women's lives are changing so their art's going to change.

WA: Don't you think there's been a hint, in some writings, that people who were not pursuing feminist imagery, or did not have that kind of content in their work, perhaps weren't feminists? That seems to be a feeling that some artists hold, and women who do consider themselves feminists, but paint something totally different from what's being defined, resent it highly.

JS: There are lots of women who consider themselves feminists whose work does not have some of those ideas in it. I don't think it makes them any less feminist. There's a difference between a feminist person and a feminist art, which is a particular kind of art. Those things are not necessarily inclusive of each other, they can exist side by side with no lessening of anybody's position or intention. The belief that things have to change for women is very strong and I hope that it is going to happen. For some of us who work as artists, it's going to be in our work, and for others functioning as women and artists will be an ideal and an example to other women.

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reviews

Extraordinary Women

(Museum of Modern Art, July 22-Sept. 20) "Extraordinary Women" was a grand title for a modest selection of 19 works on paper assembled in one room on the Modern's first floor. The works were chosen from over 100 acquired last year. The women are indeed extraordinary, although some of the work is less so. The emphasis was on two major areas: European artists from 1910-21 and American artists of the '70s. Notable in the first category were a small but powerful collage by Popova, done at a time when abstract art was still considered party line and "revolutionary," a humorous pencil sketch by S. Tauber-Arp, atypical watercolors by Sonia Delaunay and Hannah Hoch. Except for a charcoal drawing and a drypoint by Suzanne Valadon, all the early drawings testify to the modernist doctrines that dominated the first two decades of this century in Europe.

The surprise of the show is the preference (a third of the selection and almost half the wall space) for work from women artists of this decade. They are certainly drawings worth showing off: a folded, varnish paper piece by Dorothea Rockburne, one of Blythe Bohnen's studies in graphite crayon, and a prize black horse drawing done this year by Susan Rothenberg.

Representing the years inbetween, was an ideal *Still Life* by Lee Krasner (done in 1938 while she was studying with Hans Hofmann) that epitomizes much of American painting between the wars.

It is difficult to review a grouping of this kind, with no formal theme or attitude, but it is fitting to welcome these additions to the Modern. The most interesting evaluation is a more political one. In a post-feminist atmosphere that is becoming felt in New York's most 'cultured' cultural institutions, equal time for equal work is being practiced. (The museum had an "Extraordinary Men" show in the same space just prior to this exhibit.) This new status is worth noting and none too soon. There is also some satisfaction and much curiosity in knowing that these 19 works by extraordinary women represent only the tip of the iceberg.

—Jill Dunbar

Ree Morton

(Droll/Kolbert Gallery, Sept. 13—Oct. 1) There is a strong sense of visual poetics in the last work of Ree Morton that was on view at Droll/Kolbert during the month of September. The show consisted of a number of "Regional Pieces" and sketches for them done last spring while Morton was an artist-in-residence in San Diego. Morton died in an automobile accident after completing this work, so it has the added intensity of being the last we will see from this artist.

Each piece consists of two paintings, seemingly executed at the same time. Both paintings are 50 by 20 inches, and each is framed by a piece of celastic, a theatrical fabric hardened into enshrouding curtains. The two paintings are hung one above the other.

In most pieces the elements are the same. The bottom painting is of a fish and the top painting is of a sunset over the unbroken horizon of the ocean. Sometimes the sun is going down in a burst of Tiepolo-golden, clouded glory, sometimes it is a faint glow above a dark, dark sea. In one or two pieces she places the fish above the sunset.

This work is successful on many levels. As painting the work has a sureness and bravura that gives the sense that Morton wanted to satisfy the barest needs to get her point over. She did so admirably. Her color and form have a vividness which gives each piece a carrying power. At a distance they are undeniably themselves, the idea of the work is so available and poetic...these fish with their sunsets floating above them, a dream before it happens...are they (the fish) having dreams of sunsets or are the sunsets the extensions of the space the fish are swimming in?

A series of sketches shown in an adjoining room give us a key to the mystery of the work. These sketches are of fish, some labeled or notated in pencil as if Morton was working from a guide book or some other identifying text. The sketches are taken through a series of framing devices—first there is a box drawn around the fish and then this frame is framed again by another formal device (cross hatching, color bands), one level of reality pushed through another until the edge of the paper is reached. There is a devotion to formalism in the sketches and one can see how they were extended into double images and curtained panels. The means to this work discovered in no way makes it less powerful. It seems influenced by the poetics of John Cage and chance construction, as much a reflection of her intellect as her hand. Whatever the means, she arrived at a very powerful art, a very powerful image that once seen is not forgotten.

—Robert Sievert

Four Artists

(55 Mercer Street Gal., September 6-24) The four women artists at 55 Mercer mounted a strong show of paintings and sculpture. Gail Von der Lippe exhibited

Ree Morton, Regional Work #2, *1976. Oil on board with celastic, 20x50" each panel. Photo: Bevan Davies.*

Cynthia Eardley, untitled, *1977. Fired terra cotta clay, c. 1' long.*

large painted black shapes on white canvas paper. Her technique of mixing pigment and wax creates a rich translucent surface that reveals the color secluded in the black. Upon close scrutiny the black is seen to be red in this painting, green in another and cobalt blue in a third. Though the structure is swathed in thick paint, the paintings possess a sculptural presence. They are bold images executed with authority.

Barbara Knight's painted wooden sculptures are constructions of imaginary objects with an urge toward the utilitarian. The artist employs a sophisticated combination of painting and sculpture, using her industrial paint colors and the radical surface area of the free-standing pieces to full advantage. As one walks around the sculpture the different painted surfaces take precedence over each other in turn, so that the image changes kaleidoscopically. The sculpture sits solid and immobile, like a disused machine, its unexpended energy straining to be expressed in color and form. The overall effect is forbidding; the bright colors fail to mask a sinister, absurd character in the structures.

Cynthia Eardley's earthenware sculptures hug the broad white wall of the gallery forming pockets of emotion. They are minimal stage sets sized four by 10 inches and smaller, on which a woman is posed in various attitudes: slumped in a chair watching TV, screaming, hands cupped to mouth, backed against a wall, arms outstretched. Starkly free of detail, Eardley's solid little forms milk the last drop of emotion from each gesture. Looking down upon the tiny figures, one sees a woman in a fish bowl, lonely, isolated, resigned, defiant. Too narrow are the borders of her world; invisible are the barriers that hold her there.

Lois Baron paints humorous cutouts of athletic equipment and garments, then pastes them flat against the wall. Painted to mimic the garish colors and slick shiny surfaces of a real football helmet and real satin gym shorts, the paintings look like pieces stolen from a giant children's puzzle. But there is another dimension to Baron's subject matter, as hints the star of this show, an orange and purple, down-filled hunting vest. Depicted in glowing color in all its luxurious gooseneck-stuffed richness, and bearing the star-spangled edict "Made in USA," the vest is a monument to American leisure and the working middle class which consumes its leisure in sport and the great outdoors.

—Carla Sanders

Lucy Sallick

(SOHO 20, September 10-October 5) The subject of Lucy Sallick's still-life painting is her own work and working materials: watercolor landscape sketches, brushes, pencils, water jars. Other artists—Matisse for example—have recycled the shapes and colors of their paintings as compositional elements in studio interior scenes. Sallick has different intentions. Her canvases are not representations of rooms but of objects in shallow space. There is no horizon, yet the placement of successive sketches having horizons creates a cumulative compensatory effect that moves like an undulating frieze.

Rendering a translucent medium in one that is opaque, she translates deceptively random-seeming drawings into abstract blotches of color against a light neutral ground. Vistas of coastal rocks and clouded skies punch scenic windows through the picture plane, invoking other times and places. Sallick punctures illusion just as readily, upending a sketch to improve a composition or confound expectations.

Lucy Sallick's working method is to paint from life the items she has positioned on her studio floor, counteracting the flatness of things seen from above by means of under-shadows and folded corners. She often uses a jar of brushes to establish scale. Her angled viewpoint causes the painted objects to have a floating quality, as if hovering on an incline. This produces a kinesthetic response in the viewer; we tend to lean forward to "correct" the image and thus we become collaborators.

Sallick's most ambitious project to date is a three-panel piece, *Studio Floor Still Life Number 14*. Each section stands as a unified composition; fitted together, they expand powerfully with controlled directional flow. In the rhythm of contiguous forms and intervals her ordered conception of still-life is crystallized. If single items occasionally betray contrivance, the way too many coincidences in a novel foster skepticism, on the whole there is equilibrium, especially in the sensitive balance of the sensuous and the rational. Moreover, Lucy Sallick's paintings show respect for the process of artistic growth through the vagaries of personal experience.

—Sylvia Moore

Mary Beth Edelson

(A.I.R., October 8-November 2) Mary Beth Edelson is an artist of honorable obsession. Her exhibition, "Proposals for: Memorials to the 9,000,000 Women Burned as Witches in the Christian Era" does not ever let us get too far away from the story of her own insistent searching, and that intimacy keeps the exhibition from veering into rhetoric. Edelson's obsession has taken her on pilgrimages, one to a neolithic cave in Yugoslavia once sacred to the Great Goddess, one to Bamberg, Germany, where a great many witches were burned during a particularly

Lucy Sallick, Studio Floor Still Life #12 *(detail), 1977. Oil on canvas, 46x56".*

Mary Beth Edelson, Grapceva Series: Memorial Pilgrimage/See For Yourself *(detail), 1977. Photograph, one of 10.*

frenzied Counter-reformation. Much of the exhibition is the documentation of these pilgrimages, some of it in wall installations, some in hand-made clay-covered books at a low ring-table around a burning ladder—the ladder a spiritual symbol recalling a witch hunter's practice of tying a woman to a ladder and heaving her onto a bonfire. Let us not mince words: the burning of 9,000,000 witches over six centuries was an abomination of holocaustic proportions, one the memory of which seems to have been swallowed up in the collective unconsciousness for which we are all responsible. Accordingly, the Book of Bamberg is exhibited closed, the cover weighed down by stones. To get at what is inside, we must lift the stones one by one, as if uncovering a burial mound. It is not the historical Bamberg the artist is after; it is the memory buried in each of us. In a story box are cards for viewers' messages and memorials. The contributions are none the less moving for their ordinariness, which makes us trust them. Perhaps the most eloquent card is a half-burned one, the testimony of a viewer who was clearly willing to accept complicity with the fate of the witches. Such complicity and the anger that accompanies the pain of it are the most significant memorial the exhibition proposes, although the drawing proposals, for monuments such as "Body of the Great Mother to Cover a Continent," are inventive and ambitious. Finally, though, an act of moral imagination is the only memorial equal to the horror and pity of so much burning. Perhaps an even more imaginative memorial than this exhibition proposes would encourage us to accept complicity in the fate, not only of the tortured, but of the torturer. Who "we" and "they" are is never as clear as Edelson suggests. And yet, there is no denying the effectiveness of the exhibition on its own insistent terms. We are not in the end persuaded by the weight of fact or reason but by the passion of the search, the artist's scrutiny of streets, buildings, alleys, of bricks, gratings, tiles, her sniffing the very air, as if some 500-year old odor of charred flesh or stale prison straw might linger around the uncertain site of the Bamberg witch-house. Of her own questions the reviewer can only say, Perhaps they are a burnt card in themselves.

—Patricia Eakins

Benson Woodroofe / M. Apter-McKevitt

(*Central Hall Gallery, September 7-25*) Nature and the use of color are important to both Marjorie Apter-McKevitt and Benson Woodroofe. Although sharing a common source of inspiration and often expressing themselves through the same medium, their works reflect very different responses to similar stimuli.

On viewing Apter-McKevitt's paintings, one senses the obvious joy she feels in observing nature near her home on Long Island. Her subjects, painted on the site, include plants, trees, flowers, and water: all interpreted with an expressive and intense use of color. She seeks a dynamic interaction between warmth and coolness, architecture and organic elements, and light and shadow. Often, as in *Azaleas*, the overall impression of nature overtakes details so as to create broad areas of lush texture and color. In three charcoal drawings, *Barn at Kings Point, I, II, and III*, she uses the same technique to draw a single barn from three different angles. In each work, undulating outlines give a sense of animation to the form. In addition she captures the variegated texture of wet roof shakes by the use of light and shadow.

Benson Woodroofe's paintings are hard-edged, geometric abstractions. Her concern with the effects of light and color are reflected in tonalities inspired by hazy atmospheric sunlight. Lavendars, greens and blues are set on grounds of warm putty or cool gray. The color extends as the canvas wraps around the edges of the supporting stretcher. The geometric shapes and their relationships suggest such poetic titles as *Castle, Seascape,* and *Windchimes*, titles which involve more than visual sensation for they evoke intellectual and auditory memory as well. The rhythm of color and shapes creates an abstract vocabulary that is a metaphor for relationships in our world.

—Barbara Coller

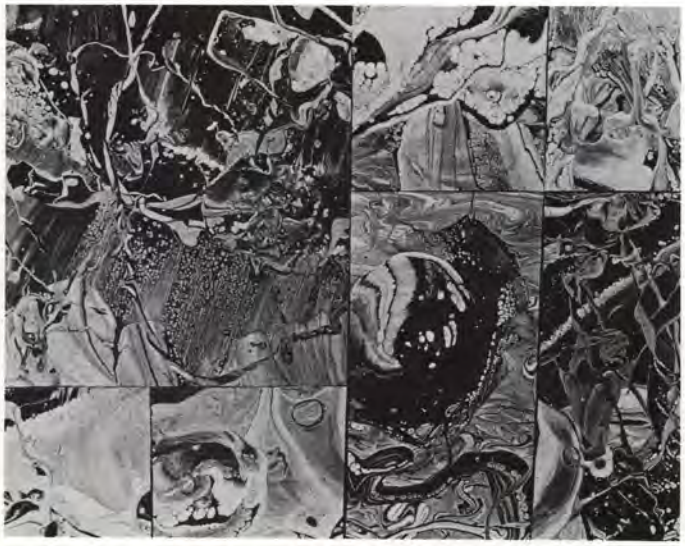
Shirley Bach / Suzanne Weisberg / Marguerite Doernbach

(*Alternate Space Gal. at Westbroadway, October 8-27*) These three women shared the Alternate Space Gallery though they shared few esthetic similarities, producing a varied group of paintings to look at.

Shirley Bach made collages out of small panels of paintings that were not painted. The title of the series was "Cells Not Painted" and the title is derived from the fact that the panels in some way have picked up liquid images similar to the images one gets by floating oil paint on top of water and picking up the images by drawing an absorbent paper through the water. It is a very organic image of swirls and cell-like figures. The one limitation Bach seems to encounter is size. She is never able to go beyond a set format of about six by nine inches. To make larger pieces she mounts several of these together. Juxtaposed, these panels seem to lose their identities to the whole. It is more interesting to see them singly.

Suzanne Weisberg's work seemed influenced by that of James Havard. In each of

Marjorie Apter-McKevitt, Barn at Kings Point III *(detail), 1977. Charcoal, 29½x41½".*



Shirley Bach, Paint Cell Series #2, *detail.*

her large abstract canvases, she places three elongated forms against a painterly background. These forms are underlined with a thin airbrushed shadow that seems to project the form above outward, giving the painting an illusionistic space. While the effect is very "nice," it has a cliched aspect to it.

The landscapes of Marguerite Doernbach are large and flatly realized. The color is not at all naturalistic and the space of the work has a floating feeling to it. The forms are all created with a calligraphic stroke that is constant and loose. Some paintings seem more dense than others, but it is the ones that maintain an open looseness that appear best.

—Robert Sievert

Carolyn Brady

(Nancy Hoffman Gallery, June 4—30) Brady's paintings are hyperrealistic. They sustain the illusion of recognizable objects, but what objects! Impossibly appealing and decorative chairs, fishbowls, tables, plants, bibelots, with complex patterns of their own (oriental rugs, flowered chintz, wicker) are painted in close proximity to one another and subsumed in the painter's larger pattern of composition—a process which works better in some paintings than in others. In each painting, a profusion of effects is presented, and the viewer begins to see that she is being engaged in an act of meditation, a study of the effects of light on different textures and materials: the fishbowl as fishbowl compared to the fishbowl as a representation in upholstery fabric. From painting to painting, one is engaged as well in a contemplation of the effects of different kinds of light on the same objects. Some of Brady's concerns go way back. One thinks of the pains generations of court painters have taken with the lusters of pearls and silks. This artist's objects seem to come not from a palace, but from a dream of the sunroom of a substantial and somewhat Victorian bourgeois house. Everything about these paintings—their many varieties of richness—suggests an esthetic of commodious inclusion. At times her paintings simply contain too much. The architecture of the composition is not sufficient to organize the variety of effects. But to say that sometimes the artist is too much the virtuoso is only to return to the essential generosity of the paintings.

—Patricia Eakins

Miriam Bloom

(Truman Gallery, Sept. 10—Oct. 8) Miriam Bloom's "Vessels" are just that—containers, bowls if you will, fashioned out of papier mache and a glittery material known as "diamond dust." They rise and curve at various angles to the ground, though remaining gravitationally centered. Some vessels are nestled in other, large ones; some include papier mache balls; some are solitary objects. One stands at shoulder height, composed of several containers of the same size fitted one into another.

All of Bloom's vessels appear constructed with a deliberate awkwardness that speaks of the primitive in its psychological sense. Bloom handles her materials with utmost sensitivity; the shapes appear charged with their own natural rhythms. The diamond dust makes each vessel twinkle as the viewer steps around it.

Bloom has written that her sculpture ties in with her interest in the Japanese garden. "I wanted to make one object that would have the essential feelings of the entire garden." That, she writes, led her to the bowl form. Skillfully made, direct and beautiful without pretense, Bloom's "Vessels" lend themselves to contemplation based on their strongly organic qualities fused with that ever so subtle sparkle of light.

—Janet Heit

Ronnie Elliott

(Andre Zarre Gallery, Sept. 23-Oct. 15) Ronnie Elliott's recent "Magic Ritualistic" collages are not made of unexpected elements; photographs, rags, papers, threads and homely found objects (burnt matches, bits of mirror, rusty nails, linoleum, sandpaper) are the kinds of things wer expect to find in any kind of assemblage. Witty additions—an afro comb, a peacock feather—also seem well within the irreverent tradition of this art form as practiced by such artists as Picasso, Schwitters, Motherwell. The method of Elliott's work is necessarily juxtaposition of discrete elements, a method which presupposes the discovery of order by accident. But Elliott begins with principles of order in mind. The formal elements of African art interest her, its "ornamentation, equilibrium, and balance —like building an altar," as well as its "poetry and magic." In making masks or fetishes, traditional African sculptors have used materials that came to hand to create necessary images. Although their iconographic tradition has had little to do with the iconoclastic aims of most twentieth-century asssemblagists, the Africans' joining of disparate materials influenced the earliest development of the assemblage esthetic. Elliott's collages even further parallel the African, not just because she has incorporated images of actual sculpture, but because she has attempted in the African spirit to create what Roberto C. Polo has called "meaningful wholes," a

Carolyn Brady, Fishbowls *(detail), 1977. Watercolor on paper, 41x26". Photo: Bevan Davies.*

Miriam Bloom, untitled, *1977. Papier mache, diamond dust, black paint over chicken wire, c.12" h.*

Ronnie Elliott, Female Figure and Male Portrait, *1977. Mixed media collage, 22x17". Photo: eeva-inkeri.*

phrase that echoes the critical catchphrase for describing African art: "significant form." Elliott's work is thus thematically "African" not only in its iconic intentions ("building an altar"), but in its insistent formality: theme and variation, subtle repetition and balance. Indeed, balance, one might say equipoise, is the most notable characteristic of her compositions. And this effect of balance does indeed parallel an effect of African sculpture, which however great its plastic force is so well controlled as to transmit an effect of serenity. The masks and fetishes incorporated into Elliott's work may be reliably taken, therefore, as signs or instructions telling us to look for a different esthetic informing these collages than the provisional, reversible one we are accustomed to. But taken on the artist's own ambitious terms—"poetry," "magic," "altars"—Elliott's work raises the question of whether and how often it succumbs to the vice of its virtue, the sheer elegance of its equilibrium.

—Patricia Eakins

Vernita Nemec

(*SOHO 20, October 8-November 2*) Vernita Nemec's most recent installation at SOHO 20 was a dream-like diary. She totally covered the gallery's major, 50-foot wall with orange paint and playfully built up the surface with matching orange paper with mixed media collage: pencil self-portraits, xerox photos of herself and her family, stuffed dolls with her own face, fabric silhouettes. Her clever use of the torn edge made you feel as if you were turning the pages of her notebooks or as if she herself were pulling apart sketchbooks to create a meaningful composite image.

As with all work that is at heart autobiographical, the environment was at once a recording of the artist's life (real or imaginary) and an exercise in self-searching—both calculated to yield something essential of the woman and her art. Unfortunately, there was little new or inspiring about the show, for we have seen all these ingredients and this personal format too many times.

On the other hand, Nemec's series of six small collages on graph paper at the entrance to the gallery took a fresh look at the birth/rebirth metaphor, giving it real universal reference. I would rather (and, in fact, cannot wait to) read her first novel.

—Jill Dunbar

Carol Anthony

(*Monique Knowlton Gal., May 4—June 4*) The sculpting of distorted figures usually suggests an artistic wish to destroy the human form. In Carol Anthony's newest works, that impulse is modified in the direction of playful, loving caricature. Her 17 humans are either people we recognize but from whom we feel distanced—butlers, handymen, maids, the open market lady vendor—or who are representatives of the extremes of life personified in young girls and old men.

In the building of each sculpture, Anthony's characteristic body types emerge: distorted or smallish torso, large head, long legs. But it is in the dressing of her forms that the Anthony personality truly evolves. The clothes she uses are found or donated by friends. Shoes are always too big; the men's coats never quite fit; a racing cap falls down too far on the head.

Except for two gossiping maids and a couple of sneaky-looking businessmen, Anthony's figures stand alone. Most have some sort of prop—a bar stool and ice cream cone, luggage, a chair and cane, market baskets—which create an enclosed and silent environment for them. Each statue becomes a sort of awkward, waiting puppet.

The show is enriched by 30 whimsical crayon drawings that owe something to both Thiebold and Diebenkorn. The best are landscapes with giant hamburgers and cakes on the horizon. Her collages, with bits of flags and stationery labels, are picture postcards from the New England shore. While the sculptures reveal a pensive, deliberate side, Anthony's drawings round out her show with style and charm.

—Jill Dunbar

Doris Klein

(*Phoenix Gallery, Sept. 24—Oct. 13*) The works in this show can be categorized into still-life, portraits of women, and paintings alluding to Klein's widowhood. Poems are hung alongside paintings providing the viewer with Klein's reactions to her surroundings, to events, to persons dearly loved. The poetry is brooding while the more recent paintings in the show are filled with a warm glowing light. This is a show concerned with borrowings and transitions.

The still-lifes and landscapes owe their origins to collage in having large areas of bold, unmodulated color play off each other. Particularly successful are the *Night Still Life* and *Night Interior*. Blacks and grays produce sensations of light, and some objects such as flowers, show a loosening brush stroke and a more tonal use of color. *Interior with a Model* is a synthesis of these two techniques. Klein's *Beach Still Life* uses clear simple shapes rendered in her new color sensibility and closely relates to her portraits of women.

The portraits do not capture a real sense of the sitter, rather the sitter is an object for experimentation. These works radiate

Vernita Nemec, Humorette *(detail), 1977. Mixed media collage, 9x50'.*

Doris Klein, Girl in Japanese Dress. *Oil on canvas, 30x24". Photo: Richard Di Liberto.*

Klein's vibrating colors and follow a similar transition of color and use of space as the still-lifes and are even looser in brushwork. The most personal work in the show is the physically anonymous being, *The Widow*. The work is a painful, internal portrait courageously presented to the viewer and a collective portrait for the poems on the wall. Another painting, *The Climber*, also differs from the rest of the work. A naked woman, back to viewer, climbs over the debris of male bodies, straining for some unseen vision.

Klein has absorbed the lessons of Matisse, Picasso, and John Graham to create visual expressions of events lived through, savored, and unknown. The show signals artistic and spiritual growth and a chance for men and women to share in Klein's observations of the past year.

—Lorraine Gilligan

Susan Schwalb

(*Robeson Campus Center, Rutgers Univ., October 3-31*) In Susan Schwalb's recent drawings, the natural form of an orchid is transformed into a personal vision. By isolating and enlarging the flower to fill the entire space, she evokes lived experiences or sensual fantasies. Schwalb has associated her choice of image with childhood memories of giving an orchid to her mother on Mother's Day. She also recalls some of the formal dances of her adolescence and the orchids presented to her by escorts. The orchid becomes for her a treasured gift intended for a special person, hence the sensuousness of the image is appropriate. Voluptuous curving petals unfold to reveal the inner flower. The artist parallels the evolution of the orchid series with her own "unfolding," both personally and artistically.

Schwalb uses gold and silverpoint to create these drawings. The technique was very popular in the Renaissance and earlier, but is rarely used today. Silverpoint requires slow and meticulous effort, but results in rich coloration and textural effects. Schwalb feels that her return to a traditional process was compatible with her search for her own identity as a woman artist. She has gained confidence in her work as her technical ability has developed. After experiencing the limitations of commercially-prepared cameo paper in an initial series of smaller drawings, she began to devise new surfaces in order to change the scale, texture, and tonality of her work. Recent drawings have been produced on paper coated with Chinese watercolor and she is now experimenting with gesso surfaces. The artist varies the pressure of the stroke and utilizes an assortment of metals (copper, wire, gold) to achieve the sensual quality of her work.

Because of the scale of the drawings, generally 30 in. x 40 in., the spectator is engulfed by the curving petals of the orchid and encouraged to "enter" the flower. The image slowly emerges from the depths of the paper and gradually unfolds. But the dominant frontality of the image also asserts the pictorial surface.

The new orchid series affirms Susan Schwalb's technical virtuosity and indicates her willingness to accept the powerfully evocative nature of the large-scale images.

(*Also to be exhibited at Mabel Smith Douglass Library, Douglass College, Rutgers Univ., Nov. 28-Dec. 22*)

—Joan M. Marter

Jennifer Bartlett

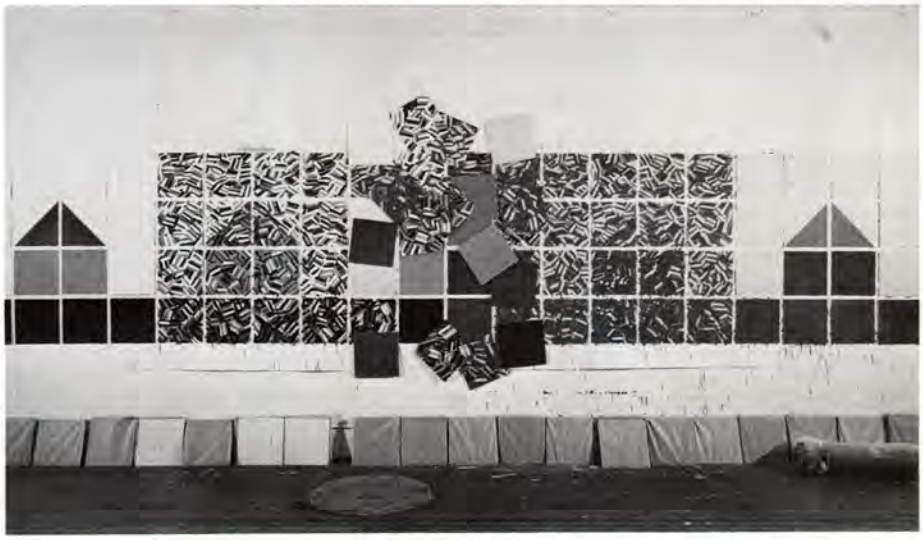
(*Paula Cooper Gallery, Oct. 8—Nov. 9*) Jennifer Bartlett's new work at Paula Cooper echoes the concerns of her older work: large paintings or constructs consisting of numerous nine-inch baked enamel on steel squares placed on the wall in grid fashion with tiny nails and assembled into huge rectangular or square formats. Each plate is silkscreened to replicate graph paper and then painted with enamel paint. The whole, a puzzle-like play on the grid...each piece separate and necessary to complete the picture.

The symbol she uses in this show is a simple house. In the past she has used a concert of themes or symbols such as the tree, ocean, mountain and house. Each work in this show is named for a different house.

Bartlett is a conceptual painter in that she plots every brush she uses according to number and style, brush stroke, style of application and color. This is explicit in the drawing for the announcement which depicts *27 Howard Street, Day and Night*, a painting that is also in the exhibition. This, a vertical piece, is divided down the center. The left side, Day House, is marked off with arcs corresponding to the left side; Night House, is marked off with angles. The interlocking spaces within each side are carefully worked out with specific colors and brush stroke, style and number.

Graceland Mansion consists of two 20-ft. long pictures on rear adjacent walls. Here, the house and its shadow are depicted and divided by the grid created by the evenly placed squares in five successive sections. Each section changes in color as affected by the movement of the sun (light to dark, or dawn to dusk). It is reminiscent of Monet's serial concerns and particularly with *Haystacks*. Yet where she is using the light of the sun to change her images in some way, there is also a slight shift in her own angle of vision, making a reference to the artist as a celestial body slowly moving and changing vision by her placement. Jawlensky does this too in his painting, *Meditation Heads* (1935), a head

Susan Schwalb, Orchid 3.1, *1977. Silverpoint, 40x30". Photo: Jean Kender.*



Jennifer Bartlett, 392 Broadway (*detail*), *1977. Baked enamel, silkscreen grid and enamel on steel, 6'x21'7". Photo: Geoffrey Clements.*

series which plays subtly with the vertical axis of the canvas. In the brown painting of *Graceland Mansion*, Bartlett uses the same brush stroke throughout all five panels. The blue adjacent piece varies the color tone and stroke according to the light change. She uses dots, long strokes, dabs, plaid, and larger dots.

There are nine paintings in the exhibition and all are beautiful and interesting. Her knowledge of painting and art history is unmistakable and she is clearly a master technician, using both her intellect and hands deftly, yet I find the work cold. This is exemplified by her use of the grid and the tiles which by their obdurate nature seem to prevent anything that hasn't been carefully planned from happening.

—Carolee Thea

Marja Vallila

(Zabriskie Gallery, Sept. 13—Oct. 8) When Marja Vallila came to New York two years ago she was engaged in making large concrete structures and smaller works out of clay. Fragments of architectural motifs appeared in these latter pieces, and this, combined with Vallila's interest in Japanese architecture, is the basis for her current work.

Two small pieces made of metallic grout hint at her interest in space, setting and scale but are too reminiscent of scale model museum displays to be effective. Her large welded steel sculptures of houses and courtyards create architectural settings of beauty and simplicity. Vallila's straightforward approach to sculpture utilizes right and straight angles, yet peering into one of her courtyards a doorway is discovered, one courtyard is sunk into another. The structures take on an air of mystery. Why only one opening? What would it be like to wander around a passage or house with only one opening? The secretiveness is unyielding and ominous.

Cliff House II is a slender vertical piece effective in isolating a small dwelling in the upper third of the structure. Vallila does not want to reproduce architecture, she wants to evoke a response to spaces that we have experienced or can imagine. The artist feels that one of the viewer's strongest visual memories is her response to dwellings previously inhabited. The viewer has the experience of being reduced to one of the elements of an integrated situation that architecture imposes.

Vallila draws not only upon the viewer's memory of experiences with architectural spaces but sharpens our recall in viewing a work of art. She has created sculptures that are impossible to take in at a glance. On closer inspection a passage appears then disappears, a wall hides a dwelling and courtyard, light shifts. There are no tricks involved, just a prod from Vallila to look and relate one part of a structure to another, one structure to the other. There is continuity in her work and ideas; refinement is evident in the latest work, eager anticipation awaits the new.

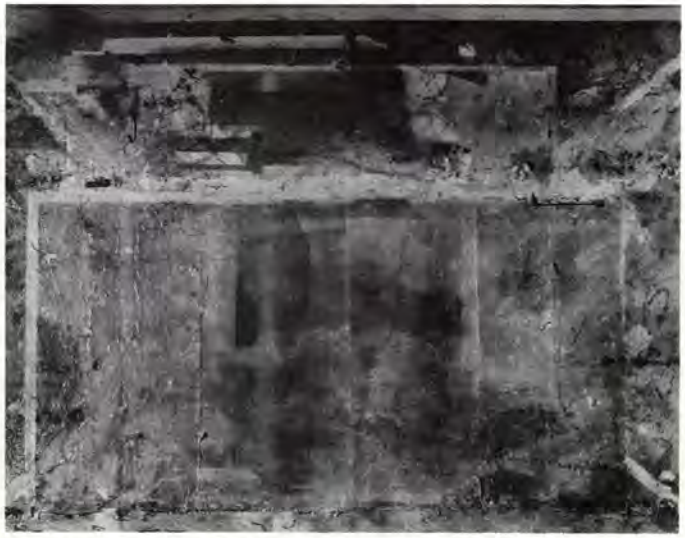
—Lorraine Gilligan

Helen Meyrowitz / Sandra Gross

(Central Hall Gallery, Sept. 28-Oct. 16) Individual and powerful, the works of Helen Meyrowitz and Sandra Gross shared the space of Central Hall Gallery. Meyrowitz's series of conte drawings, "From Closets and Drawers," consisted of carefully rendered "portraits" of a bra, shirt, and a bikini bathing suit. She chooses feminine, personal articles and then explores their formal qualities. Although there are no humans present, the clothing becomes an extension of human presence. One senses a lingering warmth from recent body contact. Meyrowitz said that she became fascinated with the figure-eight rhythm of an underwire bra that she had tacked on the wall for close observation. Many of her works explore this object showing the wire bottom creating a hard outline, while the loose nylon top is folded, compressed, or left dangling. Meyrowitz builds volume in her forms through meticulous chiaroscuro modeling. With sensuously rich gray tonalities, she creates almost tangible objects whose volume is intensified because of the flat space that makes up the rest of the composition. She manipulates this shallow space through effective use of multiple imagery, shadow, and the suggestion of a horizon line. Her precise drafting technique is balanced by a free gestural line which distinguishes the images from photography. In viewing these works, one is comfortable with the familiarity of the subjects, a bit uneasy because of their intimacy, and challenged by their unreal isolation which turns empty bikinis and bras into studies of rhythm, shape and form.

Complexity and unity coexist in the Tao Series by Sandra Gross. As the name implies, she has been influenced by Oriental philosophy and calligraphy. Her works are abstract collage paintings created by building layers of stain painting, rice paper, and mixed media. The result is an intricate three-dimensional surface which is simultaneously thick, tactile, shiny, transparent and encrusted. Unity is achieved through an overall coloring and texture; the effect is remarkably restful. The subtlety with which each layer both exposes and veils the previous one is analogous to the layering of history in civilization; the last layer is a natural outcome of all the previous influences. The canvases hang freely, without stretchers, as Oriental scrolls or tattered quilts. Gross mainly uses muted pinks and rosy beiges on which random, indecipherable, calli-

Marja Vallila, Double Sink House, *1977. Welded steel, 37x65x36". Photo: John A. Ferrari.*



Sandra Gross, Tao #3, *1977. Mixed media, 78x78". Photo: Otto E. Nelson.*

graphy conveys various moods through the varied energy of the stroke. Two very large works juxtapose architectural geometry with random spontaneity. The process of layering, as well as the disintegrating edges of the canvases, highlight a time dimension that evokes images of archeological ruins, mysterious alphabets, and the peaceful coloring of Egyptian pyramid walls.

—Barbara Coller

Agnes Martin

(*Pace Gallery, September 17-October 15*) Agnes Martin has always applied austerity and an exacting sense of measurement to her work. The grid has always been the theme of her work and she has used it at different times to do different things. Never graphically powerful, the work has always been understated and demanding. Martin's pictures develop strength and intensity from the personal choices she makes as a painter and the restraint she shows in accomplishing them.

The new paintings are even more austere than work previously shown. Over a white gesso ground a thin dilute india ink wash is applied. On top of these washes thin graphite lines are drawn that lay out the most even of grids. The personal presence of the painter is strongly felt both in the scrupulously even ink wash and the drafted, but somehow not impersonal lines of the grid. The silvery canvases have an insistent presence that is hard to deny, but it must be added that Martin gives the word restraint new depths.

Agnes Martin interestingly dedicates this show to a group of people who have supported her work in the past. Of the five names listed in the dedication, four were early collectors of her work and one was Elliot Lloyd, a painter who took great pains several years ago to restretch a group of her paintings done in the sixties. Lloyd overcame enormous technical difficulties to get the work into its original shape.

It is interesting to see the paintings in comparison to a series of screened prints by Martin several rooms away in the large gallery. The prints contain the same geometric material as the paintings. In no way do these prints have what the paintings do; the mechanical delivery of the lines robs the prints of the essential quality that makes Martin's work so powerful. The same material in Martin's hands has intensity and life.

—Robert Sievert

Joyce Stillman-Myers

(*Louis K. Meisel Gallery, September 10—October 10*) The metallic properties of the objects in Joyce Stillman-Myers' paintings allow the artist to play with luminosity as it affects objects in her immediate environment.

The objects in the paintings in Stillman-Myers' show at Meisel consisted of a kitchen sink, silverware, or round Christmas-tree ornaments. Her objects are large enough to occupy almost the whole of her canvases. They are painted from the view of directly overhead, making them lock into an imaginary grid that grounds them in space. The grid is pierced by the curves and diagonals of the painted objects, which lead one's eye around the surface.

Stillman-Myers paints in oils, saturating the canvas with color and creating a lush, sleek surface. Pigment is used to the point of opulence, and detail abounds: one sink contains soapsuds, another is surrounded on the countertop with beads of water. A strand of tinsel winds its way around the Christmas-tree ornaments in their tissue lined box. Stillman-Myers uses these as she uses the larger objects, like mirrors, in which we catch glimpses of objects from the artist's real life world, reflected and distorted into patterns on their surfaces.

Yet despite all the shiny, multi-colored metal, Stillman-Myers' paintings are never too "busy." Care is taken to focus our attention within some sort of frame, be it the sink's edge, the box the ornaments lay in or the silverware trap of the dishwasher. Stillman-Myers' paintings are at once playful and serious; they combine a sharp wit with traditional problems in space, color, form.

—Janet Heit

Marilyn Fox

(*Landmark Gallery, Oct. 15—Nov. 3*) In her last show Marilyn Fox showed small clay constructions of houses inhabited by people. Now she has turned to making clay sculptures of seed pods. Like the houses filled with people, the pods are filled with seeds. There are more comparisons to be made; a great play between the inside and the outside seems always present in her work.

The seed pods are exaggerated in size and each piece reaches the size of a pumpkin. The work has a very organic look and one is aware of the sense of draughtsmanship Fox brings to these carefully rendered forms.

One piece, different from the rest, showed a spray of leaves against a rectangular box. The leaves break in the middle as entrance to the form is achieved via the patterning of the leaves.

The choice of her subject matter seems perfectly fitted to her semi-abstract clay style in which form and function are given precedence over surface detail. The plain unglazed surfaces of the clay made it possible to see that the work was always

Helen Meyrowitz, From Closets and Drawers; Bikini Composition #2. *Pastel, 28x22".*

Agnes Martin, untitled #4 (*detail*), *1977. India ink, gesso and graphite on canvas, 6x6'.*

Marilyn Fox, Pod II, *1977. Clay, c.12" h.*

following a natural principle of construction. Marilyn Fox seems very much in touch with life when she is working in clay.

—Robert Sievert

Harriet Fields

(*Lotus Gallery, September 10-30*) Harriet Fields' recent paintings deal with the possibilities of blue. They are highly technical studies in color and material. Fields discovered that the components of paint so directly affect the color that she rejected commercially mixed paints and made her own. Through testing different ratios of pigment to oils and dryers, she brought within her control an array of brilliant blue hues. The paintings express all the romanticism that blue implies. Painted from the tube, the earlier blues are dark and distant, grayed tones of Prussian, intergalactic space, light years. The newer paintings evoke the mysteries of our own earthly blues—water and air, the confluence of ocean currents, sunlit sky. Surface becomes important as well. The diverse paint mixtures cling to the canvas and respond to each other in different ways, lying translucent or opaque, leaving rough solid particles and flakes. Applied by pouring, the paints meet each other in subtle ripples and folds. The vibrant fog of cerulean, cobalt, and ultramarine solidifies under one's gaze into strong abstract form.

—Carla Sanders

Rebecca Leonard

(*Atlantic Gallery, Sept. 13—Oct. 2*) Leonard composes small, jewel-like collages. Rich in association, musical in quality, they ring with the intimacy and poetry of Joseph Cornell, the romanticism and fantasy of Odilon Redon. Collage elements seem to be drawn from many sources, although they are most often reminiscent of old-fashioned greeting cards. These elements are finely cut and highly varnished and then combined with charms or stars and with rich velvets and silks. The compositions are contained in simple box-like frames. The imagery is involving and mysterious, heavy in surreal symbolism. Her small (about six by nine inches) pieces are often her most successful as the size is conducive to the examination of detail.

Leonard has lately been pushing toward a larger scale, and in her last work *Detail From Madonna and Child*, has finally achieved some success. The piece presents a small vignette of Christian and Eastern symbols framed by a rectangle of deep blue stuffed silk chanton; the frame is then extended by a field of black velvet and finally by wood. The result is not a large work, but a magnetic use of color to draw the viewer into the intricacies of the still small drama.

—Nancy Ungar

Visual Interplay

(*Bergen Community Museum, Sept. 28—Oct. 22*) "Visual Interplay" featured dimensional fiber forms by Frances Dezzany, painting, graphics and collages by Marlene Lenker, and ceramic sculpture by Marjorie Abramson.

Marlene Lenker's graphics and collages have in common the building up of horizontal lines and shapes, relying on the viewer's associative powers to form abstract landscape images. In case the viewer's associative powers aren't up to par, a graphic gesture symbolic of the sun or moon is there to guide your visual acumen. One might question why two different media result in imagery so similar. Chances are that some prints became collages. This is not to lessen the validity of this technique, as they are well done, but perhaps one medium detracts from the other. If more restraint had been used in selection, one might have enjoyed them even more. Her paintings have a quiescent quality about them due primarily to the dominance of horizontal brush flow. They are also abstract and associative in nature, and landscapish in feeling, as are the graphics and collages.

Frances Dezzany's hanging fiber forms are primarily bilateral and of mixed media. Her virtuosity is apparent in the controlled undulations and formation of leather, shells and fiber from the profiles of the pieces. Almost as if taking her cue from nature, her work radiates from a shell or enjoys titillating vertical rhythm in its dance with gravity. Her most recent work—which drew much attention—was asymmetrical and seemed to portend her next direction.

Marjorie Abramson's ceramic sculpture manifests a virtuosity that only a complete involvement and rapport with one's own work can achieve. It is multifaceted and multidimensional in approach and the awareness within the pieces of the relationships of plane to plane or line to line result in a statement of harmony rather than tensions. Part of her work deals with an inside-outside theme. By complementing the ceramic sculptural outside of her pieces with soft anemone-like insides, a plethora of polar themes such as public-private, appearance-reality, hard-sensual, etc. enriches one's voyeuristic pleasure in viewing her work. Velvet, satin, silken threads and metallic glazes extend the dimension of her poetics.

Her present motif seems guided by an internal biological logic with a 'scale of hands' that allows one to feel comfortable with her work. She describes her work as a

Rebecca Leonard, I Just Couldn't Pass You By Without a Word of Greeting. *Mixed media. 14x10".*

Frances Dezzany, Soft Shield Fountain (*detail*). *Handwoven and handspun fiber, 60x12x4".*

Marjorie Abramson, Lillian. *Ceramic sculpture with silk fiber, 15x15x15".*

"celebration of life" and insomuch as it reflects womanhood, it also ennobles it.

—John Mohr

Joellen Bard

(*Gallery 91, Sept. 30—Oct. 20*) Bard's Brooklyn show is the third of a series of installations begun at the artist's studio, and then continued at the Pleiades Gallery in SoHo. Her art changes and is changed by the exhibition space. By making the pieces flexible and encouraging visitors to play with them, she also designs for art-viewer interaction and innovation.

Bard's "River Series' is highly poetic: in *Homage to Baziotes* the long curved stretches of linen canvas are delicately accented with turquoise stitching and faced with colorful reflective fabrics; flowing from ceiling to floor, they create a river to be walked through. A small raft-like construction floats vertically upon it an panes of glass on the floor reflect the "watery" surface. The fantasy of the piece is placed in historical perspective by the small abstract expressionist painting leaned against the raft and by Barbara Rose's book *American Art Since 1900*, opened on the floor to an illustration of Baziotes' painting, *Congo*.

In other pieces Bard's rivers flow over and through rough-textured found objects such as broken cinder blocks, creating a tension of contrasts. A conceptual flow is also created from one show to the next as the artist acts in a more political than esthetic vein; at the Pleiades Gallery, Bard offered to *give* artwork to strangers who proved that they had something to offer for it "that was just as important as money." The result is a documentary piece in Gallery 91 based on the giving away of a major work to a couple moving to Iran. Apparently, the artist feels that the opportunity to have her work seen in Iran is of equal value to money and offers her a valid opportunity to alter the structure of the art/money exchange.

—Nancy Ungar

Eve Webb

(*Chuck Levitan Gallery, September 17-28*) The portraits that Eve Webb paints provide more information about the institutions her subjects typify than about the individual personalities.

Webb works with faces, sometimes adding a hat or showing part of a garment that aids in recognizing these people by the kind of work they do. They are identified simply as *Swimmer, Stockbroker, Airline Attendant*. Webb paints them in a dead-pan, larger-than-life, super-realist style, using a full-front or three-quarter view and centering the face close up on the canvas. She uses only gray tones, situating the subject on a solid gray field. Without, literally, any "background information," these people could be anyone, anywhere—which is apparently how Webb intends them. They smile Jimmy Carter smiles, aware that they are being watched and defensive because of it. Their stares are vacant; Webb distorts their eyes as she does the rest of their facial features. Their skins are ghoulish combinations of puckered and striated tissue, decaying in spots.

These are not portraits of actual people, but composites of Middle Americans—in essence, portraits of Middle America itself. Her subjects' empty eyes, rotting flesh, and toothy grins imply a lack of intellect, of creativity, of Eros—they are simultaneously living and dying. In this instance, I understood Webb's commentary in terms of contempt for broad segments of society, rather than as metaphysical allegory.

—Janet Heit

Joellen Bard, Homage to Baziotes, *1977. Construction, c.11x6x3'. Photo: ©D. James Dee, 1977.*

Eve Webb, Priest, *1977, acrylic on canvas*

Three Artists

(*Ward-Nasse Gallery, September 3-23*) Mercedes, Mary Beard, and Norma Haimes were the three artists showing concurrently at Ward-Nasse in September.

The painter Mercedes exhibits beautiful fantasy exercises in perspective and landscape. Using the glowing pinks, blues, and golds of dawn and sunset, she paints the tangible forms of water—icebergs, snow-covered mountains, clouds. The paintings expand and contract in complex spatial relationships which overlap a non-objective geometric structure and the natural phenomena existing within that structure. The most interesting aspect of the work is that the mountainous landscapes obey not natural laws, but the laws of perspective. Though the paintings show good graphic control and are beautifully designed, their mirage-like beauty lacks substance and the total experience leaves a vague dissatisfaction.

"Off the Wall," Mary Beard's display of chemical works, includes 12 strips of chemically treated mylar lined up against one wall, plus two 'carousels' projecting a slide show. The 12 mylar sheets repeat a single image, while the carousels flash a barrage of colorful images and unrelated information. Although the environmental possibilities of Beard's multi-media imagery are very promising, this show makes no attempt to exploit them, and the intriguing work suffers. However, this exhibit does bring some clarity to Beard's own statement about her work: "It reveals the importance of the whole as compared to its parts." This show, unfortunately, is composed only of parts, lacking the impact of wholeness.

Despite, or maybe because of, their brilliant colors and sumptuous materials, Norma Haimes' erotic soft sculptures lack a certain impact one expects when confronted at eye level with over-lifesized genitalia. However, the pieces do have the power to embarrass as the viewer is forced to become a voyeur. The satin and velvet cunts have the character of a *Playboy* centerfold, and that is a very funny idea, no matter how much it may offend a Bible Belt mentality.

—Carla Sanders

10 Downtown 10 Years

(*P.S. 1, September 11-October 2*) In its first two years of operation, "10 Downtown" featured only men and their art work. Since 1970, however, over 30 women artists have opened their studios to the public in what has become an annual spring ritual in New York. P.S. 1 saluted 10 years of "10 Downtown" with a show of its participants' more recent work, organized by the artists themselves and installed

by critic Lawrence Alloway.

The show opened with three panels of artists' statements; some referred to their experience with "10 Downtown," while others addressed issues central to their art now. May Stevens, one of the show's first female participants (1970), showed two black and white collages consisting of writing and photographs of Rosa Luxemburg and Alice Dick Stevens. Alida Walsh (1972) produced an ambitious combination of an assembled sculpture ("Earth Mother Goddess" from *We are our Own Myth*), accompanied by a videotape and a continuous-reel film, highlighting parts of the sculpture.

Elizabeth Egbert (1976) also showed sculpture; hers was titled *New England Hills* and was composed of horizontal, serpentine ribs of plywood. Abigail Gerd's (1971) *No Way In* utilized wood in vertical planes, creating an open, airy space.

Sally Erlich's (1971) *Cactus* was a highly tactile wall-hanging made from torn fabric and stuffed green fabric strips, some of which were embedded with rusty nails. Maureen Connor (1975), who works with fabric in a more "painterly" manner, adhered a peasant-type blouse to a pink flannel blanket in a piece called *Family Wall*. Judie Hand (1973) fashioned a fabric-woven-into-wire-mesh hanging construction, *Black and Silver*.

Meredith Johnson (1974) painted a very lyrical abstraction in which shapes looked inspired by the Orient. Phyllis Krim (1976) went all-American with a full frontal view of a *'54 Chevy*. Rivka Schoenfeld (1976) reproduced ink drawings in series by photo-copying them in color in her *Pyramids of the South*. Marjorie Morrow (1973) worked directly on raw canvas in a vigorous drawing entitled *Open Upped*.

Louise Egbert (1976) showed *Vernal Equinox #2*, an atmospheric painting done with the softest of palettes. Marjorie Unger (1977) twisted massive segments of a fiberglass, resin and iron compound into tubing with an erotic flavor in *Benchmarks*.

There were several other women in the show, and many men. The communality of this group show lay in the artists' connection with the annual exhibition; a thoughtful installation took care to let each piece breathe on its own, while demonstrating the diversity of the program that is "10 Downtown."

—Janet Heit

Sari Dienes

(*A.I.R., September 10-October 5*) I admit it took two visits to the gallery to absorb Sari Dienes' "Portraits." The conglomerate of materials and shapes spread randomly (or seemingly so) across the walls crowded in upon my eyes and I did not want to look at them during the first visit. But I returned to the gallery on a sunny day, with a clearer mind, and found a much more comfortable environment, eclectic rather than messy. In fact, it was almost as much fun as a treasure hunt.

The show consisted of silhouettes of heads, adorned with neckware to delight the most ardent garbage picker, or archeologist. I recognized a number of art scene luminaries—Nancy Spero in bones and suede ribbons, John Cage in buckskin and fungi, Dotty Attie in a tattered cloth Valentine, all introduced by Dienes' self-portrait of silver foil and macrame cotton and twine. The heads were very flat, cut from bespattered construction paper, corrugated cardboard, spray-painted masonite, black and silver vinyl. With etruscan-like interest Dienes made the jewelry from an egalitarian inventory: foam rubber scraps, glazed earthenware coils, mirrors, particles of jewelry, a tiny motorized speaker, hawks' wings. To Sari Dienes, no material is so humble that it cannot be dignified as Art.

—Carla Sanders

Lois Lane

(*Willard Gallery, October 13-27*) Lois Lane creates collages and paintings whose signs and objects transport me back into childhood fears and fantasies. Linens hanging from a clothesline brush my face and smell wonderful, a polar bear stirs a curiosity for the exotic, a red cross holds the sinking feeling of illness and danger. The messages are ambiguous, the images fanciful and earthy.

The collages are a prelude to the larger paintings, the artist making a smooth transition from one process to the other and each process indebted to the other. Delicate root-like configurations appear surrounded by a broken circle of color in both collage and painting and the mystical connotations become stronger with the large scale presentation. A number of paintings utilize a central, vertical composition which while interesting is problematical. As used by Lane this compositional device creates a tension with a potential to split the canvas open but may not be enough energy to sustain the rest of the canvas. The clothesline paintings and collages are playful images of pants, shirts, and dresses suspended from a delicate horizontal support. Lane has rendered in blacks and grays a dress hanging from a clothesline with a black cross on its upper half, and a bird perched on the line. Initially the painting produced a feeling of doom but Lane's application of paint is so lush and the blacks and grays so brilliant that these fears melted away. Even in her sparer paintings on white ground the paint appears to hover on the surface or else is sensitively sunk into the material.

These paintings and collages were a pleasure to look at. My own associations reached far back into time. For Lane, images once seen in magazines, used by friends, or encountered years ago unconsciously appear in her work and upon completion Lane is consciously aware of their personal connotations. Signs and symbols unfold, their relationship to living individuals is similar to the rewards of our dreams.

—Lorraine Gilligan

Lois Lane, untitled, *1975-76. Oil on gesso, 8x6 .*

Judith Godwin

(*Ingber Gallery, Sept. 17—Oct. 12*) The act of painting to Judith Godwin is more than communication—it is the revelation to herself of things hidden in the subconscious which are forced into expression.

Godwin's vigorous abstractions make a handsome show, and the initial impact on the viewer of these large oil paintings is electrifying. Personal force is evident in the line and movement of all her work and this, combined with her sense of color, makes an immediate appeal to the eye. After the attraction of this surface effect has been absorbed, the sensitive observer becomes aware that the emotions are being aroused. Godwin's intricate relationships of gesture, color, balance, and texture involve a particularly painterly instinct resulting in a romantic expressionism that conveys qualities of sensitivity and passion, as well as intellect. The most important thing about Godwin's paintings is not that they can be described and discussed, but that they can be *experienced*. Clearly, the emotions of the artist, disciplined and controlled, are expressed, and the viewer whose emotions become engaged feels the power and, at times, the almost mystical fervor of the paintings.

The content of her paintings is never obvious, as there are no recognizable

images of the natural world, but, nonetheless, there is a rationality and conscious discipline in the imagery that helps the viewer to breathe life into the abstraction. This sense of inner logic is produced to a large extent by the unmistakable architectural and landscape qualities that much of her work embodies, and which are exemplified in such paintings as *Red Forest, Yuyake*, and *The Way*. Godwin said of her own paintings in a recent interview, "There are two elements appearing in my painting now that are more pronounced than before—one is spiritual and the other is architectural." The spiritual or emotional elements, which are the hidden subjects of her work, emerge from the interrelationships of the color planes and gestures which transmit statements involving one's affinity with nature, with love, passion, anger, death, or tranquility, depending on the emotional understanding and attitude of the viewer.

Godwin is an excellent technician, able to create canvases of great power and emotional depth, a first-rate craftsperson using her talent and skill to express the essence of her reality.

—Joyce E. Davis

Suzanne Kuffler

(*Artists Space, May*) *The Tinker, the Tailor, the Soldier, the Sailor, the Radio Operator Think About What's Next* is the title of Kuffler's videotape, presented with written documentation on the wall next to the monitor. The title's intimations of coincident specific referentiality (to the nursery rhyme and to the figures in it) and highly speculative abstraction ("thinking about what's next") are appropriate, for the tape presents a layering—simple in actual construction but complex in meaningful interrelation—of the prosaic, the poetic, and the philosophical. The video image, deliberately out of focus, pans an assortment of people in a space, talking (unheard and barely heard), reading, playing musical instruments (heard more clearly), and engaged in other mundane activity. Besides the sounds these people make, the soundtrack consists of an intermeshing of three recitations, each of a list of phrases. Each group of phrases begins with a different set of words, although all three sets resemble one another; "With a contingency on some...," "Contingent on...," and "Almost contingent on..."

The phenomena presented as the subjects of these contingencies and contingent states range as widely as possible, not only in specifics, but in spirit. For example, the list of "almost contingents" ranges from "Almost contingent on coding R 2 to 10-02-24," through "Almost contingent on what can be managed," to "Almost contingent on some tadpoles and a frog." In between, the list includes objects, events, postulations, memories, technical terms, and even references to what Kuffler, as the subtitle of *Tinker, Tailor...* terms "personal tenderness."

—Peter Frank

Sherry Steiner

(*Arnot Art Museum, Sept. 10—Oct. 1*) S.L. Mednick Steiner's paintings are simple constructions of elegance and grace. Her work is about registering movement, which she accomplishes in quick, deft strokes of pencil and paint.

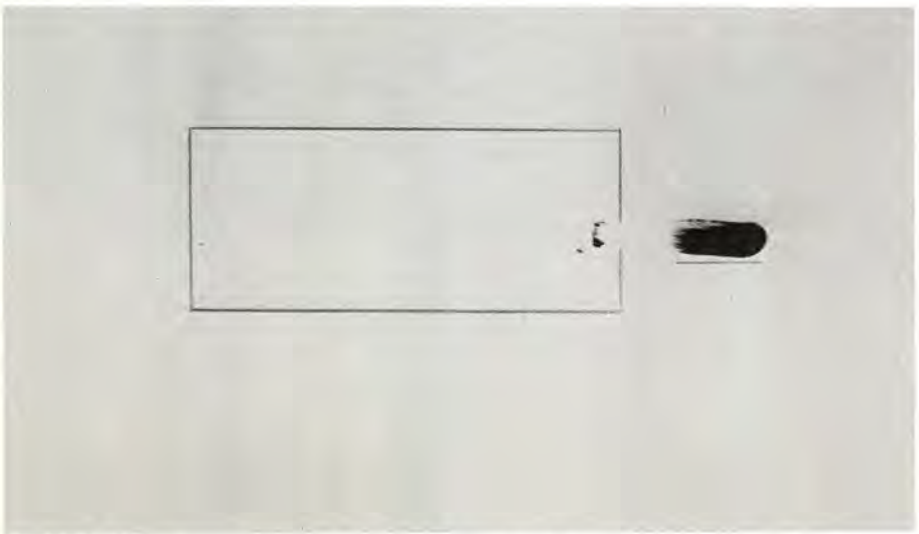
For her show at the Arnot Museum, Steiner selected a number of pieces representing her work over the past year. She generally paints white on white, with the addition of one or two straight lines in black or green pencil. Her most recent work also includes conte crayon.

Steiner's paintings have a fresh, lively quality to them. Paint is dabbed or pushed around a small area of surface with a piece of cardboard, a palette knife, etc.—never a brush.

The new paintings differ from the older ones in that long, curvilinear sweeps of pencil carry the energy formerly borne by the paint. Rigid pencil lines in various sites on the surface contrast with the fluid painterly movement in the older paintings, establishing a tension that challenges one's rational associations with "correct" pictorial "gravity." The paint itself becomes a gesture at one end of the pencil line, behaving similarly to the way a period ends, and defines, a sentence. Some contrast between movement and stasis is provided by one or two streaks of conte.

Steiner has no premeditated plan of action before beginning a painting. She works intuitively, and her best paintings echo her spontaneity. Steiner's work has always contained elements of minimalist distancing and expressionist subjectivism; the newest work tips the balance in favor of subjectivity, although the artist's penchant for order remains in evidence throughout.

—Janet Heit



Sherry Steiner, Spec 34 *(detail), 1976. Acrylic and pencil on newsprint, 10x14".*

Kate Millett

(*Chuck Levitan Gallery, October 1-29*) It was with some intimidation that I entered Millett's exhibit of drawings titled "The Lesbian Body." The installation at the Levitan Gallery was quite beautiful and inviting. I was relieved. The drawings were spare in line, like Matisse or Japanese brush strokes, quietly indicating the nude torso of woman. On each a passage was written and balanced with the image. In a gallery description, Millet says that these notes complete her "erotic, linear, literary and lesbian sensuality." For me this was the private and erotic part of her work functioning as the visual equal with the nude. The pieces read like a journal, and are actually addresses or notations divided into three series for three different women: Rosie Dakota, Colette, and Sita. They are indistinguishable from each other and hint at love-making and appreciation for experience shared. The similarity of figure is interesting. These nudes are depicted without anatomic idiosyncracy which renders them anonymous or perhaps generic. Only the literary notation clues us in to their identity. By themselves, without the words, the drawings are visually uninteresting, yet fascinating in their omissions. Because the nudes are depicted without heads or arms and emphasize genitalia, they are more like sexual fragments or postural reminders of the fertility figures of paleolithic times. Yet her words save the work from this fate and cast it into other minor categories.

—Carolee Thea

Beginning in February is WNET/13's (public television in New York) **Women in Art**, a seven-part series of films about women artists. "Georgia O'Keeffe" was offered November 15 as part of the station's two-week celebration of women in honor of the National Women's Conference in Houston, and will be re-broadcast as the concluding film of the series.

Perry Miller Adato is the executive producer of the series of half-hour films, and also created four of them. The series will show films about Mary Cassatt (by Adato), Louise Nevelson (Adato), Helen Frankenthaler (Adato), Alice Neel (Nancy Baer), "A California Artist—Betye Saar" (Suzanne Bairmann), "Anonymous Was a Woman," about unknown American women artists (Mirra Bank), and O'Keeffe (Adato), which is an hour-long film. The films will also be shown nationally on public television stations, in February.

*

Women's Caucus for Art sessions for the national meeting in New York will be coordinated with both the College Art Association and ARLIS meetings, and run from January 24-28. WCA/ARLIS sessions will be held at the Barbizon Plaza Tuesday all day and Wednesday morning. Programs from Wednesday afternoon through Saturday will be held at the New York Hilton.

WCA/ARLIS sessions include "Women View The New York Art Scene," "Women and the Environment: Architecture and Design," "Crafts: Beyond Painting and Sculpture," "Discrimination in the Courts: A Legal Overview."

WCA sessions held at the Hilton include: "Questioning the Litany: Feminist Views of Art History," "New Matronage: Women's Support for Women's Art," "'Contemporary Women's Art: Iconography and Sensibility."

*

In addition, the **WCA** is sponsoring its second national invitational exhibition to be held concurrently with the national meeting in January. Entitled *Art in Crafts: Works in Fiber, Clay and Metal by Women*, it will be held at the Bronx Museum, which is co-sponsoring, and will run from January 18 through February 24.

Three artists working with the Bronx Museum president of the board of directors organized the show, for which 15 craftswomen chose the exhibitors. A catalogue will be published, and buses chartered to transport visitors from the Hilton Hotel for the opening January 25.

*

The first, recently completed City-Walls project in Staten Island, New York is by a woman artist. **Cynthia Mailman**, a 1977 CAPS grant recipient and resident of that borough, was brought by CAPS to the attention of the Public Arts Council (CityWalls) which had been previously contacted by a local board of commerce which sought the execution of a public wall mural in their area. Execution of the wall was funded and coordinated by the Public Arts Council, with some funds coming from the local businesses that had instigated the project. The Staten Island Council on the Arts is assisting with supportive public relations, and a video essay on the mural's execution was made by Patty Kaplan.

*

The site of the premier exhibition of the **Sister Chapel** will be The Institute for Art and Urban Resources at P.S. 1, in Long Island City, New York. It is scheduled to open in time for the WCA and CAA national meetings in January.

*

A.I.R.

cont'd from pg. 7

ered salesperson to wine and dine and entertain people." Also, because every decision is discussed and voted on by 20 people, 20 highly individualistic and ambitious women artists, meetings are often confusing and always highly charged, emotional affairs. The person who proposes a new idea is expected to work to see it through, and the work load on top of their usual gallery business—especially if a woman is in the process of preparing for her own show—often seems disproportionate. It was decided at the end of the first year that the members should be allowed to choose A.I.R. from a position of strength. Therefore, if a person is asked and decides she wants to go with a commercial gallery or, simply, wants to take a leave, she has the option of becoming an associate member and taking a sabbatical from A.I.R. for a year. During this period, the member does not have a show but is expected to pay some dues and, at the end of the year, has the choice of returning to A.I.R. at the first opening. (Several of the artists have entered into agreements with commercial galleries specifying they can retain their A.I.R. membership.) If the member decides not to re-enter, the gallery can then choose a new member in her place.

There have been 28 members of A.I.R. to date. Donna Byars, the co-op's newest member, joined the gallery in January 1977. Byars, who had a one-person show at 55 Mercer Street and was included in shows at Buecker & Harpsichords and the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art before being invited to join A.I.R., continues the gallery's tradition of choosing for its members mature women artists of proven accomplishment. She lives in the Bronx (all of A.I.R.'s members are New York-based), and admits it's a 45-minute commute to the gallery, but says she has been coming to the shows and the Monday evenings for years. Byars is currently part of the committee working on A.I.R.'s upcoming five-year retrospective. This exhibition, scheduled for 1978, will include at least two works by all of the original members of the gallery: one made in 1972, the year A.I.R. began, and one current work. The show should provide a good indication of the range of art works in the gallery over the years, as well as demonstrate the talent and achievements of its individual members during the last half decade.

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LECTURES, PANEL ACCOMPANY *WOMEN ARTISTS AND CONTEMPORARY WOMEN*

Among the myriad events held at the Brooklyn Museum in conjunction with the *Women Artists: 1550-1950* and *Contemporary Women: Consciousness and Content* exhibitions there this fall were two Sunday programs of particular interest. The first, October 16, consisted of three consecutive lectures amply illustrated with slides, collectively entitled "Women Artists as Feminists: 1550-1950." The show's two curators, Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, were joined by Peter Walch, assistant professor of art history at the University of New Mexico.

Harris' talk, focusing on artists before 1800, also described the theme of the talks as, did women artists advocate the women's cause, in subjects of paintings, their letters and diaries, by advocating positions for women in academies? She answered these questions by stating there had been an "unspoken assumption" that women of achievement would remain exceptions, that there was no effort to change the status quo for women professionals.

Displaying the work of several of the outstanding artists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, she noted the lack of feminist consciousness until the work of Artemisia Gentileschi [see *Womanart*, Fall 1976 and Winter/Spring 1977], the "first woman artist aware of the handicaps of her sex." After a thorough discussion of Gentileschi's life and work, she discussed other seventeenth and eighteenth century artists, some of whom had feminist overtones in their work, noting that these women artists with successful careers served as role models, and therefore that "active" feminist work was not a requirement for an artist to be a feminist.

Nochlin's lecture picked up where Harris left off, at the beginning of the nineteenth century. She described the situation as very different than today, in which the "whole notion of feminism as a conscious, articulate movement was foreign to women artists." We can get a sense of a particular artist as a woman through the sense of the creative self as a woman that seeps through the subject of the art work, she noted, and went on to provide examples. Emily Mary Osborn, a nineteenth century British painter, through her paintings of "worthy but unfortunate women," was seen as having the vantage point of a feminist sensibility. Rosa Bonheur and Lady Elizabeth Butler were pointed out as "astonishing" women, who painted powerful, dynamic, unladylike subjects.

The following Sunday, October 23, the museum was the setting for "The Personal and Public in Women's Art, A Panel Discussion on the occasion of Contemporary Women: Consciousness and Content," which featured the exhibition's curator, Joan Semmel, as moderator. Panelists were artists Harmony Hammond, Joyce Kozloff, and May Stevens, all represented in the show, and critics Lawrence Alloway and Carter Ratcliff. Semmel's introduction described the origins of the show [see article this issue], and the panel's theme, stating that the works in the show were executed as personal statements by the individual artists, but became political (feminist) when placed in the "public arena." Hammond stated her work was done in a political context, declaring that "without a women's art, there are no women." Ratcliff noted that art comes out of personal experience, and the problem is to "exteriorize that experience," also stating that women artists were in good positions for breaking "male rules" of art, and for making new art.

Stevens' most emphatic point was that she would have liked the works in the contemporary show to display women artists seeing "beyond their own cultural predicament." Anger and artistic pain were buried, devolved, not raw, she stated, and that work that went beyond the personal, that dealt with pain, was called for. With courage and self-knowledge gained, artists could move into the larger arena of class struggle. Kozloff was disturbed at the composition of the panel —women artists and male critics—and its "implied authority hierarchy." She also described personal work as not necessarily political, that the work's content has to be understood before it becomes political. Alloway stated that both the personal and public had been brought into a new domain, and that in the show we saw a self-definition of women, an expansion of the use of art to communicate it, and that the total effect was of non-stylistic unity, that a "socio-political unity" bound the individual artists, providing an anti-formalist show.

A reception for panelists and audience followed a discussion by panel members of each others' statements, and a brief question and answer period.

—Ellen Lubell

WOMEN ARTISTS IN HOLLAND

Until recently, there was no interest in female artists in Holland, not even in "liberal" Amsterdam. This lack of interest in women was not confined to art but also appeared in other fields. It should be noted, however, that in Holland women never were very much part of the work force; for the most part, they are housewives. Only in the past five to 10 years has a women's movement formed, due to the need to have legal abortions and the desire for equal pay, among other reasons. The American Women's Movement certainly had a big influence and still sets an energetic example.

In 1975 when the First National Congress on Women and Science was organized at the University of Amsterdam, the university's History of Art Department hardly contributed to it. The few female faculty members of the department gave no support at all to efforts being made to set up a seminar to focus on women artists. It was, and still is, considered ridiculous to work on such "trivia."

Some efforts are now finally being made to set up a documentation center on women artists and this is to be applauded. This movement is led by Liesbeth Brandt Corstius, former curator of the Rotterdam Museum Boymans-Van Beuningen and now editor of the specialized magazine *Museum journaal.*

When Liesbeth announced her plans in a publication of the Amsterdam Women's House the response was tremendous. Women from all over the country sent in work, slides and pictures.

A group is now working to gather more information on women artists, who they are and what they are doing. Hopefully art historians from the universities will offer their assistance.

The aim of the survey is to collect more factual information on the vulnerable spots in the life of the woman artist: training, work, earning money, use of the government programs for support of the arts. Women often miss out on the opportunities that definitely exist for them, or that could be made available to them as soon as they voice their desires.

Only in the end will there be an attempt to organize exhibitions of work by women artists. It will certainly come since the Council for the Arts in The Hague provides housing for the working group on women artists. This gives it the social status needed and an official character which will underline its seriousness.

A small subsidy was granted for such costs as telephones and stamps. But the organizers hope to qualify for larger subsidies from the local and national governments, in order to hire permanent staff. Up to now the whole initiative was supported by volunteers, something which is unusual in Holland and which points to the dedication of the people working on this project. The volunteers are mainly jobless artists who have some sort of unemployment benefits or are being supported by their husbands.

I doubt whether there will be much help from the official art history establishment or that women art historians, even if they had money, would devote much attention to this effort. But in any case, the few people interested at last have an opportunity to devote themselves to women's studies in the art field, something the universities have neglected to do up to now.

—Rosa Lindenburg

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