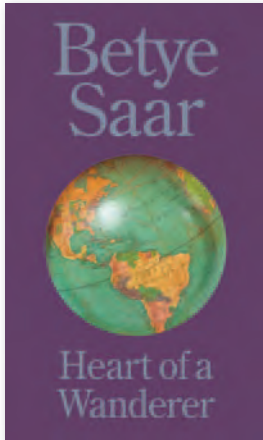


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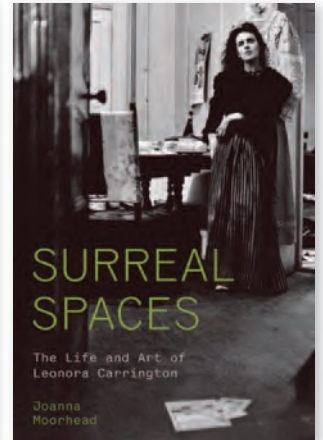
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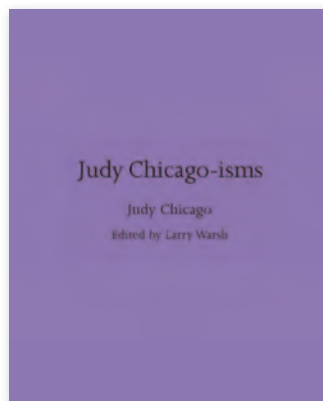
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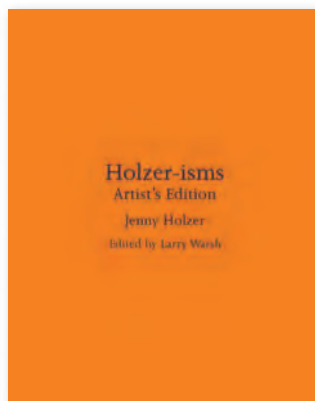
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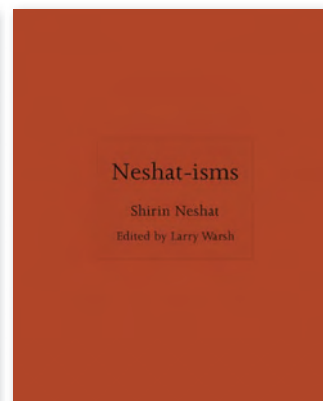
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A SCULPTOR'S LEGACY

META VAUX WARRICK FULLER'S SCRAPBOOK

By Rachel Passannante

At first glance, the small book is unassuming: a dull, worn cover with many tears, brittle and brown pages, something long forgotten in a box left in an attic or closet. The fabric cover, hand sewn to encase the book, has faded from a deep, rich green to an olive brown, fraying across the spine and edges. What is inside, however, is a significant collection of primary resource materials—pieces of articles, pamphlets, invitations, correspondences, and photographs from America and Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. The sad exterior is quickly dispelled to reveal a snapshot of the notable identity and life of the person who compiled it.

This rare collection of materials was gathered and assembled by Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller (1877–1968), a consummate sculptor who redefined the role of African American women artists throughout her seventy-plus-year career. In early April 2021, Cernel Hoover contacted Dr. Jessica Roscio, Director and Curator at the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University, Massachusetts, after discovering, during a recent move, a scrapbook and photo album that once belonged to Meta Fuller (Hoover grew up in Framingham and was friends with Fuller's children). Her mother, Velma Hoover, and Meta Fuller were close friends and “spent many long hours together.”¹ At some point in the mid-1960s, Meta gave Velma the two items for “safekeeping” (though any elaboration on why this was needed has been lost to history).

The scrapbook (Fig. 1) is small, measuring 9 1/2" x 7 1/2" x 2 1/2". Inside are seventy-two double-sided pages, totaling 144 pages of material, along with several loose letters and newspaper articles gathered at the front. The contents include articles, letters, photographs, correspondences, and exhibition memora-



Fig. 1. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller Scrapbook, 9 1/2" x 7 1/2" x 2 1/2". Courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University.

bilia. The fragile green fabric cover was hand-sewn around the book at a later date, and handwriting and a photograph are just visible on each inside cover, suggesting the covers were originally meant to be viewed. The pages of the scrapbook are stiff and show heavy signs of acid burn from its own inherent acidity and acid transfer from the many newspaper articles attached within, and the photographs have all faded to a light yellow or a deep blue.

The contents date from 1899, when Fuller left for Paris, until 1932, by which time she was settled in Framingham. Although the organization appears to have been mostly chronological, from her college education until midway into her career, in a few instances newspaper articles were added out of order or placed in a free space in the timeline,

indicating she continuously added materials as they came to her. At the back of the scrapbook, she added photographs of her sculptures, also in chronological order, serving as a pictorial catalogue of her oeuvre. By 1903, after Fuller had returned from Paris and resettled in Philadelphia, she abandoned this method and began including photographs mixed in with newspaper articles and correspondences.

Gathered by her, the materials—and their organization—offer new insights into Fuller's life, career, and the sculptures she produced. They provide primary resources of her time in France and Philadelphia, reveal connections she made with journalists, notable artists, and gallery owners, and redefine her sculpting practice. These materials also help fill gaps in our understanding of Fuller's career, revealing and affirming her prevalence as an artist. As the artist's own voice emerges from the articles, this valuable scrapbook and archive greatly expand our understanding and research into Meta Fuller's life:



Fig. 2. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, Maquette for *Spirit of Emancipation* (1913), plaster, 7" x 3 1/2" x 3". Courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University. Gift of the Meta V. W. Fuller Trust. Photograph by Will Howcroft.

not only does it redefine her oeuvre but it adds to her connections and exhibitions in Paris and elucidates how she was depicted between the French and American press.

Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller was born on June 9, 1877, the youngest of three children in an upper-middle class family in Philadelphia. Her father, William, owned a barber shop and her mother, Emma, worked as a hairdresser and wigmaker.² Her family lived a comfortable life in Philadelphia with a vacation home in Atlantic City, New Jersey. They were politically and socially active, with her parents stressing proper etiquette, dress, and conduct that reflected their Black middle-class status and standing.³ Fortunately, for Meta, her family supported her desire to become an artist, something not common at the time, especially for African American women. Thanks to Fuller's artistic talents and the encouragement she received from her family and teachers, she won a scholarship to the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Arts in 1896, where she learned technical drawing and anatomy from plaster casts and concentrated on sculpture.

In 1899, Meta left for Paris—at the time seen as the art capital of the world. She studied drawing and sculpture privately and attended the Académie Colarossi, at the same time as Camille Claudel (1864–1943), where she continued her study of anatomy directly from live models, a practice inaccessible to most women art students in America. While in

Paris she found success, exhibiting between 1902 and 1903 at the American Woman's Art Association, the annual exhibition of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, and a solo exhibition at L'Art Nouveau Bing, a leading avant-garde gallery. She continued to develop and excel as her style of exaggerated forms, vivid expressions, and flowing lines fit perfectly with the Paris climate.⁴ While there she met sculptor Auguste Rodin, a formative presence at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle, and the civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois, both of whom would be influential in her career.

Returning home to Philadelphia in fall 1902, before her work was on view at the Société Nationale in April 1903, she continued to sculpt and take classes, though she struggled to gain the same reputation and support in America that she had enjoyed in France. In 1907, she became the first African American woman to win a federal government commission to create a sculpture for the Negro Building at the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition in Virginia: she amazed audiences with her fifteen tableaux containing 133 sculpted and clothed figures depicting scenes of African American life, winning her the gold medal in the fine arts category.⁵ In 1909, after a two-year engagement, Meta married Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller, and the couple moved to Framingham, into the house they built. As their family grew, with three sons, Fuller tried to balance domestic housework and child-rearing while continuing to sculpt in the attic of their home. In Framingham, Fuller made some of her best-known sculptures that pushed back on the stereotypical depictions of African Americans in art. In 1913, she unveiled her eight-foot-tall *Spirit of Emancipation* (plaster, last cast in bronze) (Pl. 1 and Fig. 2), commemorating the fiftieth celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation. Looking outward, the allegorical figures in *Spirit of Emancipation*, a man and woman, stride confidently forward, away from the hand-shaped tree that represents Fate, while another, Humanity, with her face shielded, gently pushes the man forward, now free from enslavement, to create his own future. In 1921, for the Making of America Exhibition in New York City, she created *Ethiopia Awakening* (front cover), celebrating the awakening of Black consciousness and culture. Fuller also created works in the 1930s based on African folktales and music, such as *Waterboy I* (1930; Pl. 2) and *Waterboy II* (1930), *Lazybones* (1933), and *Talking Skull* (1937). Black subjects and themes were expected to focus on abolitionist discourse, shown through the forms of struggle, slavery, or pleading, often wearing ragged clothes or chains. *Waterboy* depicts a young African American boy holding a large jug: barefooted, the ground beneath him almost resembles water, lapping against another pitcher laying on its side. The boy in *Waterboy II* looks up and out, almost proudly, while in *Waterboy I*, Meta changed his posture to lean sideways and forward, his head looking back at his heavy jar. Rarely did artwork depict strength, self-determination, or the normal, everyday lives of African Americans. Yet Fuller's sculptures never approached the imposed stereotypes. Instead, she drew upon her classical and Symbolist Parisian training to depict African Americans with dignity, respect, and strength, standing on their own merits without the entreating look to a higher power or savior for help.

Along with her family responsibilities, Fuller built and ran her own studio a few doors down from her home and fulfilled sculpture commissions across the US Eastern seaboard.⁶ She gave lectures and workshops to local residents and schools, was active at her church and in local theater, and took part in social activist groups and fundraisers. After her death in 1968, Fuller's home, artworks, and studio contents remained in the family, divided among her three sons and grandchildren. Knowing her artwork had such prominent importance, they wanted her collection to be in the public domain and to stay in Framingham, where she spent the majority of her career. After an exhibition in 1980 at the then Danforth Museum of Art, the family slowly began donating Fuller's works to the Museum's collection. In 2006, the gift was made official, including close to four hundred study and process pieces, finished painted plaster works, studio materials, and hundreds of loose sheets of ephemera. Today, the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University holds the largest collection of Meta Fuller's works and has a gallery permanently dedicated to her artwork and studio.

From the scrapbook articles and photographs, the list of Fuller's sculptures has grown. Previous inventories come from Judith Kerr's 1986 dissertation, "God-Given Work: The Life and Times of Sculptor Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller," and from the Fuller family, though all were done after the artist's passing in 1968.⁷ The primary sources in this scrapbook added previously unknown works to her oeuvre, refined creation dates, and provided provenance information. Some caution is needed when analyzing the scrapbook materials for mentions of her artwork. Not all newspaper articles accurately reported titles or subject matter, as seen in various handwritten edits made by Fuller to several articles. Some works are reported as potential future projects, but it is unknown if she ever started them, as no works resembling these descriptions have yet to appear. The use of similar titles across multiple works muddies identification, as for example, Fuller made at least five sculptures titled *Bacchante* and eight with some version of the *Dancer*. There is also the loss of names and descriptions through history. Family inventories list multiple generic names such as "Bust" fifteen times, with no further description. And similar themes, such as dancers, mother and child, and religious figures, across many works, complicate the process of identifying individual sculptures.

Because records of Fuller's sculptures are incomplete, it is not known how many of her works were given away or sold to patrons. In some cases, the owners or possible locations of sculptures have yet to be confirmed, while others are feared to be lost, and a number of her earliest works, stored in a Philadelphia warehouse, were destroyed in a 1910 fire. All of this makes these articles and photographs from the scrapbook incredibly valuable as the only known record of some of these early works. A number of photographs depict sculptures made during her time at the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art (1896–1899) and in Paris (1899–1902), that were lost or destroyed. At least three show her sculpture studies in the studios of the Académie Colarossi, including a photograph of her study *Etude* (c. 1899; Fig. 3), a sculpture of a nude man



Fig. 3. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, *Etude (Study)* at the Académie Colarossi (c. 1899). Photograph (restored) from the Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller Scrapbook. Courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University.

seated on a stump-like shape surrounded by other studies and anatomical drawings at various stages of completion. Using Adobe Photoshop on RAW photographs taken of the scrapbook, it has been possible to bring them from a faded and damaged condition back to their original appearance. Over the past several years, the Danforth has compiled a list of Fuller's sculptures, gathering images, provenance, exhibition histories, and current locations. From scrapbook materials, combined with previous inventories, it has been possible to identify more than 395 unique works. This does not account for duplicates or multiple casts of the same subject with slight variations, but, strictly, uniquely themed works. With further identification and research, given the concerns of repeated titles, incomplete inventories, and possible new discoveries, this total will grow (or possibly shrink). To date, the scrapbook has resulted in the identification of twenty-eight works previously unknown to modern researchers; added details such as concrete descriptions and exhibition histories to eighteen known works; and provided photographs of thirty works that previously had either poor quality or no known reproductions.

The scrapbook's French and US articles, exhibition records, and photographs have made it possible to identify and approximately date a number of works. These include: *Faunes*, *Untitled Study (Woman)*, *Etude/Study (Male)*, *Little Dancer*, *La Lutte (The Wrestlers)*, *Unknown (Fountain Decoration)*, *Death in*



Fig. 4. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, *The Rhine Maidens/The Three Daughters of the Rhine* (c. 1898). Photograph (restored) from the Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller Scrapbook, original to the left and restored to the right. Courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University.



Fig. 5. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, *Three Grey Women* (c. 1904). Photograph from the Meta Vaux

Warrick Fuller Scrapbook, original to the left and restored to the right. Courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University.



the Wind (all c. 1900); *Godiva* and *Unknown Study* (*Young Standing Man*) (both c. 1901); *Feaux Follet* (*Wild Fire/Corpse Candle*) and *Silenus/Silene et Satyres* (c. 1902); *Bacchante modern*, *The Flame*, *Bust of William Still*, *Spirit Dancing*, and *Portrait Bust of Sylvia* (all 1903); *Prospective*, *The Young Devil*, *Fire*, and *Self Portrait Bust* (all c. 1904); *Bronzed Self-Portrait/Self Portrait Bust of Mirrors* (c. 1903–6); and *Unknown* (*Exhausted Man*) (c. 1910). Two other works mentioned in a 1914 newspaper article as “not yet attempted” are busts of politicians Senator Benjamin Tillman and Reverend Thomas Dixon.

A number of sculptures come from installation photographs of her Alumni Exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Arts, hosted in 1905. These previously unknown or unphotographed works include: *Cyclopes 1* and *Cyclopes 2* (dates unknown); partial photograph of *Arts and Crafts Procession* (c. 1899); *Primitive Woman* (c. 1900); possible sculpture *Oriental Dancer* (c. 1902); *Spirit Dancing* (c. 1903); *The Violinist* (c. 1904); and from c. 1905, *Monument to McKinley*, *Bust of Booker T. Washington*, *The Bear Trap*, *The British Lion*, *Dancing Woman*, possible bust of *William Thomas*, and *An Old Woman*. Unknown works mentioned in the exhibition catalogue, not identifiable in the photograph, include: *Despair* (c. 1903); and *Bust of Toussaint L'Ouverture*, *Unknown* (*Indian Girl*), and *Study of Pose* (all c. 1905).

Three photographs specifically exemplify Fuller's early Symbolist and Rodin-influenced styles. Made around 1898, *The Rhine Maidens/The Three Daughters of the Rhine* (Fig. 4) was inspired by *The Rings of Nibelungs*, an opera by the German composer Richard Wagner. This piece won Fuller an honorable mention for modeling. It is unknown where this work is today, but the photograph captures clear details of the swirling pillar of water and the women within. For *Three Grey Women* (c. 1904; Fig. 5), Fuller found inspiration from the Greek Perseus legend, where the Graeae—Greek for old women or grey ones—who share one eye and one tooth amongst them, have their eye stolen by Perseus, who would give it back if they told him where the three magical objects to kill Medusa were hidden. Clustered together, the three women's faces are shrouded, emerging from rippling fabric with a deep void at their torsos that adds depth and drama. *Desepoire* (*Cloud Relief*) (c. 1902; Fig. 6) was inspired by the last stanza of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem “Rainy Day.” In this stanza, the misery of the poet's heart is captured in the rain, but he is reminded that the sun is just behind the clouds and to be in good cheer. Fuller sculpted a cloud of people in various poses of suffering and despair,

Fig. 6. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, *Desepoire* (*Cloud Relief*) (c. 1902). Photograph from the Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller Scrapbook. Courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University.



Fig. 7. "Exposition de Sculptures de Mlle Meta Warrick," L'Art Nouveau Bing, Paris (1902). Exhibition poster, 13" x 18", from the Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller Scrapbook. Courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University.

yet cleverly shows light just behind the cloud and hints of faces smiling full of hope. Both *Three Grey Women* and *Deseipoire* were destroyed in the 1910 warehouse fire.

The scrapbook materials have allowed for more accurate dating of several works. For example, *Brittany Peasant* has been dated 1902, but newspaper articles noted it was actually made soon after she returned to Philadelphia in early 1903. The original was destroyed in the warehouse fire, but later articles talk about Fuller remaking this work, so any existing pieces date between 1913 and 1914. Similarly, the inclusion of several works in Galerie B. Weill's 1900 exhibition in France has re-dated a number of works that had been assigned c. 1902, including: *John the Baptist*, *La Lutte*, *Thief on the Cross*, *Laughing Man*, *Oedipus*, *Man Carrying the Dead* (later known as *Carrying the Dead Body*), *Primitive Woman*, *Little Dancer*, and *Death in the Wind*.

Primary sources with descriptions of specific works have been beneficial in identifying sculptures or, in one case, even correcting a mistitled one. Sold at auction in 2010, a gold-painted statue depicting a man in a late eighteenth-century military uniform, seated on a stump with a forlorn expression, was titled *Peeping Tom of Coventry*.⁸ Descriptions of *Tom of Coventry* from the scrapbook articles emphasize his eyes and facial features (like previous depictions of this figure by other artists), but Meta captured the moment just after he was struck blind, with shame and reflection in his face. These descriptions do not quite match the statue sold at auction. The articles make no mention of the figure's posture, clothing, or the stump but focus only on the facial features, giving an impression it is a portrait bust rather than a statuette. The gold-painted statue, upon further inventory research, does match the description of a work Fuller created around 1898 called *Bob Acres*, based on a character from *The Rival*, an eighteenth-century play by satirist Richard Brinsley Sheridan, in which Bob sits on a tree stump offering words of wisdom to the audience. It was famously

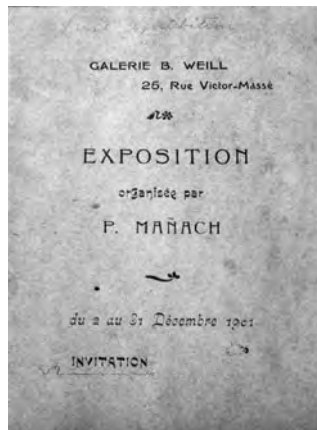


Fig. 8. Exhibition brochure for Galerie B. Weill, 25 Rue Victor-Massé, Paris (1901), from the Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller Scrapbook. Courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University.

played in the late nineteenth century by Joseph Jefferson III, a Philadelphia-born actor. Drawings of his character, etched and publicized by several artists in the late 1800s, and a nineteenth-century photograph of Jefferson, bear a striking similarity to Fuller's statue. Without the scrapbook's many invaluable resources, this sculpture would remain inaccurately titled.

Along with the many newspaper articles in the scrapbook are numerous items of memorabilia relating to exhibitions saved by Fuller. Documents found within the earlier section reinforce these connections. It is known from previous publications that she exhibited at the l'Art Nouveau Bing and the American Woman's Club (1902), the Salon at the Société des Beaux-Arts (1903), and the Philadelphia Museum and School of Industrial Arts (1905). Memorabilia saved from her solo show at L'Art Nouveau Bing, displaying twenty-two sculptures, include a poster announcing her June 1902 solo show (Fig. 7); an exhibition catalog (noting works sold) with text by Edouard Gérard, offering, "Under her strong and supple hands the clay has leapt into form: a whole turbulent world seems to have forced itself into the cold and dead material"; and a 1903 letter from Siegfried Bing, the noted French dealer and gallery owner, to the artist upon her return to Philadelphia.⁹ Fuller met Rodin in 1902, and articles in the scrapbook note that he occasionally came to Fuller's studio for art critiques. A calling card from him in the scrapbook has a handwritten note with New Year's greetings.¹⁰

Two more exhibitions can be confirmed to Fuller's list of Paris shows, including the opening exhibition of Galerie B. Weill at 25, Rue Victor-Massé, nearby Edgar Degas's studio, in December 1901. Fuller saved an exhibition brochure (Fig. 8), notated in pencil "first exhibition" with a list of exhibited sculptures: *The Wretched*, *The Wrestlers*, *Faunes*, *John [the Baptist]*, and several sketches. Berthe Weill, the first Parisian woman to open and own a contemporary art gallery for emerging artists in Paris, dedicated one of every five solo shows to a woman artist.¹¹ Weill's gallery opened in 1900, with the first exhibition in 1901 organized by the Spanish art dealer Pedro Mañach, whom she met during the Exposition Universelle (also depicted in a well-known 1901 portrait by Pablo Picasso). In Weill's autobiography, published in 1933 and recently translated into English, recalling her inaugural exhibition, she wrote: "Mlle. Warrick exhibited some promising sculptures ... whatever became of her?"¹² The fact



Fig. 9. Exhibitor ticket to Meta from the Grand Palais des Beaux-Arts, Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs (Union of Women Painters and Sculptors), Paris, and calling card from Colonel Luis de Figuerola Ferretti, from the Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller Scrapbook. Courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University.

that Weill, thirty-two years later, remembered Fuller, and in the context of Maillol and other promising artists, shows that Fuller left a significant impact on her.

The second exhibition is known from a “carte d’exposante” (exhibitor card) to the Grand Palais des Beaux-Arts for the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs (Union of Women Painters and Sculptors, UFPS)—a small ticket on brown paper with diagonally cut corners (Fig. 9).¹³ The Union des Femmes was founded by Hélène Bertaux (1825–1902), a French academically trained sculptor, in 1881, specifically to promote female artists in their education, display of art, and application to art prizes.¹⁴ At its peak, the group had four hundred fifty members and existed for over a century until its closure in 1994, making it one of the longest lasting artistic associations in the world. Fuller’s ticket indicates that she was an exhibitor at one of their showings.¹⁵

While attending the 1900 Exposition Universelle, Fuller met the Countess de Montaigu. A brief letter in the scrapbook written by the Countess notes their introduction and states her intention to write about Fuller for an American newspaper.¹⁶ This is followed by a small published article pasted onto laid paper with “Compliments de Madame de Montaigu” handwritten around it.¹⁷ The Countess de Montaigu was the pseudonym of Annie Kershaw de Montaigu, an American journalist, who had been married to then French expatriate Count Frederick Oliver Raimond de Montaigu, who died during the American Civil War. To support herself, the Countess de Montaigu became a writer for women’s magazines and was part of the Woman’s Press Club of New York City, formed in 1889 by Jane Cunningham Croly with forty women from local city papers. Fuller also saved a calling card from Colonel Luis de Figuerola Ferretti, the chamberlain to the king of Spain.¹⁸ Where they met is unknown, but according to Kerr, a man approached Fuller while preparing

for her exhibition at L’Art Nouveau, and they began discussing her works at length. He was impressed that Meta showed any interest in him, being an old soldier from Spain. He left, stating if she ever needed any influence in his country, she “...only had to call upon him.”¹⁹ This person could have been Ferretti, and, if so, they met in 1902. Their meeting, which evidently made an impression on her, could have also occurred at the inaugural exhibition at Galerie B. Weill, as the curator, Mañach, was a fellow Spaniard.

Fuller’s voice and agency come through in a number of the newspaper and magazine articles, which speak strongly to her personality and dedication to her career. Most interesting, she corrected misquotes and misinformation and included reactions through certain markings—for example, boxing sections or adding question marks. From these corrections, a compelling distinction can be made between the American and French articles: she made corrections to many American publications, but no edits appear in any French pieces. It suggests that the French focused more diligently on her works, exhibitions, and artistic abilities, while the American articles, as a whole, are more personal—sensationalizing her life and analyzing her family, heritage, and race rather than critiquing her work. Fuller may have felt that, even with in-person interviews, the American journalists misinterpreted or mischaracterized her, her family, and her sculptures.

Though Fuller found many “mistakes,” the American articles provide quotes that give a glimpse into how she found inspiration or viewed her own works. Since she made no edits to these quotes, it is likely that these were accurately represented by the journalists. When asked in *McGirt’s* magazine, for the 1907 article “Negro Artist Busy with Historic Task,” to describe the dark themes seen in her sculpture, Fuller replied:

Since the time I was a child here in Philadelphia, where I was born and have grown up, the gruesome phases of life have interested me. It was not that I searched for it, but simply that it came to mind. I had the habit of imagining the most horrible things and reciting them to my family as if they had actually happened to me. Many times I scared them badly.²⁰

For another article from the same year by William Francis O’Donnell, titled “Meta Vaux Warrick, Sculptor of Horrors,” when asked why she created the early sculpture *Man Carrying the Dead*, she responded:

Because I wished to show the extent to which duty should spur one—how we should perform it, no matter how unpleasant, without a murmur.... My work is of the soul rather than the figure and it happens that sometimes the figure must be very crude in order to carry the full strength of the spiritual meaning.²¹

A large number of the newspaper articles saved in the scrapbook deal with the 1907 Jamestown Tercentennial, a large exposition celebrating the three hundredth anniversary of the

English landing at Jamestown, Virginia.²² Through some connections she made at the 1900 Exposition Universelle, Fuller's commission for the Negro Building (the Warrick Tableaux) depicted African American history starting from the first slaves brought on shore at Jamestown. In just over two months, she produced an astonishing twelve dioramas containing over one hundred thirty, two-foot-tall figurines, in handsewn clothing, each placed within an open-front boxed scene. Her life-like depictions and highly detailed scenes brought the African American's experience to the forefront of an often white-dominated narrative and showcased their abilities—what they had, could, and would achieve.²³

Although lauded for its revolutionary depictions and scale, then and now, the artist was not pleased with the result. Between 1907 and 1908, Fuller saved twenty-one articles that mention or talk at length about the commission and her tableaux. In O'Donnell's "Meta Vaux Warrick, Sculptor of Horrors," Fuller expressed her personal feelings about her historic tableaux:

Please say little about it. It was done too hurriedly—think of it, almost one hundred and fifty figures to model in two months—and besides, the restrictions precluded really artistic work. Think of having to model figures, knowing that they were to be covered with real clothes, painted to represent natural colors, and set up against canvas backgrounds! No, I'm not at all proud of it.²⁴

A fascinating glimpse into what she thought about one of her most publicized works, Fuller's desire not to discuss it makes sense when understood from her own perspective: the rushed quality, the clay figures' sculptural bodies hidden behind clothes, the "doll-like" theatrical scenes. To date, research published on these momentous tableaux has yet discussed or hypothesized Fuller's feelings about the project. This quote provides a new standpoint on these works directly from the artist: without changing the historic nature of the tableaux and what it achieved, it adds another dimension to the narrative, in Fuller's own voice, on how she struggled with the completion of this work and viewed it negatively as a classically trained sculptor.

Fuller was fastidious, for decades saving whatever press she could find. Some articles are just a sentence, cut around other lines to save only where she is mentioned (Pl. 3). Others are full-length, spanning two or three long newspaper. There are clippings from various cities across America as well as from France and Ireland, and even one from a German newspaper.²⁵ Publication names, article titles, and dates were either cut out and included with the article or handwritten around the cut article, although some lack any notation. Multipage magazine publications received a special method where both sides could be read. Seeing these clippings gathered together gives a surprising view on Fuller's early career and just how globally recognized it was. It had been assumed that much of Fuller's career had been overlooked by her contemporaries: few articles or publications were known

to exist; she rarely entered sculpting competitions; and, besides her three monumental sculptures—the *Warrick Tableaux*, *Spirit of Emancipation*, and *Ethiopia Awakening*—most of her works were local commissions, gifts for friends and family, or her own personal inspirations. The scrapbook starts with an 1899 article on her intent to leave Philadelphia to study in Paris. During her years there, several Parisian newspapers and magazines wrote about her, her works, and her exhibitions, yet even American newspapers published articles about her *while* she was in Paris. The amount of coverage so early in her career changes the current narrative: that she was not widely known in America and that most of the attention on her came from France alone. The scrapbook contents also provide an opportunity to analyze how Fuller was treated across different cultures and geographies.

Fuller grew up at the end of the Victorian era, where societal norms were competing with a growing demand for equal rights and increased representation of women in public life. Women who persevered with art education and careers often faced begrudging "acceptance" or hostile rebukes for doing so, and were viewed as either lacking the "imaginative, inventive" mind or were too "down to earth" to create art and lacked the overall education to become artists.²⁶ Art critics and historians often used gendered terms when describing women's artwork, feminizing or masculinizing characteristics and labels, such as soft, demure, pretty, pleasant, or happy. An example of this treatment is observed in a review (c. 1900) saved in her scrapbook from the American Woman's Art Association Exhibition: the article deplores these women for leaving America, saying they "deserted their country and do not deserve to be regarded as Americans," that they "do not retain much of their native vitality and freshness."²⁷ The reviewer, Riter Fitzgerald, curtly and negatively describes the works, giving attention only to those few women artists who depicted the preferred types of domestic scenes of motherhood or families. Fuller is described as "Rodin-esque" with no further details, and further lamented that, "There are no American characteristics in the exhibition.... These women are fools to remain in Europe and paint French subjects."²⁸

There are at least seven French articles in the scrapbook dating from 1900 to 1902 that go into depth about Fuller as an artist, including the *New York Herald* (reprinted from an unknown French publication), *Femina* (France) (c. 1902), and *La Fronde*, *European*, *Le Figaro*, and *L'Ermitage* (all from May 1902). Out of those seven, her race is mentioned once, her being an American five times, and her youth seven. Overt feminine words like sculptress, womanly, feminine, delicate, happy, or charming occur six times (three in just one article alone), while the use of respectful or admirable terms for her style and work occur eighteen times, a considerably high number. These include various terms and phrases such as "originality," "greatly admired," "powerful and very skillful execution," "very gifted," "many beautiful and rare qualities," and "there is the revelation of a great, a very great artist."²⁹

The American press publications, of greater number, span the period from 1899 to 1932. There is a striking difference in the early American articles, quickly apparent when compared

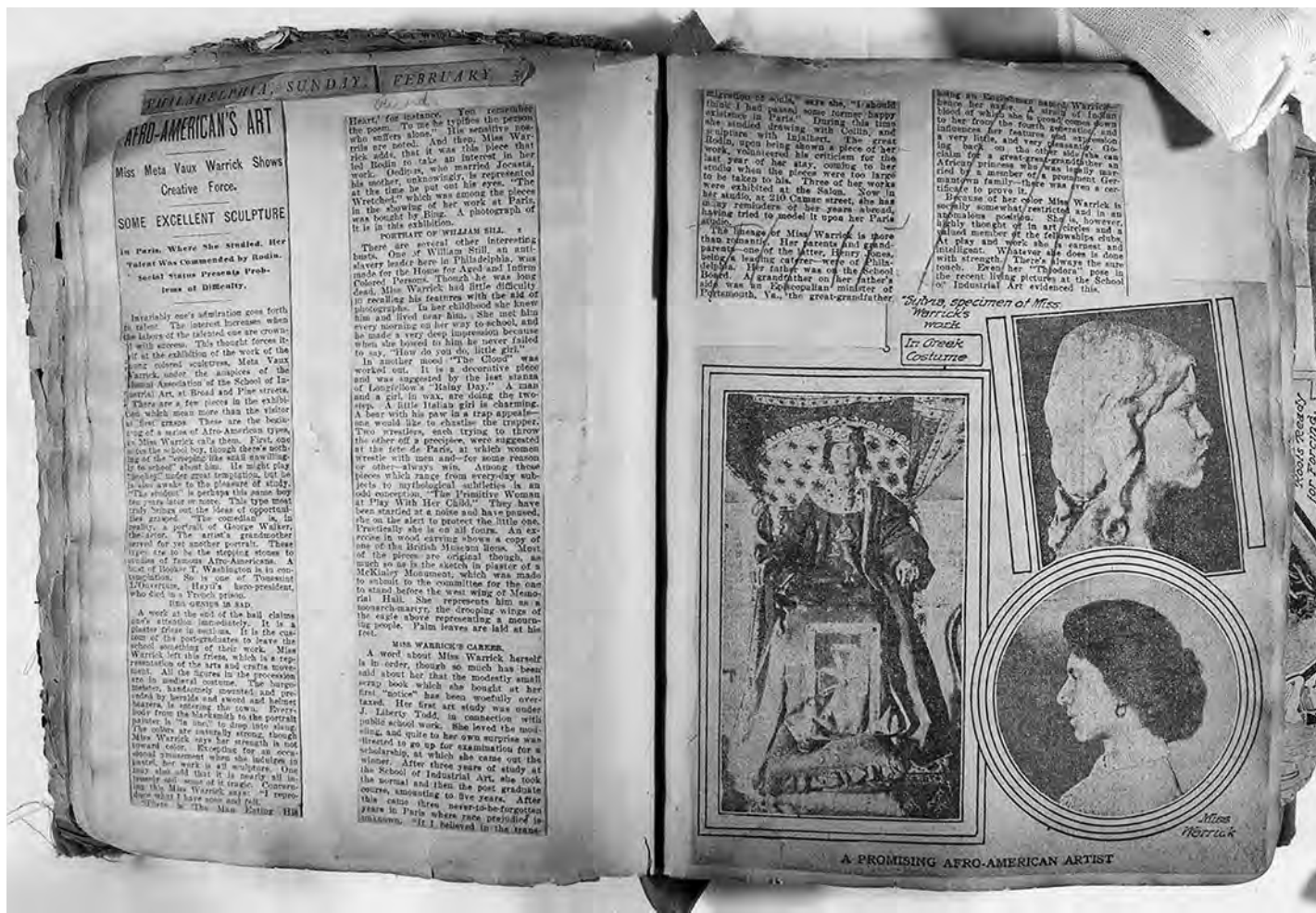


Fig. 10. "Afro-American's Art: Miss Meta Vaux Warrick Shows Creative Force," *Philadelphia Record* (Feb. 5, 1905), with notations by the artist, from the Meta Vaux Warrick Scrapbook. Courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University.

to the French publications, regarding the use of overt racial language, tone, and topics covered. It is the earliest American articles focusing on Fuller's race and family that use more explicit racial depictions and radical language, common among journalists at that time, with disparaging descriptions about Fuller's "African" ancestry. (Notably, a number of the American articles that relate to African American themed events, such as the Negro Exhibition at the Jamestown Tercentennial, or the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, do not contain this language.) Later American articles also utilize a different tone, and starting around 1913, they are more focused on events, competitions, or programs that Fuller was involved in rather than sensationalizing her personal life. The scrapbook thus marks this chronological, biographical, and socio-historical shift in presentation. Of the thirty-one American articles that detail her career in depth, fourteen, or almost half, discuss Fuller at some length using her race, ancestry, or gendered artistic terms to describe her or her work. These are papers from all over the US Eastern seaboard, including at least one led and run by African American journalists.³⁰ Terms used include negress, negro, mulatto, colored, or, more generally,

the "Only Sculptress of her Race," most often deployed as a descriptor, but in several articles, used much more bluntly. Her ancestry and bloodline are regularly brought into focus with wide discrepancies: full African, mulatto or creole, descendant of royal African relations, descendant from enslaved or never enslaved peoples, and one lone mention of (American) Indian and Germanic ancestry. These sections, along with mentions of her immediate family, received the most edits by Fuller with thick pencil slashes through these descriptive words; placed editorially next to her side profile, they serve as a negation of the critic's "romantic" lineage and historicization of her and act as her formal excising of the exotic narrative of descent from African royalty and English heritage (Fig. 10):

The lineage of Miss Warrick is more than romantic.... A strain of Indian blood of which she is proud come down to her from the fourth generation, and influences her features and expression a very little, and very pleasantly. Going back on the other side she can claim for a great-great-grandfather an African princess who was legally married by a member of a prominent Germantown family—there was even a certificate to prove it.³¹



Fig. 11. "Philadelphia Mulatto Girl's Statuary Weird as Rodin's," *North American* (c. 1902), from the Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller Scrapbook. Courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University.

When describing Fuller's work, the American press inevitably drew a visible line between accepted male and female characteristics. In the *Sunday Inquirer* from 1903, her works are described as being like Rodin's, even as, "One could more readily understand them in a strong man, but hardly in a young and happy girl."³² Comparatively, discussing women's clay and marble sculptures, and hesitating to apply the term "sculptress," the *North American* (Sunday) (Fig. 11) critiqued their inherent "lines of charm and delicacy [that miss] that touch of power which characterizes the work of men," and how "one hesitates to use the term sculptress," calling into question her gender. It goes on to describe one of Fuller's sculptures, *The Wretched* (1902; Fig. 12), which draws influences from Rodin's *Gates of Hell* (1880–1917), saying:

The original conception, the movement of palpitating life, the masterly grouping would be remarkable work for a mature man. As it is the work of a young girl one ponders deeply for an explanation.... Yet Miss Warrick has not a morbid personality [...] she has a feminine fondness for pretty clothes. The fingers that modeled the "Impenitent Thief" can trim a hat with Parisian "smartness."³³

Similar to *The Wretched*, Fuller's life-sized *Impenitent Thief* was described as "astonishing" and "frightening to behold." Depicting a man clinging to a cross near death, he is shown looking upward with exaggerated, swollen facial features as if to continue his blasphemies and curses to the sky.³⁴ Such loaded conceptualizations of her sculptural process called into question her femininity, professionalism, and age, reminding the reader what she "should be" sculpting, and targeting her forms and approaches of artistic expression.

O'Donnell, in his article "Sculptor of Horrors," described her style as a "spasm," as if it is a temporary reaction to something internal and extreme rather than a specific artistic choice.³⁵ Another, from the *Philadelphia Press* in January 1905, described the qualities Fuller gave her figures as a "defect ... seen across her entire collection."³⁶ Later, in the same newspaper, the journalist offered, inflected with a racial undercurrent: "[One] might say the sculptor is simply giving expression to an unspoiled personality not far removed from the primitive as



Fig. 12. Meta Warrick Fuller, *The Wretched* (1902), bronze, 17" x 21" x 15". Maryhill Museum of Art, Goldendale, Washington, gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels; photograph courtesy of the Maryhill Museum of Art.

found on the Dark Continent."³⁷ Also connecting her race and subject matter, a reviewer in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, in 1903, noted: "The blood of the long enslaved negro runs in her veins and inspires her with weird conceptions and strange, Heina-like contrasts. All the feelings of her race, the 'hants' and 'spirrits' of the South, the bitter philosophy of the North may find splendid expression in her."³⁸

There are two main overarching reasons for the different treatments of Fuller's artistic style and her race and gender in France and the US. First is the accepted aesthetics in each country at the time. The popular art styles in France, Art Nouveau and Symbolism—exemplified by Fuller—had a smaller audience in America, which favored Impressionism and the Arts and Crafts movement. Thus the French journalists were more accepting of Fuller's stylistic expression and critics favorably analyzed the works and subject matter presented as an artistic choice. The American articles attempted to explain

Fuller's style and inspiration as somehow related to her African ancestry, and in so doing, fell back on racial and gendered stereotypes that reinforced Fuller as the "Other," foreign and uncivilized, to explain something so inconceivable as a woman sculptor making such dark and, to them, masculine art, and consequently fortified societal expectations of women and African Americans at the turn of the twentieth century.

Second is each country's long and complex histories with racism and enslavement of Africans, as both nations are steeped in white, Christian European ideals that have led to highly nationalistic and patriotic sentiments, and both have centuries of dichotomies in their ideals of freedom and inclusion, declaring all equals but denying citizens' rights to minority groups at times in their histories.³⁹ Forced removal and enslavement of Africans financially benefited both France and America. Because slavery existed primarily on France's colonized islands, it was remote from everyday life, with only a small number of Africans brought into the country as servants or amusements for the elite. Slavery could thus be easily ignored or overlooked, but with more free and open discussions about the practice.⁴⁰ Because African and other minorities represented less than five percent of their total population, minorities were seen as unthreatening, with an air of curiosity, in turn allowing for more acceptance of those living on the mainland, especially when compared to treatment by Americans.⁴¹

America, in contrast, had large enslaved populations, resulting in their vastly outnumbering populations in the southern states, where slavery had predominated. In 1863, by the Emancipation Proclamation, there was much more fear in the white populations of the 'other' who now lived freely amongst them. After Emancipation, treatment of Blacks worsened, with repression through Jim Crow laws, and increased violence, incarceration, and lynching as whites attempted to keep their perceived superiority and control.

Women artists still struggled for acceptance in the mainstream art world. In France, as discussed above, the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs was founded to give women the opportunity to exhibit, as most Paris salons were increasingly excluding women artists. Still, the vastly different support for Fuller between France and America is stark. French publications focused on her artwork, her developing yet strong skills, her uniqueness and inventiveness in subject matter, and the strength of her ability to portray emotions, stories, and feelings. They highlighted her being from America and her youth over her race and sex. They appreciated her work for what it was and the talents that she had. Most American publications could not conceive of a woman producing works like Fuller's, which leads to a strange dichotomy in their articles. On the one hand, they stressed her race and gender; at the same time, they called her artistic style and expression "unfeminine." Rather than recognizing her style and subject matter as a deliberate choice and artistic expression, they were labeled as negative attributes, better suited to a male artist. Some justification was needed for her unique art, and her race and gender became the reasons for American journalists. Occasionally,

American newspapers were much more evenhanded, as in a 1904 article in an Ossining, New York, paper that discussed the artist and her work, where neither race nor gender was introduced.⁴²

In recent decades, there has been a noticeable growth in attention to Fuller's documentation of her struggles and her successes: she exemplifies these marginalized histories and the continued rise of civil and equal justice movements, pushing the social boundaries of women in the arts and creating sculptures with themes that are still poignant and relevant today. The rediscovery of this scrapbook adds new dimensions to ongoing assessments, expanding her known oeuvre, and providing more concrete dates for recognized works and photographs of unknown and lost sculptures. A clearer picture emerges of her reception in her early years and of people and artists she interacted with while studying in Paris. The materials she saved, and those she edited, shed light on her own voice, thoughts, influences, and ideas about the works she created. Fuller's impact on the world of art can be gleaned from the perspectives of two different countries, seeing how each reacted to her and her works. Besides providing insights into how she was treated in the media at the turn of the twentieth century, these archives speak to her strength of character and determination to succeed in her chosen profession.

At a time when women and African Americans were often ignored or marginalized in the historical record, this scrapbook reveals how Fuller took and manifested her own agency. She cared deeply about what she accomplished and saved materials that highlighted her career. She was preserving her legacy as an artist, a career that was largely undervalued due to the stereotypes and social norms of her era. By taking action and creating this scrapbook, she has preserved an amazing, unique historical record for her descendants and for scholars working to bring into view her accomplishments, achievements, and artwork. This scrapbook, shedding new light onto Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller as an artist, will continue to be an important resource for future research and understanding. •

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Notes

1. Carnel Hoover, e-mails to Dr. Jessica Roscio, April 7–12, 2021.
2. Renée Ater, *Remaking Race and History: The Sculpture of Meta Warrick Fuller* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2011), 11.

3. Ater, 12–13.
4. Harriet Forte Kennedy, *An Independent Woman: The Life and Art of Meta Warrick Fuller (1877–1968)* (Framingham, MA: Danforth Museum of Art, 1984), 1.
5. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller Scrapbook, 1899–1935, Eph1.41.88, Danforth Art Museum and School at Framingham State University, Framingham, MA (hereafter cited as MVWFS). Archived by the Danforth Art Museum, all Meta Warrick Fuller ephemera, including the scrapbook, is designated Eph. 1: the scrapbook is labeled as the forty-first object within the larger collection of Fuller ephemera (Eph1.41.88); the number eighty-eight refers to a specific record within the scrapbook. As the museum's Collections Manager, the sketchbook's entirety, including each article, journal, letter, or photograph, for instance, was documented and granted its own number by the author. See also, Erika Schneider, "Asserting Agency: Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller's Scrapbook," *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2022), <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.15090>.
6. A few commissions Fuller accepted include: *Spirit of Inspiration* (c. 1919); plaque of W.J. Trent (c. 1920); Baptismal font (c. 1925); plaque of Julian Daniel Taylor (1935); and the Joseph Charles Pierce Medal (1936).
7. Fuller's son, Solomon Fuller Jr., who lived in Bourne, MA, passed his mother's works to his children upon his death in 2001, after which materials came to the Danforth in 2006. See also, Judith Nina Kerr, "God-Given Work: The Life and Times of Sculptor Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, 1887–1968" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Massachusetts, 1968).
8. *Peeping Tom of Coventry*, Swann Auction Galleries Record, African-American Art, February 23, 2010, <https://catalogue.swanngalleries.com/Lots/auction-lot/META-VAUX-WARRICK-FULLER-%281877-1968%29-Peeping-Tom-of-Coventry?saleno=2203&lotNo=4&refNo=623773>.
9. In his letter, Bing notes: "If I have succeeded in being of some service to you it gives me great delight. You know to what degree I am a keen admirer of your talent." He also states that the few pieces left with him by Fuller had been shown to "many people," "very anxious to see some more." MVWFS, Eph1.41.41.
10. "Aule des meilleuns souhais faur l'annee novell." Calling card from Auguste Rodin with handwritten note, MVWFS, Eph1.41.42.
11. Marianne Le Morvan, "Introduction: The Marvel of Montmartre," in Berthe Weill, *Pow! Right in the Eye! Thirty Years behind the Scenes of Modern French Painting*, ed. Lynn Gumpert, trans. William Rodarmor (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2022), xxi.
12. Weill, 17.
13. Exhibitor card, Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs, 1902, MVWFS Eph1.41.9.
14. Bertaux served as the chairwoman of the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs from 1881 to 1894. See Aleksandra Kovacevic, "Hélène Bertaux," Archives of Women Artists, Research, and Exhibitions, <https://awarewomenartists.com/en/artiste/helene-bertaux/>.
15. To date, no catalogs or records of works shown have come to light from any Union des Femmes exhibitions, so it is yet unknown which sculptures Fuller displayed.
16. Letter from Countess de Montaigu to Meta Warrick Fuller, MVWFS Eph1.41.18.
17. Article from Countess de Montaigu, MVWFS Eph1.41.19.
18. Alongside Queen Regent Maria Christina, Colonel Ferretti helped raise, educate, and prepare the future King Alfonso XIII (whose father, King Alfonso XII, died before he was born) to ascend the throne in 1902 at the age of sixteen.
19. Kerr, "God-Given Work: The Life and Times of Sculptor Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller," 137.
20. "Negro Artist Busy with Historic Task," *McGirt's*, 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.95.
21. William Francis O'Donnell, "Meta Vaux Warrick, Sculptor of Horrors: The Negro Girl Whose Productions Are Being Compared to Rodin's," *World To-Day* 13, no. 5 (Nov. 1907): 1139–45, MVWFS Eph1.41.114.
22. Articles in the scrapbook referring to the Jamestown Tableaux include: *The Washington Herald*, Monday, March 18, 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.85; *New York Tribune*, March 31, 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.86; "At the White House: Negro Exhibition at the Jamestown Exposition," MVWFS Eph1.41.87; "Negro Artist Busy with Historic Task," *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia), April 14, 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.88; "Best of All Exhibitions," *Newport News, Virginia Press*, March 31, 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.89; "Shipping Exhibits to Jamestown Fair," *The Philadelphia Record*, April 15, 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.90; "Negro Exhibit for Jamestown," *New York Evening Post*, March 16, 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.91; "Our Sculptress and Her Work," *Philadelphia* (incomplete title), April 5, 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.92; "[Pe]nnsylvania Negro's [sic] Since Lincoln's Day," *The North American, Philadelphia*, Feb. 10, 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.93; "Negro Artist Busy with Historic Task," *McGirt's*, c. 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.95; "Life groups Show Progress of Negro," *Boston Sunday Globe*, June 30, 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.97; "Meta Warrick, Sculptress," *The Freeman: A National Illustrated Colored Newspaper*, undated, MVWFS Eph1.41.100; "Women at Work," *The World's Events*, July 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.101; "Negro Building at Expo. Interesting Ethologic Study," *Virginian-Pilot*, Nov. 10, 1907, MVWFS Eph1.41.106; *The Independent*, unknown date, MVWFS Eph1.41.112; and *Charities and The Commons*, Sept. 21, MVWFS Eph1.41.113.
23. For the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition, including detailed descriptions of each diorama scene of the Warrick Tableaux, see Ater, *The Sculpture of Meta Warrick Fuller*, 37–72.
24. Meta Vaux Warrick, quoted in O'Donnell, "Meta Vaux Warrick, Sculptor of Horrors."
25. Several pages of Fuller's scrapbook contain small newspaper clippings with Meta's own handwritten reference to titles in pencil. For example, one of these pages alone account for ten clippings: eight are from French journals and publications, including *L'Eclair*, *Le Ménestrel français*, *Revue de l'Art*, *La Revue des musées de France*, and *Le Salut Public – Journal de Lyon*. For three, handwritten names are illegible: one an unnamed publication from England, another from Germany's *Der Hannoversche Courier*. See MVWFS Eph1.41.53.
26. Those who did succeed in the art world were confined to the decorative arts, textiles or china painting, and were expected to produce only feminine subjects of motherhood, children, and domesticity. See Laurence Madeline, *Women Artists in Paris 1850–1900* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2017), 5.
27. Riter Fitzgerald, "[Review] So-Called Americans," unnamed newspaper article, c. 1901, MVWFS Eph1.41.17.
28. Fitzgerald, "So-Called Americans."
29. See *Femina*, c. 1902, MVWFS Eph1.41.22; Arsène Alexandra, *Le Figaro*, June 23, 1902, MVWFS Eph1.41.25; "Petites Expositione," *European*, c. 1902, MVWFS Eph1.41.26.
30. *Boston Sunday Journal*, Aug. 17, 1902, MVWFS Eph1.41.28; *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Aug. 10, 1902, MVWFS Eph1.41.32; *Philadelphia Sunday Press*, Oct. 19, 1902, MVWFS Eph1.41.40; *Sunday Inquirer*, 1903, MVWFS Eph1.41.43; *North American Sunday*, date unknown, MVWFS Eph1.41.47; *Colored Magazine*, March 1903, MVWFS Eph1.41.52; *News Tribune* (Detroit), July 21, 1903, MVWFS Eph1.41.55; *Philadelphia Call*, July 9, 1903, MVWFS Eph1.41.59; Untitled article, MVWFS Eph1.41.62; *Philadelphia Press*, Jan. 1905, MVWFS Eph1.41.65; *Philadelphia Ledger*, June (?)

- 17, date unknown, MVWFS Eph1.41.66; "Afro-American's Art," *Philadelphia Sunday*, Feb. 5, 1905, MVWFS Eph1.41.74; "Themes in Sculpture Earn Fame in France and American for a Colored Girl," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Feb. 1905, MVWFS Eph1.41.77; "Negro Tableaux Planned," unnamed newspaper, MVWFS Eph1.41.84.
31. "Afro-American's Art," *Philadelphia Record*, Feb. 5, 1905, MVWFS Eph1.41.74.
32. Untitled article, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dec. (?) 1903, MVWFS Eph1.41.43.
33. "Philadelphia Mulatto Girl's Statuary Weird as Rodin's," *North American (Sunday)*, c. 1902, MVWFS Eph1.41.47.
34. On *Impenitent Thief*, see the following two descriptions from two 1902 newspaper articles: "These powerful sketches, newly emerging from her thought through her woman's fingers, look at her Bad Thief, whose gesture curses the sky and you will be astonished when you know that their author is a young twenty-year-old creole," *L'Ermitage*, July 7, 1902, MVWFS Eph1.41.24; "For instance, her almost life-sized thief on the cross is almost frightful to behold. It is the realistic face of the thief in the throes of death, with protruding lips, that become blanched with blasphemies as well as death. Every line of the body shows anatomical study and that the girl did not hesitate to produce the lines as her vision of the thief revealed them to her," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Aug. 10, 1902, MVWFS Eph1.41.32.
35. O'Donnell, "Meta Vaux Warrick, Sculptor of Horrors."
36. *Philadelphia Press*, Jan. 1905, MVWFS Eph1.41.65.
37. *Philadelphia Press*, 1908, MVWFS Eph1.41.65.
38. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, c. 1902, noted as *Sunday Inquirer* by Fuller in the scrapbook, MVWFS Eph1.41.43.
39. See Jann Pasler, "Theorizing Race in Nineteenth-Century France: Music as Emblem of Identity," *The Musical Quarterly* 89, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 461–63; and George M. Fredrickson, *Race, Ethnicity, and National Identity in France and the United States: A Comparative Historical Overview* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2003), 12.
40. Fredrickson, 11.
41. Erik Bleich, "Race Policy in France," *Brookings*, May 1, 2001, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/race-policy-in-france/>.
42. "A Distinguished Visitor," unnamed newspaper, Ossining, NY, Sept. 12, 1904, MVWFS Eph1.41.64.



(re)FOCUS: Philadelphia Focuses on Women in the Visual Arts, 1974–2024 (The Galleries at Moore College of Art & Design, January 27 – March 16, 2024) was the core exhibition for a citywide celebration of women artists, taking place through May 2024. This catalog/book provides an overview of fifty years of the Feminist Art Movement through the work of the 82 paradigm-breaking women artists in the 1974 and 2024 exhibitions including Eleanor Antin, Judith Bernstein, Louise Bourgeois, Audrey Flack, Alice Neel, Louise Nevelson, Yayoi Kusama, Howardena Pindell, Adrian Piper, Faith Ringgold, Miriam Schapiro, Alma Thomas. Biographies tell about their lives and struggles with the white male art world of 50 years ago. The catalog also documents the satellite exhibitions and programs at 65 visual arts venues in and around Philadelphia, featuring women and gender non-conforming artists. Essays by the organizers Judith K. Brodsky and Diane Burko along with Judith E. Stein, Ruth Fine, Robert Cozzolino, and Imani Roach illuminate the historical and contemporary contexts.

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“COMEDY, PATHOS, DELIGHT, AND HORROR”

SATIRE IN THE WORK OF JOYCE J. SCOTT

By Phoebe Wolfskill

In a 2009 interview for the Archives of American Art, Robert Silberman asked Joyce J. Scott (b. 1948), “Was [your work] always a combination of ... shock and humor?” Scott replied, “You might have just described me.”¹ Scott’s *Cuddly Black Dick #3* (1995; Fig. 1 and Pl. 4) epitomizes the “shock and humor” central to the artist’s oeuvre. The sculpture imagines an interracial couple seated on a park bench. A readymade ceramic represents the white woman adorned by Scott in a beaded gown. Scott also uses beads to render the Black man, yet he lacks a body; he is simply a penis. His reduction to pure sexuality reads as absurd and comical, although disturbingly consistent with historical constructs of Black masculinity. *Cuddly Black Dick #3* highlights Scott’s skill in beadwork, wirework, and assemblage, but above all, it illuminates her command of satire. Satire—as a literary and artistic method—ridicules human folly through irony and humor with the goal of discrediting its target. Scott’s sculpture stimulates recoil and laughter at racial and gender stereotypes, while prompting consideration of their real-life implications.

This article explores the ways in which Scott uses satire to interrogate the logic of stereotypes. As she claims, “I believe in messing with stereotypes, prodding the viewer to reassess.... I skirt the borders between comedy, pathos, delight, and horror. I invite the viewer to laugh at our collective selves.”² Scott’s work frequently investigates racial, ethnic, and gender vio-



Fig. 1. Joyce J. Scott, *Cuddly Black Dick #3* (1995), glass beads, thread, ceramic, and wire, 7 1/2" x 4 1/2" x 5". Collection Francine Pilloff, Beachwood, Ohio. Image courtesy of Goya Contemporary Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland.

lence as physical, psychological, and alarmingly commonplace experiences. In referencing and revisiting historical and contemporary acts of violence throughout her oeuvre, her work speaks to the cyclical nature of these brutalities. Jane Blocker defines “echoic temporalities” as “the nauseous loop that deprives Black subjects from gaining an appropriate distance on the past because by recurring, repeating, it refuses to *stay* past.”³ Using humor as her weapon, Scott responds to this “nauseous loop” of violence aimed at Black Americans as well as at the vulnerable populations throughout the world. Glenda Carpio notes, “For Black Americans, humor has often functioned as a way of affirming their humanity in the face of its violent denial.”⁴ Simultaneously, the power of satire among Black visual artists is, in Richard J. Powell’s words, “to illustrate the irrationality, the absurdity, or the gross inequity of racist acts, policies, and social practices.”⁵ Bringing these two distinct but related concepts together, Scott uses satire as a means

of societal self-critique that underscores Black humanity while highlighting the irrationality of violence and stereotype.

Scott’s mix-media necklaces and sculptures, exhibited and collected since the 1970s, raise difficult questions about artistic methods of confronting racial violence. Much current activism and scholarship dispute the overrepresentation of Blackness in terms of victimhood, trauma, and death. Attention to Black life is foundational to the global activist work of Black Lives



Fig. 2. The artist Joyce J. Scott in her Baltimore studio, 2016. Photo: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Matter, founded in 2013, and the philosophical, cultural, and visual ruminations of scholars Leigh Raiford, Christina Sharpe, Courtney R. Baker, Darby English, and Kevin Quashie, among others.⁶ Visualizations highlighting violence against Black people have met conflicting and ambivalent responses, particularly in recent years. Protests surrounded white artist Dana Schutz's (b. 1976) reference to Emmett Till in her painting *Open Casket* (2016), shown at the 2017 Whitney Biennial. Schutz was decried for her insensitivity to the histories of Black suffering, prompting challenges for her right to access this subject matter and her methods of rendering it. George Floyd's murder, in 2020, attracted emphatic responses by the public, yet for some observers its countless media replays positioned Black death as spectacle.⁷ Psychological and physical violence was a central component of enslavement and its aftermath, a violence that continues nowadays in the form of illegal executions, neglect, and mass incarceration. One's attentiveness to Black humanity and the voyeuristic anxieties over images of Black death are integral to cultural and scholarly discussions. How do Scott's provocative sculptures, often portraying violated or fragmented Black bodies, fit into this conversation? Does her use of satire serve therapeutic purposes, or does it turn the knife in the wound?

The historical and contemporary resonances of Scott's practice push the viewer to consider how figurative violence in art, when combined with the sting of satire, can function as a potent response to anti-Blackness. Utilizing the work of Frantz Fanon, the scholarship on Black satire, and contemporary responses to representations of racial violence, this article considers Scott's visual satire as a means of excavation, confrontation, and release. From her extensive oeuvre, works satirizing themes of miscegenation, police brutality, and racial stereotyping are granted particular focus. This conversation foregrounds the particularities of Scott's medium of "craft" and considers the challenges and possibilities satire offers to acknowledging and confronting racial violence.

Studies of Black satire have generally highlighted literature and performance. This scholarship includes: Darryl Dickson-Carr's *African American Satire: The Sacredly Profane Novel* (2001); Paul Beatty's compilation of African American humor in *Hokum (An Anthology of African American Humor)* (2006); Dana Williams's edited collection of essays, *African American Humor, Irony, and Satire* (2007); Glenda Carpio's *Laughing Fit to Kill: Black Humor in the Fictions of Slavery* (2008); and, more recently, Danielle Fuentes Morgan's *Laughing to Keep from Dying: African American Satire in the Twenty-First Century* (2020).⁸ Additional publications and exhibition catalogues, such as Cherise Smith's *Michael Ray Charles: A Retrospective* (2019); the multi-authored *Art and Race Matters: The Career of Robert Colescott* (2019); Rebecca Wanzo's *The Content of Our Caricature* (2020); and Richard J. Powell's *Going There: Black Visual Satire* (2020) have added much needed consideration of Black humor and satire within the history of art and visual culture.⁹

While Scott is included in numerous exhibition catalogues and interviews, and a 2016 recipient of the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship ("genius" grant), her work deserves a central place in studies of Black satire (Fig. 2). Art history and criticism have historically marginalized Black female artists and "craft," which is the descriptor generally applied to Scott's bead, glass, and textile necklaces, sculptures, and installations. Yet Scott's application of craft heightens her approach and the satirical nature of her work through the emphasis on materiality, and its related constructive element of surprise. Her adoption of satire is inherently disruptive—a dissonance that engenders complex and sometimes polarizing feelings. The work is easily misconstrued when its humor is lost on the viewer. Providing neither a didactic nor fully empathetic model in her broader explorations of humor, Scott offers comic absurdity, a tenuous but provocative method of using representation to encourage new ways of reading race and racialized bodies.

Under the guidance of her mother, the artist and quiltmaker Elizabeth Talford Scott, the younger Scott began practicing weaving and beadwork when she was five years old.¹⁰ Fundamental to Scott's artistry is her family's southern roots and consistent engagement with artmaking based on functionality and available materials. She views her sculptures as connected to a broader cultural history rooted in Black manual labor, a history of creativity despite the constraints of slavery, and the construction of usable and innovative objects.¹¹ Raised in a family of artists, Scott's upbringing, academic study, worldwide travel, and art residencies are instrumental to her adult work. Earning her BFA in 1970 from the Maryland Institute of Contemporary Art (MICA), Scott then studied at the Instituto Allende in San Miguel Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico, where she received her MFA in 1971. She then traveled throughout Central and South America, Europe, and Asia to study craft and beadwork. These experiences encouraged her move toward greater artistic improvisation and inventive approaches to textiles, beadwork, glass, and found objects. Scott's career has consistently intertwined learning and practice. She studied at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Maine from

1974 to 1976, where she learned Yoruba weaving techniques from Nigerian artist Twins Seven Seven. From the late 1970s through the early 1980s, she studied design at the Rochester Institute of Technology and, in 1992, she worked as artist-in-residence at Pilchuck Glass School, after which glass became a common component in her work. From 2011 to 2012, she collaborated with artists at the Murano glass factory in Venice, Italy, and in 2018 developed an exhibition dedicated to Harriet Tubman at Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton, New Jersey. Scott's group exhibitions since the late 1970s have thematized artistic use of materials (namely craft, textile, and jewelry), racial and gender identity, and/or themes of racial and social justice.

Scott also falls within a broad lineage of female artists using craft, approaches at the artistic forefront during the 1970s feminist movement, when Scott was an art student and burgeoning artist. This period included Judy Chicago's (b. 1939) celebratory porcelain vulva dinner plates in *The Dinner Party* (1974–79), and the pink-walled, multi-authored, and woman-centered aesthetics of *Womanhouse* (1972). Coinciding with this largely white middle-class body of work by her peers, Scott turned her attention to Black "types," including the working-class mammy/nanny, figures of mixed race, and compromised or debased nudes, a strategy divergent from the "central core" imagery of Chicago, Miriam Schapiro (1923–2015), Carolee Schneemann (1939–2019), and Hannah Wilke (1940–1993). As such, Scott's work extends that matriarchal lineage of feminist craft by adding and recuperating Black identities, socio-economic class, and satirical humor to the conversation.

At the same time, Scott's craftwork corresponds with a trajectory of Black artists that employ stereotypes, among them Robert Colescott (1925–2009), Camille Billops (1933–2019), Carrie Mae Weems (b. 1953), Kara Walker (b. 1969), and Michael Ray Charles (b. 1967), who posit racist imagery as a fundamental component of the national psyche and engage stereotype as a means of troubling it. The frequent presence of dismantled and distorted bodies in their work positions dehumanization as a central theme. Scott persistently addresses themes of sexuality as acts of violation or dismemberment. In this way, she challenges bodily wholeness, thereby contesting a history of art that values the holistic nude, portrait, or historical painting. As referenced in the introduction to this essay, Scott developed her "cuddly Black dick" series to challenge racial stereotypes and



Fig. 3. William Hogarth, *Four Times of the Day: Noon* (1738), engraving, 19 3/16" x 15 13/16". Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1932, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Fig. 4. Robert Colescott, *My Shadow* (1977), acrylic on canvas, 84 1/4" x 66 1/4". Oakland Museum of California, Gift of Mrs. Elizabeth Ross.



interracial relations in manners both fantastical and humorous.¹² As Scott describes *Cuddly Black Dick* #3:

The woman here is with her lover or husband and she's got her arm around him and they're talking. But when people who dislike this, or have one narrow view of what blacks are, see her, they see her with just a dick.¹³

The artist envisions the piece as a loving relationship wherein race is inconsequential to the autonomous couple, and yet the placement of outside eyes on the figures reduces the individual Black man to carnal anatomy.¹⁴ This quirky arrangement, the positionality between the couple and the viewer, recalls Fanon's reflections on white perceptions of Black masculinity: "One is no longer aware of the Negro but only of a penis: the Negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He *is* a penis."¹⁵

Scott's work makes literal Fanon's processual articulation of white disorientation and Black bodily fragmentation. Further referencing the frequent theme of dismemberment in her art, Scott has commented, "There's something frightening about a body that's in parts and not together [...] they cannot control things."¹⁶ The Black body as a set of disembodied parts also carries historical implications: bell hooks notes that Black people were often relegated to segments, viewed "as a pair of hands ... reduced to the machinery of bodily physical labor."¹⁷ In conversation with this corporeal history, Scott furnishes the visual and physical information to conceptualize the white woman as a complete and fully realized human being, but not the appearance of the Black man. In her exploration of bodily fragmentation, Scott further queries how society locates Black wholeness.

Fanon articulates anti-Black racism as a disorienting experience and a means of fragmenting Black bodies and psyches. He further considers the ways in which sexuality, language, and symbols inform conceptions of race. In his reference to the power of vision to mark race, Fanon writes: "The movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other *fixed me there*."¹⁸ Scott's statement about *Cuddly Black Dick #3* similarly describes her interracial couple as "fixed" by an outside gaze. Yet rather than highlight Fanon's focus on the internalized repercussions of anti-Black racism, Scott's language and artwork make the viewer question their own participation in the perpetuation of racial stereotypes and their attitudes about interracial relationships.

Alongside mobilizing the affective nature of cultural stereotypes that associate the Black male with sexual prowess, instincts, and sizable goods, *Cuddly Black Dick #3* further suggests white society's longstanding anxieties about the Black man's assumed lust for white women and their accompanying attributes of womanhood, and the feared and mythologized white woman's desire for Black men. The work, then, tests the audience's binary assumptions about white femininity and Black masculinity, and prompts such questions as, Where are the spaces for white feminine desire, and when and how do we see Black masculinity in terms of intellect and mind, rather than body?

Scott's thematic attention to whiteness also stems from her collections of material culture. The artist had purchased the ceramic figurine for *Cuddly Black Dick #3* from a commercial arts and crafts shop.¹⁹ Popular craft chains, such as Hobby Lobby, are politically and religiously conservative and cultivate a Christian clientele, whereas Joann Fabrics and Crafts has openly critiqued such conservative agendas.²⁰ Regardless of their specific ideology, the commercial industry caters to a presumed white clientele unlikely to locate amongst their craft supplies and materials the barbed racial politics adopted by Scott. She uses this incongruity to her advantage: playing upon the Black stereotype, the artist provocatively transforms the "cute," white ceramic figure to create new meanings, pushing the viewer to reassess how they function and for whom. Scott's transformation of this object exhibits "the subversive potential of everyday life," in Anna Dezeuze's words.²¹ By setting up a material relationship between the store-bought object and the handmade, the artist activates the figurine, taking it outside of her typical function as homecraft and into the service of racial and gender politics. By appropriating the readymade craft, Scott alludes to broader cultural patterns of consumption and the ways in which critique fits squarely within these structures.

The doll set purchased by Scott and used for *Cuddly Black Dick #3* exists as a partial body primed for completion through the acts of sewing, stuffing, and gluing. Scott took only the figure's head and hands, and, rather than using the supplied fabric, she composed for it a beaded dress and limbs.²² The doll's quaint appearance may elicit childhood nostalgia, often introduced to girls as gender-appropriate forms of play. Yet the coupling of white doll/Black penis disrupts sentimentalization by the viewer, drawing into question the existence of this doll's

Black equivalents outside of racial stereotypes. The penis companion further reveals the ways in which cultural nostalgia is generally positioned within tropes of white material culture, desire, and memory, rather than Black. Scott illuminates both Black masculinity and white femininity as constructions subject to playful manipulation and deformation. Victorian ideals of white womanhood live on through such doll-like consumer objects to celebrate, in Richard Dyer's account, "their non-physical, spiritual, indeed ethereal qualities."²³ Scott unsettles the white ideal by positioning the ostensibly demure female embracing the physical object of her desire.

Scott's creative play between her figure's beaded and ceramic components presents further social and psychological readings. The ceramic head and hands are positionally frozen, rendering the expression and gesture forever immobilized. The rigid ceramic components contrast with the relative manipulability and elasticity of the strung beads. These material variances speak to Scott's facility with integrating found objects with her handmade beadwork in a manner that complements yet also complicates both components—the commercial and artisanal. Closer looking at the frozen face and hands provide more detailed associations: when read as a literal pairing, we see a white woman attempting to embrace a penis that she does not quite grasp. Her empty expression and odd inability to see or hold the object seated beside her suggests a mental vacancy recalling early twentieth-century proscriptions about Black male/white female relationships. Concerns about "racial purity" and the protection of white women were prominent in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discourses; prohibitions against intermarriage and miscegenation are found in legal rulings throughout the nation. The language surrounding Black male and white female relationships and marriage undermined both parties' right to self-determination; court rulings routinely pronounced the Black man's "natural" proclivity for violence and domination, and/or the white woman's mental instability or insanity.²⁴ In many cases, white women were deemed mentally ill alongside being declared defiant or defiled. Their willing relationship with a Black man suggested their incapability of making logical, rational choices. Taking this history into consideration in evaluating Scott's work, the ceramic woman's blank gaze appropriates the mental patient's catatonic and pathological unawareness of self and surroundings. While Scott presents the white female on a park bench embracing her Black lover, we might simultaneously imagine her on a therapist's couch.

Scott illustrates the contingencies and performative qualities of race and gender as dependent on each other for broader societal meaning. The artist self-consciously exhibits how whiteness operates vis-à-vis Blackness—with the goal of denaturalizing whiteness and proving its contingency upon others. In illuminating whiteness within her art, Scott positions its power as one that should be clearly articulated and ideally dislodged to function as an equal player among diverse peoples.

The amputated Black penis has similarly disturbing connotations, which speaks in even crueler terms to white supremacist violence toward interracial relationships. While



Fig. 5. Joyce J. Scott, *Still Funny: Mammy/Penis* (2011), figurine, beads, and thread, 3 1/2" x 2" x 2". Collection Glenn Dellon and Hillary Belzer, Baltimore, Maryland. Image courtesy of Goya Contemporary Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland.

the penis, as Scott describes it, serves as a metonym for a real body, its severing and separate placement also evokes castration, which often accompanied the lynching of Black men. The artist probes the question: What happens when the boundaries between Black masculinity and white femininity are not secure? In her book *Imagery of Lynching*, Dora Apel writes of castration imagery, referring to the visualized Black penis as "the direct and threatening source of Black masculinity, the basis for the stereotype of Black male sexuality so dreaded and desired by whites."²⁵ Castration often accompanied lynching as a punishment for the alleged crime of raping a white woman; as Apel suggests, the brutal act of castration assuaged fears of the mythologized and envied Black male body.

Scott is, of course, not the first artist to satirize interracial desire between a Black man and a white woman within Western art, examples of which date back at least to the



Fig. 6. Betye Saar, *Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972), mixed media, 11 3/4" x 8" x 2 3/4". University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley. Photographed for Univ. of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive by Benjamin Blackwell. Courtesy of the artist and Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, CA.

eighteenth-century conversation pieces of British painter and satirist William Hogarth. In Hogarth's *Four Times of the Day: Noon* (1738; Fig. 3), the crude behaviors of the English working class include a Black servant's flagrant fondling of a white maid's breasts. Relatedly, the comingling of Black and white, and male and female, is explored repeatedly in the work of twentieth-century artistic-provocateur Robert Colescott. The artist creates pointed critiques of western history and popular culture through comically misshapen bodies rendered through thick brushwork and a gaudy palette. Colescott's *My Shadow* (1977; Fig. 4), for example, pictures a cartoonish Black and white couple dancing together in syncopation toward bed. Colescott conflates the trope of Black performativity with the fear of interracial relations, making such interactions funny, absurd, and even predictable, like a dance sequence. The couple smiles and gazes at the viewer, connoting the relative safety of the visually mediated space of interracial

performance, while their steady movement and gig to bed anticipates their illicit pleasure, whose dangerous repercussions intimate the need to tiptoe quietly. Simultaneously laughable and deeply uncomfortable, *My Shadow* speaks to a long, interconnected history of interracial relations, white female desire, and Black male vulnerability that continues to inform our cultural identities. Colescott writes, "Consider the intricate network of human relations and interdependencies that have existed since dim pre-history.... Then consider that most people of either race go around acting like we're not even related. It adds up to a historical absurdity of tragic dimensions. If you decide to laugh, don't forget the 'humor is the bait,' and once you've bitten you may have to do some serious chewing. The tears may come later."²⁶ Colescott underscores the complex range of emotions summoned by satire, its difficulty and usefulness. His comment on racial intermixing further suggests the absurdity of the tidy boundaries of "white" and "Black." Colescott's *My Shadow* and Scott's *Cuddly Black Dick #3* combine racial stereotypes with structures of performativity, exemplified in each work by the posed and gesturing hands. Their implied theatrics underscore race and gender as constructs as well as performances. Danielle Fuentes Morgan offers, "The utility of satire is found in its upending of dominant ideologies that render race essential and racism natural."²⁷ Colescott and Scott sanction laughter at racial essentialism while insinuating the psychological and physical violence wrought from these stereotypical constructions.

The 2008 candidacy of Barack Obama, the United States' first Black president, met the celebration of a "post racial" America. However, this congratulatory language coexisted with a slew of visual material that pictured Obama through age-old stereotypes: notable examples "jokingly" equated Obama with a chimpanzee; exhibited the White House lawn strewn with watermelons; presented "Obama Bucks" as food stamps illustrated with fried chicken and watermelon; and used Shephard Fairey's *Hope* poster as a template for a lynched portrayal of Obama underscored with the word "ROPE."²⁸ These examples suggested an America that was decidedly *not* post-racial and the readiness of Obama's opposition to defuse racist anxieties through stereotype.

In the Obama era and after, the open circulation of racist images underscores the continued relevance of artists engaging stereotypes as cyclical and ripe with historical and contemporary resonances. Scott's *Still Funny* series of 2011 revisits the same technique explored in her 1995 *Cuddly Black Dick* works—combining beaded components with pre-existing figurative objects—and furthers her attention to interracial desire coupled with homoeroticism and Black female agency. Replacing a porcelain dandy's flute with a beaded Black penis, *Still Funny: Flutist* (2011; Pl. 5) gives new meaning to the figurine's pink-cheeked exertion in his musical act of "blowing" his flute.²⁹ In *Still Funny: Mammy/Penis* (2011; Fig. 5 and Pl. 6), a true miniature at only 3 1/2 x 2 inches, Scott replaces the rolling pin from a ceramic mammy with a beaded pink penis and testicles.³⁰

The "mammy" originated as a Black stereotype of contented

domestic servitude rooted in the narratives of the Old South. Reproduced in literature, sheet music, and advertising, the mammy image expanded commercially when she was corporatized in the form of Aunt Jemima in the late nineteenth century.³¹ Alongside her placement in advertising, on pancake boxes, and throughout Hollywood films, the presence of the mammy / Aunt Jemima ceramic also served as a salt, pepper, or spice shaker. Scott's subversive and unexpected alteration of the figurine raises questions: Does the mammy smile mischievously because she has castrated the white master? Or does she hold the object of her desire, as suggested in the reversed-race scenario of *Cuddly Black Dick #3*? The Black mammy / white penis combination calls to mind a history of sexual relations between empowered white men and disempowered, Black enslaved or domestic servants. Simultaneously, the dismantling of the white body by the hand of the Black woman implies some comical retribution for these corporeal entanglements. Like its forerunner, the *Still Funny* series further imparts how traces of racial and gender norms exist in the production of ceramic memorabilia and their "timeless" qualities. Prior to Scott's interventions, the flutist and mammy figurines exhibited the commonplace articulation of whiteness as proper and elite, and Blackness as subservient and smiling. Scott glaringly subverts these readings by replacing each object's typical attributes with beaded phalluses of racial and historical consequence.

The figures and tropes of Aunt Jemima and mammy enjoyed multiple forms of liberation during the Black arts and feminist movements by artists such as Betye Saar (b. 1926), Murray DePillars, Jeff Donaldson, Frieda High Tesfagiorgis (b. 1946), Jon Onye Lockard, Joe Overstreet, and Faith Ringgold (1930–2024). Subject to numerous analyses, Saar's *Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972; Fig. 6), probably her best-known piece, is worth considering vis-à-vis Scott's use of the mammy figurine. Saar's *Liberation*, an assemblage of various materials, exhibits three distinct varieties of mammy, the largest forming its centerpiece: a full-figured, black-skinned, red-lipped grinning figure that once functioned as a kitchen notepad holder; within the rectangular cavity of this mammy's skirt, the artist replaces the notepad with another mammy, here an inset postcard of a Black woman holding a squalling baby.³² On a tertiary level, Saar lines the container with the relatively moderate image of Aunt Jemima from the pancake box. Positing each of these types as unacceptable, the artist alters them to challenge their original meaning. She substitutes the pencil once held by the large central mammy with a rifle and adds a pistol to her other hand. To disrupt the grinning figure on the postcard, Saar partially obscures it with a Black power fist. Finally, by lining the back of the frame with the Aunt Jemima pancake image—an image that is further duplicated through attached mirrors on either side of the box—Saar conveys the figure's endless repetition. In doing so, the artist draws attention to the ubiquity of the mammy image, but also to its hollowness, presenting it as pure copy without prototype. Whether shockingly grotesque, like the central figure, or mind-numbingly repetitive, like the pancake logo, Saar aims to liberate these mummies from their standard place of servitude and one-dimensionality. Her range of materials—

found objects painstakingly accumulated and reassembled as representative of broader cultural ideas and values—speak to the history and ubiquity of Black stereotypes in consumer culture.³³ With Saar's alterations, the exaggerated grin of the central mammy carries new, rather sinister implications upon being armed, and the figurative distortion of the smile suggests the pleasure of reprisal.

Unlike Saar's *Liberation*, Scott's *Still Funny: Mammy/Penis* does not necessarily posit cries of liberation from "mammy" imagery and caricature but rather reflects the subject in a more lighthearted yet equally destabilizing fashion. Pairing the store-bought mammy with a coy symbol of white patriarchy, that is, the phallus associated with the wielding of power, Scott directly cites the white authorial structure responsible for creating and reinforcing stereotypical conceptions, consequently dismembering this authority. She further unsettles expectations in conceptualizing the white male in terms of nudity. Within the history of art, the white male nude has epitomized supreme, God-like perfection in ancient Greek art; more contemporary explorations have involved an active probing, challenging, or even mocking of masculine selfhood and manhood in the painting and self-portraiture of artists such as Lucian Freud, David Hockney, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Jeff Koons. Regardless, the white male's authority over representation and authorship goes unquestioned. Scott's work upends the historical centrality and authority of the white male nude by exhibiting it solely as a penis removed from the empowered, non-fragmented body. Constructed from pink beads to replace a rolling pen, the penis, gently cradled, appears further feminized and emasculated. Scott's simultaneous referencing and dismantling of symbolic power challenges the treatment of Black and white bodies within the histories of art and material culture.

In this piece, Scott further plays with the polarities of removal versus creation in the act of identity formation. Holding the substituted beaded, phallic object, we witness the mammy as a perverse craftsperson. Historically, it was commonplace for Black domestic workers to exhibit proficiencies in various forms of artistry, such as quilting and sewing. Scott's particular mammy figure has advanced her skills to new and previously unimaginable heights "beading" her way to jurisdiction over the white male body. Following Saar's *Liberation of Aunt Jemima*, Scott allows the once obsequious smile to have new meaning; the mammy's mischievously averted eyes and grin suggest pride in her dual potential for creation and castration. As Michael Gillespie submits, "Slavery acts as the historical precedent for exploitation of black bodies as laboring objects devoid of subject status. Subsequently, an emblem with personality that violently disputes the use of its labor evokes the prospect of slave rebellion."³⁴ Scott's mammy appears poised to lead this rebellion.

The artist's titling proposes further observations on our relationship to the object: in its simplistic rendering of Black femininity, *Still Funny* suggests that we can view the mammy through a comedic lens as always, somewhat "funny." The title reassures the viewer that they need not be staunchly offended by the mammy stereotype, for it is, perhaps, better to laugh at it. We are also pushed to contemplate the "stillness" of the

work; overall, her objects represent longstanding traditions and long-established stereotypes, yet Scott is able to change, update, and render them funny and, arguably, not so "still" but mutable. She plays with signs of Blackness in important ways; these are not Black bodies but a tragicomedy of how Black bodies are reduced.

While Fanon's *White Skin, Black Masks* is crucial to exploring Black fragmentation and dehumanization, Scott's *Mammy* highlights the limitations espoused by Fanon's assumptions of patriarchal norms. To this point, Gwen Bergner writes, "Fanon does not ignore sexual difference altogether, but he explores sexuality's role in constructing race only through rigid categories of gender."³⁵ Scott frequently represents intersectional forms of discrimination by underscoring class, race, and gender identities through her images of working-class Black womanhood. In this way, Scott pushes beyond Fanon's limited framework that privileges Black men as the subject of consideration and Black women as aberrant. Bergner notes, "Fanon's scathing condemnation of black women's desire ... [illustrates] his own desire to circumscribe black women's sexuality and economic autonomy in order to ensure the patriarchal authority of black men."³⁶ In her *Cuddly Black* and *Still Funny* series of beaded, ceramic, or glass mammy art works, Scott, by contrast, foregrounds the subjectivity of Black womanhood by taking a stereotype and radically changing its meaning, allowing the viewer to read the figures' smiles as a product of Black female power and pleasure.

This rereading of mammy further underscores Scott's ambivalent relationship toward the use of the stereotypical object, bringing with it an acute awareness of the white supremacist culture that constructed these objects in the first place as servile and mindlessly smiling figures, and her own observations that Black domestic workers are rooted in a historical reality. Lowery Stokes Sims underscores this knowledge: "If you deconstruct an image such as Aunt Jemima, you find that there are specific, historical kinds of elements that are part of what she is."³⁷ The artist recalled that her parents served as cooks, worked in the kitchen, and did their jobs well. From Scott's perspective, these objects can be reread in personal terms in a manner that uproots their intended meanings.³⁸ In this process of uprooting and pivoting original meaning, her works present other questions: Why allow white racism to command complete control over interpretations of these objects? Why not read them as kin and as playful and unruly active agents? In interviews, Scott emphasizes the wide-ranging stylistic variation in racial caricature, from the all-consuming lips in minstrelsy posters to the "milder" aesthetics displayed in some ceramics. From Scott's oblique angle, it is best to construe this "cute" Black domestic worker as a mischievous woman with tricks up her sleeve.

While most of Scott's figures read as generic representations, at times she references specific individuals such as Harriet Tubman, Rodney King, and Obama. These works do not function as portraiture, however, as her beaded works eschew likeness; rather they convey the

appearance of known figures combined with other symbols. Because of its bold and luscious color and association with stereotypes of African American consumption, the watermelon is a repeated signifier of racial violence in Scott's oeuvre. Like the Black stereotypes that consume one's humanity, the watermelon in Scott's work devours or subsumes the body, deployed in such works as *Man Eating Watermelon* (1986; Pl. 7) and *Rodney King's Head Was Squashed Like a Watermelon* (1991; Fig. 7). The sculpture *Rodney King* references the eponymous individual who became an iconic victim of racial violence in the 1990s, combining in this piece King's beaten face with visual and titular references to the watermelon stereotype, thereby conveying the systemic and multifaceted nature of anti-Black racism.

The beating of King by white Los Angeles police officers on March 3, 1991, became a national conversation after the televised release of a grainy video by onlooker George Holliday. While the official police report recorded that King's injuries "were of a minor nature" and that he was "oblivious to pain," the video evidence shows that the victim was kicked at least seven times, shot four times with a Taser, and hit fifty-six times with nightsticks before handcuffed and dragged to the side of the road.³⁹ Among his numerous injuries, King sustained nine skull fractures, a shattered eye socket, kidney damage, and permanent brain damage.⁴⁰ Holliday's video, photographs of King's battered face, and an interview with King seated in a wheelchair aired repeatedly on local and national television stations. After the police officers were acquitted of all charges on April 29, 1992, anger over King's beating and the lack of officer accountability erupted in the L.A. uprising, which would leave fifty-three people dead, 2,300 injured, and at least a billion dollars in property damage.⁴¹

In *Rodney King's Head Was Squashed Like a Watermelon*, Scott composes the entire work (approximately eleven inches) from dark black beads, rendering one eye bloated and swollen in a raised circle, the other mashed into its socket. The beadwork's asymmetry and lumpiness underscore the corporeality of King's facial injuries. Scott has said of this work:

A watermelon has really red meat in it, and when you cleave it, it does look like a wound. But 'watermelon' is also a euphemism for Africans and African Americans in this culture. So, when you're hitting a watermelon, you're also beating up a stereotype.⁴²

Scott describes the interior of the watermelon as resembling a wound, one reinforced psychologically by the stereotype. Yet she alters the meaning of this abuse, remaking King's battered head as a metaphorical means of "beating up" or enacting symbolic violence onto the stereotype itself. The sculpture's green exaggerated lips and protruding red tongue provide the color references to a watermelon, while further amplifying the unnatural distortions and disfigurements of King's appearance after the police attack. With the addition of large, white beads as teeth, Scott references the colors of the four horses of the apocalypse, a prescient metaphor for the burning of Los Angeles after the acquittal of the white officers responsible for

striking King.⁴³ The use of red, black, and green further complement the colors of Black liberation, a concept that is succinctly drawn into question in this work. Scott's depiction of King's abuse cites the figuration of two principal methods of debasing Black identity: the racial stereotype and the prerogative of white-dominated power structures to assess and punish perceived Black misconduct. Despite this heavy-handed theme, the object itself is quirky in its intimate rendering of the human form, and its reference to a squashed piece of fruit.

In fact, Scott uses defamiliarization as her strategy in confronting King's racially-motivated beating. Too abstract to function as a portrait of King and too figural to be a watermelon, her sculpture plays with incongruity in a manner that reinforces a cultural fatigue with the ubiquitous media images of the battered King as well as the racist watermelon stereotype. Constructing King's face as a beaded sack instantly troubles his media portrayals, as we are provided a different kind of witnessing to the event; building the head, the simultaneous care and beauty undertaken by Scott, combined with her interpretation of the cruel beating that ruptured King's face, provides the disruptive foil that forces us to see the event, and the victim, anew. Scott rejects the mechanisms of the media (Holliday's video or the aftermath footage of King) to draw upon a larger picture conflating Blackness with threat (a perceived criminal in need of "correcting") or pleasure (consuming watermelon). Thus, rather than creating an image of Black humanity, Scott underscores white debasement. In this way, the work reflects the dangers facing all Black people in a white supremacist society. The watermelon metaphor continues to be apt. In response to the brutal beating and murder of her son, Tyre Nichols, by the Memphis police on January 7, 2023, RowVaughn Wells recalled, "His head was swollen like a watermelon.... When I saw him, I knew my son was gone. Even if he did live he would have been a vegetable."⁴⁴ Wells' watermelon/vegetable reference underscores the physicality of the abuse alongside the denial of Nichols's humanness.

More than twenty years after the creation of *Rodney King's Head Was Squashed Like a Watermelon*, Scott again referenced the subject of King in her 2014 exhibition at the Goya Gallery in Baltimore, entitled, "Can't we all just get along?" The title of her show paraphrases King's 1992 inquiry to the media and public, which was subjected to serious reflection but also comedic parody. Scott's continuous attention to racial tensions demands that she takes King's question seriously, yet she is more than willing to explore its humorous resonances. While her 1991 sculpture on King directly conveys the anger and frustration surrounding a specific event and person, much of Scott's work considers the racial body more broadly as a cultural entity both humorous and tragic.

The visual articulations of beaten and fragmented Black bodies carry historical and contemporary resonances that most viewers understandably wish to avoid, concerns contemplated in transdisciplinary contexts by art historians and scholars in Black studies, American studies, history, geography, among other fields. On this subject, Leigh Raiford recently queried in

Art Journal, “When does visual representation of Black death become a spectacle for critical or merely aesthetic consumption and when does it serve efforts toward justice?”⁴⁵ Courtney R. Baker likewise observed in her book on Black suffering and death, “There have been and continue to be great costs involved in displaying black bodies in states of ruin.”⁴⁶ Scott, Colescott, and others have faced these demons through satire, enabling their work to function differently from the photographic, aesthetic, and politically-inspired art of Black violence that Raiford and Baker reference in their scholarship. These scholars probe how images of Black suffering might inspire empathy and, in Baker’s words, “humane insight” rather than spectacle.⁴⁷

As a result, visual artists’ methods of dealing with violence and stereotypes often meet ambivalence if not outright censure by viewers unamused or unappreciative of their practices of exploration. Scott’s retrospective, *Joyce J. Scott Kickin’ It with the Old Masters*, opened at the Baltimore Museum of Art in 2000, but the traveling exhibition was cancelled by the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville, Tennessee, apparently due to her provocative look at sexuality, racial stereotypes, and the inclusion of racial slurs in her titles.⁴⁸ Concerns about “appropriate” representations of Blackness have long been attached to the sardonic work of Colescott, Charles, and Walker, who have also faced corresponding degrees of censure.

The 1990s witnessed sustained interest and concern in the artistic appropriation of racist stereotypes. In March 1998, Harvard University held a contentious conference, “Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke,” which accompanied an exhibition of Walker’s work, and included panelists made up of historians, artists, and curators, including Henry Louis Gates Jr., Julian Bond, Stokes Sims, Kenneth Goings, Saar, Weems, and Charles. Discussion focused on the merit of collecting Black memorabilia, the global variability of Black dolls, and the use of Black stereotypes in contemporary art.⁴⁹ Contestation over the creation of “positive images” of Blackness over the incorporation of stereotype and caricature continued on the pages of the *International Review of African American Art* (IRAAA), which positioned figures such as Saar and IRAAA editor Juliette Bowles at odds with the appropriative strategies of Walker and Charles.⁵⁰ While Scott’s work was not foregrounded in the conference or published discussions, her *Out to Dry* (1991) appeared in Bowles’s extended conversation, “Extreme Times Calls for Extreme Heroes,” in IRAAA, without analysis or specific mention. These charged conversations, however, may have informed the cancelling of Scott’s exhibition at the Frist two years later.

Describing the ambiguity of meaning in Walker’s antebellum silhouetted nightmares, Powell contests, “For Walker and other artistic traffickers in socio-cultural narratives of chaos, the only way the visual arts can even come close to the terrors of slavery, the horrifying, documented examples of white-on-black violence, and the psychological damage that racism has inflicted upon subsequent generations of Americans is through this narratively hyperbolic, distorted lens.”⁵¹ The quandary surrounding these artists’ creatively daring propositions becomes apparent when their satirical



Fig. 7. Joyce J. Scott, *Rodney King's Head Was Squashed Like a Watermelon* (1991), beads and thread, 10 3/4" x 7" x 6 1/2". Collection Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of the Women's Committee. Image courtesy of Goya Contemporary Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland.

intentions are rejected by their audience. As Fuentes Morgan explains, “Satire is complicated because in its effort to reframe the rules of the social game, the purpose of the game itself may ultimately be lost.”⁵² By extension, additional questions are called forth: When is a work of art incomprehensible as satire, and when does hyperbole go too far? And who—if anyone—gets to make this judgment?

In his contemplation of recent incidences of anti-Black violence, Darby English queries:

How *do* you do representation in a crisis? A crisis in culture means a crisis in thought. Confusion is par for the course; admitting this, less so.... But today, it seems, first and foremost crisis must be legible, accompanied by easy-to-use narratives that explain and direct—typically by reference to neat oppositionalities. But the vernacular, organic epistemologies that crisis actually precipitates muddle those oppositions, and, at the very least, invite us to consider what may be good for crisis thinking about less-than-perfect legibility.⁵³

English’s statement highlights the demand for readable narratives in representations of racial violence. Yet, he

suggests, lucidity often denies artistic exploration of the murkiness and unnamable components of this violence.

The purposeful uneasiness that Scott's work elicits speaks to the complexities of satire, but also its generative potential. Scott's figurative distortions suggest that there may be power in ruptured bodies and stereotypes. In discussing Wangechi Mutu's (b. 1972) *Ark Collection* (2006), a series of collages of Black women taken from pornographic and ethnographic photography, Jillian Hernandez notes the "pleasure" that can be derived from Mutu's collage interventions, a pleasure both conceptual and aesthetic in its "boundary troubling."⁵⁴ Scott's rupture of boundaries likewise speaks to her dissatisfaction with straightforward narratives, as didacticism prevents a deep dive into human absurdity. In rendering violation unfamiliar and downright strange, Scott uses injury and violence as a site for confronting these violations. Satirical art engaged with race encourages viewers to locate the source of racism; frequently viewers turn to the artist and creator rather than considering the larger challenges offered by the work. This art springs from unusual explorations that stimulate discomfort, however, and ideally prompt deliberation and dialogue.

Black humanity—and humanity more broadly—forms the central concern of Scott's oeuvre. Scott describes her work as her own kind of therapy with the hope of instilling the viewer with "radical empathy."⁵⁵ Her attention to Blackness, whiteness, and other identity formations attempts to reveal and disrupt hierarchal constructions, imploring the need for healing these minds and bodies in conflict.⁵⁶ Referencing the relationship between the creation of art and the realities of everyday human traumas, Scott has said, "I'd like my art to induce people to stop raping, torturing, and shooting each other. I don't have the ability to end violence, racism, and sexism. But my art can help them look and think."⁵⁷ Rather than singularly assigning blame, she uses her art to delve deeper into the collective shortcomings of humankind and our universal need for self-appraisal. This self-assessment is challenging, yet, in Scott's words, "the benefits of the struggle are massive."⁵⁸ Scott's work, as simultaneously comical and brutal, allows unconventional methods of interpreting our racist past and present. Simon Crichtley offers on the nature of humor: "Humor is a form of critical social anthropology, defamiliarizing the familiar, demythologizing the exotic and inverting the world of common sense. Humor views the world awry, bringing us back to the everyday by estranging us from it."⁵⁹ This statement reflects Scott's ability to absorb and reflect racial stereotypes, while also laughing at them, a means of speaking to their absurdity and rendering them comical on new terms not defined by their racist origins. As Crichtley concludes, "Humour can reveal us to be persons that, frankly, we would rather not be."⁶⁰ Laughing, while being uncomfortable doing so, is the power of Scott's work. •

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Negro Art (Univ. of Illinois Press), and *Beholding Christ and Christianity in African American Art*, a co-edited anthology with James Romaine (Penn. State Univ. Press), in 2017. She has contributed articles to *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, *Archives of American Art Journal*, and *Art Bulletin*, and book chapters to *Emma Amos: Color Odyssey* (2021) and the *Routledge Companion to African American Art* (2019).

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ENTANGLING RACE, GENDER, AND ANTEBELLUM SAVANNAH

SHARON NORWOOD'S OWENS-THOMAS HOUSE INTERVENTION

By Margaret Bridget Betz

I wanted to highlight the presence and absence of Black bodies in these historical settings. These beautiful objects are littered with the curly line, which cannot be removed. There is an immediate reaction, physical and emotional questioning; the viewer is challenged to reflect on their own personal relationship to the objects.

—Sharon Norwood¹

Perhaps there is no site more charming for Southern hospitality than an invitation to tea at the Drawing Room of the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters in Savannah, Georgia. In summer 2023, artist Sharon Norwood's (b. 1976) site-specific commission proposed an "intervention" in a historic, pre-Civil War mansion and slave quarters. This presentation, called *Look/See* (Pl. 8), organized by Elyse Gerstenecker, Curator of Decorative Arts at the Telfair Museums, required paying vigilant attention to the surrounding items, especially inside the elegant tea.² Indeed, as Norwood tells us, "I like to think of the work as seducing my audience, so that they get real close, until the horror of it is there, and so then they have to negotiate their way out of it."³ Norwood's intervention prompts some thought for the "downstairs" persons serving your tea, those of African descent who have maintained the Owens' family life—elegant, clean, and cultured. Originally built for a shipping merchant and completed in 1819, the house and living quarters, for slaves, was later purchased and occupied, in 1830, by George Welshman Owens, a lawyer, landowner, and enslaver, and by his wife and six children, and, at times, fourteen "enslaved" servants.⁴ Sensitivities in our own time to cultural heritage sites have greatly evolved since then, and the realm of Southern cultural institutions, including art museums, historic houses, and labor camps (plantations in the un-reconstructed narratives), have had to completely change the way they retell the past, the language of "enslaved" versus "slave."⁵

The custom of high tea, even now, is a visible remnant of settler colonialism in the Americas. Norwood has a keen eye in



Fig. 1. Sharon Norwood, *Hair Matters* (2018), custom overglaze drawings on vintage china. © Sharon Norwood.

the way *she* laid tea, for how style-meets-charm-cum-fur-covered-cup-and-saucer. But we're not meeting the Black version of Meret Oppenheim's 1936 Surrealist *Object* (*Le Déjeuner en fourrure*) (Lunch in Fur) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In many of her ceramics and mixed media series, such examples of tea service sets are gathered under the rubric *Hair Matters* (Fig. 1). Norwood's motif is the coil: large and small curly lines in many media (Fig. 2). On vintage porcelain teapots, teacups, and saucers, layers of overlaid linework are drawn, screen printed, and fired or heat transferred (utilizing Norwood's backyard kiln), making the set literally look hairy.⁶ Atop the flowery, Rococo patterns of the tea pot and set, each of the kiln-fired layers of black paint, squiggles that suggest kinky hair, introduces the "ghosts" of enslaved persons who prepared our repast (sometimes the overlay multiplies into a tangle resembling the stray strand from an African woman with natural hair). The ornate, romantic space that flourished in the garden of Jean-Honoré's famous painting, *The Swing* of 1767, was also an influence for Norwood's conception of



Fig. 2. Sharon Norwood, *Look/See* (2023), installation view of the Drawing Room at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters, Savannah, GA. Photo: Sharon Norwood. © Sharon Norwood.

“curly” spaces. As a Black artist of Caribbean descent, Norwood offers that “hair becomes the stand-in for the Black body.”⁷ “Using the line as a marker for the Black body allows me to, perhaps, share longer, more layered conversations, as opposed to if I was actually using an individual or a specific person,” she affirms.⁸ Norwood’s manipulation of the curly line, juxtaposed with found and historical objects, underscores her commentary on race, gender, class, and labor, so that the curly lines also have the capacity to live, she attests, “within the decorative, ornate space that connects us back to the formal language of drawing, and mark making.”⁹ Norwood’s subtlety represents one of the more clever disruptions in the expectations of a white visitor. The question arises, Who is attracted to and who is repelled by the presence of linear elements suggesting hairs on the surface of an entire tea service?

Norwood received her BFA in painting from the University of South Florida in 2013, and her MFA at Florida State University in 2018. Her work has been seen, since 2012, in close to sixty international exhibitions, both group and solo shows.¹⁰ Her parents are from Jamaica where Sharon was born. At age nine they moved to Canada, and when asked, she identifies as Jamaican-Canadian. In 2000 she met her husband, and they moved to the US.¹¹ Since settling in Savannah, her back-yard kiln has steadily fired her ceramics, both hand-built and mold-cast, and has facilitated the reglazing of commercial tea sets. Several production houses have made the yards of fabric designs used in her installations.

The integrity of Savannah’s full history comes to our attention at the Owens-Thomas House, and the complexities of how Black enslaved persons served the privileged class. In Norwood’s intervention, we “see” traces of the invisible servants, what is appropriate and misplaced, and the accompanying sensibilities of beauty and hair, desire and shame—vestiges of the far too personal in such elegant formality. This drawing room is, indeed, a “white person’s setting” for the enjoyment of life’s finest things. A shaft of hair, let alone a tangle left on plate and cup, present disturbing



Fig. 3. Sharon Norwood, table display in *Look/See* (2023), installation view of the Drawing Room at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters, Savannah, GA. Photo: Sharon Norwood. © Sharon Norwood.

questions: Will we eat and drink from these ‘hairy’ things? Will we ‘swallow’ such an intrusion of the very reality of life, dished up by our city’s complicated past? Most importantly, Can traces of the invisible and the enslaved attract a diverse viewership to these historic sites? Norwood foregrounds that question for those alert to her subtleties. As Gerstenecker explained, “Sharon Norwood’s work tells stories about enslavement and resistance in a visually disruptive way, adding a different layer to the narratives that our Historical Interpreters share with visitors to the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters.”¹² The artist herself calls it “more of a still life intervention that reminds us of the cost” of our luxuries, a cost very high for those who served and who labor, even now.

The Drawing Room is *the* most elegant front room representative of the nineteenth century in Savannah. The ceiling dome illusion, with corner gathers of “cloth,” was skillfully constructed of plaster, but who even thinks of the unpaid skilled laborers and hands that laid brick and papered walls, hands that installed the decorative plaster gracing this home? At first, Norwood’s intervention blends into the décor of the Drawing Room, but the overflowing tabletop, a still life with tea, is an accumulation of ceramics, bricks, peanuts, candlestick, and knick-knacks that “fall from a height” down onto the carpet (Pl. 9). Some of the tea service is even broken, and so an element of sound (the bell-like cracking of fine ceramics) enters the ears of an alert visitor (Fig. 3). As Norwood puts it, the



Fig. 4. Sharon Norwood, detail, table in *Look/See* (2023), installation view of the Drawing Room at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters, Savannah, GA. Photo: Sharon Norwood. © Sharon Norwood.

sounds of breaking china “disrupt, dismantle, and create space to amplify and honor the lived experience of the enslaved occupants and shed light on the forms of resistance active in the space, as well as the intimate connectedness between enslaved and ‘enslaver.’”¹³ A silver pitcher reflects the sculptural “knick-knack” of a Black boy (Fig. 4); on the floor and the low shelf of a sideboard, Savannah Grey bricks, dating back to the early 1800s and historically made with Black labor—today reclaimed, cleaned, valued, and reused in many historic restorations—are presented both in the original and in Norwood’s glazed ceramics, including touches of gilding. By their juxtaposition, the hidden labor of this product and the basket of fired clay peanuts atop the bricks strike the viewer to the universally valued silver. On the table rest wax fruit (haphazardly covered with Norwood’s curly, tangled fabric patterns and old-fashioned, embroidered tablecloths), enlarged clothespins, enticing macaroons, and front desk bells as in a hotel—all suggest a jumble of hidden laborers. On the windows, Norwood’s sheer fabric brings in images from Slave Auction Papers (also crumpled and dangling from the three-tiered table located elsewhere in the room). Provocation abounds in this antebellum “space of resistance.”



Fig. 5. Sharon Norwood, sideboard display of books, peanuts, and Savannah Grey bricks in *Look/See* (2023), installation at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters, Savannah, GA. Photo: Sharon Norwood. © Sharon Norwood.

The marble mantelpiece in the Drawing Room holds a mixed media work of ribbons, costume jewelry, wire, string, lace and more (Pl. 10). At lower left is a large version of the coil, and it is black and glossy, flecked with gold. String and wire hang down over the relief carving of a recumbent nymph. The artist writes, “It’s an offering of sorts to the ancestors.... [I] was thinking about what was lost.... [It’s] meant to reference Vodou [sic] culture, a ‘religion’ that dates back to west Africa, brought to the Americas by the enslaved. It highlights resistance and agency [...] enslaved Africans practiced Vodou as a way to retain cultural histories and spiritual beliefs despite their conditions.”¹⁴ The two sideboards hold things both ordinary and subtly disruptive. At the left as one enters, a set of books on the sideboard includes highlights from American history, such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, *Amistad*, *Beloved*, and *Krak Teet*, which is Gullah Geechee for talk or tell stories. The bookends are ceramic casts of Savannah Grey Bricks, one gilded and others glazed black. A small pile of ceramic peanuts that look quite natural sits atop *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Fig. 5). Everywhere the covers and bricks have been overprinted with the coil motif. The sideboard at the right has two levels, and a mirror on the back shows the rear side of the bricks and peanuts on the bottom shelf (Fig. 6). On top, the white marble holds a brass wire stand with a teapot below and cup and



Fig. 6. Sharon Norwood, sideboard in *Look/See* (2023), installation view of the Drawing Room at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters, Savannah, GA. Photo: Sharon Norwood. © Sharon Norwood.

saucer above, overprinted with the coil motif. At the left of that an oval, a silverplate tray holds a jumble of ceramics. Flower buds set in the interstices of large versions of the coil made with solid ropes of fired clay that are quite heavy. The flower-print glazing on white creates a delicate and almost weightless illusion, however, and suggests an abundance of refinement and opulence.

Contemporary controversies keep us in mind of “the original sin” of our nation’s foundation—slavery in the Americas. In 1859, the historic “Weeping Time” reported the largest sale of enslaved persons from plantations at Ten Broeck Race Course on the outskirts of Savannah, what now persists as an “obscured landscape.”¹⁵ Today, however, reckoning with the hidden past is the work of truthfully narrating the builders and maintainers of the rich life of planters and other factors here, building on the complex start to this 1733 colony and the philanthropic ambition of James Oglethorpe, whose own source of wealth was property in Surrey, England. As a Parliament member concerned early on with bettering the horrid lives of impressed sailors of the Royal Navy, Oglethorpe’s subsequent intent to uplift the debtors of his nation prompted his leadership of groups that sailed the ocean to work out their own capitalist improvement on the bluffs above the Savannah River. In contrast to all other English colonies on the shores of North America, especially nearby South Carolina, Oglethorpe’s regu-



Fig. 7. Name Wall at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters, Savannah, GA.

lations forbade unpaid labor, like slavery, so as to encourage the “deserving poor” men’s habits of industry. Soon though, the disparity between enslaved and free labor caused unbridled complaints among Oglethorpe’s colonists. They had to build farms out of the pine barrens and, crucially, guard their frontiers against Catholic Spanish incursions in these disputed lands. They were undermanned and poorly fed and armed, and as their noble goals were abandoned in a few years, kidnapped Africans were brought in to work. Yet, Savannah continued to surprise, then and now. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in 1964, called Savannah “the most desegregated city south of the Mason-Dixon Line.”¹⁶ The Owens-Thomas House, begun 1819, surprisingly used ancient Roman technology, unheard-of in nineteenth-century colonies: an indoor privy and plumbing, with rain catchment on the roof. Skepticism about odors pervading the home prevented most from even contemplating such a change (it took about thirty years for another home to install an indoor privy). Other cutting-edge technology includes the first hybrid sailing steamship to cross from Savannah to England, the SS Savannah, in 1819. One could gather all these facts of Savannah as a site for “innovation,” and indeed, today, this very theme powers the idea of the town as a hub for creativity and innovation, not something those exploring a romantic antebellum past usually jump to.

Docent commentaries in historic homes have seen thoroughly new facts incorporated, the names of the enslaved given almost equal time with the names of the enslavers—the start of the tour at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters is a room paneled with boards burned with the names of the enslaved found in the families’ records (Fig. 7). Norwood honors the enslaved persons here so “others can see this home

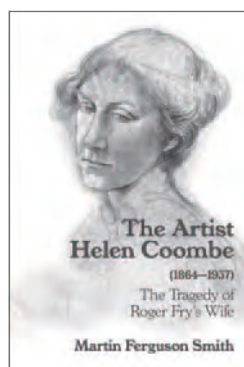
as a site of resistance, not solely as an architectural wonder or a place for idealized romantic beauty, but also in consideration of the enslaved persons held at the estate."¹⁷ Entangling her own Otherness with the intersectionality of race, gender, and conditions of enslavement and resistance, Norwood seduces the historic homes' buff into a racialized place where the surprise of healing can accompany enlightenment. •

Margaret Bridget Betz, an art historian based in Savannah, Georgia, recently published "Icons in the Present Tense: Janet Culbertson's Moral Imagination," in *Woman's Art Journal* (Spring/Summer 2022).

Notes

1. Sharon Norwood, Artist's Statement, *Obsidian: Literature & Arts in the African Diaspora*, 2018, <https://obsidianlit.org/project/sharon-norwood/>.
2. Sharon Norwood's *Look/See* was installed at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters, Savannah, Georgia, from May 18 through Sept. 12, 2023.
3. See Rob Hessler, "Sharon Norwood Investigates Black Identity with Her Curly Lines Artworks," *Savannah Morning News*, April 21, 2021, <https://www.savannahnow.com/story/entertainment/2021/04/21/sharon-norwood-uses-her-curly-lines-artwork-shape-black-identity-savannah-ga/7258747002/>; "Art of the Air: Sharon Norwood," interview by Rob Hessler, radio, 30:25, [savannahnow.com/entertainment](https://www.savannahnow.com/entertainment).
4. In 1954, the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters was opened to the public under the auspices of the Telfair Museums: <https://www.telfair.org/visit/owens-thomas/>. See also, "Telfair Museum's Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters: Telling the Untold Story," Telfair Museums, May 2020, <https://www.telfair.org/news/telfair-museums-owens-thomas-house-slave-quarters-telling-the-untold-story/>.
5. See Shannon Browning-Mullis, Curator of History and Decorative Arts, "Why We Use Enslaved," Telfair Museums, Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters, May 4, 2020, <https://www.telfair.org/article/why-we-use-enslaved/>.
6. See "Sharon Norwood," in *Contemporary Black American Ceramic Artists*, ed. Donald. A. Clark and Chotsani Elaine Dean (Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 2022), 168.
7. "Artist Interview: Sharon Norwood," *Textures: The History and Art of Black Hair*, Kent State Univ. Museum, Kent, Ohio, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvVgF0-aJco>.
8. "Artist Interview: Sharon Norwood," *Textures*.
9. Sharon Norwood, interview by Margo Moore, the New York Public Library, George Bruce Library, March 15, 2021, <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2021/03/15/artist-interview-sharon-norwood>.
10. In 2022, Norwood held two solo exhibitions: *Sharon Norwood's Drawing Room*, International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP), New York; and *The Root of the Matter*, Washington & Lee Univ. Museums, Lexington, VA.
11. Norwood, direct message to the author, March 9, 2024.
12. "Telfair Museums highlights #Art912 artist Sharon Norwood in the first contemporary art spotlight at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters in over a decade," *Savannah Business Journal*, July 14, 2023, https://www.savannahbusinessjournal.com/featured/july-14---telfair-museums-highlights-art912-artist-sharon-norwood-in-the-first-contemporary-art-spotlight-at-the-owens-thomas-house-and-slave-quarters-in-over-a-decade/article_65de7372-20e8-11ee-90fd-133804827c13.html.
13. "#Art912: Sharon Norwood, Look/See: Artist Sharon Norwood in the First Contemporary Art Spotlight at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters in Over a Decade," press release, Telfair Museums, July 11, 2023, <https://www.telfair.org/news/telfair-museums-highlights-art912-artist-sharon-norwood-in-the-first-contemporary-art-spotlight-at-the-owens-thomas-house-and-slave-quarters-in-over-a-decade/>.
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15. Kwesi DeGraft-Hanson, "Unearthing the Weeping Time: Savannah's Ten Broeck Race Course and 1859 Slave Sale," *Southern Spaces*, Feb. 18, 2010, <https://southernspaces.org/2010/unearthing-weeping-time-savannahs-ten-broeck-race-course-and-1859-slave-sale/>. See also, Leslie M. Harris and Ramey Berry, eds., *Slavery in Savannah* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 2014).
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Women Artists



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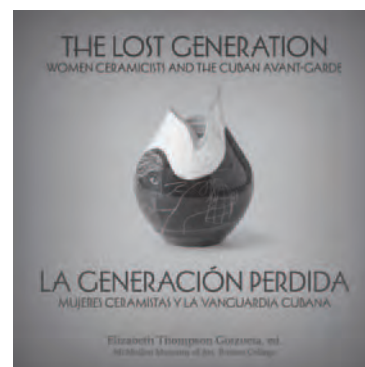
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COMMITTED TO SURVIVAL

THE WOMANIST VISIONS OF VARNETTE P. HONEYWOOD AND ANNIE F. LEE

By crystal am nelson

Varnette P. Honeywood's (1950–2010) *Dixie Peach* (1978; Fig. 1 and Pl. 11) and Annie F. Lee's (1935–2014) *Ash* (1983; Fig. 2 and Pl. 12) depict two distinct yet related scenes: two mothers tend to their daughters, providing intensive physical care for their bodies. Both families, in their homes, appear at ease in their environments: the mothers are dressed comfortably in house clothes, hair set in rollers, while the daughters wear an assortment of undergarments. In *Dixie Peach*, a mother and her two daughters are in the kitchen engaged in what was, by the time of the painting's execution, in 1978, a seventy-year-old Black tradition of pressing and curling the hair. Dressed in a floral smock, the mother is in the midst of straightening her youngest daughter's hair using a hot comb, and the Royal Crown hairdressing rests in the young girl's lap. The eldest daughter, having undergone the routine already, admires herself in a hand-held mirror. In *Ash*, by Lee, a mother and her young daughter are immersed in yet another time-honored Black tradition—using Vaseline to soften and moisturize the skin, the mother vigorously rubs the ointment on her daughter's leg, perched in her lap, while the little girl makes an earnest effort to climb into her mother's arms, perhaps sit in her lap. Both Honeywood and Lee have chosen to create particular visions of the Black maternal, focusing on the special relationships shared between Black mothers and daughters. More specifically, Honeywood and Lee emphasize rituals of care that intersect with the cultivation of Black beauty, which, due to systemic racism, have always started in the home and in childhood for Black women. These domestic scenes of mothering show the ways “beauty culture” and an ethics of care are transmitted intergenerationally, as the mothers provide concentrated physical care for their daughters' bodies, demonstrating not only self-care but also the processes by which one takes care of others to build relationships and community. Even though, as Black feminist scholar Jennifer Nash aptly observes, Black motherhood is increasingly imagined as a space of crisis and as a metaphorical ground zero for Black death, the figure of the Black mother, as she is imagined by Honeywood and Lee,



Fig. 1. Varnette P. Honeywood, *Dixie Peach* (1978), color lithograph, 30" x 22 1/2". Private Collection.

serves as the site and creator of a safe time and space for Black daughters, Black families, and Black communities.¹ Safe time is the temporal condition during which one is protected from harm, injury, danger, or risk, and safe space means a place where Black subjects can act and speak freely, feel comfortable



Fig. 2. Annie F. Lee, *Ash* (1983), acrylic on canvas, 8" x 10". Private Collection.

and welcome, and build community without fear of violence on account of skin, color, or race.

Much maligned, Black motherhood has long been the subject of sustained debate and surveillance. The watershed moment came in 1965 when the then US assistant secretary of labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan published "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," better known as the Moynihan Report, where he argued that Black families were damaged, in part, because "a very large percentage" had female heads of households.² Black artists have long addressed the subject in an effort to recuperate, revitalize, and reclaim the Black maternal as sacred. Carrie Mae Weems's (b. 1953) *Kitchen Table Series* (1990) is one example of an artist's response to the Moynihan Report. The series of twenty black and white photographs and fourteen text panels tell the story of one woman's life as it is conducted in the intimate space of her kitchen. While several characters make regular appearances in the photonovella, it is the moments the woman shares with her daughter that are most poignant. *Untitled (Woman and Daughter with Makeup)* (1990; Fig. 3) depicts the female protagonist sitting at the kitchen table, looking in a mirror and putting on makeup, while her daughter emulates her. This photograph demonstrates both the bond between mother and daughter and how mothers serve as role models for their daughters. Efforts by Weems and others also led to the reclamation of Black womanhood as abundant and critical to the expression of Black female



Fig. 3. Carrie Mae Weems, *Untitled (Woman and Daughter with Makeup)* from the *Kitchen Table Series* (1990), gelatin silver print, 27" x 27". Gift of Helen Kornblum in honor of Roxana Marcoci. © 2024 Carrie Mae Weems.



Fig. 4. Elizabeth Catlett, *Mother and Child* (1956), limestone, 11 1/4" x 7" x 7". Gift of Friends of Education of The Museum of Modern Art, The Modern Women's Fund, and Dr. Alfred Gold (by exchange).



Fig. 5. Elizabeth Catlett, *Mother and Child* (1959), lithograph, 17" x 12 7/25". Ben and Beatrice Goldstein Foundation Collection. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, DC.

identity. If we look back to the Social Realists and to Elizabeth Catlett (1915–2012), more specifically, we understand the precursors for how the visual was brought to bear on this topic. Since graduate school, Catlett revisited, time and again, the themes of maternal love and protection in both her sculptures and prints. Her first piece addressing this is *Negro Mother and Child* (1940), a limestone sculpture now missing, featuring a kneeling Black mother holding her infant in her lap; a later version from 1956 (Fig. 4) is useful for comparison. Submitted in 1940 as her thesis project at the University of Iowa, Catlett's interest was Negro motherhood, expressed in the ways she interlaced the figures to express maternity.³ Catlett endeavored to produce a sculpture devoid of sentimentality and yet clearly representative of the loving relationship between them.⁴ In a later work, the 1959 lithograph, *Mother and Child* (Fig. 5), Catlett features a young Black mother closely holding her infant son, whose bodies are deftly rendered together through the rich tonal gradations made available by the printmaking process. The mother gently smiles, cradling him in her left arm, hand supporting his head, while the child's closed fist rests on her shoulder, looking at something beyond the frame. Both works call to mind Madonna and Child imagery, registering a sacred quality to the images. They also recall what Melanie Anne Herzog calls "radical empathy."⁵

Images of the Black maternal ground this discussion in fundamental ideas of womanism. To better understand the relationships between motherhood and womanism, it is important to revisit poet and writer Alice Walker's foundational texts. In 1979, Walker first used the term "womanist" in "Coming Apart," a short story about a Black couple arguing over the husband's addiction to pornography, and its effects on their marriage. There is a line where Walker writes, "The wife has never considered herself a feminist—though she is, of course a 'womanist.' A 'womanist' is a feminist, only more common."⁶ Here, Walker draws a clear distinction between a feminist and a womanist, and yet she places them on the same spectrum of resistance activity. Womanists are more prevalent culturally, which is to say that Walker asserts how more [Black] women find greater ideological affinities with womanism than feminism. As she elaborated in her groundbreaking collection of essays from 1983, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (the title taken from her 1972 essay), the opening pages offer a detailed, numbered definition of the term womanist to the reader:

1. *FROM WOMANISH.* (Opp. of "girlish," i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. *Serious.*
2. *Also:* A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?" Ans.: "Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented." Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time."
3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless.*
4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender.⁷

Walker roots the term womanism in the Black maternal to reflect the relationships between Black mothers and their precocious daughters, but also to emphasize some of the salient characteristics of a womanist: "Responsible. In Charge."

*Serious.*⁸ Womanism is a pro-woman, sociopolitical position within the Black community. It is critical to understand that, although womanists are pro-women, they are not anti-male. Sociologist Deborah King nicely summarizes this position: “The concerns of the womanist perspective are the survival, affirmation, and empowerment of all persons, male and female.”⁹ However, this is conceived as a fundamentally maternal labor, though not necessarily women’s labor. To cite scholar and activist Layli Maparyan, from her comprehensive analysis in *The Womanist Idea*: “Motherly power evinces from a combination of love, caretaking, and authority; perhaps most importantly, it is tethered to a sense of unbreakable ties that bind a group of people, however different they each may seem or be. This is why motherhood serves as a trope of womanist social and ecological transformation methodology....”¹⁰ In a womanist context, motherhood becomes detached from its biological confines and takes on an activist role driven largely by love ethics and an ethics of care.

An integral part of womanist praxis is the mandate to create what sociologist Patricia Hill Collins identifies as safe spaces, a definition this article builds upon. According to Collins, there are specific social spaces where Black women can resist hegemony, give voice, and obtain empowerment through self-definition.¹¹ Self-identified womanists embrace the responsibility of establishing sanctuaries and sites of belonging for all Black women, specifically, and ultimately all Black people. According to literary scholar Farah Jasmine Griffin, “Safe spaces are both material and discursive.”¹² They can be actual locales as well as objects around which oppressed and exploited groups, such as Black women, gather for the “seeing of” representations that reflect the ideas and everyday experiences of the subjugated. “The creation of art and culture also evokes safe spaces,” submits art historian and curator Kellie Jones, further noting that art objects “create safe spaces for contemplation, peace, beauty, the articulation of love, aesthetics, and resistance.”¹³

As acts of resistance deeply rooted in womanist thought, many Black Romantic artists produce images that reject the long-standing, controlling images of Black women, such as the “mammy” and “Welfare Queen.” Active since the late seventies, Black Romantic artists have worked in the figurative tradition and exhibited almost exclusively at Black art venues, avoiding participation in the postmodern discourse that tends to define the mainstream contemporary art world. Rather, they are considered romantic because they present sentimental, nostalgic, and readily accessible themes and subjects that affirm traditionally held values in the Black community (church, family, prayer, etc.).¹⁴ This paper examines Honeywood and Lee as critical examples of this discourse, even as neither artist explicitly identified as a womanist; however, their bodies of work show that both careers reflected a womanist consciousness, and through their exploration of rich material inspired by the Black women’s blues tradition, both artists crafted identities for Black women that sustain self-esteem. Furthermore, their depictions of the everyday occurrences and experiences in Black women’s lives are modes of refusal for both racist and sexist interpellations. Constitutive

of individual and collective Black women’s voices, Honeywood and Lee’s art practices, as Collins states, “express a fully articulated womanist standpoint.”¹⁵

Born in Los Angeles, California, in 1950, Honeywood began serious art studies at age twelve at the Chouinard Art Institute (now part of CalArts). She continued her art studies at Spelman College, the first historically Black, all women’s institute of higher learning, in Atlanta, Georgia, from which she earned a BFA in 1972, followed in 1974 by a Master of Education from the University of Southern California. Working in a wide range of media, though primarily in painting and collage, Honeywood developed a signature style she referred to as figurative abstraction—profiles and silhouettes define her portraits of everyday Black folk in familiar settings engaged in mundane activities, such as families cooking together in the kitchen, multiple generations gathering for church socials, or best friends communing with one another on the front porch. Creating vibrant genre scenes, she deftly uses bold colors, patterns, and textures to reflect her community of people and places.

For the 1979 documentary, *Vernette’s World: A Study of a Young Artist*, Honeywood told filmmaker Carroll Parrott Blue that, thematically, she made the effort “to illustrate the strong, reassuring, and free expressions of proud Black people.”¹⁶ This is especially true for Black women, for whom Honeywood had a particular artistic interest, and she sought to celebrate Black women’s beauty, as well as their power and authority in the community, through affirming images that honor what Collins called a “collective self-defined black women’s standpoint.”¹⁷ These positions are combined: individual acts of resistance and refusal performed in their everyday lives that challenge and reject domination, exploitation, and controlling images of Black womanhood. Returning to *Dixie Peach* of 1978, Honeywood’s composition countervails the predominant representations, identified by Collins, of the Black matriarch and welfare mother, both images symbolizing the “bad” Black mother; where the Black matriarch characterizes an overly aggressive, unfeminine Black woman who fails to fulfill her “womanly” duties at home, the welfare mother is portrayed as an unwed mother who lacks the ambition to gain and maintain employment. Lacking a work ethic, she fails to pass it onto her children. Not only are these two archetypes deemed pathological, but so, too, the Black family with the Black mother at the helm. Honeywood contests these stereotypes by using a triangular composition for the figures in *Dixie Peach* to emphasize strength, stability, care, and nurture. Their centralized placement grants the image a sacred, devotional quality. She uses three distinct, rich hues of brown to honor the diversity of skin tones that exist both within the Black community and within Black families. As Walker states, a womanist is “traditionally universalist, as in: ‘Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?’ Ans.: ‘Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented.’”¹⁸

Honeywood asks that we expand our view of the Black maternal—to see it is not solely mothers tending to their



Fig. 6. Varnette P. Honeywood, *St. Sapphire* (2000).

children's needs, but it is also the transference of knowledge from one generation to the next. In the lithograph, she included objects, such as a sprouting potato on the windowsill, which underscores this cultivation of young life happening in the household, likewise reflected in the calendar hanging above the stove, on which Juneteenth is circled in red to suggest that the mother teaches her daughters to celebrate Black people's triumphs and honor their tribulations.

Throughout her forty-seven-year career, Honeywood produced a body of work that showcased her commitment to making visible the stories of Black women and girls. She used Afrocentric motifs as well as bold colors, patterns, and textures to generate a positive tone in her artworks. She did not create positive images merely to respond to negative representations of Black women. Honeywood sought to reflect what she observed in the community: sights that were not commonly or artistically rendered in honor of quotidian Black womanhood. The quotidian, asserts Tina Campt, is not merely "passive everyday acts," but rather "a practice honed by the dispossessed to create possibility within the constraints of everyday life."¹⁹ In this context, we can think of quotidian Black womanhood as the necessary creative practices in which Black women engage to develop their own identities: racial, gender,



Fig. 7. Varnette P. Honeywood, *Virtuous Woman* (1988), acrylic on canvas, 30 1/2" x 22 3/4".

and sexual. The banal, the mundane, and the everyday lived experiences of Black women are strategies for survival on varying scales. Whereas *Dixie Peach* orients viewers around the Black maternal vis-à-vis grooming rituals, paintings such as *St. Sapphire* (2000; Fig. 6 and Pl. 13) and *Virtuous Woman* (1988; Fig. 7) are two examples of Honeywood's efforts to visually translate the ways Black women grapple with objectification and the controlling images fostered by such degrading actions.

Through *St. Sapphire*, the artist interrogates the caricature of the same name. The Sapphire caricature was born on the minstrel-style radio show *Amos 'n' Andy*, which aired from 1928 to 1960, with the character, Sapphire Stevens, as wife of the central character, George Kingfish Stevens. The creators of the show, Freeman F. Gosden and Charles J. Correll, played all the roles until 1935, when female actresses began voicing characters.²⁰ As the show developed, Sapphire became one of its central characters;²¹ she made her television debut in 1951 when the show was adapted for television.²² In the role of Sapphire, producers cast Ernestine Wade, who played her as "a demanding scold [and] kind of emasculating harpy;" then, she became shorthand for an angry Black woman. According to bell hooks, Sapphires are the counterparts to the submissive and loyal Aunt Jemima image: "As Sapphires, black women were depicted as evil, treacherous, bitchy, stubborn, and hateful."²³ However, Honeywood subverts these stereotypes,



Fig. 8. Annie F. Lee, *Gramma* (2013), acrylic on canvas, 8" x 10". Private Collection.

and its liabilities become assets. In her portrayal, Sapphire becomes assertive, no-nonsense, and gregarious. The embossed white dress contrasts dramatically with her ebony skin and emphasizes the figure's Blackness. She is formidable. Tall and curvy, with her hands on her hips, she nearly fills the frame. She invites admiration. The Adinkra symbols adorning the frame represent St. Sapphire's attributes that Honeywood borrowed from the Akan people of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Traditionally, Akan royalty wore cloth stamped with Adinkra symbols to special occasions, such as funerals, where the textiles represented the characteristics of the deceased or conveyed messages to them.²⁴ Though Adinkra symbols have since become used ubiquitously, their purpose remains the same: to visually communicate knowledge and wisdom. Of the four symbols Honeywood includes, the two on the top and bottom left sides of the canvas are of particular note. Called the ram's horns, meaning humility with strength, and the chief of Adinkra symbols, exuding greatness, charisma, and leadership, the symbols reframe Sapphire's attributes as they were distorted by binary thinking and objectification.²⁵ By comparison, Honeywood's *Virtuous Woman* is provocative for its liberal use of *nkyinkyim*, the Adinkra symbol of initiative, dynamism, and versatility; it reflects the tortuous nature of life, requiring one to be versatile and resilient.²⁶ In the case of Black women, the twists and turns of racism and sexism require them to be nimble in order to survive adversity. The

abundance of cowrie shells may suggest the wealth of resources available to Black women for Black feminine survivance.

Honeywood's images, particularly her portraits of women and girls, offer models of Black womanhood that not only counter the dominant frames used to demean Black women but that are also more reflective of how Black women see themselves and their worlds. By rendering her figures with minimal features, sometimes no features, the artist allows audiences to project themselves onto the images in order to take refuge.

Like Honeywood, Annie F. Lee's images represent a fully articulated womanist standpoint. Born in Gadsden, Alabama, in 1935, and raised in Chicago, Lee started painting as a child but began her professional career late at age forty and had her first gallery exhibition at fifty. By that time in her life, she had endured much tragedy and struggles. She lost her first husband to cancer, then her son to a car accident; in quick succession, her father, brother, and ex-second husband all passed away. For much of her adult life, Lee survived as a single mother who worked three jobs at times to support her family and put herself through school. For her, art was a critical outlet. During what was, perhaps, her darkest period, painting became the primary means through which she coped and expressed her grief and sorrow. After taking one year off from work to paint, she developed her signature style and techniques. Omitting facial features, she chose instead to exaggerate body language and elongate and curve the limbs to achieve a range of emotions typically associated with the face. This technique enables viewers to relate to the figures in the paintings. To enhance this relatability, Lee, like Honeywood, renders her figures in a range of skin tones representative of the Black community, from bone black to yellow bone.

Lee's oeuvre was inspired by her personal life experiences as well as by the sights and sites observed in her surrounding communities, particularly invested in telling the stories of Black women and girls. Her representations of Black women are deeply rooted in the legacy of the blues. Angela Davis writes that "women's blues served as an important site for the independent elaboration and affirmation of subjectivity and community for women of the black working class."²⁷ Having lived multiple lives and identities—the single, working mother; the grieving widow and mother (who lost her youngest child); and the survivor of domestic abuse—Lee understood the blues that many if not most Black women feel, and the working-class conditions under which many Black women live. Having cultivated a point of view best described as womanist, Lee successfully translated it into highly sympathetic genre scenes that present quotidian Black womanhood as subject matter worthy of aesthetic appreciation.

For example, in *Ash* from 1983, what appears on the surface of a rather mundane act, a mother putting Vaseline on her child, is, after spending more time with the image, apparently an endearing intimacy between a mother and daughter making visible "motherly power"—again, what Maparyan

tells us “evinces from a combination of love, caretaking, and authority.”²⁸ Lee produced a number of works that explored motherhood, mothering, and the maternal. *Gramma* (2013; Fig. 8) is more of a minimalist composition depicting a young granddaughter kneeling at the feet of her grandmother, seated in a red overstuffed chair, and showing her an album of family pictures. In the Black community, the grandmother functions as an othermother—a woman who assists a blood mother or relation by sharing mothering responsibilities. According to Collins, othermothers are central to the institution of Black motherhood, and thus, arguably, formative to the networks of care upon which it is predicated.²⁹ In Lee’s *Gramma*, the grandmother is physically imposing and nearly envelops her granddaughter, with her hand on the granddaughter’s shoulder, practically swallowing it. This is a technique employed by the artist to create a sense of security and safety for the little girl.

In addition to the Black maternal, Lee is interested in “women’s culture” or, more specifically, care as a mode of engagement between Black women. Her 2007 painting, *Humility* (Fig. 9 and Pl. 14), depicts a foot-washing ritual between two older women, where one, with the green smock, gently washes her companion’s foot. By taking care while giving care, it shows the care recipient how to receive care, as well as how to give care, so that she may reciprocate and pay it forward. The onions hanging in the back right corner suggest the caregiver is a healer, as the root vegetable features heavily in Black folk medicine. The women’s outfits signal a range of African diasporic cosmologies and religious practices where the initiates wear white (although unidentifiable here from one specific religion). Lee, a devout woman, was likely inspired by the biblical tale of Jesus washing his disciples’ feet, an exercise performed according to the Bible to correct their misperception of position in the kingdom. Lee’s interpretation of the subject reflects the primacy of Black women’s relationships with one another in the development and affirmation of Black women’s subjectivity. Care, often in the form of mothering, is vital to these relationships. Mothering, Alexis Pauline Gumbs tells us, is precisely what community building requires.

Through her art, Lee invites us to consider the myriad methodologies of care that Black women utilize in constructing safe spaces as well as in modeling a type of womanhood that affirms Black women’s lived realities. *Ash*, *Gramma*, and *Humility* represent forms of Black mothering, a manifestation of care rooted in the understanding that Black life has value outside of fungibility and, therefore, must be nurtured. In each composition, the figures are touching each other, and the love and care with which the figures are touched underscores how critical the act of positive touch is for Black subjects, whose bodies have historically been at the mercy of those who despise Black flesh. In her Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *Beloved* (1987), author Toni Morrison vividly explains the importance of not only loving touch but also honoring the sanctity of the Black body. In the well-known scene where Baby Suggs calls the community to the Clearing for Church, she implores them to “Love it. Love it hard.” Suggs goes on to remind them that “Yonder [...] No more do they love they skin



Fig. 9. Annie F. Lee, *Humility* (2007), acrylic on canvas, 8" x 10". Private Collection.

on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face ‘cause they don’t love that either. You got to love it, you!”³⁰ Through Suggs, Morrison is describing care at its most basic and yet most profound. Baby Suggs sets forth the proposition that care and love, for the self and others, has resistive power. Lee visually taps into this power. She privileges the Black body in her work, over and above the face. While she aestheticizes the Black body and its physicality, she does not objectify them. Her visual treatment of the body positions it as the expression of the total self.

The art practices of Varnette P. Honeywood and Annie F. Lee challenge hegemonic constructs of Black womanhood. Their art serves as a refusal of the forces that maintain objectifying images of Black women as the Other and use them to justify intersecting oppressions. Honeywood and Lee reveal the high stakes involved in the visual representation of Black women, namely the power of self-definition. Not only does their art offer compelling ways of exploring issues of identity, community building, the Black maternal, and safe spaces, but it also allows us to think through Black womanhood beyond the archetype. Honeywood and Lee are storytellers who deftly wield their chosen mediums into breathtaking genre scenes of the Black quotidian. By engaging the Black viewing public in practices of seeing that center Black humanity, these two artists offer a more robust, embodied aesthetic experience. ●

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Notes

- Jennifer Nash, *Birthing Black Mothers* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 3.
- Best known as the Moynihan Report, the document was one of the most controversial of the twentieth century due to its questionable arguments about the relationship between a matriarchal family structure and the degeneracy of Black families, a presumed destructive culture among low-income Black people. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" (Washington, D.C.: Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor, 1965), 9.
- Elizabeth Catlett, "Sculpture in stone: Negro mother and child" (master's thesis, University of Iowa, 1940), 6, <https://iro.uiowa.edu/esploro/outputs/graduate/Sculpture-in-stone-Negro-mother-and/9983777063702771#file-0>.
- Catlett, "Sculpture in stone: Negro mother and child," 7.
- Melanie Anne Herzog, "Embodied Witness and Radical Empathy: The Art of Elizabeth Catlett," in *Persevere and Resist: The Strong Black Women of Elizabeth Catlett*, ed. Heather Nickels (Memphis, TN: Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, in assoc. with Paul Holberton Pub., 2021), 28.
- Alice Walker, "Coming Apart," in *The Womanist Reader*, ed. Layli Phillips (New York: Routledge, 2006), 7.
- Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (New York: Open Road Media, 2011), 7, https://www.google.com/books/edition/In_Search_of_Our_Mothers_Gardens/53eAjaQ8i0IC?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PT7&printsec=frontcover.
- Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, 7.
- Deborah K. King, "Womanist, Womanism, Womanish," *Women's Studies Encyclopedia, Volume 1 Views from the Sciences*, ed. Helen Tierney (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 390.
- Layli Maparyan, *The Womanist Idea* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 62.
- Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 111.
- Farah Jasmine Griffin, "Who Set You Flowin'?: The African-American Migration Narrative" (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), 9.
- Kellie Jones, *South of Pico: African American Artists in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 6.
- Many of the Black Romantic artists gained recognition under the auspices of Bill Cosby who would feature various Black artists works on *The Cosby Show* (1984–92). Honeywood was one of the more frequently exhibited artists on the show.
- Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 110.
- Honeywood, quoted in *Vernette's World: A Study of A Young Artist*, directed by Carol Parrott Blue (1979), documentary short, <https://blackfilmarchive.com/Vernette-s-World-A-Study-of-a-Young-Artist>.
- Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 110.
- Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, 8.
- Tina Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2017), 4.
- Pascha Weaver, "Radio Drama: A 'Visual Sound' Analysis of *John, George and Drew Baby*" (master's thesis, Univ. of Central Florida, 2012), 40.
- Mel Watkins, "What Was It About 'Amos 'n' Andy?," *New York Times*, July 7, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/07/07/books/what-was-it-about-amos-n-andy.html>.
- Donnetrice C. Allison, "Introduction: A Historical Overview," in *Black Women's Portrayals on Reality Television: The New Sapphire*, ed. Donnetrice C. Allison (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), x.
- bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 85.
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- G.F. Kojo Arthur, *Cloth as Metaphor: (Re)Reading the Adinkra Cloth Symbols of the Akan of Ghana* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2017), 227, 229.
- Arthur, 253.
- Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2011), 46.
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- Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 192.
- Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Pub., 2007), 205, iBook.

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF “QUEER”

DEBORAH KASS’S *FEEL GOOD PAINTINGS FOR FEEL BAD TIMES*

By Theo. Triandos

I have an issue with the word and category “queer” because I think it obfuscates the material differences between men and women, which are so huge, okay? That said, I might be the queerest artist I know.

—Deborah Kass, 2010¹

Deborah Kass’s *Daddy I Would Love to Dance* (2008; Pl. 15) superimposes the rectilinear format of Frank Stella’s concentric square paintings over a vortex of orthogonal lines, connecting the outer edges of the canvas to a vanishing point at center. Combining these formal and spatial motifs, the painting recalls the art critic Rosalind Krauss’s suggestion, in “A View of Modernism” (1972), that if Stella’s works depict anything, it is the teleological view of history that modernist criticism brings to them: likening the human eye’s perception of linear perspective to the critical reception to the past, understood as a sequence of stages, Krauss sees in the illusionistic depth of Stella’s concentric squares a reflection of modernist criticism’s view that 1960s painting is the outcome and vessel of the entire history of that art’s incremental development.²

Discernible—but just so—through the mesh of competing motifs in Kass’s painting is the phrase: “Daddy I Would Love to Dance.” Kass has said of this painting that it represents her “absolute desire to participate ... to be part of history, wanting to *talk* to history, to dance with it.”³ Whereas *Daddy* summons Stella’s painting and Krauss’s reading of it, the “history” in which Kass’s painting participates can be understood both as the art of the past and the critical writing through which prevailing conceptions of it are achieved. In this light, the color scheme of Kass’s painting, which recollects both the paintings Stella made during his return to the squares in the 1970s, and the first gay pride flag created by Gilbert Baker in 1978, gains particular significance. Krauss’s analysis of modernist criticism, in her aforementioned 1972 essay, highlights how that discourse’s theorization of modernist painting in terms of historical time (or chronological development) precludes

recognition of recent sculpture’s elicitation of lived time (or embodied temporal experience).⁴ But, Kass’s painting, made over thirty years later, calls attention to Krauss’s seeming inability to see *her own time*, her failure, that is, to read the arrival of embodied reception aesthetics in light of queer liberation.

Kass’s explanation of *Daddy*, with its emphasis on *participation*, may be read as alluding to a particular theoretical mechanism whose operation is legible throughout her painting series, the *Feel Good Paintings for Feel Bad Times* (2001–2010): postmodernist allegory. In these paintings, the visualization of readings or theories of art from key texts forms an engagement that extends the operation of critical and aesthetic crossing, first established when the Minimalist and Land artists of the 1960s through 1970s began publishing essays in popular art journals.⁵ In “Earthwords” (1979), the critic Craig Owens posited this development in terms of a larger phenomenon of postmodernism represented, in his words, by “the eruption of language into the field of the visual arts.”⁶ In his next essay, “The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism” (1980), Owens would theorize the critical ramifications of this condition, evident in some recent artists’ mobilization of literary allegory in their visual works.⁷ Elaborating the theorist Paul de Man’s theory of “allegorical unreadability,” defined as a text’s elicitation of two mutually incompatible readings between which it is impossible to choose, in “The Allegorical Impulse” Owens deciphers allegory in postmodernist art’s operative “*participating* in the very activity that is being denounced, precisely in order to denounce it.”⁸

Kass’s *Daddy* is not the first “text” to highlight postmodernist criticism’s failure to address issues of sex and sexuality in art. In an article published after he departed the *October* journal, “The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism” (1983), Owens would himself point out the “remarkable oversight” of his (and, implicitly, his colleagues’) earlier writings on postmodernism, described by him as “our failure to address the issue of sexual difference—not only in the objects we discuss, but in our own enunciations as well.”⁹ In its allegorical



Fig. 1. Deborah Kass, *How Do I Look?* (1991), oil on canvas, 50" x 100". © Deborah Kass / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

critique of Krauss's first postmodernist essay, Kass's *Daddy* develops Owens's assessment of his previous work in order to draw out what the critic at that time had only implied.¹⁰ More than missing the feminism legible in the work of Cindy Sherman (b. 1954), Sherrie Levine (b. 1947), and Laurie Anderson (b. 1947), for example, *October's* criticism also overlooked the queerness of contemporary art.

This paper, however, is concerned with a subset of the *Feel Good* paintings that focuses this allegorical impulse on another critical discourse, one aligned with Kass's *Daddy*: queer art history. Just as Kass's *Daddy* participates in postmodernist criticism in ways that expose its failure to adequately address sexuality in art, another group of paintings from this series pivots this operation to expose queer art history's discursive failure, in the first decade and a half of the field's development (roughly from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s), to adequately address art by women. As suggested by Kass's earlier statement of 2010 and the operations of *Daddy* already presented, the "participation" of these paintings in queer art history is genuine: These paintings can be read as committed to promoting queer art history's recovery of queer meaning in art that has been elided, repressed, and disavowed in both the histories of art and, more broadly, in American culture. But Kass's paintings may also be read further as interrogating what exactly "queer" means within queer art history, revealing who queer art history adequately represented and who it overlooked or dismissed in the field's early stages. Kass's queer art history paintings, therefore, reflect the complex circumstances of contemporary cultural, political relationality that the theorist Judith Butler termed *disidentification*: "the uneasy sense of standing under a sign to which one does and does not belong."¹¹

To better understand the complex operations underlying her art, it will be important to begin with an exploration of two previous projects Kass undertook throughout the 1990s, the main features of which the *Feel Good* paintings, addressed in this paper, combine and reformulate. Since her first major

series, the *Art History* project, Kass's work has sought to recover queer meaning in past art and culture as well as expose the specific role of art history (as a critical discipline) in its elision. These earlier paintings convey such insights through a mesh of visual quotations sourced from modern and contemporary art history. Kass's *How Do I Look?* (1991; Fig. 1 and Pl. 16) combines her painted reproduction of Pablo Picasso's *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* (1906) with a landscape constituted of two additional visual quotations of art historical works: a fragment spanning the upper left corner to the lower right of Gustave Courbet's painting, *Sleepers* (1866), depicting two women in bed replete with erotic

signifiers; and Jasper Johns's *The Critic Sees* (1961), from which appear two open mouths in the place of eyes behind a set of horn-rimmed frames. As Robert Lubar observes, relevant for Kass's presentation, the interaction of the Courbet and the Johns elucidates the plight of Picasso's painting, specifically, art history's repression of the sitter's lesbian identity.¹² Whereas Courbet's *Sleepers* subsumes the subject of lesbian eroticism into the nineteenth-century convention of the nude, the task of decoding the painting falls to the art historian (or critic) who, too often, refuses to look, or, in Lubar's words, "speaks his discourse from a position of blindness."¹³ Similarly, the discipline regularly turns a blind eye to the subjectivities of queer artists, represented in this painting by the portrait of Stein, the author: art history can identify Picasso's sitter, but apparently cannot sit with her lesbian identity.

However, Kass's *How Do I Look?* is not just a critical commentary on art history's repression of queerness, it also raises questions about how contemporary art discourses engage with the subject of sexuality. The painting's title echoes that of the foundational gay and lesbian visual studies conference of 1989 and the publication two years later, both organized by the critic Douglas Crimp. A member of the *October* group in its early years, Crimp's influential writings on postmodernism also largely overlooked issues of sexuality.¹⁴ But, Crimp went on to join the AIDS activist group, ACT UP, in 1987 and, that same year, edited and contributed to the special issue of the journal: *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*.¹⁵ The AIDS issue became one of *October's* most popular productions. But a later special issue of the journal that, as Crimp explained, would have published the proceedings of *How Do I Look?* was not to be. Instead, *October* published an open letter written by Crimp, in which he resigned from the journal, disclosing that his three co-editors refused two of the papers from the conference, citing editorial standards.¹⁶

Another painting from Kass's *Art History* series, *Making Men #4* (1992; Fig. 2), draws on the contemporaneous writings of Butler to decipher gender deconstruction in Andy Warhol's



Fig. 2. Deborah Kass, *Making Men #4* (1992), oil, enamel, and acrylic on canvas, 78" x 63". © Deborah Kass / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

paintings of the 1960s. In this piece, an image of male wrestlers engaged in intimate contact appears above a smaller horizontal segment recalling a Jackson Pollock drip painting. While the combination of these fragments may, in light of the work's title, allude to the homoeroticism latent in male sports and implicit in the phallic gesturalism of New York School painting, the overlaying of the athletic pair, with an all-over reproduction of Warhol's *Dance Diagram 2, Fox Trot: "The Double Twinkle—Man"* (1962; Fig. 3), encourages another reading.¹⁷

In his seminal 1952 essay, "The American Action Painters," the critic Harold Rosenberg posited the Abstract Expressionist canvas not as a surface on which to represent something but as "an arena in which to act."¹⁸ For Rosenberg, the marks left on the canvas stand as the result of a physical encounter that was itself a means of achieving the true event of painting: the artist's discovery of his authentic *inner-self*, stripped of external influence:

The lone artist did not want the world to be different, he wanted his canvas to be a world. Liberation from the object meant liberation from the "nature," society, and art already there.... With the American, heir of the pioneer and the immigrant ... the end of Art marked the beginning of an optimism regarding himself as an artist.

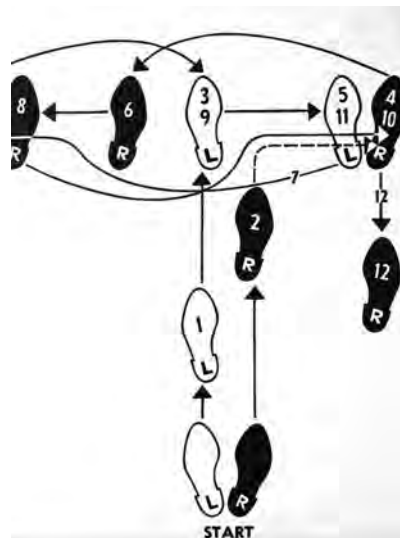


Fig. 3. Andy Warhol, *Dance Diagram 2, Fox Trot: "The Double Twinkle—Man"* (1962), casein and graphite on canvas, 70" x 54". Artwork © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

The American vanguard painter took to the white expanse of the canvas as Melville's Ishmael took to the sea. On the one hand, a desperate recognition of moral and intellectual exhaustion; on the other, the exhilaration of an adventure over depths in which he might find reflected the true image of his identity.¹⁹

Warhol's dance diagrams, works displayed on the ground to conjure Pollock's creative process, allude to a contradiction legible in Rosenberg's account of Abstract Expressionism centering on the location or source of the artist's self.²⁰ By associating abstract painting with "action," Rosenberg gestures to the active/passive binary, reflected in the sociological discourse and material culture of the US, undergirding prevailing conceptions of male/female gender difference at mid-century.²¹ Thus, when Rosenberg posits action painting as an event through which the artist discovers the "true image of his identity," he implicitly presents that discovery as an embodiment of postwar masculinity.

In their groundbreaking work of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Butler argued that "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed [but] rather ... is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts."²² In saying this, Butler speaks of the mundane acts of performativity (such as walking, or gesturing) that "constitute the illusion of the abiding gender self," and not, as they would later articulate more forcefully, more deliberate forms of performance, such as those taking place on a stage or dancefloor.²³ Still, Butler's theory of gender performativity is useful for thinking about dance, particularly as Warhol presents this activity as an analogy for the painterly performativity of postwar male figures like Pollock.

Dance choreography, particularly for popular dance styles fashioned for couples, draws on similar active/passive oppositional relationships to which Rosenberg alludes in his famous essay. In positioning men in the lead, a dance for a twosome appears to follow from the natural tendencies of masculinity relative to femininity. But, the binary conception



Fig. 4. Deborah Kass, *Double Silver Yentl (My Elvis)* (1993), silkscreen and acrylic on canvas, 72" x 72". © Deborah Kass / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

of male activity and female passivity, as with the underlying idea of nature, derives from cultural productions (or social discourses) that construct such oppositionality, of which dance is one of countless forms. Taking part in the ballroom dance called the Foxtrot, a challenging, rhythmic two-step arrangement, individuals engage in a form of discursive "citation" (by following the notated diagram) that reifies the more mundane, habituated ways individuals performatively cite discourses that dictate and constrain the possibilities of gender in everyday life.²⁴

By pairing an image of men engaged in action with a Pollockian fragment and overlaying these images with a reproduction of the *Dance Diagram*, Kass's *Making Men* decodes Warhol's Pop engagement with Abstract Expressionism, suggesting that his nimble presentation of the male role in the foxtrot as a stand-in for, say, Pollock's *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)* (1950), posits the latter as a form of gender performativity. While the dripping and slashing that comprise a Pollock appear, as Rosenberg suggests, to index the artist's discovery of his *inner-self*, those gestures in fact represent the performative citation of *external* sources, contemporary social and cultural discourses attributing masculinity to activity. Indeed, as Kass's *Making Men* proposes, if painting in this male sphere offers any sense of self, it is by virtue of the artist's engagement in gender-constituting acts that create and sustain its illusion.

Kass's next series, *The Warhol Project*, is a large corpus of paintings depicting Jewish and female subjects in the recognizable formats of Warhol's iconic silkscreen paintings of the 1960s. Some of these works, such as *Double Silver Yentl (My Elvis)* (1993; Fig. 4), which replace the Elvis Presley from Warhol's iconic *Double Elvis* (1963) with the image of Barbra Streisand in male drag as the character Yentl (from the film of

the same name), elaborate the gender deconstruction of *Making Men* #4 to expand upon the criticality toward lesbian erasure in art history, established in *How Do I Look?*²⁵ Specifically, *Double Silver Yentl (My Elvis)* is a self-reflexive painting, wherein the imagery of Streisand in drag evokes the critical operation of the work's combined stylistic and iconographic qualities: countering the recent assimilation of women's art and queer art to patriarchal art history.

Rooted in ideas of influence and lineage, contemporary art discourse of the early 1990s reinforced the patriarchal structure of art history, even as it addressed the expanded field of art by women since the mid-1970s. As Mira Schor points out in "Patrilineage" (1991), an essay published the year before Kass started *The Warhol Project*, the lines of connection that art historians and critics established between the contemporary and the historical, in the evolving canon, were almost always masculinist in orientation. The potential of a contemporary artist's legitimation was determined by the degree to which the paternity of his or her art could be confirmed, and the content of that work assimilated to art history.²⁶ It should also be noted that at the time of Schor's writing, there, too, operated a concomitant assimilation of queerness within this patrilineage: Robert Rauschenberg, Johns, and Warhol were routinely presented as "father figures" within the patrilineal schema, but rarely was the sexuality of their art acknowledged, let alone presented as a basis for connecting past and present aesthetic practices (though this was soon to change).

Dressed in the visual language of the most famous twentieth-century male artist, Kass's *Warhol* paintings establish the terms of their own incorporation into the patrilineage. Yet, the annexation of Kass's paintings to the patrilineage did not ensure their intellectual or political assimilation to it: as Kass has explained, "I wanted to do something that was not necessarily absorbable into a male narrative. It was legible because it used Andy's style, which was so ubiquitous as to be a language."²⁷ Indeed, it is through their engagement with *Double Elvis* that the *Yentls* counter the terms of Warhol and women's historicization. Best suggested by this series' *Double Ghost Yentl (My Elvis)* (1997), the Warhol paintings *haunt* art history with its content exclusions. Swapping Streisand for Andy's Elvis, Kass reveals the queerness of Warhol's art precisely by displacing it with her own: in Kass's words, "I replace Andy's male homosexual desire with my own specificity [—] Jew love, female voice, and blatant lesbian diva worship."²⁸

Similar to the *Warhol Project*, the *Feel Good* paintings are dressed up in maleness, thereby embedding lesbian-feminist meaning where it has been marginalized or excluded. Even as the *Feel Good* paintings carry over from the *Warhol Project* series the practice of reproducing the iconic styles of historical men, these works establish their maleness by another means, that is, by participating in a particular field of art historical discourse whose very formation was anticipated by Kass's earlier projects: queer art history. Inversely reflected in Kass's earlier statement of 2010, it is by speaking queer that the *Feel Good* paintings formulate feminist critique. Through their

reiterations and elaborations of queer art history, these paintings reveal the centrality of maleness within “queer,” and the underrepresentation of women in the discourse of art centered around that category.

In *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (2002), Richard Meyer compellingly elaborated the reading of gay male eroticism in Warhol’s art that Kass’s *Yentl* paintings first enacted over a decade prior. Interpreting the subtle modulation of paint density between the two figures in Warhol’s *Double Elvis* as establishing the legibility of two different, overlapping men, Meyer deciphers a number of potential erotic connotations from the resulting evocation of queer contact: “top and bottom, extension and recession, activity and passivity, dominance and submission.”²⁹ A recipient of the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s Charles C. Eldredge Prize for Outstanding Scholarship, *Outlaw Representation* is the first book-length study on homosexuality in art history to receive mainstream recognition in the discipline, and in the years since its publication, it has become a seminal text in queer art history. As a representative text, *Outlaw Representation* reflects both the important advances of queer studies in art as well as the field’s shortcomings. Meyer is forthright in his introduction when he points out the limited scope of the project, noting that the book’s five chapters center around art by men, with the address of artistic and cultural contributions of lesbians appearing in the afterword.³⁰ In the way it unfolds, *Outlaw Representation* encapsulates the development of the field to that point in time, which, with important exceptions (often written by women), addressed historical art by women only after extensive discourse on male art.

A network of interrelated historical and discursive conditions, specific to the development of art writing in the twentieth century, has contributed to the delayed reception to women in queer art history. First, as a function of the longer arc of the art world’s patriarchal domination, the majority of artists who rose to prominence in the postwar and Pop eras of American art history were white men. While the queer art historical research of figures publishing in the 1990s, such as Meyer and Whitney Davis, has shown that male homosexual eroticism is legible in art throughout the modern period, the decade from the mid-1950s through mid-1960s saw the major growth of men whose queer art captured the attention of the art world and popular culture, most notably Rauschenberg, Johns, Cy Twombly, Paul Thek, Ellsworth Kelly, and Warhol.³¹ Many other major artists produced work during this period and after, exploring non-normative sexual themes and challenging rigid binaries of gender: Claus Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein, Richard Hamilton, Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci, Judy Chicago (b. 1939), Julia Kunin (b. 1961), Robert Morris, Harmony Hammond (b. 1944), Lynda Benglis (b. 1941), Sherrie Levine (b. 1947), and Cindy Sherman (b. 1954), to name just a handful. While a significant portion of art historical discourse in the last quarter of the twentieth century centered on these figures (the men primarily), the queerness of their art remained largely repressed in the writings on them. As



Fig. 5. Deborah Kass, *Painting with Balls* (2005), oil on linen, 84" x 60".
© Deborah Kass / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

addressed in the introduction, the rise of postmodernist criticism, a discourse which addressed art by Rauschenberg, Johns, Morris, Benglis, Levine, Sherman, and Warhol, saw the formation of a blind spot toward sexuality. This was a function of this writing’s tendency to bypass subject matter, at times even positing, essentially, art’s fundamental illegibility, in favor of addressing painting, photography, and sculpture’s apparent attacks on the aesthetic ontologies of modernist discourse and the co-existent interpretive practices of art history.³²

Much of the writing in early queer art history represents an implicit response to dominant art criticism’s delimited interpretive schema, where it comes to queer art. As an outgrowth of the “cultural turn” within postmodernism, represented by critics such as Owens and Crimp abandoning, each in their own time, the neo-formalist operations of *October*’s criticism in favor of addressing contemporary art in terms of sex and sexuality, in the mid-to-late 1990s, recent PhDs in art history reexamined postwar and Pop art through a queer lens. Most notably, Jonathan David Katz recovered the queerness of Rauschenberg’s combines, in his essential “Art of Code: Jasper Johns & Robert Rauschenberg” (1993), an essay that developed the methodology of decoding queer meaning in art that later scholars in the field, such as Meyer, carried

forward.³³ Though Katz's essay does not in its approach directly cite either Krauss's 1974 article, "Rauschenberg and the Materialized Image," or Owens's "Allegorical Impulse," "Art of Code" represents an extended counterpoint to their theoretical premises.³⁴ Reading Rauschenberg as encoding allusions to his identification as a gay man in the combines, Katz's account of the postwar artist's queer meaning-making reveals the error of the postmodernists' insistence on those works' basic illegibility (or unreadability).³⁵ The critical dialogue Katz's essay established—between the field of queer art history it, in part, founded and what was, at the time, the still dominant discourse of *October* and related journals—was enough to catch Krauss's attention, who, in a later essay, reiterated the postmodernist position, calling Katz and other authors' readings of coherent meaning in the combines into question, and suggesting, furthermore, that the only "message" legible of these works is, once again, the message of "unreadability."³⁶

Some of the earliest writing in queer art discourse was, however, authored by women and explored the challenges facing the writing of lesbian art history. In her influential essay, "Notes on Lesbian" (1996), Laura Cottingham identifies the destruction of the historical documentation of lesbian lives as a facet of the overall erasure of lesbian existence in patriarchal societies. Cottingham suggests that this practice of expunging lesbian history has resulted in a lack of knowledge about the sexual identities of those female artists of the past whose work is known.³⁷ Still, as Cottingham observes, there are some historical female artists whose identities as lesbians are popularly known despite the compounded forces of historical erasure, and yet their subjectivities as such continue to be elided in their art historical accounts, such as in the then-recent writings on the art of Bernice Abbott (1898–1991) and Hammond.³⁸

Cottingham's essay appeared in a special 1996 issue of *Art Journal*—"We're Here: Gay and Lesbian Presence in Art and Art History." In her introductory remarks, co-editor Flavia Rando envisions a field of lesbian/gay/queer studies in art history that represents differences within queer, a field that, through an exploration of a diversity of historic aesthetic production, asks the question of how experiences of oppression differ among queer people at the intersections of sexuality, gender, and race.³⁹ Rando is prescient in framing these remarks with a reference to the French theorist Monique Wittig's insistence that we recognize the "material oppression of individuals by discourses."⁴⁰ For we need only look at the imbalance of representation in queer art history, in the decade or so after the special issue, to find an answer to the editor's question. With notable exceptions, such as Hammond's essential survey from 2000 of lesbian American art since the turn of the twentieth century, and Amelia Jones's feminist writings, which, at times, explore same-sex desire and gender non-conformity in historical art by women, "queer" was a term that, in the early formation of the field, was fused with gay male experience and meaning-making.⁴¹

In a 2014 discussion with Katz centered on the question,

Why has there been no queer feminist art history?, Jones confronted the problematic relationship between queer art history and women.⁴² Jones recognized the challenges faced by writers seeking to produce queer feminist art histories that were posed by the field's foundational basis in gay male identity: "In visual arts discourse there is sometimes a feeling that gay men have dominated the discussion of homoeroticism, queer, same-sex relationships ... [and] that it may be difficult for women to take this anywhere else."⁴³ Agreeing that "gay men have been so dominant in visual culture institutions," Katz offers one view as to why it is queer art history has centered around gay masculinity: "Gay men's inherent disinterest in women's bodies meets their disinterest in feminist politics and produces a politics of erasure."⁴⁴ Whatever the merits of this explanation, it is significant that Katz, a pioneering figure in queer art history, recognizes the problem of women's underrepresentation in the field. Still, Katz's emphasis on the operations of "institutions" (which Jones clarified as meaning museums, galleries, and auction houses) bypasses the role of academic writing in the effect of erasure he describes. Institutions associated with collections, displays, and sales have historically followed the currents of academic art history in their promotions of art.

It is in terms of an interrogation of academic, queer art historical writing that Kass's *Feel Good* paintings are read in this article. Recalling the earlier *Making Men #4* from 1992 in form and content, Kass's *Painting with Balls* (2005; Fig. 5), once again, superimposes motifs drawn from art and art historical writing. Replacing the "mock" action painting of Johns's *Painting with Two Balls* (1960) with the single, capitalized word, *COJONES*, repeated seven times, *Painting with Balls* recalls Katz's passing description of Johns' painting, in "Art of Code," as his (the artist's) take on Abstract Expressionism's "masculine pictorial ambition."⁴⁵ Whereas the Johns appears to have been created through the act of repeatedly hurling balls included in a cutaway at the center of the canvas, it suggests that Abstract Expressionist painting is, once again, the event of the artist's tenuous achievement of masculinity. Invoking, once more, Butler's description of gender as "an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts," Kass's painting spells out Johns's (and Katz's) exhortation that the "action painting" of the New York School was a gender-constituting performance.⁴⁶ Kass's *Painting with Balls* thus participates in queer art history, elaborating an important but underdeveloped reading from one of the field's foundational texts. But Kass's painting also denounces queer art history: repeating "cojones" several times, it calls attention to queer art history's own masculine pictorial ambition, so to speak, with its repeating focus on gay male icons—*painters with balls*.

In 2012, Kass spoke directly to the critical theme deciphered here in *Painting with Balls*. In a roundtable discussion convened on the occasion of the Brooklyn Museum's installation of *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire*, the landmark exhibition co-curated by Katz and David Ward focusing on sexual difference/same-sex desire in modern American portraiture, Kass observed that the show is emblematic of the

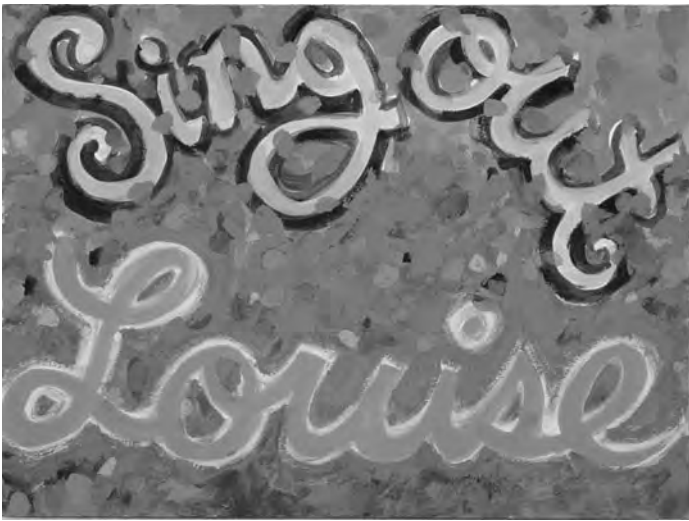


Fig. 6. Deborah Kass, *Sing out Louise* (2002), gouache on paper, 9" x 12". © Deborah Kass / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

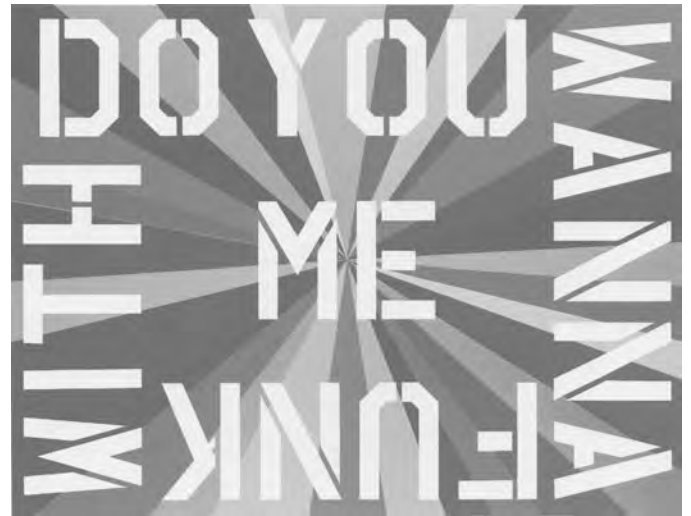


Fig. 7. Deborah Kass, *Small Funk* (2006), enamel and acrylic on canvas, 52" x 68". © Deborah Kass / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

continued underrepresentation of women in art history. In her remarks, Kass alluded to the problem facing queer art history, that the discourse of art this field has inherited from earlier generations is so heavily skewed in terms of sex. She explained: "This show with its emphasis on bringing the canon out of the closet emphasizes the problem: the canon—gay, straight, bi- ... or *queer*—is male." Thus, she observes, "We cannot really say we are queering the canon, when in fact we're just gaying the canon." Kass goes on to suggest that the responsibility to include women within the project of diversifying the canon has not been met, explaining, "As we expand the canon to be more inclusive, to diversify it, it remains remarkably male."⁴⁷

Taking into account such deconstruction of the universal/particular ontology of "queer" in art historical discourse, it is important to consider another work from the *Feel Good* series, *Desert Daddy* (2007; Pl. 17). Superimposing text comprised of Pollock's splatter technique over a ground reminiscent of Warhol's late camouflage abstractions of 1986–87, *Desert Daddy* participates in queer art history by decoding the latter's critical commentary on the postwar master. The camouflage pattern appropriated for Warhol's late paintings, based on the curvature of natural forms, was created by the US Army so military troops could blend into natural settings in armed conflict—or, as is said, in *action*. Warhol's paintings thus elicit Pollock's famous rejoinder to Hans Hoffman's conclusion that, in his turn to abstraction, Pollock no longer painted from nature. As told by Lee Krasner, Pollock replied, "*I am nature.*"⁴⁸ Pollock's statement represents the primitivist current of Abstract Expressionist discourse, in which some associated with the movement communicated a universal "human nature" through their art by mobilizing motifs or techniques associated with indigenous North American groups popularly conceived as sources of primordial knowledge.⁴⁹ Merging Warhol's camo with Pollock's drips, Kass's *Daddy* further deciphers Warhol's painting: Abstract



Fig. 8. Deborah Kass, *Daddy* (2007), silkscreen, ink, and acrylic on canvas. © Deborah Kass / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Expressionist painters' turn to nature concealed the cultural specificity of their art, and in particular, as Ann E. Gibson has suggested, facilitated the transcendence of questions pertaining to their artistic and personal (ad)vantages as modern straight white men.⁵⁰

Whereas it is difficult to tell in *Desert Daddy* where the splatter ends and the camo begins, it once again does more than simply participate in queer art history. The painting also suggests that this field—that first came to be known as "queer" in the second half of the 1990s in part within the study of Warhol—formally echoes something of the universal/



Fig. 9. Lynda Benglis, *Odalisque (Hey Hey Frankenthaler)* (1969), poured pigmented latex, 165" x 34". © Lynda Benglis.

particular relationship that same artist's work posited of mid-century art.⁵¹ For just as Abstract Expressionism camouflaged its male particularity behind the universalizing screen of nature, so, too, has queer art history veiled its male priorities behind the universal category of "queer."

By highlighting the universal/particular ontology of queer art history, Kass's *Desert Daddy* brings the complexity of the *Feel Good* series' engagement with that discourse into clearer focus. More than participating in the activity being denounced strictly in order to denounce it, qua postmodern tropes, this art's engagement with queer art history reflects the problem of relationality within contemporary cultural politics. Like so many cultural political discourses, queer art history is organized under a universal sign, *queer*, that, even as it forms the very basis for a political group identity, necessarily fails to encompass the totality of interests and subjectivities it seems to express.⁵² When the *Feel Good Paintings for Feel Bad Times* promote queer art history in such a way that also highlights the male particularity that has, by and large, formed that discourse's substance, they evoke, as previously noted and deserving repetition, what Butler described as the ambivalence of *disidentification*: "the uneasy sense of standing under a sign to which one does and does not belong."⁵³

Another work from the series, *You Made Me Love You* (2007; Pl. 18), more directly expresses this ambivalence, this unease, of women's *disidentification* with queer. This painting superimposes the musical phrase, "you made me love you," over a series of hard edge color panels reminiscent of Kelly's works of the 1960s. Expressing the troubled displacement of the self involved in the identification with a discourse that, in Kass's words, "obfuscates material differences between men and women," the phrase that appears in this piece foretells the next line of the popular song from which it is lifted: "I didn't want to do it." The complex relationality of women to queer art history is furthermore expressed through the use of the color white solely for the words you/me/you. While the painting draws distinctions between these terms by separating

them out across the different panels, their unified projection through a shared chromatic presentation highlights how, for many women, the present political framework of queer leaves the self/other dynamic unresolved.

This series does not, however, just reveal the problematic relationship between queer art discourse and women at the historical juncture of its creation. It also responds to Butler's question about what "more democratizing affirmation[s] of internal difference" might be developed from the state of *disidentificatory* unease.⁵⁴ Similar to the queer art history paintings discussed to this point, another subset of works from the series voices "queer" vernacular but does so in order to pivot the discourse toward greater inclusivity. Take *Sing out Louise* (2002; Fig. 6), a small gouache on paper, and

one of Kass's first *Feel Good* paintings. This painting uses a text-based abstraction reminiscent of Louise Fishman's (1939–2021) series of 1970s paintings on paper, which pay homage to radical women of history to recall the identificatory demand, articulated by Harvey Milk during his landmark Gay Freedom Day speech, "Every gay person must come out."⁵⁵ In combining these artifacts, *Sing out Louise* reverberates Fishman's project and, in so doing, enacts what the painting voices: it adds Fishman to her (Fishman's) own group of radical woman, decoding her historical project as an aesthetic/discursive act of lesbian self-identification.

Small Funk (2006; Fig. 7), from the same series, superimposes the iconic 1980s dance lyrics, "Do You Want to Funk with Me," sung by recording artist Sylvester, over another compositional vortex recalling the colors of gay pride, a combination suggesting that the expansion of subject representation in queer art history must be mutually constitutive with the expansion of the field's very conception of art. The compound erasure to which queer, female, and transgender artists of color have been subjected has resulted in the near total exclusion of art representative of these communities from the canon of art history. *Small Funk* promotes a wider scope of queer art history to include forms of artistic production historically considered popular, rather than high art, such as musical performance, as one means of representing Black female and transgender voices (while Sylvester is often described as a male artist who performed in drag, in some accounts of the artist's history, Sylvester is described as gender-fluid and sometimes presenting as female).⁵⁶

Finally, another *Daddy* (2008; Fig. 8) points to an alternative format from Warhol's late series, the rainbow camo. As much as Kass's presentation of this motif alludes to Warhol's paintings, the combination of the forms' organic curvature with this color spectrum also recalls the rainbow flows of some of Benglis's iconic, Post Minimalist poured latex sculptures of the late 1960s, such as *Odalisque (Hey Hey Frankenthaler)* (1969; Fig. 9). More specifically, by pairing this reference to Benglis's

works with Pollock's splatter, *Daddy* prompts Benglis's gestural parody, from the 1970 *Life* editorial on her, of Pollock's debut in that same publication twenty years prior: "Jackson Pollock: Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?" (1949).⁵⁷ The 1949 article, featuring a pair of corresponding images, presents on the left a photograph of Pollock crouching, hovering over his painting, arm outstretched applying his iconic drips; to the right, an ad for Barbasol shave cream, that, in visually echoing the adjacent image, "decodes" it (the ad displays a shirtless man hovering above a woman lying on her back, his right arm and torso forming a triangular enclosure around her). *Daddy's* combination of Pollock's splatters and Benglis's latex flows draws out the lesbian eroticism implied in Benglis's parody of Pollock's ejaculatory performance: Benglis trades Pollock's splatter for a flood of fluid, whose spread through space evokes the flow of female pleasure freed from the containment of heterosexual relations.⁵⁸

As a subset of the *Feel Good Paintings for Feel Bad Times*, Kass's queer art history paintings focus the overall, allegorical impulse of the series on a specific discourse of art to which they do and do not belong. Condensing the operations of the entire arc of Kass's career into a complex but pointed engagement with a particular field of discourse, these works promote queer art history while calling for and achieving its expansion to include women and people of color who, despite more recent advances in that critical space, remain underrepresented. In this light, it seems pertinent to return to Kass's earlier statement of 2010, in which she proclaims she is the queerest artist that she knows. Kass's claim can be read in terms of her art's promotion, once again, of queer art history. But, whereas the *Feel Good* paintings engage with queer art history in a way that problematizes the centrality of masculinity in that field, they also recall Michael Warner's conception of queering as an approach that defines itself not just against heterosexual modalities of discourse, but against any normal business in the academy.⁵⁹ Indeed, Kass's *Feel Good* paintings find their "critical edge" in redressing the historical business-as-usual maleness of the field in which they intercede, and, in so doing, they *queer* the queer history of art.⁶⁰ •

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Notes

1. "Deborah Kass with Terry R. Myers (Interview)" *Brooklyn Rail*, Sept. 23, 2010 <https://brooklynrail.org/2010/09/art/deborah-kass-with-terry-r-myers>. In addressing queer art history, this essay focuses on texts exploring historical art (art at least twenty years old when the texts were written) through a gay/lesbian/queer lens. This essay understands Kass's *Feel Good* paintings to engage with writings in queer art history created prior to and during the span of the series (2001–10) and recognizes the shift to greater gender inclusivity in queer art history toward the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

2. Rosalind Krauss, "A View of Modernism," *Artforum* 11, No.1 (Sept. 1972): 48–50.
3. Kass's italics; "Deborah Kass by Irving Sandler (Interview)" *BOMB*, Sept. 17, 2010, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/deborah-kass/>.
4. Krauss, "View," 50–51.
5. See, for instance, Nancy Holt, "Sun Tunnels," *Artforum* 15, no. 8 (April 1977): 32–37.
6. Craig Owens, "Earthwords," *October* 10 (Autumn 1979): 122.
7. Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism Part 2," *October* 13 (Summer 1980): 58–80.
8. Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse," 61, 79. Kass's mobilization of allegory is furthermore suggested by the linkage between her explanation of the *Feel Good* paintings reproduced above, and the primary example of an allegorical text Owens provides in his essay—poet W. B. Yeats's *Among School Children* (c. 1926), whose famous line, "How can we know the dancer from the dance," elicits two mutually incompatible readings (my italics). Widely accepted as a metaphor for the relation of sign and meaning in symbolic writing, the first reading, which is rhetorical, suggests there is no distinguishing sign from meaning, while the second, a literal reading, begs to discern the distinction. Owens, 63.
9. Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," in Hal Foster ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), 61. *October* is the art criticism and theory journal founded by Krauss, Annette Michelson, and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe in 1976. It published numerous essays on postmodernism in art during the late 1970s and early 1980s.
10. See also Craig Owens's later essay, "Outlaws: Gay Men in Feminism," in Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, eds., *Men in Feminism* (New York: Methuen, 1987): 219–32.
11. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 219.
12. Robert Lubar, "Unmasking Pablo's Gertrude: Queer Desire and the Subject of Portraiture," *The Art Bulletin* 79, no. 1 (March 1997): 65–66.
13. Lubar, 66.
14. See Douglas Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," *October* 15 (Winter 1980): 91–101. The pivot toward issues of sexuality in Crimp's writing first appeared in 1982; see Crimp, "Fassbinder, Franz, Fox, Elvira, Erwin, Armin, and All the Others," *October* 21 (Summer 1982): 62–81.
15. Douglas Crimp, "Introduction," *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, *October* 43 (Winter 1987): 3–16.
16. See Crimp, "To Our Readers," *October* 53 (Summer 1990): 110–12. Crimp's letter is followed by a response signed by "The Editors" (who were at the time Krauss, Michelson, and Joan Copjec). Scholar Cindy Patton's essay, "Safe Sex and the Pornographic Vernacular," and the essay by artist Richard Fung, "Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn," were published, along with the rest of the conference proceedings, in *How Do I Look?: Queer Film and Video*, ed. Bad-Object Choices [Cindy Patton, Kobena Mercer, and Teresa De Laurentis] (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991). See also Jonathan Katz, "How AIDS changed American Art," in Katz et al., *ART/AIDS/AMERICA* (Tacoma, WA: Tacoma Art Museum, 2015), 35. See "Oral History Interview with Douglas Crimp by Joanna Burton," March 8, 2009, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-douglas-crimp-15791>. "So my sense is that by the time that Annette and Rosalind refused to publish two of the essays that were part of this package [of *How Do I Look?*] ... [they] said that Cindy Patton's and Richard Fung's essays were not up to the standards of *October*, the theoretical sophistication or whatever. And I think—my sense is

that Rosalind was looking for a pretext to start a fight with me. I mean I think that something had happened, something probably about my commitments having changed in a way that she didn't want her magazine to be about.... But it was a kind of constellation around sexuality and cultural studies, let's say. And it was also maybe a kind of competitive thing about my taking the magazine away from her, which of course I had no desire to do or intention of doing," Crimp, AAA.

17. Michael Plante first identified the subject of homoeroticism in Kass's *Making Men #4*, while also alluding to the gender deconstruction of the painting elaborated below. Plante observes, concisely, "[I]n *Making Men #4*, the choreography of the wrestling scene, perhaps lifted from a porn movie or magazine, is directed by Warhol via his *Dance Diagram* of 1962. From Warhol's voyeuristic eye, Kass denotes the Arthur Murray-like instruction of how masculinity is constructed, and how easily Pollock's pour paintings ... might slip from the masculine to the homoerotic." See Plante, "Screened Identities, Multiple Repetitions and Missed Kisses: Deborah Kass's Warhol Project," in *Deborah Kass: The Warhol Project*, exh. cat. (Newcomb Art Gallery, Woldenberg Art Center of Tulane University; New York: DAP, 1999), 38.
18. Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," *Art News* 51, no. 8 (Dec. 1952) 22–23, 48–50; repr. *Reading Abstract Expressionism*, ed. Ellen G. Landau (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2017), 190.
19. Rosenberg, 193.
20. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Andy Warhol's One Dimensional Art: 1956–1966," in *Andy Warhol*, ed. Annette Michelson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 14.
21. As Leja observes, in the cultural project that enveloped New York School painting and related discourses, "African-Americans, Native Americans, women and other excluded groups served principally as foils in opposition to which a subjectivity for white heterosexual, middle-class, males was reconstituted." See Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1993), 253–54. Amelia Jones's contextualization of critical writings on Pollock's art in light of the "crisis in masculinity" of the post-WWII period establishes some of the terms of the present discussion. Jones reads Rosenberg's emphasis on the physicality of Pollock's art as a response to "anxieties about the feminization of the American male" expressed in popular writings of the period. Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1998), 77–79. See also Jones's mobilization of Butler's theory of gender performativity to read Pollock's pose and dress in his 1949 appearance in *Life* magazine as "the reiteration of 'regulatory norms of sex.'" Jones, 67. The common association of masculinity with action, furthermore, has its basis in academic texts of the postwar period, such as Margaret Mead's influential *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (New York: William Morrow, 1949). Mead identifies the origin of male/female differentiation in the mother-child relationship, in which the mother teaches children that they belong to either "the same sex [as herself]" or "a different one." Mead concludes that "the mother-child situation at present provides a perfect learning context in which girls learn to be and boys learn the need to act," 148–49.
22. Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (Dec. 1988): 519.
23. Butler, "Performative Acts," 519; and Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 2.
24. Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 2.
25. Kass's *Yentl* paintings suggest an elaboration of the engagement with Butler's theories represented by *Making Men #4*, both in terms of gender deconstruction as well as the significance of the performative constitution of gender to the individual's sense of self. In later interviews and writings, Butler clarified some of the terms of their landmark *Gender Trouble* (1990), including that book's engagements with drag. But, in *Gender Trouble*, released two years before the inception of Kass's Warhol project, Butler posits drag performance as "dramatiz[ing]" the performative constitution of gender that occurs in the realm of the lived: "In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency. Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary [Butler's emphasis]." Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990), xviii, 175. Still, Kass's differentiation of her own sense of self as a woman with lesbian subjectivity from Andy, as a gay man, in her explanation for this work (reproduced below) underscores that gender, however constructed and performed, forms a vital (even if not "essential") basis of identity.
26. Mira Schor, "Patrilineage," *Art Journal* 50, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 58.
27. "Deborah Kass with Terry R. Myers," *Brooklyn Rail*.
28. Kass and Sandler, *Bomb*. See also Catherine Lorde's account of Kass's *Double Double Yentl* (*My Elvis*) (1992) as enacting a queer reading of the "erotic desire" of Warhol's *Double Elvis*. Lorde and Richard Meyer, *Art & Queer Culture* (London: Phaidon Press, 2013), 172. Plante also observes: "Kass's substitution of Streisand for Elvis Presley pressed art historians [such as Richard Meyer] to account more forcibly for Andy Warhol's homosexual desire in the paintings of [1950s male movie stars]." Plante, "Screened Identities," 45.
29. Richard Meyer, *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2002), 150.
30. Meyer, 22.
31. See Whitney Davis, "Erotic Revision in Thomas Eakins's Narratives of Male Nudity," *Art History* 17, no. 3 (Sept. 1994) 301–41.
32. Referring to Owens and Buchloh's writings on postmodernist allegory, Amelia Jones observes, "Bypassing questions of subjectivity (here, especially, authorial identity) and interpretation (especially their own interpretive investments), Buchloh and any number of other historians and critics have focused on the political effects of works (especially their capacity for institutional critique) as determined through their formal or narrative structures (read through coded symbolic systems such as allegory) and, to a lesser extent, content." Jones, *Body Art*, 29–30.
33. Jonathan D. Katz, "The Art of Code: Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg," in *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership*, ed. Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle Courtivron (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 189–207, 251–52. See also Kenneth Bendiner, "Robert Rauschenberg's Canyon," *Arts Magazine* 56, no. 10 (June 1982), 57–59.
34. See Krauss, "Rauschenberg and the Materialized Image," *Artforum* 13, no. 4 (Dec. 1974): 36–43. "The images that collect on those flatbed surfaces, like so much clutter or debris, have an extraordinary range in terms of the type of content they bear. A work like *Small Rebus* (1956), places, one next to another, such disparate types of images as magazine photos of sports events, a map section showing the north central United States, a snapshot of a family, postage stamps, a child's drawing of a clock-face, and a reproduction of Titian's *Rape of Europa*. Yet, because each image is given the same level of density as object, one is struck not by their multivalence as signs, but rather by their sameness as things [my italics]," 40–41. This statement lays the foundations for Owens's claim, in "The Allegorical Impulse Part 2," suggesting the combine's primary allegorical status. In Owens's telling, these works elicit the sense that they are legible, only to deny it: "[The] fragmentary, piecemeal combination of images that initially impels reading is also

- what blocks it, erects an impenetrable barrier to its course." See Owens, "Allegorical Part 2," 68.
35. Katz, 201–02.
 36. See Krauss, "Perpetual Inventory," *October* 88 (Spring 1999): 116, n. 59; "It is precisely the message of uncertainty, of slippage, of unreadability and fragmentation that allegory [the theory mobilized by authors such as Owens to characterize the combines] not only conveys but also, in a necessary act of redoubling, itself becomes." See also Katz's own account of this exchange in Katz, "How AIDS changed American Art," 35–36.
 37. See Laura Cottingham, "Notes on Lesbian," *Art Journal* 55, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 72–73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/777658>.
 38. Cottingham, 74, 76.
 39. Flavia Rando, "Reflections on a Name: We're Here: Gay and Lesbian Presence in Art and Art History," *Art Journal* 55, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 9–10. Rando draws on the writings of Elizabeth Grosz and Audre Lorde to frame this question.
 40. Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind," in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 25, quoted in Rando, 8.
 41. See Harmony Hammond, *Lesbian Art in America: A Contemporary History* (New York: Rizzoli, 2000); and Amelia Jones's discussion of Lynda Benglis's video art, in Jones, "Interpreting Feminist Bodies: The Unframeability of Desire," in Paul Duro, ed., *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 226–27. See also Whitney Davis, *Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History* (New York: Haworth Press, 1994); Andrea Weiss, *Paris Was a Woman: Portraits from the Left Bank* (San Francisco: Harper, 1995); James Smalls, *Homosexuality in Art* (New York: Parkstone, 2003); and Tirza True Latimer, *Women Together/Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).
 42. This conversation took place after the turn toward greater racial and gender inclusivity in queer art history since roughly the end of the 2000s, a change influenced in part by Katz's own writing on Agnes Martin's art; this shift also comes as a consequence of the growing gender and racial diversity among advanced scholars working in the field, as well as the passage of queer art (of the 1980s and 1990s) from the category of the "contemporary" to the historical. See Katz, "Agnes Martin and The Sexuality of Abstraction," in Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly, eds., *Agnes Martin* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2011), 171–97.
 43. "Our maiden aunt, lesbianism, or the limits of queer: Jonathan D. Katz in dialogue with Erin Silver and Amelia Jones," in ed. Amelia Jones and Erin Silver, *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories* (Manchester UK: Manchester Univ. Press, 2016), 86.
 44. Katz, *Otherwise*.
 45. Katz, "Art of Code," 205.
 46. Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 519.
 47. Roundtable Discussion: "Sexuality and the Museum," the Brooklyn Museum, Jan. 21, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EkN1XCPvMM>. Kass's remarks, while directed in part at the exhibition, also seem informed by larger currents in "queer" art discourse. Already a subject of debate in the early formation of the field was the shift toward framing gay and lesbian art as "queer," a category encompassing different sexualities and genders and denoting societal analysis rooted in deconstructing gender and sexual binaries. While the shift to queer anticipates the inclusion of more art by women in the field, as this essay argues, that expansion came by and large after a delay, and a significant amount of the writing addressing the queerness of historical art in the period leading up to Kass's remarks reflects the field's prioritization of male artistic production. *Hide/Seek* (mounted in 2011) represents an early example of the move toward greater gender inclusivity that would characterize the field over the course of the 2010s. While, as Kass suggests, *Hide/Seek* includes more male artists than female artists, the exhibition literature includes works by early twentieth-century women, such as Romaine Brooks and Berenice Abbott, draws on writings by women in the field, including Latimer and Jennifer Doyle, and interprets works by artists such as Agnes Martin, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Lynda Benglis through a queer and feminist lens. See Jonathan Weinberg's early critical exploration of the shift to queer in gay and lesbian art history in Weinberg, "Things Are Queer," in Rando, 12.
 48. Bruce Glaser, "Jackson Pollock: An Interview with Lee Krasner (April 1967)" in *Jackson Pollock: Interviews, Articles, and Reviews*, ed. Pepe Karmel (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 28.
 49. See Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 84–85, 95.
 50. See Ann E. Gibson, "Recasting the Canon: Norman Lewis and Jackson Pollock," *Artforum* 30 (March 1992): 67–69.
 51. See Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, and Jose Esteban Muñoz, eds., *Pop Out: Queer Warhol* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1996).
 52. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 219.
 53. Butler.
 54. Butler.
 55. Kass alludes to the historical associations of *Sing out Louise* in the Myers interview, explaining, "You know we just happened to catch [the film,] *Milk* [2008] on television. And, I have to say, when Harvey Milk says [that] to his political team. We were so riveted and inspired. 'You have to come out! You have to!' I grew up in the '60s; questioning authority was a moral imperative. And my mother was a great FDR liberal. She was on the right side of every political argument her whole life and there were plenty of them. She taught me that it was my duty as a citizen of the world to articulate positions, popular or not, and sing out, Louise!"
 56. Author and activist Kenyon Farrow first presented these ideas in response to ART/AIDS/AMERICA, an exhibition co-curated by Katz and Rock Hushka. Recounting his meeting with Katz and Hushka, Farrow explained: "[A] few of us pointed out [that] focusing on 'canonical' works would obviously limit the voices to mostly white men.... I also ... suggested they ... expand what was considered 'art' [to] include Marlon Riggs, house music, hip-hop, and ballroom culture...." A later installation of the show at the Bronx Museum featured Riggs's *Tongues Untied* (1989). Farrow's statement is reproduced in Ted Kerr, "A History of Erasing Black Artists and Bodies from the AIDS Conversation" *Hyperallergic*, Dec. 31, 2015, <https://hyperallergic.com/264934/a-history-of-erasing-black-artists-and-bodies-from-the-aids-conversation/>.
 57. See David Bourdon, "Fling, Dribble and Dip," *Life*, Feb. 27, 1970, 62–63; and Dorothy Seiberling, "Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?," *Life*, Aug. 8, 1949, 45.
 58. Jones's discussions, both of Benglis's video, *Female Sensibility* (1973), and her *Life* parody of Pollock, are drawn upon here. See Jones, "Interpreting Feminist Bodies," 226–27; and Jones, *Body Art*, 94–97. Jones reads the "gynoeroticism" of Benglis's 1973 video in terms of Luce Irigaray's theory, in Jones's words, that "pleasure (particularly female and most particularly female to female) has the potential of disrupting logical structures of containment that are masculinist in effect."
 59. Michael Warner, "Introduction," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Warner (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxvi.
 60. Warner.

A Time of One's Own: Histories of Feminism in Contemporary Art

By Catherine Grant

Duke University Press, 2022

Reviewed by Jennifer S. Griffiths

Catherine Grant has been a Reader in Modern and Contemporary Art and the Dean for Education at the Courtauld Institute of Art since 2022. She is also on the Advisory Board of the Women's Art Library in London. Her new book addresses several issues that are current within feminist scholarship, including alternative temporalities, collaborative practices, and the central importance—yet frequent absence or demise—of archives for feminist histories. She weaves together a wide range of theories and applies them to a broad spectrum of materials, from painting, film, and performance to political actions, literary texts, and archival documents. The overarching aim is to show how feminist art from the early 2000s through the late 2010s has been creatively revisiting and reimagining the feminism of the late 1960s through the early 1990s to produce meaning for the present. *A Time of One's Own* comprises an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, endnotes, a bibliography, an index, and sixty-one black-and-white images.

The introduction, "Anachronizing Feminism," traces the origins of the book to Grant's thinking in the early 2000s about feminism in the Anglo-American experience and in queer material culture. Here she explores the first of several key concepts that loop through the book, in much the same way that the histories of feminism loop through the art under discussion. To confound time, or to "anachronize," in the sense used by artist Sharon Hayes (b. 1970) of intentionally deploying and embodying aspects of the past in the present, is taken up as a productive feminist strategy and as a key element of contemporary experience. This usage resonates, Grant points out, with a number of queer theorizations of temporality, including Carolyn Dinshaw's notion of bodies containing

other times and Elizabeth Freeman's concept of "temporal drag," the viscerally felt pull of the past. Feminist artists in the first two decades of the new millennium have turned to their feminist predecessors sometimes as a source of possibility, the author observes, and other times as figures whose authority must be challenged or remade, in both ways forging a sense of community across time. Examined in subsequent chapters are specific artistic engagements with these earlier histories and figures of feminism that produce complex sites of tension and homage, wherein lies their potentiality.

The inaugural chapter, "Fans of Feminism," returns to ideas from a 2019 volume Grant co-edited with Kate Random Love, *Fandom as Methodology*. The current book recapitulates how the consideration of the artist or art historian as a fan—a person with a "passionate attachment to the object of interest that is not passive but, instead, alters the object to suit the fan's needs" (27)—can characterize the revived interest in second-wave feminism that has appeared within contemporary feminist art since the early 2000s. In one of the LTR art collective's zine-style journals (2002–6), for example, the artist team Ridykeulous, comprising A. L. Steiner (b. 1967) and Nicole Eisenman (b. 1965), make explicitly sexual lesbian revisions to the Guerilla Girls' 1988 poster "The Advantages of Being a Woman Artist." In a video by Mary Kelly (b. 1941) in her installation project *Love Songs* (2005–7), Kelly's students reenact an archival photograph of a 1960s women's march; replacing the original placard text, "Unite for Women's Emancipation," is a line from Sylvia Plath's 1960 poem "Love Letter," "From stone to cloud." Grant argues for the usefulness and flexibility of fandom as a model that escapes what she regards as the limiting terms of the mother-daughter paradigm and allows for an emotionally invested, cross-generational reworking of feminism.

Chapter two focuses on the installation *Killjoy's Kastle* (2013–14) by Allyson Mitchell (b. 1967) and Deirdre Logue (b. 1964), specifically its faux gravestones for defunct feminist and



Fig. 1. Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue, with Nazmia Jamal and others, *Killjoy's Kastle* (2014), mixed media and performance, installation view, British Film Institute, London. Photograph by Nika Zbašnik. Courtesy of the artists.

lesbian groups and initiatives (Fig. 1). Grant thinks through the participatory dimensions of this work using Bertolt Brecht's concept of the learning-play, or *Lehrstück*, which emphasizes rehearsal and the attendant processes of learning, discussion, and reimagining. Through this lens, she sees *Killjoy's Kastle* as playing with our tendency to mythologize feminist pasts and as activating a collaborative strategy of reenactment to engage meaningfully with those pasts. She argues that Brecht's theory "provides a flexible and political framework for an expanded notion of reenactment" that might be applied widely to the analysis of other feminist works (54). She traces some of the organizations and activist groups commemorated in the installation's tombstones, among them the Lambeth Women's Project (1979–2012), which offered community space and services for women in its namesake London borough, and whose members included Nazmia Jamal, curator of the London iteration of the *Kastle*.

Like the title of the book, chapter three, "A Time of One's Own," references

A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf's 1929 meditation on the need for space to be creative. The chapter has the dual intention of highlighting what Grant calls the problem of creative women's "time poverty" and asserting that in "engaging with the histories and fantasies of feminism," artists "are creating a time of their own by bringing together a cast of both historical moments and characters for us to use in the present" (69). "Reenactment" is the key term here, which is explained as "the process of embodying and analyzing an event, text, or idea" (71). Grant examines the film *Salomania* (2009) by Pauline Boudry (b. 1972) and Renate Lorenz (b. 1963), which draws together reinterpretations of the titular character's dance in the 1923 film *Salomé*, a role performed by Jewish actor Alla Nazimova. Interspersed scenes show dancer and choreographer Yvonne Rainer (b. 1934) teaching transgender artist Wu Tsang (b. 1982) a Salome-style dance from Rainer's 1972 film *Lives of Performers*. The dancers in *Salomania*, Grant submits, employ movement and discussion to explore the meanings of the Biblical princess for marginalized bodies past and present. Young British artist Faye Green takes up Rainer's *Trio A* (1978) in her filmed "performance of a rehearsal" *NOT TO DISCOU[RAGE] YOU* (2013) (81); since Green could not afford the transmitter's fee, hers is "an unauthorized learning, an obsessive, incomplete taking hold of the dance ... accompanied by research, reading, feeling" (82). These reenactments of feminism's histories, it is argued, are acts of fandom that prioritize understanding to get inside moments and gestures, making them active in and for the present.

Chapter four, "A Feminist Chorus," explores the "replaying or respeaking" of texts or moments in feminist histories in embodied and spatial ways within a group (88). For Grant, the idea of the chorus allows one to appreciate the contribution of the individual voice while listening for the harmony—and, sometimes, the discordances—of the whole. She describes the cacophony of the *Feminist Chorus* convened by artist Lucy Reynolds in Glasgow in 2014, in

which performers simultaneously recited different texts relating to women artists from the city's archives, and contrasts it with the "sacred air" of the 2011 performance in a darkened London gallery of Clare Gasson's *The River*, a carefully composed minimalist score listing every name from the Women's Art Library. Both projects made archival material present, embodied, and communal, moving it beyond a specific space or geography. Feminist projects that prioritize reading aloud in small gatherings, such as the Women of Colour Index Reading Group organized at the Woman's Art Library by artists Samia Malik (b. 1961), Michelle Williams Gamaker (b. 1979), and Rehana Zaman (b. 1982), illustrate how such choruses permit the realization of "a feminist now, connected to the past through the act of respeaking or listening" (108).

Grant ends chapter four with a reference to *Thin Black Line(s)* (2011) by Black British artist Lubaina Himid (b. 1954), a diagram in the style of a Tube subway map that documents a network of women artists of color active in London during the 1980s. Himid's broader practice of artmaking, curation, and teaching in the UK over the last forty years is taken up in the final chapter, "Conversations and Constellations," and considered alongside the more than half-century-long career of white UK-US artist, writer, and educator Mary Kelly. Two highly influential artists who have long situated their projects within intersectional feminist communities—but whose circles, Grant notes, rarely overlap—are put into conversation with the aim of investigating a feminist art history that moves "beyond a sense of sisterhood as a utopian space" (117) and "does not ignore intersectional issues and tensions, particularly around race and sexuality, but also class, geography, and artworld visibility" (131). To this end, Grant addresses examples of the sometimes difficult encounters among feminist scholars and artists, one being a 1988 discussion between Himid and Griselda Pollock at the launch of Pollock's and Rozsika Parker's *Framing Feminism* (1987) at which Himid voiced

"little patience with a movement where I don't know where the key people are" (111).¹ Another is Kelly's 2015 online conversation with her students and other collaborators, including members of the London Women's Liberation Workshop History Group, about "what defines an era," an email string prompted by Kelly's compressed-lint renderings of historical events in her project *On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Period of Time* (2014) and subsequently published (125–27). Once more Grant's discussion is underpinned by specific terminology, in this case the "constellation," defined with reference to theorist Walter Benjamin's formulation, "Image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation" (122–23);² Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's call to "perceive, in the darkness of the present, this light that strives to reach us but cannot" (124);³ and contemporary writers' thinking around queer networks and chosen family. A constellation, unlike a map, "is seen in relation to the viewer's position rather than that of the omnipotent viewer" (122), and conversations within it offer a means to "interrogate history in nonlinear forms" (114).

Eleanor Farjeon's story *Elsie Piddock Skips in Her Sleep* (1937) is summarized at the start of a conclusion wherein Grant turns her lens on the many literary reconfigurations of *A Room of One's Own*. In Elsie's story, playful repetition—a 109-year-old woman jumping rope—becomes a means for overthrowing the interests of capitalist patriarchy. The repeated evocations of Woolf's text by feminist authors drawing on its productive force likewise serve to challenge oppressive norms. Grant considers, among other examples, scholar Gloria Anzaldúa's 1979 speech "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers," which addresses the especially large obstacles faced by women of color who seek time and space for writing. Grant reflects on her own circumstances, too: as an art lecturer at a UK university, she does have an office, but her position feels precarious amid the capitalist

instrumentalization of learning. She turns to Woolf's vision in *Three Guineas* (1938) of an unfettered feminist "poor college," and of a great fire set to the old patriarchal college by daughters and mothers, to explore anarchic fantasizing and communal embodied learning as potentially radical tools.

A *Time of One's Own* is heavily restricted by its focus on the Anglo-American context and on a narrow window of time, only to about 2017, within the wider reception of second-wave feminism. The recent related study by Victoria Browne, *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History* (2014), goes unmentioned, and readers should take note of the exciting parallel work on constructive anachronizing that is being done by scholars of Afrofuturism, such as Elizabeth Hamilton and Tao Leigh Goffe. The undoubted importance of Grant's book lies in the flexibility and breadth of the new set of terms and con-

ceptual frameworks she applies to contemporary feminist art history. This is an invitation to explore notions of anachronism, fandom, reenactment, the chorus, and the constellation in different geographical and chronological directions and in our own individual feminist practices. By conscientiously acknowledging and exploring her own positionality, Grant has made her detailed account of Anglo-American contemporary environments more broadly relevant and intersectional. The author's transparent subjectivity and embrace of complexity offer up an authentically feminist work of scholarship predicated on her expansion of a familiar precept: "The personal is the artistic is the professional is the political" (54). •

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Italian Art Society newsletter. She is the author of *Marisa Mori and the Futurists: A Woman Artist in an Age of Fascism* (2023), reviewed in this issue of the *Woman's Art Journal*.

Notes

1. Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker, *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement* (London/ New York: Pandora, 1987).
2. Walter Benjamin, "Convolute N [On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]," in Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1999), 462 [N2a, 3]. Originally published as "Konvolut N," in *Das Passagen-Werk*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1982).
3. Giorgio Agamben, "What is the Contemporary?," in Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?* and *Other Essays*, translated by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 46. Originally published as *Che cos'è il contemporaneo?* (Milan: Nottetempo, 2008).

Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other

Edited by Elissa Auther, Laura Mott, and Monica Obniski, with additional contributions from Renée Ater, Gwendolyn Brooks, Leslie King-Hammond, Lowery Stokes Sims, and Sonya Clark in conversation with Nick Cave and Joyce J. Scott
Museum of Arts and Design and
Hirmer, 2023

Reviewed by crystal am nelson

The artistic world of Sonya Clark (b. 1967) is dominated by textiles: silk, cotton, nylon, hair. These materials undergird a practice in which craft and fine art merge, one rooted in community, collaboration, and participation. In the first comprehensive treatment of Clark's practice, the editors of the catalogue *Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other*—Elissa Auther, Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs and William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator at the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD), New York; Laura Mott, Chief Curator of the Cranbrook Art Museum, Detroit;

and Monica Obniski, Curator of Decorative Arts and Design at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta—bring together a group of thinkers and makers to celebrate the artist's achievements over the last twenty-five years. The volume accompanies an exhibition that originated at the Cranbrook, traveled to the High Museum, and is now at MAD.

Clark is the Winifred L. Arms Professor of Art and the Humanities in the Department of Art and the History of Art at Amherst College. Born in Washington, DC, to a psychiatrist from Trinidad and a nurse from Jamaica,¹ she holds a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and an MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art. She was previously a Distinguished Research Fellow and Chair of the Craft and Material Studies Department at Virginia Commonwealth University and the Baldwin Bascom Professor of Creative Arts at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Clark has exhibited at over five hundred museums and galleries across Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, and the Americas, and her work can be found in the Smithsonian

Museum of American Art and the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and numerous other collections (163). The current catalogue, an integral component of the artist's mid-career survey, focuses on Clark's ability to bring people together to explore what is possible to do with her motley collection of materials. From the intricate braiding of the artist's own hair by expert stylists to the deconstruction of Confederate flags by museum visitors, Clark engages people "in community to shape and create corrective histories" (Ater, 32).

The catalogue opens with "Paul Robeson," a 1970 poem by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and author Gwendolyn Brooks (1917–2000) about athlete, actor, singer, and activist Paul Robeson. The poem speaks not only to Robeson's accomplishments as a humanitarian and race man but also, in the repeated line "We are each other's harvest / ... business / ... magnitude and bond," emphasizes the spirit of community at the heart of Clark's practice. Clark tells artist

Nick Cave later in the volume that she “think[s] about this poem ... all the time when I’m in collaboration” (127).

In their acknowledgments, the editors thank the three organizing institutions for the exhibition and discuss the geographic significance of the three hosting cities, Detroit, Atlanta, and New York City, to Clark’s practice. While earning her MFA at Cranbrook in the 1990s, Clark developed close relationships with other Black artists in inner-city Detroit. With Detroit having a majority-Black population that has sustained an immense amount of trauma (the devastating impact of COVID-19, a failing infrastructure, profound socioeconomic disparity), the city has a particular resonance with Clark’s work; her ongoing public Detroit Healing Memorial project (begun 2021) invites residents to seal a dedication within a beaded pouch as a “performance of community and catharsis” (15). In Atlanta, Clark’s research at the world’s largest Black beauty industry event, the Bronner Brothers International Beauty Show, led to her 2014 *Hair Craft Project*, an award-winning artwork that has been exhibited several times in the city since its execution (Fig. 1). Through this project, Clark asserts that hairstylists are artists, and that Black hair is a magnificent source material to work with because of its cultural and political symbolism and substance (16–17). Clark’s relationship with MAD began in 1999 with the inclusion of her work in *The Beaded Universe: Strands of Culture*, an exhibition that originated at the Mingei International Museum in San Diego. Clark’s investment in the use of beads, textiles, and quotidian materials is intimately entwined with her dedication to issues of history, race, and reconciliation: “To her, craft is essential to the question of equality because for marginalized people (African Americans and women, in particular), handwork has been essential to survival; consequently, it functioned, and continues to function, as an important means of creating group identity” (17). Together the three hosting institutions have formed an intellectual and creative matrix in

which Clark has addressed complex and difficult questions about the representation, and frequent exclusion, of African American visual culture.

Renée Ater, a Visiting Professor in Africana Studies at Brown University, in her essay “The Monumental Work of Sonya Clark: Community, the Everyday, and Reshaping History,” discusses the terms “monument” and “monumental” in relation to Clark’s practice. Clark herself has increasingly used these terms to describe her work over the past several years. In *The Beaded Prayers Project* (1998–ongoing), *Unraveling* (2015–ongoing), *Edifice and Mortar* (2018), *Monumental Cloth, The Flag We Should Know* (2019), and *Solidarity Book Project* (2020–21), Clark uses everyday objects to challenge our nation’s self-aggrandizing narratives and question how Western culture defines a monument. Ater quotes Clark that “simple silent objects possess a subversive monumentality” (21).² For example, in the *Beaded Prayers Project* (as in the site-specific *Detroit Healing Memorial*), the artist invites participants to create beaded prayer packets, called memorial pouches, fashioned after the practice of making African amulets as forms of protection, health, and power. Each individual participant makes one packet to keep and another to donate to the exhibition-cum-memorial. Although the process of making the packets is deeply personal, the participants’ collective labor produces thousands of packets, elevating the project to the monumental. *Unraveling* invites gallery and museum visitors to pull strands of thread from a Confederate battle flag, and thus to contemplate with Clark the potential for undoing racial dynamics in the United States. “In *Unraveling*,” Ater reflects, “Clark has taken a well-known object that conveys monumental meaning and enacted an anti-monument gesture with it” (24).

Artist, curator, and art historian Leslie King-Hammond contributes “Sonya Clark—Small Things Considered: Forgotten, Remembered, Reclaimed,



Fig. 1. Sonya Clark, *The Hair Craft Project: Hairstylists with Sonya* (2014), photograph of the artist with hair technician Jamilah Williams, one of eleven inkjet photographs, 28" x 28". Photograph by Naoko Wowsugi.

and Exalted! or: ‘How Did I Not Know That?’” to the catalogue. Like Ater, King-Hammond recognizes the monumentality of Clark’s work. She expresses greater interest, however, in the artist’s use of ordinary, everyday materials typically disregarded by art history. Inspired by the material objects of which the enslaved made impressive use, Clark is among the African Diaspora artists who deploy mundane, useless, and/or discarded things to reflect Black experiences in the world, King-Hammond notes, citing as precedents Clark’s interviewers for the volume, Cave and Joyce J. Scott, along with Betye Saar (b. 1926), Faith Ringgold (1930–2024), David Hammons, and numerous others (67–68). Integral to this aspect of Clark’s practice, the author points out, is her work with human hair, typically the artist’s own. She has incorporated into live performative acts, including *The Hair Craft Project* (Fig. 1), “skilled stylists who specialize in African braiding and coiffuring” (69), allowing audiences to witness the intense labor behind the vital practice of designing and styling in the African Diaspora, as well as the close relationship that develops between the technician and the client. Both Clark’s hair practice and her flag work exemplify the ways in which

Clark is able to foster dialogue around slavery, racial inequality, and the reclamation of US history as it relates to race (70–71).

In Lowery Stokes Sims's essay, "Dreads, Braids, Finger Curls, and 'Fros: The Hirsute Pursuits of Sonya Clark," the educator and curator emerita focuses on Clark's hair practice and draws attention to the myriad ways the artist has used hair, hairdressing, and hairdressing tools to tease out what Clark has described as the "power and history" of Black hair³ and what Sims calls its "occult aspects" (93). For Sims, gesture is at the heart of Clark's practice: the pulling of threads and the care and manipulation of hair, as in *Wig Series* (1998), in which the artist drew dark threads resembling hair through cap-like cloths to create salon-inspired hairstyles, some resembling crowns. Clark's careful engagement transforms the stereotypical associations of Black hair as "unkempt" and "unruly," Sims points out, and elevates hair technicians to the artists they are. Sims identifies two other contemporary African Diaspora artists for whom hair is a primary material: Liliana Angulo Cortés from Colombia (b. 1974) and Laetitia Ky from the Ivory Coast (b. 1996). The work of Clark, Cortés, and Ky demonstrates "continuities of ideas as well as dispersions of aesthetic, social, economic, or political attitudes about Black hair in a global context" (99).

The final two contributions to the catalogue are "Connections: A Conversation between Sonya Clark and Nick Cave" and "Bright and Boundary-less: A Conversation between Sonya Clark and Joyce J. Scott." Cave is a visual and performing artist who works in a range of media, including sculpture, installation, video, sound, and performance; Clark was a student of Cave's at SAIC. In their conversation, the two artists focus on "what is happening in critique and how you can learn the most from the experience" (122). Clark tells Cave that she thrives on having a community of students with whom she can exchange and test ideas: "Teaching feels like a collaborative and generative act. ... The classroom is just one of those places where ... we

establish community and work to bring forth the best of ourselves with accountability" (121).

Scott is an African American artist, sculptor, quilter, performance artist, printmaker, and educator. She and Clark met at a mini-conference hosted by SAIC, and their conversation shows a closeness and level of care found between a mother-figure and her "daughter." Clark and Scott begin by recognizing how their work, and Cave's, eliminates the boundaries between craft and fine art. The "alchemy" of handcraft, as Scott terms it (132), honors the ingenuity and technical skills of the people who came before them as well as creating a wide enough path for those coming after them to follow. Clark sees herself as collaborating with the ancestors—"a chorus of voices through me"—and with the audiences who interact with her work (133). In discussing the colonialist mode of being, she brings up her 2022 project *Twist*, for which a graphic designer took the curl pattern of her hair and produced a useable font. For Clark, it is a contestation of the colonizers' alphabet. (On the book's cover, Clark's name is rendered in *Twist* alongside Latin alphabetic letters.) Scott concludes by telling Clark, "Since there are seven billion people in the world, there are a lot of bright lights out there, glowing. But when we see that light right there, when we're in the presence of it and we're almost getting scorched by it, we ought to call it out. One of those great torches is Sonya Clark" (136).

The catalogue's back matter includes a selected bibliography, Clark's exhibition history, and an annotated history of the artist's performances and projects, providing an important body of information that helps fill the gaps that King-Hammond notes in her essay: "Clark's rise in the contemporary art world has yet to be fully documented, and there are important factors to record that helped move her career and those of other artists of color forward" (68). These materials will prove crucial to those interested in conducting in-depth studies of Clark and her practice. The catalogue is an excellent resource for

scholars of hair art, fiber arts, and artistic collaboration, especially between the artist and audience. An exceptional aspect of the book is its set of seventy-five high-quality color photographs of Clark's most notable works. The catalogue's limitation has to do with the conversation between Cave and Clark; the latter does much of the talking, making the exchange uneven, unlike the one with Scott. Still, the interaction with Cave allows Clark to reveal more about her artistic philosophy. A welcome addition would have been a conversation between Clark and the other hair artists Sims brings up, Liliana Angulo Cortés from Colombia and Laetitia Ky from the Ivory Coast. The affinities among their works would have provided the basis for a rich and substantive dialogue. Still, *Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other* is a significant contribution to the discourse on contemporary craft and fine art and a vital offering in the burgeoning scholarship on a thought-provoking artist.

crystal am nelson is an Assistant Professor of African/Diasporic Visual Studies in the Art and Art History Department at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her writing has appeared in *Art Journal*, *Feminist Media Histories*, *The Art Bulletin*, *caa.reviews*, and other publications. •

Notes

1. See the artist's website, <https://sonyaclark.com/bio/biography/>.
2. "Sonya Clark: Declaration: Artist Profile," Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University website, https://icavcu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/MC-Copy-of-ProjectProfile_Clark.pdf.
3. *Friday Arts: Sonya Clark*, PBS video, August 23, 2013, <https://www.pbs.org/video/friday-arts-sonya-clark/>.

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith: Memory Map

Edited by Laura Phipps, with a conversation with Lowery Stokes Sims, lead essays by Phipps, Candice Hopkins, Richard William Hill, and Josie M. Lopez, and contributions by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Elizabeth Woody, Larissa Nez, Gail Tremblay, Lou Cornum, Larry McNeil Xhe Dhé Tee Harbor Jackson, Andrea Carlson, Neal Ambrose-Smith, Patricia Marroquin Norby, and Alicia Harris Whitney Museum of American Art, 2023

Reviewed by Roni Feinstein

My life's work involves examining contemporary life in America and interpreting it through Native ideology.

—Jaune Quick-to-See Smith¹

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (b. 1940), the 84-year-old artist, curator, and political activist who is an enrolled Salish member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation, has been the subject of any number of solo shows, but the exhibition that opened at the Whitney Museum of American Art in April 2023 was the artist's first full-scale retrospective. Curated by Associate (then Assistant) Curator Laura Phipps, *Jaune Quick-to-See Smith: Memory Map* was also the first exhibition devoted to a Native American artist to originate at the museum.² This profusely illustrated catalogue with essays and commentaries by fifteen writers accompanied the exhibition. Smith herself has been curating exhibitions of Native American contemporary art since the late 1970s, including, in 2023–24, the first one at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, since 1953, *The Land Carries Our Ancestors: Contemporary Art by Native Americans*.

All of these firsts are reflective of a moment when museums are engaging in self-correction, seeking to make reparations for the longstanding exclusion of once-marginalized populations. With regard to Indigenous communities, this initiative entails not only the diversification of exhibitions, programs, and collections of Native American art but also the acknowledgment of the Native American

lands on which these museums reside. As the Whitney catalogue makes clear, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, who at the time of this review's publication was represented by eighteen works in the museum's permanent collection, has long stood at the forefront of ensuring visibility for Indigenous people, history, and culture, and especially for Native American contemporary art. As an artist, activist, and curator who has repeatedly broken what she has called "the buckskin ceiling" (9), Smith has played a significant role in leading us to the current moment.

Memory Map surveys five decades of Smith's artistic production, from 1974 to 2021, illustrated in more than 120 full-page color plates that are followed by an extensive exhibition history and bibliography. An odd feature of the plates is that the chronology is scrambled at various points; the progression of Smith's art is thus inconsistently represented, although her development as an artist and activist is well documented in the multiple lead essays. A selected chronology to clarify the progression of Quick-to-See Smith's life, activism, and career as both artist and curator would have been helpful. Integrated among the plates are ten single-page commentaries that illuminate aspects of particular works or series. Of the fourteen contributors to the catalogue, only three are not of Native American descent: exhibition curator and volume editor Phipps; African American independent scholar and former museum director and curator Lowery Stokes Sims; and the Latinx Head Curator at the Albuquerque Museum, Josie M. Lopez.

Editor Phipps's essay and Sims's interview with the artist offer introductions to Smith's art and life. Born in 1940 on the Flathead Reservation in what is now called Montana, Smith moved frequently with her father, an illiterate horse trainer, and her sister. By the age of eight, she was driven by poverty to work in fields, stables, and elsewhere. After attaining an associate's degree in art at Olympic Junior College (now Olympic College) in Bremerton, Washington, in 1960, Smith spent more than a decade raising children and working odd jobs before completing her BA in art education at Framingham State College (now University) in

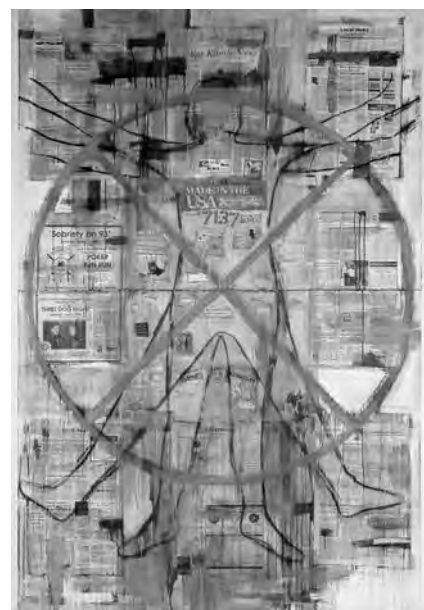


Fig. 1. Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, *The Red Mean: Self-Portrait* (1992), acrylic, paper, newspaper, charcoal, and shellac on canvas, two panels, 90" × 60". Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts.

Massachusetts. In 1976, she began graduate studies at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. A year later, she came together with other Indigenous students to form the Grey Canyon Group, taking upon herself the task of seeking exhibition venues for member artists. She also developed relationships with three visiting professors at UNM who were leading feminist artists from New York: Joyce Kozloff (b. 1942), Jane Kaufman (1938–2021), and Harmony Hammond (b. 1944). In 1985, Smith collaborated with Hammond and Erin Younger, who had recently been a curator of Indian art at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, to curate *Women of Sweetgrass, Cedar and Sage*, an exhibition devoted to the work of nineteen contemporary Native American women artists that opened at the American Indian Community House Gallery in New York City and traveled to eight venues through 1987. With regard to Smith's encounters with New York feminist artists at UNM and elsewhere, Phipps points out that although Smith collaborated with Hammond on the *Women of Sweetgrass* exhibition and published artwork and poetry in the feminist journal *Heresies*, founded by Hammond, Lucy Lippard, Miriam Schapiro (1923–2015), and oth-

ers, Smith grappled “with the distinctions between mainstream feminism and her own approach to supporting Indigenous women, which encompassed tribal sovereignty and Native American representation more than specific ‘women’s issues’” (25).

Into the early 1990s, as the plates in the Whitney catalogue illustrate, Smith’s paintings and drawings most often took the form of abstracted landscapes populated with pictographic human figures and horses and other animals, the choice of subjects generally revolving around the need to preserve both the environment and Indigenous culture. Then, in response to the United States government’s quinquennial celebration of Christopher Columbus’s landing in the Americas, Smith came together with yet another collective of Native American artists and curated *The Submuloc Show/Columbus Wohs: A Visual Commentary on the Columbus Quincentennial from the Perspective of America’s First People*, which opened in 1992 at the University of Oregon, Eugene, and traveled to twelve venues. In a series of works starting in 1992 tellingly titled *I See Red*, she gives clear expression to the fury she feels about the genocide of Native tribes; about the decimation of the environment that accompanied the arrival of the conquering invaders; about the injustices that have continued to be perpetrated against Native people and their lands by the US government, developers, and corporations; and about the offensive and damaging stereotypes that have persisted in American culture. In many of these canvases, a large outline drawing of an iconic form—a canoe, a buffalo, a horse, a US map, or a Flathead man’s vest, among other images—overlays a field collaged with newspaper clippings and with photographs pertaining to Native life, many drawn from the *Char-Koosta News*, the newspaper of the Flathead Reservation. Embedded in fields activated by masterfully handled gestural paintwork, drips, and splatters, the collage materials work together to provoke chains of association, non-linear narratives, and sardonic commentary on the subject of the outline drawing. The predominant

red color manifests Smith’s anger, recalls violence and bloodshed, and signifies both proud Native identity and the demeaning racial epithet (29). In *The Red Mean: Self-Portrait* (1992; Fig. 1), for instance, collaged beneath the outline of the artist’s body in a pose echoing that of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Vitruvian Man* (c. 1490) are clippings reading “MADE IN THE USA,” “7137” (Smith’s tribal enrollment number), “Coyote Made Me Do It,” “MAJOR VALUES,” “Indian Art,” and “Bush administration asserts power to declare tribes extinct.” The red segmented circle superimposed upon her form evokes both the Indian medicine wheel of healing and the crosshairs of a rifle. Over the course of the ensuing decades, Smith has pursued a variety of other styles and manners of artmaking; remaining characteristic to the present day, however, is the passion she unleashed with the *I See Red* series in upholding the viability of Native American culture. Smith “recognizes that the past is always present,” as Phipps puts it, “and asserts the linkage between global events and tribal concerns” (29).

Preceding Phipps’s essay are excerpts from a conversation between the artist and Sims, who became acquainted some forty years ago as activist curators “battering our way from the periphery” of art discourse (15). The interview reveals how particular details of Smith’s upbringing and background impacted her sense of community and worldview. The discussion provides insights into the iconography of a few of the paintings in which Smith uses Native and other imagery to address such global issues as climate change, animal extinction, female empowerment, and the Iraq War. Smith’s *Trade Canoe for Don Quixote* (2004) and *Don Quixote in Sumeria* (2005), for example, present war canoes laden with body parts as metaphors for the US destruction of ancient sites in Iraq.

The essay by Candice Hopkins, a citizen of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and Executive Director of Forge Project, a Native-led initiative centered on Indigenous art and culture in Upstate New York, focuses on Smith’s role as a curator, writer, and national spokesperson for Native American art.³ Smith was “instrumental to the creation

of an artistic ecosystem,” she writes, “one maintained through her administrative generosity and, likely, her sheer tenacity” (32). Hopkins looks most closely at the 1985–87 *Women of Sweetgrass, Cedar and Sage* exhibition and its catalogue, for which Lippard authored one of her many essays on Smith. Like Phipps, however, Hopkins maintains that “feminism remains an awkward fit when projected onto Native societies” (36): while second-wave feminists idealized Native societies for their matrilineal and egalitarian qualities, they tended to overlook Native women and contemporary Indigenous artists, save for Smith, her collaborator Emmi Whitehorse (b. 1957), and the performance troupe Spiderwoman Theater. *Women of Sweetgrass* nevertheless marked an important collective endeavor for Native women artists. The exhibition included painting, weaving, ceramics, jewelry, beadwork, photography, quilting, and basketry, as “hierarchies are not representative of Native American culture,” Hopkins asserts (35–36). A few paragraphs later, however, she offers a quote from the *Sweetgrass* catalogue in which Smith notes a traditional gender divide among Indigenous artists, with painting and sculpture being seen as men’s domain and smaller works as women’s purview. Elsewhere, Smith recalls being told repeatedly that a woman—particularly a Native woman—could not be an artist (16, 174). The artist writes in the excerpted *Sweetgrass* essay that the gendered hierarchy of media was starting to shrink by the mid-1980s, and Hopkins attributes further progress to *Sweetgrass* itself.⁴

In the essay that follows, Richard William Hill, Curator of Canadian Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery, explores the relationship between Smith’s work and that of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. While Hill correctly maintains that Smith employed their “artistic tools”—Rauschenberg’s “flatbed picture plane”⁵ filled with found materials derived from popular culture, and Johns’s use of iconic images (38–40)—he espouses outdated conceptions of Rauschenberg’s and Johns’s art when he asserts that Smith’s work is imbued with content while theirs eschews it.⁶ In the 1950s, and even more so in the

decades that followed, these artists, like Smith, undeniably used clusters of images to provoke meaning.

With further regard to Smith's artistic sources, while Phipps's essay admirably reviews the artist's development and career, I take exception to her discussion of Smith's relationship to earlier art. Phipps writes, "Smith is a consummate and constant student—absorbing, almost inhabiting, the books and images of artists like Paul Klee, Joan Mitchell [(1925–1992)], and Hannelore Baron [(1926–1987)] that populate her studio. But Smith transforms these sources to carry her own stories of American history and current events." Phipps refers to "superficial similarities" between Smith's work and that of Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol, ultimately declaring, "Categorization of her work is unnecessary" (29). Phipps thereby seems to apologize for and downplay an essential and deliberate component of Smith's artistic strategy that is at the very core of her brilliance: her rampant eclecticism. Anyone familiar with international modern and contemporary art flipping through the plates in the catalogue will quickly note that Smith draws from a wide swath of art history: Wassily Kandinsky, Anselm Kiefer, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Donald Baechler, James Ensor, Frida Kahlo (1907–1954), Larry Rivers, Jim Dine, Susan Rothenberg (1954–2020), and Philip Guston, among many others. With regard to Dine, for example, Smith's many paintings that feature the central outline drawing of a vest, war shirt, or dress—such as *Flathead Vest: Drums, Sweat, and Tears* (1996)—strongly call to mind Dine's extended series of bathrobe pictures (begun in 1964). Smith's words on Pop art epitomize her approach to her sources: "I appropriate [this style] because it is symbolic of American mainstream culture. This gives me a common language in order to communicate with the viewer." Her strategy can be understood to derive from the 1970s–1980s Pictures Generation, Appropriation, and Neo-Expressionist movements, all of which dismissed the modernist value of originality and instead viewed the image bank of mass-media images and "high" art throughout history as a wellspring from which to draw at will. Smith

employs familiar styles and motifs to lure us into images that are deeply rooted in Indigenous traditions, thereby affirming the very fact of Native American existence and inserting her oeuvre into the art-historical narrative. This practice finds a parallel of sorts in her curation of exhibitions of work by contemporary Indigenous artists, which has allowed Native American voices to penetrate the walls of museums. Both Smith's art and her activism thus engage in institutional critique. Smith's subversive strategies resonate with her self-identification with Coyote, a familiar and beloved trickster character in Native American stories who bestows knowledge. It is no coincidence that Smith created *Urban Trickster* (2021), a two-foot-high bronze featuring the head of a slyly grinning coyote, especially for the Whitney retrospective (although the catalogue does not illustrate it).

The spirit of Smith's art—her desire to communicate essential messages while engaging in humor often tinged with pain—is best captured by Lopez in "Printmaking as Resistance and Survival." Although the essay focuses upon the artist's longstanding engagement with graphic media, the points Lopez makes and the issues she raises apply to the whole of Smith's artmaking practice: "Smith's use of humor and satire is no laughing matter. As cornerstones of her visual language, these are tools—mechanisms for facilitating Indigenous resilience and survival. The prints demand participation as the viewer grapples with irresolution, opposition, and tension that intersect with a Native American perspective built on the interconnectedness of the land and all living things. Smith's graphic works are weapons holding the past and present up for view." Lopez provides cogent analyses of an array of Smith's prints, a corpus the artist has made in collaboration with over fifty printers at workshops across the country. By creating some prints on the scale of paintings, "Smith is intentionally democratizing the dissemination of Native American art" (44).

Several of the short texts interspersed within the plates section of the book illuminate the historical figures, places, or events that inspired one or more works on the succeeding pages. Others offer personal and often poetic

reflections on particular themes that recur in Smith's art. A poem by Smith herself reflects on the production of her *Ronan Robe* series (1977), in which canvases calling to mind animal hides hang on lodgepoles. Elizabeth Woody sheds light on the inspirations for the *Wallowa Waterhole* series (1979), with its imagery of dispersed ancestors and Wallowa landscape of mountains and canyons. Larissa Nez explores the *Petroglyph Park* series (1985–87) and related works executed in response to the destruction of Native American sacred sites by developers; Gail Tremblay provides an introduction to Chief Seattle, the Native American leader whose 1854 speech on the need to protect the environment inspired the texts that appear in Smith's eponymous *C.S. 1854 Series* of 1989–91. Lou Cornum masterfully dissects the "deceptive whimsicality" of the devastating watercolor series *Paper Dolls for a Post-Columbian World with Ensembles Contributed by the US Government* (1991), produced just before the quincentenary of Columbus's arrival in the Americas. Larry McNeil Xhe Dhé Tee Harbor Jackson offers insights into tricksters and Smith's Coyote persona. Andrea Carlson addresses Smith's recurrent use of the image of the trade canoe, which has been a focus of her work in all media since 1992, including a series of sculptures made in 2018 in collaboration with her son, Neal Ambrose-Smith. In his own text, Ambrose-Smith discusses the dancing movements and storytelling function of a motorized assemblage made with his mother, *Warrior for the 21st Century* (1999). Patricia Marroquin Norby reflects on Smith's works dedicated to the horrors of war, and Alicia Harris offers incisive commentary on Smith's eloquent use of the US map, which, in her most recent works, the artist turns on its side. Harris writes, "Smith's maps are monument to rematriation..., renaissance to a knowledge of this as living *Indian* land. Her vision is of a land full of messy overlaps of history, ripe with the viscous fluid of culture, memory, and meaning" (196).

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith has said about her work as a whole, "These are

my stories, every picture, every drawing is telling a story. I create memory maps" (9). Hence the subtitle of this intermittently flawed yet essential catalogue, one whose tribute to the artist is at once belated and timely. •

Roni Feinstein, PhD, is a California-based independent scholar, curator, and art critic specializing in modern and contemporary art. She has served as Branch Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art at Champion in Stamford, Connecticut, and has taught courses at many institutions, including the University of Guelph in Guelph, Ontario; the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida; the Museum of Modern Art; the University of California, Irvine; and, currently, UCLA Extension.

Notes

1. Smith in Carolyn Kastner, *Jaune Quick-to-See Smith: An American Modernist* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), 15. Reviewed by Betsy

Fahlman in *Woman's Art Journal* 36, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2015), 49–50.

2. The 2017 Whitney exhibition *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World*, which originated at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, met with considerable controversy, as the artist's self-identification as Cherokee was widely disputed, no Indian nation being willing to claim him.
3. Hopkins is also on the faculty of the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College and was the curator of another noteworthy recent exhibition on contemporary Native American art, *Indian Theater: Native Performance, Art, and Self-Determination since 1969*, at the Hessel Museum at Bard (June 24–November 26, 2023). The exhibition included Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's *Paper Dolls for a Post-Columbian World* (1991).
4. See also on the *Women of Sweetgrass, Cedar and Sage* exhibition Nancy Luomala's review in the *Woman's Art Journal* 9, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1988), 42–44.
5. Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria," in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), quoted in Hill's essay, 39.
6. Hill dismisses "the model of decoding the

iconographic/ethnographic signs" in Rauschenberg's, Johns's, and Smith's work (43, n. 11), saying that Carolyn Kastner, in her brilliant 2013 book *Jaune Quick-to-See Smith: An American Modernist* (see note 1 above), "misreads" the three artists in this regard. Scholars have long understood, however, that in the 1950s Rauschenberg and Johns employed clusters of images and texts to provoke associations and convey meaning: see, among others, Charles F. Stuckey, "Reading Rauschenberg," *Art in America* 65, no. 2 (March–April 1977): 74–84; Roberta Bernstein, "Robert Rauschenberg's *Rebus*," *Arts* 52, no. 5 (January 1978): 138–41; and Jane Carpenter, "The Infra-Iconography of Jasper Johns," *Art Journal* 36, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 221–27. Regarding *The Red Mean: Self-Portrait* (1992; Fig 1), while the work generally evokes Rauschenberg's collaged surfaces, it invites more specific comparison with Johns's *Seasons* painting cycle (1985–86), in which elements drawn from the artist's personal history surround the artist's traced silhouette.

7. Alejandro Anreus, "A Conversation with Jaune Quick-to-See Smith," in Anreus, Joy Harjo, and Lucy Lippard, *Subversions/Affirmations: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith* (Jersey City, NJ: Jersey City Museum, 1996), 111.



THE ACTIVIST COLLECTOR
Lida Clanton Broner's 1938
Journey from Newark to
South Africa
Christa Clarke
Published by the Newark Museum. Distributed
worldwide by Rutgers University Press.



**THE BRODSKY CENTER AT
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY**
Three Decades, 1986–2017
Edited by Ferris Olin



**WOMEN ARTISTS ON THE
LEADING EDGE**
Visual Arts at Douglass
College
Joan M. Marter



PHOTO-ATTRactions
An Indian Dancer, an
American Photographer,
and a German Camera
Ajay Sinha

"E.G. Crichton has created a testament to lineage and liberation for all of us who know that diving into the past is also simultaneous discovery into our own psyche. This is a touching study of how identity, art, and lineage tie into the physical artifacts of our lives. Riveting and a true pleasure to read."

— Susie Bright, Editor-at-Large and Executive Producer of *The Bright List* at Audible and author of *Mommy's Little Girl*

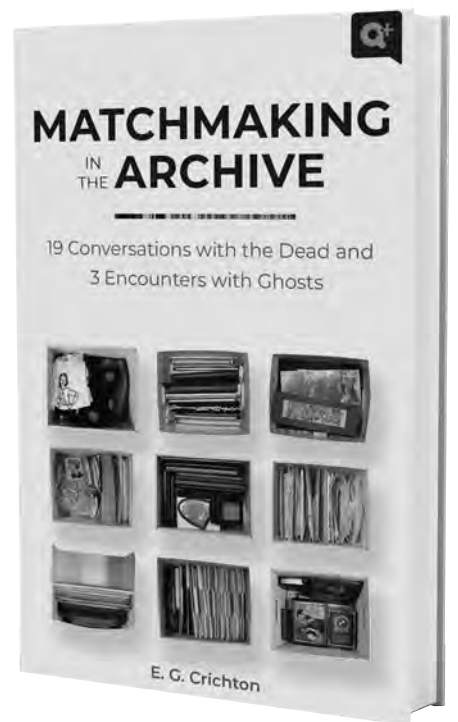
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Hannah Wilke: Art for Life's Sake

Edited by Tamara H. Schenkenberg and Donna Wingate, with contributions by Schenkenberg, Glenn Adamson, Connie Butler, Hayv Kahraman, Nadia Myre, Cindy Nemser, Jeanine Oleson, and Catherine Opie

Pulitzer Arts Foundation, in association with Princeton University Press, 2021

Reviewed by Marissa Vigneault

A strikingly posed photograph of Hannah Wilke (1940–1993) in her New York loft, taken in December 1976, is the first image of the artist reproduced in the exhibition catalogue accompanying the recent retrospective of her ceramics, drawings, performances, photography, sculpture, and video at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in St. Louis. Wilke, mid-1970s–fashionable in high-heeled boots and rolled-up jeans, cocks her head to the side and looks directly at the camera with the self-awareness and intensity of a model posing for the lens (Fig. 1). Haloed by the latex folds of her *Ponder-r-rosa 3* series (1975) hanging on a back wall, she seems a goddess of Art and Eros. Closer to Wilke is a twelve-foot-high reproduction of herself as an Augustus Saint-Gaudens-style caryatid—upright, frontal, and garbed in rippling drapery from the waist down—in *My Country-'tis of Thee*, a critique of patriarchal classicism that she performed at the Albright Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo on Independence Day of the US bicentennial year. An array of Wilke's works, including photographs from the *S.O.S. Starification Object Series* (1974), is visible on the walls and floor of her live-work space. The photograph reinforces the centrality to Wilke's life of the politically informed and often piercingly intimate art she crafted with intelligence and sensitivity. I am a fan of Wilke in the vein of Catherine Grant's "fans of feminism," for whom "to be a fan is also often to be in dialogue."¹ Because of Wilke's untimely death in 1993 from the effects of lymphoma, this dialogue must engage solely with archives of visual and textual information, in this case enclosed within the pale pink hard

cover of this exhibition catalogue. A sheet of Mylar printed with an image of Wilke's *Untitled* (ca. 1970), an early latex piece pleated together with metal pushpins, wraps around the cover, producing a lovely, tactile materiality and a kind of intimacy: I can't touch the art in the exhibition, but I can touch the book. (Can a catalogue be an erotic object?)

The text is structured as three parts: three longer academic essays, four short artists' reflections, and a previously unpublished 1975 conversation between Wilke and the late feminist art historian Cindy Nemser. The rest of the catalogue comprises high-quality reproductions of works in the exhibition, an informative chronology of Wilke's life, a selected bibliography (which the researcher in me wanted to see expanded), and an index (something I wish all exhibition catalogues included). The opening essay, "Eros and Oneness," by the curator of the exhibition, Tamara H. Schenkenberg, introduces and contextualizes the whole of Wilke's artistic production. Schenkenberg situates Wilke's ideas, motivations, and techniques in relation to Eros, here defined as "sexual charge, life force, and locus of creative agency" (40). The author rightly asserts that Wilke was "dedicated to expressing the erotic from a woman's perspective" (14) and locates this vitality of movement in the gestural and playful folds, twists, turns, and loops found in so much of Wilke's art. One of the stronger aspects of this essay is Schenkenberg's use of Wilke's words to support her claims, notably "Eros has to do with affirming life" (14; from the Nemser interview, 100) and "art is for life's sake" (40),² the latter providing the subtitle for the exhibition and catalogue.

Curator and writer Glenn Adamson, notable for his expertise in the history of design, craft, and contemporary art, focuses on Wilke's ceramic pieces in his essay, "Elective Affinities." Wilke worked closely with the potter Rudy Staffel during her undergraduate years at the Tyler School of Fine Arts near Philadelphia (now the Tyler School of Art and Architecture at Temple University), and she went on to teach both ceramics and sculpture at the School of Visual Arts in New York from

1972 to 1991. Adamson deftly finds affinities between Wilke's work and the clay vessels by West Coast funk artist Robert Arneson that vividly evoke genitalia. I love this suggestion, and I would further posit a link between Arneson's drawings and Wilke's, particularly her dynamic, multicolored works from the 1980s. Adamson's amusing yet compelling visual alignment of Arneson's phallic teapot *Blue Mountain Tea from the Sweet Golden Rod* (1969) with Wilke's latex-glossed ceramic *Untitled (Phallus)* (c. 1970) reinforces Schenkenberg's point that the erotic is central to Wilke's feminist practice. Adamson remarks upon Wilke's use of latex and Liquitex on clay to "represent the wetness brought on by arousal" (49). Wilke's innovative use of bright acrylic paints and other colorants in many ceramic works, on the other hand, "quite literally put a barrier between the clay body and her own," providing "a clever riposte to the charges of essentialism and narcissism which were beginning to be lodged against her" (55).

The first section concludes with a substantial essay by Connie Butler, who organized the exceptional exhibition *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* in 2007, which included works by Wilke, and who was recently named Director of MoMA PS1, where Wilke created and exhibited *So Help Me Hannah: Snatchshots with Ray Guns* in 1978 (when the institution was known as the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center). The title of Butler's essay, "Needed Erase Her? Don't. Hannah Wilke's Female Image," both references the artist's witty wordplay, as seen in the titles of many works reproduced in the catalogue, and evokes her pointed critique of the patriarchal subjugation of women's bodies. Butler reminds us that Wilke was "always a self-proclaimed feminist" (66) who worked to advance "a radical feminist practice based on her particular bodily experience, with all of its attendant sexual stereotypes, misogyny, pleasure, and empowerment" (61). Here Butler adds a feminist lens through which one can view Adamson's postulated link between Wilke's ceramic practice and Arneson's: "The bodiliness



Fig. 1. Hannah Wilke in her studio, SoHo, New York (1976), with over-lifesize reproduction of herself in performance as caryatid at Albert Knox Gallery, Buffalo (1976, center), *Ponderrosa* 3 series of latex sculptures (1975, left wall), and other works. Photograph by Fred W. McDarrah. Getty Images.

of Wilke's ceramic forms runs as a feminist counterpoint to the male-centric history of the medium's most experimental practitioners" (63). I respectfully take issue, however, with two brief aspects of Butler's essay. First is her claim that a "very obvious but not often charted nod that Wilke made to this male-dominated history of the female body-as-found-image and material is to Marcel Duchamp" (65). There is excellent writing on Wilke's reception of Duchamp by Debra Wacks and Janine Mileaf, neither of whom are cited in the endnotes, although Wacks's essay is listed in the catalogue's Selected Bibliography.³ Second is Butler's statement that Wilke's "focus on a visual language of the erotic has been little discussed in the literature" (67). Rachel Middleman, whose work exploring female sexual subjectivities is cited by Adamson but not Butler, has written extensively on the complexities of Wilke's abstraction in relation to its eroticism.⁴ Overall, though, Butler's text effectively solidifies Wilke's pioneering

practice as having been deeply informed by feminist politics and her subjects as continuing to hold great relevance in our present society.

The second part of the catalogue features four short essays by contemporary artists who were invited to reflect on one of Wilke's works in relation to their own positions and practices. The short narratives are personal, at times achingly so, creating a bridge between the more art-historical preceding section and the lived experiences of women artists working now. What results is an imagined dialogue in line with Grant's conception of "fans of feminism," an anachronistic positioning of voices that creates "feminist constellations—actual and potential, real and imagined."⁵ The essay by Catherine Opie (b. 1961), "Daughter/Mother," connects her own mother's cancer diagnosis with the striking pathos of Wilke's photographic diptych *Portrait of the Artist with Her Mother, Selma Butter* (1978–81). "Our mother/daughter bond through our bodies," Opie gut-wrenchingly writes, "is loaded with metaphors that are at times difficult to reckon with" (72). Wilke's images both assert the continued presence of their subjects and concede their corporeal fragility, a tender duality mirrored by Opie's poem about the diptych at the end of the essay: "a mother who looked away from the camera/while Wilke stares back" (75).

Wilke's sense of humor was smart and sensual and also feminist in its provocation of patriarchal anxieties. "Through her art making, she was really quite funny," observes Jeanine Oleson (b. 1974) in her essay "Ha-Ha-Hannah," noting that Wilke "consistently produced certain shocks and intellectual scramblings—as well as a plethora of terrific puns" (77). Oleson focuses on Wilke's black-and-white video *Hello Boys* (1975), in which the artist appears nude behind a glass fish tank, and compellingly connects Wilke here to the "bawdy powerhouse of sexual camp" (78) known cinematically as Mae West (1893–1980). Both Wilke and West faced censorship and condemnation for their performative focus on female eroticism cloaked in clever double entendres and humorous wordplay. Yet as Oleson beautifully claims, this humor was "a form of 'em-

bodied survival," a self-activating way of "surviving misogyny" (79).

In Opie's and Oleson's essays, the artist's body is both powerful and fragile, a highly moldable material subject to unforeseen external forces. It is also, as Nadia Myre (b. 1974) writes in "Cycling Through Gestures to Strike a Pose," a connection point with the world, a notion that recalls Schenkenberg's relational reading of Eros. Myre watched Wilke's black-and-white *Gestures* (1974) repeatedly, finding in the artist's first video work—which shows the artist silently moving her head, changing her facial expression, and kneading her skin—a deep "intimacy and honesty of performing" (80) as Wilke develops a "vocabulary of poses and archetypes" (83). Myre likens this artistic mode to her own process of "working with gesture as an embodied practice" (82). It marks the beginning, Myre argues, of Wilke "using her body in a feminist act to subvert the expectation of an easy read" (83).

Hayv Kahraman (b. 1981) expands upon the political dimension of Wilke's practice in her short essay "Play and Care," which centers on Wilke's mirrored reflection in a 1982 photographic self-portrait in her Greene Street loft. What strikes Kahraman in this photograph (and, presumably, in Wilke's work as a whole) is the artist's "deliberate and defiant use of her beauty as a decoy. ... Her body served as a precision mechanism for questioning, subverting, and resisting" (86–87). Wilke was often chastised by critics and fellow feminists for flaunting her good looks. Yet I have always found in Wilke's work precisely the feminist subversion that Myre and Kahraman focus on. She pushed for us to see the "pathos past the posing," the suffering of all women who bear the scars of objectification.⁶

Fittingly, all four artist-authors consider the centrality of the body (physically and metaphorically) in Wilke's art. The body is always political, bearing the weight of personal concerns and societal expectations, and many of the concerns Wilke carried in the later decades of the twentieth century remain exceedingly relevant in 2024. I therefore wanted to read one more reflection by an artist born after 1999 whose work is

just starting to grapple with the cost of inhabiting a body. As a young graduate student in the early 2000s, I marched through the streets of Washington, DC to protest the election of George W. Bush in the fear that my body and so many others were in deep danger. Feminist art history helped me to understand something of the struggles and survivals of women artists and to appreciate the importance of the archive in preserving their voices. I still pull out my heavily highlighted copy of Cindy Nemser's *Art Talk: Conversations with 15 Women Artists* (the revised and expanded 1995 edition). But until I read *Art for Life's Sake*, I hadn't realized that a February 1975 interview with Wilke had been excluded from Nemser's collection. The conversation, "edited for brevity and clarity" (89), is here published for the first time and adds much to our understanding of the relation of the erotic to Wilke's practice in the mid-1970s. "I try to elevate the status of women," Wilke explains, "by making art with a very sexual, sensitive, open, free feeling ... Eros has to do with affirming life" (100). The retrospective's title resonates with this statement of purpose. When Nemser asks Wilke "what it means to be a woman artist now," Wilke responds, "It's much easier. Having a bit of power has made me funnier and more secure, taking more risks with my art" (105). Ha-Ha-

Hannah. I wonder, though, what her response would have been in 2024.

Given the massive growth in the online availability of archival materials and digitized images, we may be inclined to ask why printed exhibition catalogues are still valuable. I, personally, find significance and pleasure in physically flipping through their pages of texts and images, inking notations in the margins, and pulling the books repeatedly from the shelves. (Yes, a catalogue can be an erotic object.) The contributions to *Art for Life's Sake* may each stand on their own, but collectively they form one of Grant's "feminist constellations" of art-historical narratives that are never static but always in the process of becoming.⁷ There are many different histories of Wilke and of the insistently smart, funny objects and performances she created with such self-awareness, including the narratives in this catalogue and those yet to be unspooled by future generations. My version of Wilke's history has once again shifted after seeing the Pulitzer exhibition and reading its catalogue, which now sits on my bookshelf near my well-worn copy of Nemser's collection of interviews, prompting me to daydream of the feminist constellations yet to come that will fill my future stargazing. •

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focuses on the connections between artists working in the 1970s and now whose work is informed by the politics of feminisms and eroticism.

Notes

1. Catherine Grant, *A Time of One's Own: Histories of Feminism in Contemporary Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), 6. See the review by Jennifer S. Griffiths in this issue of the *Woman's Art Journal*.
2. Wilke in Chris Huestis and Marvin Jones, "Hannah Wilke's Art, Politics, Religion and Feminism," *The New Common Good* (May 1985): 11.
3. Debra Wacks, "Playing with Dada: Hannah Wilke's Irreverent Artistic Discourse with Duchamp," in *From Diversion to Subversion: Games, Play, and Twentieth-Century Art*, edited by David J. Getsy (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 105–17; Janine Mileaf, "The Stripper and the Glass: Hannah Wilke at the Philadelphia Museum of Art," in *AKA Marcel Duchamp: Meditations on the Identities of an Artist*, edited by Anne Collins Goodyear and James W. McManus (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2014).
4. Rachel Middleman, *Women, Art, and Sex in the 1960s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2018).
5. Grant, *A Time of One's Own*, 20.
6. Wilke quoted in "Hannah Wilke in Conversation with Ruth Iskin," *Visual Dialog 2*, no. 4 (June–August 1977): 20.
7. Grant, *A Time of One's Own*, 8, 122–25.

Viva Video!: The Art and Life of Shigeo Kubota

Edited by Mayumi Hamada, Azusa Hashimoto, Mihoko Nishikawa, Midori Yoshimoto, and Yui Yoshizumi
Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art and Kawade Shobo Shinsha Publishers, 2021

Shigeo Kubota: Liquid Reality

Edited by Erica Papernik-Shimizu, with a contribution by Gloria Sutton
Museum of Modern Art, 2021

Reviewed by Helena Shaskevich

Two strikingly different portraits of the the artist, critic, and curator Shigeo Kubota (1937–2015) preface the Museum of Modern Art's *Liquid Reality* exhibition catalogue. The first is an untitled 1988 watercolor whose sinuous lines and distilled washes of pastel pinks and yellows form a sensuous profile portrait that multiplies as it recedes into the background, softening with each iteration until it dissolves into pure abstraction. The second is a black-and-white photograph of Kubota peering down into a mirrored recess holding a video monitor in her 1976 sculpture *Three Mountains*. The mirrors' sharp, jagged angles kaleidoscopically refract Kubota's image at the center, shattering her figural

integrity. The juxtaposition of these two portraits attests to the complexity of Kubota's oeuvre: the ease and comfort with which she changed scale and medium, her willingness to delve into psychic spaces of joy as well as of tragedy, and her deployment of ripples, echoes, reflections, and refractions as the visual and metaphorical language binding her life experiences to her favored medium of video.

Kubota has suffered from the type of historicizing neglect experienced by countless women artists. She has been overshadowed by her husband, Nam June Paik, considered the "father of video art," and her diverse practice has frequently been reduced to her



Fig. 1. Installation view of 1st. LOVE, 2nd. LOVE...Shigeko Kubota Solo Sculpture Exhibition (1963), Naiqua Gallery, Tokyo, black-and-white photograph. Private collection.

infamous 1965 performance *Vagina Painting*, in which she crouched and waddled over a canvas with a red-daubed paintbrush attached to her underwear, a work that despite receiving art-historical accolades remains an outlier within her oeuvre. *Viva Video!: The Art and Life of Shigeko Kubota* and *Shigeko Kubota: Liquid Reality* offer an important corrective to these omissions and, more generally, signal a shift towards greater institutional acknowledgment of women's significant contributions to the histories of video art.

The books are catalogues for exhibitions that opened just a few months apart in 2021 on opposite sides of the globe. *Viva Video!* accompanies the first posthumous solo exhibition of Kubota's work and is the first major survey in nearly three decades. Edited by the organizing curators at the three hosting institutions, Mayumi Hamada at the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art (where the exhibition originated), Azusa Hashimoto at the National Museum of Art, Osaka, and Mihoko Nishikawa at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, as well as by Midori Yoshimoto, Professor of Art History and Gallery Director at New Jersey State University in the US, the fully bilingual Japanese-English catalogue traces the trajectory of Kubota's work using carefully compiled resources that include never-before-translated texts and interviews. *Liquid*

Reality accompanies the dazzling exhibition of Kubota's video sculptures from 1970 to 1986 organized at MoMA by Erica Papernik-Shimizu, an Associate Curator in MoMA's Department of Media and Performance.

Viva Video! provides an in-depth chronology of Kubota's full artistic career. After studying sculpture at the Tokyo University of Education (now the University of Tsukuba), Kubota joined the sound art collective Group Ongaku and had a solo show in 1963 at the Naiqua in Shinbashi, an installation of abstract metal sculptures surmounting a cloth-covered pile of love notes (Fig. 1). She moved to New York the following year and became involved with numerous avant-garde circles in the US, including Fluxus and the experimental music collective Sonic Arts Union. Taking up video in 1970–71 while in California with Paik, she soon began to produce the video sculptures that became her signature. The catalogue illustrates this timeline with rarely exhibited, high-quality archival photographs and ephemera, including countless sketches, notes, and preparatory drawings, which texture its presentation of Kubota's deeply personal oeuvre with an even greater sense of intimacy. Her work with White, Black, Red, and Yellow, the multiracial multimedia arts collective she co-founded in 1972, for instance, is illustrated with a photo of the founding members in a planning session: Kubota, video and performance artist Mary Lucier (b. 1944), artist Cecilia Sandoval (b. 1951), and poet Charlotte Warren (b. 1932). The women sit at a kitchen table facing the camera with expressions of resolute self-assurance, creating a sense of intimate convocation and sisterhood while claiming a space where women have long been oppressively bound to unremunerated forms of domestic labor. The image thus attests to the importance of personal friendships within the group's intersectional feminist politics and artmaking. The pairing of Kubota's works with archival materials throughout *Viva Video!* sheds light on the artist's cross-cultural, collaborative practice as well as on her playful yet serious artistic persona.

Following the color illustrated plates are short reflections by Kubota's fellow artists and colleagues. Among the contributors are Fluxus artist and composer Mieko Shiomi (b. 1938), who first met Kubota around 1963 when they were young artists in Tokyo; Lucier, who worked closely alongside Kubota in New York during the 1970s and 1980s; and sound sculpture artist Liz Phillips (b. 1951), who recalls Kubota's strong early influence on her work. Filmmakers Jonas Mekas and Bob Harris, Osaka National Museum of Art Director Atsuhiko Shima, and video artist Joan Logue (b. 1942) elaborate upon Kubota's deep ties to avant-garde art communities. Finally, two of Kubota's earliest and most unwavering institutional champions pay tribute: Barbara London, the first video art curator at MoMA, and Lori Zippay, former Executive Director of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), Kubota's distributor. The pieces exemplify the catalogue's thoughtful approach towards a comprehensive discussion of Kubota's work.

In the candid remarks of her friends and collaborators, Kubota appears passionate, tempestuous, and highly driven. Lucier characterizes Kubota's nature as protean: "On the one hand, she seemed to be a traditional Japanese woman—accommodating, cheerful, and happy to cook for guests.... On the other hand, she was a radical feminist, unhappy about her status as a woman artist in Japan and easily angered by the slightest perceived injustice. ... Her extremes intimidated me, but somewhere inside I felt a deep kinship with this volatile personality, ambitious in her art and determined to succeed. Her temperament and her art were inextricably bound together, and she brought tremendous energy and vitality to every project she undertook" (*Viva Video!*, 46). Lucier suggests that this dual nature was necessary to Kubota's practice, propelling her to consistently break ground and push the envelope.

The catalogue's second half is dedicated to the curators' essays. Hamada and Yoshimoto provide overviews of Kubota's early artistic career. Nishikawa discusses the visual and material aspects of Kubota's video

sculptures: the bright colors, strong contrasts, and myriad distortions of the videos, for example, which draw the eye and offer “efficient means of rendering images abstract” (221), and the juxtaposition of the natural—such as wood with a pronounced grain—with the technological. Kubota flexibly adapted her practice when physical constraints and technical advances required it, Nishikawa shows. In “Shigeo Kubota and the Cyclical,” Hashimoto fascinatingly argues that Kubota drew an intentional connection between the continuous looping of her videos and the circular forms in many of her sculptures, including rotating wheels.

With the authors benefiting from the rare treat of unfettered access to Kubota’s archives and collaborators, one would have hoped for a much more developed and nuanced discussion of Kubota’s relationship to the Japanese avant-gardes, a topic on which little information exists in current English-language literature.¹ Kubota famously spoke, as she does here in an interview with Judith Greer (174), of feeling stifled as a female artist in Japan; she blamed the lack of opportunities there for her decision to move to New York. What is the greater context for these frustrations, and where and how do they manifest in her work? In which works can viewers witness Kubota engaging with her Japanese peers versus pushing back against them? The *Viva Video!* catalogue is uniquely positioned to explore these topics, so their absence is keenly felt, particularly considering the attunement in the rest of the catalogue to cross-cultural collaboration.

Regardless, *Viva Video!* is a significant and timely addition to Kubota scholarship. It provides an important update to *Shigeo Kubota: Video Sculpture*, Mary Jane Jacob’s 1991 exhibition at the Museum of the Moving Image in Queens, New York,² by addressing many of Kubota’s later works. In this part of her career, the artist shifted towards large-scale, multi-piece installations of video sculptures, including *Video is a Ghost of Yourself* (Lance Fung Gallery, New York, 1996) and the series of sculptures she made



Fig. 2. Shigeo Kubota, *Duchampiana: Nude Descending A Staircase* (1976), standard-definition color video and film transferred to video, cathode-ray tube monitors, and plywood, 66" x 30" x 67". Museum of Modern Art, New York.

after Paik’s death in 2006 reflecting on their life together.

In 1981, MoMA purchased Kubota’s *Duchampiana: Nude Descending a Staircase* (1976; Fig. 2), a set of wooden steps containing screens with an electronically modified video of feminist filmmaker Sheila McLaughlin (b. 1950) walking nude up and down a flight of stairs. It was the first video sculpture to enter the museum’s collections. *Shigeo Kubota: Liquid Reality* touchingly brings this history full circle, celebrating the artist’s innovative transformation of video into sculptural form and beautifully arguing for the historic significance of Kubota’s distinct practice. It was in the early 1970s that Kubota began to extend her videos into three dimensions, burrowing cathode-ray tube monitors into nylon bags, embedding them into plywood boxes, and hanging them delicately over stainless-steel basins, bestowing a sense of monumentality onto a medium that could otherwise feel delicate and ephemeral. The catalogue opens with her earliest work of video sculpture, *Video Poem* (1970-75), in which she placed a synthesized self-portrait and a fan inside experimental composer Takehisa Kosugi’s cloth bag, and

concludes with *Rock Video Cherry Blossom* (1986), in which an LCD monitor showing abstracted flowering branches is embedded within a foam replica of a large garden stone. The richly illustrated catalogue includes two scholarly essays: an introductory text by Papernik-Shimizu, and a longer exposition on time and memory in Kubota’s sculpture by Gloria Sutton, a scholar of contemporary art history at Northeastern University.

The exhibition’s subtitle is taken from a quote by Kubota in which she describes reality as becoming “liquid” within the medium of video, with “infinite variation becom[ing] possible ... freedom to dissolve, reconstruct, mutate all forms, shape, color, location, speed, scale” (*Liquid Reality*, 11).³ Papernik-Shimizu begins her essay with this quote and demonstrates Kubota’s sustained commitment to mining the electronic image. Writing in a rhythmic prose that echoes the undulating, reverberating, “liquid” qualities she emphasizes in Kubota’s works, Papernik-Shimizu underscores the transformative impact of events in Kubota’s life on her shift towards video sculpture. During Kubota’s 1972 trip to Europe, for instance, the artist reflected upon the physicality of video: “Portapak tears down my backbone, shoulder, and waist. I travel alone with my Portapak on my back, as Vietnamese women do with their babies.”⁴ Woven into Kubota’s articulation of the camera’s heft is a gendered politics of embodiment that challenges the widely held notion of video as a “fragile” medium. Papernik-Shimizu sees this challenge also in Kubota’s sculptural language, arguing that her plywood forms offered video, a medium thought to be “superficial” and “instant,” a sense of immutability and monumentality (14).

Sutton’s essay, “A Matter of Memory,” expands upon these ideas. Through ekphrastic analyses that add depth to readings of Kubota’s works, Sutton identifies the principal dialectics in the artist’s sculptures: preservation versus erasure and obsolescence; the sculptural form versus the moving image; nature versus technology (resonating with Nishikawa’s

essay in *Viva Video!*); and the deep time of geology versus the rapidly shifting time of electronic imagery. Kubota's inherently hybrid objects, Sutton points out, challenged the "prevailing monocultural, male-dominated art historical narratives of the period," namely Minimalism, and defied the rigid spatial boundaries of the theatrical screen and the TV box. Instead, they mixed abstract and minimalist forms while "spill[ing] off the wall into the viewer's arena" (20).

Sutton's central thesis revolves around video's ontology. She compellingly argues that Kubota's primary interest in video was in its archival potential, and particularly in its inherent multi-temporality, "its reliance on an unsettling provisional present that is stored and replayed over and over" (20). In *Duchampiana: Marcel Duchamp's Grave* (1972–75), for instance, in which videos showing the eponymous burial place play on monitors studded into a wooden pillar and reflected in a mirror, Sutton sees "less a portrait of Duchamp or a record of Kubota's visit to France than an open circuit or a variable loop that physically refracts and abstracts the video imagery, like an unstable memory" (27). Her formally and theoretically persuasive argument is a valuable contribution to our understanding of Kubota's art.

Sutton's essay does, however, miss an opportunity to address Kubota's relationship with MoMA. Her characterization of Kubota's statements about Manhattan arts institutions—"The Whitney is only for Americans and MoMA is too slick; and also I'd have to die to have a show there"³—as "provocations" feels far too

apologetic (35). It too quickly attributes this sentiment to the fiery brashness for which Kubota was known and refuses to hold these institutions accountable. Moreover, it misses the irony: despite paving the way for video art at MoMA, Kubota is only now receiving an exhibition there, almost a decade after her death. Given *Liquid Reality's* recognition of Kubota's contributions to the history of video as "a pluralistic art form in North America ... largely shaped by those who prodigiously operated in the margins of American art history: women, immigrants, émigrés, and foreigners" (21), the book might have reflected on MoMA's significant role in defining—and delimiting the extent of—video art. While it was instrumental in recognizing video as an artistic medium, hosting such important events as the Open Circuits conference in 1974, MoMA also helped forge the discursive frameworks that cast more socially oriented TV experiments out of museums. This split, which had profound consequences for the continued viability of these works, was also a highly gendered one.⁶ Since Kubota consistently pushed back against these boundaries in her writing, curatorial work, and organizing efforts, an acknowledgment of this history would have been fitting here.

Nevertheless, the *Liquid Reality* catalogue is a beautifully produced and intellectually significant reading of Kubota's unique shift from single-channel video to sculpture. Both this volume and the *Viva Video!* catalogue give an artist too long in the shadows her well-deserved spotlight. •

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Notes

1. While the Anglophone literature on Kubota often mentions the influence of Japanese philosophy on her oeuvre, it does not contextualize her work relative to the Japanese avant-garde. See, for instance, Moira Roth, "The Voice of Shigeko Kubota: 'A Fusion of Art and Life, Asia and America...,'" in *Shigeko Kubota: Video Sculpture*, edited by Mary Jane Jacob (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 76–87.
2. Jacob, *Shigeko Kubota: Video Sculpture*.
3. Kubota in Jacob, *Shigeko Kubota: Video Sculpture*, 41.
4. Kubota in Chris Meigh-Andrews, *A History of Video Art* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 10.
5. Kubota in Katsue Tomiyama, "The End of an Odyssey: Shigeko Kubota's Large-Scale Retrospective in New York. An Interview with Shigeko Kubota," in *Shigeko Kubota: Video as a Form of Spiritual Collision with the World* (Milan: Mudima, 1994), 9.
6. For further discussions of this division and its gendered politics, see Lynn Spigel, *TV by Design: Modern Art and the Rise of Network Television* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), and Martha Rosler, "Video: Shedding the Utopian Moment," in *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975–2001* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004 [1985–86]), 32–33.

Marisa Mori and the Futurists: A Woman Artist in an Age of Fascism

By Jennifer S. Griffiths
Bloomsbury, 2023

Reviewed by Tara Kraft-Ainsworth

Futurism is often presented as a masculine endeavor, but Jennifer S. Griffiths's monograph on Marisa Mori (1900–1985) complicates the gen-

dered treatments of this Italian avant-garde movement. The book focuses on Mori's artistic production during the interwar period, with brief mentions of her postwar contributions to feminist discourse. In the introduction, Griffiths outlines two central objectives: firstly, and most prominently, she aims to contextualize Mori's oeuvre in order to "reevaluate the pervasive myth of a masculine modernism" (2). Secondly, she applies a feminist lens to Mori's imagery, re-examining her work outside

of "the masculine, the urban, and the abstract" (5). The chapters map Mori's engagement with the prevalent iconography and ideologies of Magic Realism and Futurism as well as her relationships with prominent artists and intellectuals like Felice Casorati, with whom she trained in 1925–31, and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, author of the first *Manifesto del Futurismo* (1909). Building on this background, Griffiths presents detailed readings of Mori's compositions, demonstrating how the

artist revised the gendered visual language of her historical moment. Blending traditional, figurative, often feminine subject matter with the mechanized, dynamic angles of Futurism, Mori's work challenges Fascism's restrictive definitions of womanhood.

The first chapter supplies biographical information on the artist. Born Maria Luisa Lurini and raised in Florence, she moved with her family in 1918 to industrialized Turin, which served as the backdrop to her artistic development from her earliest training under Casorati to her introduction to Futurism in 1931 (11–24). At the age of twenty, she married war veteran Mario Mori, and two years later she had her only child, Franco Mori; uncommonly for her time, the artist separated from her husband in 1924. In the 1930s, in addition to designing sets and costumes for theater and film, she exhibited extensively within Italy and abroad, often with the Futurists, but she severed ties with the movement by the end of the decade because of its continuing alignment with Fascism (14–22). After weathering the Second World War in Florence, she continued to produce drawings and paintings into the 1970s (22–24, 32–33).

Griffiths punctuates the artist's biography in this chapter with an insightful discussion of Mori's 1948 lecture for the Lyceum Club, the first modern Italian professional organization for women, a text that Griffiths translates in full in the appendix (105–109). Titled "Vita della donna artista" (The Life of the Woman Artist), the presentation cited the examples of Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–c. 1656), Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755–1842), and Rosa Bonheur (1822–1899) to argue that women could be great artists regardless of marital and maternal status. Mori reflected on the positive and negative impact procreation had on creativity, and she proposed that the two processes were intimately informed and enriched by each other (106). Throughout the book, Griffiths uses Mori's lecture as the foundation for her re-evaluation of the artist's imagery, arguing that Mori drew upon her knowledge of women artists and employed motherhood motifs widely in her oeuvre to interrogate the prevailing definitions of maternity,



Fig. 1. Marisa Mori, *L'Ebbrezza fisica della maternità* (The Physical Ecstasy of Maternity) (1936), oil on cardboard, 27 1/2" x 39 1/3". Mori Family Archive.

particularly those of the Fascist regime. Indeed, Mori's depictions of mothers and children oscillate between celebrating women's ability to create life and revealing the constrictiveness of the bonds formed by this act of creation. Griffiths later provides a visual representation of this dialectic in her discussions of "*L'Ebbrezza fisica della maternità* (The Physical Ecstasy of Maternity, 1936; Fig. 1), exhibited at the 1936 Venice Biennale (83), and her *Maternità futuristica* (Futurist Maternity) of 1932; whereas the former presents motherhood as a transcendent experience akin to flight (101–103), the latter depicts maternity as a heavy, dark chain connecting the child to the woman (77–78). Griffiths finds that both Mori's lecture and her use of Futurist visual language occupy a liminal space between avant-garde methods and traditional perspectives, a point that acts as a touchstone for the remainder of the study.

Chapter two focuses on Mori's engagement with Casorati's studio in Turin. Intimate, anti-Fascist, and female-dominated, Casorati's atelier provided Mori with an uncommon space where the exercise of critical thinking, the acquisition of art-historical knowledge, and the refinement of rigorous technical skills were encouraged alongside experimentation. Although often labeled a Magic

Realist, Casorati prompted his students to develop their individual styles by drawing simultaneously on tradition and on current issues. In addition to teaching his students about such canonical artists as Giotto di Bondone, Masaccio di Ser Giovanni di Simone, Andrea Mantegna, and Tiziano Vecellio, Casorati introduced his students to European avant-garde painters Gustav Klimt, Paul Cézanne, and Pablo Picasso, among others. The *maestro's* engagement with non-Italian influences and his veneration of late medieval and early modern art brought his pedagogy and practice under Fascist scrutiny, earning him the label "poco italiano" ("not very Italian") (41). Griffiths argues that this subversive, free-thinking environment was a formative experience for Mori and traces the influence of Casorati's curriculum in Mori's early landscapes, still lifes, and portraits. The author's discussion of Mori's self-portraits is particularly compelling, as it demonstrates Mori's use of historical precedents as part of her own experimentation. Several of these compositions present Mori with the tools of her trade, holding a brush or palette, while others depict the artist's nude body. The latter, Griffiths argues, are not simple representations or traditional studies of the female form but rather an act of "*re-creating herself*" (45). In *Autoritratto nudo* (Nude

Self-Portrait, 1929–1930), for example, Mori applied a heavy sfumato to her composition, abstracting her exposed body so that it frustrates the (male) gaze with its blurred forms and protects its subject by rendering her anonymous; the work thus became a site of personal exploration.

Mori's revisions to the way the female form was depicted became more pointed in her Futurist work, particularly in her contribution to the *Futurist Cookbook* (1932), the subject of chapter three. Griffiths notes that while Marinetti, the book's editor with Fillia (Luigi Colombo), elevated the so-called "feminine" senses of smell and taste as new artistic avenues, Mori's recipe—the only entry in the Cookbook by a woman—challenged Futurism's consumption of the female body. Mori had been introduced into the Futurist circle the previous year through her friendship with Tullio d'Albisola (Tullio Mazzotti), who encouraged her by example toward more playful modes of artmaking. Griffiths argues that Mori's Futurist experiments combined the comical and the feminine to oppugn the "ideal" woman visually presented by the movement and verbally reinforced by Fascist politics. To support this proposition, Griffiths conducts a persuasive analysis of the two recipes for edible breasts in the *Futurist Cookbook*: the marzipan *Mammelle italiane al sole* (Italian Breasts in the Sun) by Mori, and the *Fragolamammella* (Strawberry Breasts) of the poet Farfa (Vittorio Osvaldo Tommasini). While breasts are traditionally a symbol both of maternity and of feminine wiles, the *mammelle* of Mori's recipe disrupt both of these significations; their dense flour and flesh-like tone render them "less inviting or yielding" than Farfa's pink ricotta version, whose succulent color and candied strawberry nipples accentuate the dish's erotic intention (76). Griffiths reads Mori's approach to the mutilated female form as a modification of the sacrificial iconography of Saint Agatha of Sicily, whose legend held that she had been martyred by the removal of her breasts.¹ Mori's recipe places cream and custard around the *mammelle*, a detail that Griffiths suggests might point to a

female body hidden below the surface of the dish: "Her breasts may then symbolize women emerging from the shadows and into the light in a liberating kind of exposure to the world" (73). Although operating within the visual language employed by male Futurists, Mori's (re)presentation of the female body attempts to reclaim "maternal creative power" (76) as capable of enacting meaningful revisions to society, subverting the notion of these bodies as conduits for male creativity or reproduction.

The artist's rebuttal of "ideal" womanhood appears most clearly in the paintings she completed after her first flight in an airplane, the topic of the book's final chapter. Drawing on primary sources, public sculptures, and Futurist writing, Griffiths provides extensive background on how airplane travel was coded as a masculine enterprise in Fascist thought, its disembodied freedom reserved only for men. Nevertheless, Mori's relationship with Marinetti provided her with the opportunity in 1934 to experience this dangerous autonomy for herself by riding in an open-cockpit acrobatic biplane. Her subsequent paintings, such as *L'Ebbrezza fisica della maternità* (Fig. 1), utilize the same imagery as the *aeropittura* paintings of her male colleagues, juxtaposing "masculine" forms of flight with the "feminine" natural world. However, while male painters like Alfredo Ambrosi emphasize the airplane's ability to penetrate the earth in violent ways, Mori reframes the earth as an active, fertile presence receiving the pilot. Griffiths argues that "if nature appears as the object of man's conquest in many Futurist images, [Mori's] works undermine the narrative of a heroic male flyer subjugating the earth" (97). In *Aviatrice addormentata* (Sleeping Aviatrice, 1932), Mori situates a recumbent female nude between a propeller and wing in the background and the translucent form of a cockpit in the foreground. Griffiths suggests that this hybrid form of woman and machine combines the male freedom signified by the airplane with the passive motif of slumber, infusing the latter with

"creative power." By depicting the woman asleep but using a title and imagery that suggest she is actively in control of the aircraft, Mori undermines the masculine correlation of sight and domination, replacing it with a "metaphor for intellectual or spiritual ascent" initiated and embodied by the female form (99). Her treatment of the nude in these later paintings recalls her earlier experiments, such as *Autoritratto nudo*, where traditional imagery becomes a method for reclaiming agency.

Griffiths's feminist lens reveals Marisa Mori's interest in exploring the female body as a site of endless capability, from procreation to artistic freedom to cultural intervention. Although at times the contextual information on Casorati and the Futurists overshadows the discussion of Mori herself, Griffiths's monograph provides an excellent introduction to the artist and her work. The author's detailed formal readings are supplemented by a wealth of illustrations throughout the book, many in color, and by ten high-quality color plates at the end of the study. *Marisa Mori and the Futurists* thoroughly situates the artist in conversation with her historical moment, elucidating the ways in which she refashioned Futurist language to speak on issues of modern womanhood. Bloomsbury will issue a paperback edition in November 2024. •

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Notes

1. For the story of Agatha of Sicily, Griffiths cites the saint's hagiography in the thirteenth-century *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine, which relays that Agatha received this punishment for rejecting the advances of a Roman official and refusing to worship pagan idols. Traditional iconography shows the saint presenting her severed breasts on a serving dish as a holy sacrifice (71–72).

Meret Oppenheim: My Album

By Meret Oppenheim, edited by Lisa Wenger and Martina Corgnati (translated by Mia Prucker, Belinda Grace Gardner, and Bridget Mason) Scheidegger & Spiess, 2022

Leonora Carrington: The Image of Dreams

By Giulia Ingarao (translated by Dominic McElwee) Mimesis, 2022

Reviewed by Talia Kwartler

During their long artistic careers, Meret Oppenheim (1913–1985) and Leonora Carrington (1917–2011) worked across artistic and spoken languages. They emerged as artists at a precocious age and were quickly assigned the role of *femmes-enfants*—nonconformist young muses—by men of the Surrealist movement. Each had to define themselves as artists on their own terms during and after their collaborations with the male Surrealists. The book on Oppenheim is a lushly illustrated facsimile with transcriptions and the first English translation of an autobiographical album Oppenheim made in March 1958. It contains original drawings, personal photographs, documents relating to her career, and other materials from her childhood through 1943. This edition of Oppenheim's album also contains a facsimile and paired German and English translations of a short autobiography Oppenheim wrote by hand in French around 1971. The book on Carrington is a new English translation of a monograph originally published in Italian in 2014. Neither Meret Oppenheim's *Meret Oppenheim: My Album* nor Giulia Ingarao's *Leonora Carrington: The Image of Dreams* is an entirely new book, yet they still feel fresh. Now we have access to these books in the English language, which offers a novel way to consider questions about the legacies of women artists.

In *Meret Oppenheim: My Album*, the multilingual German transcriptions and

the translations of the artist's captions and annotations to the visual materials in her *Album: From Childhood to 1943* are reproduced alongside facsimile pages from the album (Fig. 1). The texts and images are spaciouly arranged against colored backgrounds on the pages of the large-format book. Reproductions of works mentioned in the album punctuate these pages. Opening the volume, and focusing mostly on *My Album*, is a short introduction by Lisa Wenger, the artist's niece, and Martina Corgnati, an Italian art historian (7–13). Corgnati organized a retrospective of Oppenheim's work in Milan in the late 1990s and published an Italian biography of the artist in 2014.¹ Together, the texts Wenger and Corgnati present in *My Album* provide a distinctive view into the artist's interpretation of her life story, and as Wenger and Corgnati note, they give scholars an important and personal document through which to consider Oppenheim's art. Yet the artist stipulated that these materials could only be published twenty years after her death, leaving us with the sense that she wanted to participate in the writing of her own history but was reticent to do so while she was alive.

Oppenheim's (usually) chronological *Album: From Childhood to 1943* and *My Autobiography* provide poignant insights and details that supplement the already known facts about her life. Oppenheim was born in Berlin in 1913 to a Swiss mother and a German father who worked as a doctor until his distant Jewish heritage stripped him of his livelihood during World War II (309, 312). She went to school in Steinen in southern Germany, and later in Basel, before taking her first extended trip to Paris in 1932 with her friend Irène Zurkinden (1909–1987), a painter, at the age of eighteen (309). The following year, back in Paris, she met Alberto Giacometti, who introduced her to Jean (Hans) Arp and invited her to exhibit at the Salon des Surindépendants with the Surrealist group (309–10). Within this context, Oppenheim met Max Ernst, an artist twelve years her senior, and they had a “great love affair that lasted for around a year” (310). As Oppenheim

wrote in the 1971 autobiography (employing the third person to refer to herself, as she did throughout the text), “She left M.E. due to an abrupt signal from her subconscious.... Only much later would she understand: this separation, which she too saw as a catastrophe, was due to an unconscious ‘knowing’ that by staying with M.E. she would not have been able to develop as a person and as an artist” (310). Around this time, in the winter of 1933, Oppenheim posed for a series of nude photographs taken by Man Ray in the studio of the artist Louis Marcoussis (310). In the series, she stands with her arm blackened with lithographic ink and placed on the printing plate. Man Ray's photographs of Oppenheim became well-known within Surrealist circles. The 1958 album barely mentions this shoot; Wenger and Corgnati sense Oppenheim “had still not gotten over the relative unease that the images had caused her on a personal level” (11).

Oppenheim's first solo gallery show took place in the spring of 1936 at the Galerie Schulthess in Basel. Her album includes the typewritten exhibition checklist of twenty objects, such as the well-known platter of trussed high-heeled shoes entitled *Ma gouvernante—My Nurse—Mein Kinder-mädchen* (1936, recreated 1967). The artist's fame only intensified when she made *Object* (1936), a work that André Breton dubbed *Déjeuner en fourrure* (*Breakfast in Fur*), a store-bought porcelain teacup, saucer, and spoon covered in gazelle fur that was exhibited first in the *Exposition surréaliste d'objets* at the Galerie Charles Ratton in Paris and then in *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (1936–37) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. “Breton's name for it,” Oppenheim reflects in her autobiographical sketch, “triggered the start of the erotic associations that have always surrounded the object, and which are really created by the viewers. For me, the idea of drinking chocolate out of that cup or eating a ragoût or an omelette from that saucer was a jape/joke that appealed to me” (312). Her album preserves the letter that MoMA director Alfred Barr Jr. sent Oppenheim after the show to purchase



Fig. 1. Page from Meret Oppenheim, *Album: Von der Kindheit bis 1943* (Album: From Childhood to 1943) (1958). Reproduced in *Meret Oppenheim: My Album*, 215.

Object for \$50 (187). Notably, the shocking work only officially entered the museum's permanent collection in 1946.² The simultaneous scandal and renown this work brought Oppenheim, coupled with the looming war in Europe, led her to leave Paris and return to Basel in 1937 (312), where she trained in art restoration, not returning to artmaking with vigor until the 1950s. As she writes in her autobiography, "Finally, in October 1954, the crisis passed just like that, without external occasion. ... For the first time for a long while, M.O. rents a studio and starts working again with passion and pleasure" (315). Nearly half of the autobiography covers Oppenheim's postwar years through 1971, a time of lesser-known output for the artist. Because the broader arc of Oppenheim's career has historically been overshadowed by her collaborations with the Surrealists, this multilingual edition

of *Album: From Childhood to 1943* and *My Biography* is a welcome addition to scholarship, which has expanded following the international retrospective *Meret Oppenheim: My Exhibition* (2021–22).³

In *Leonora Carrington: The Image of Dreams*, we can see parallels between Carrington's emergence into the avant-garde and Oppenheim's artistic trajectory, but we can also sense the interest in the mystical that plays out evocatively in Carrington's art. Ingarao, an art historian, takes the reader through the entirety of Carrington's life and artistic career, writing in her acknowledgements that her book was based "first of all, [on] my conversations with Leonora Carrington at her home in Calle Chihuahua during my years of research in Mexico" (177). These interviews with the artist from 2006 are central to Ingarao's reading of Carrington's work. They give her monograph a lively character because the artist herself was such a dynamic figure, and they help

Ingarao to structure her book around Carrington's biography. Although raised in Lancashire in Northern England to be a refined bourgeois woman, Carrington ultimately convinced her parents to let her study art in London, first at the Chelsea College of Art and then at Amédée Ozenfant's Academy of Fine Arts (44–45). She became acquainted with the Surrealist movement first through Herbert Read's *Surrealism* (1936), a gift from her mother, and then by seeing the group's works firsthand on the occasion of the *International Surrealist Exhibition* at the New Burlington Galleries in London in June–July 1936 (46–48). Carrington met Ernst, an artist whose works she had greatly admired in Read's book, on the occasion of his exhibition in London in June 1937 (48–49). Soon afterward, the two became inseparable; they spent the summer together in Cornwall, and she moved with him to Paris in autumn 1937 (52–53).

In August 1938, Carrington and Ernst purchased a cottage and vineyard in Saint-Martin-d'Ardèche, a village north of Avignon, where they lived together in an intensely creative and collaborative period (59–61). Carrington made "magnificent hybrid creatures" for the house, Ingarao describes, including a plaster horsehead emerging from the wall and a cement horsehead forming the armrest of a bench in the garden (60, 61). Inside the house, Carrington painted half-human, half-animal subjects on cupboard doors in the dining room (62–63). Like Oppenheim, Carrington's life was disrupted and dislocated by World War II, but in a more dramatic way. In September 1939, Ernst, as a German, was ordered to report to an internment camp in Largentière before being transferred to Les Milles in Aix-en-Provence (67, 71). Ernst's departure sent Carrington into an emotional crisis that was staunchly by Ernst's return to Saint-Martin-d'Ardèche in December 1939 but reignited when Ernst was forced to return to Les Milles in May 1940 (73–75). Now a young foreign woman living alone in a French village, Carrington ended up turning over the house she had shared with Ernst to the unscrupulous owner of the local Hôtel des Touristes. She left France with artist Catherine Yarrow (1904–1990), an old friend from England, for Madrid, from which, at Yarrow's advice, Carrington's parents had her committed to an asylum in Santander, a traumatic experience recalled in Carrington's memoir *Down Below* (1944; 78–79).⁴

Afterward, Carrington went to Lisbon, where she once again saw Ernst (who was now married to the collector and art dealer Peggy Guggenheim). As Carrington later said, "After Madrid I was not the same person. ... There was no way to go back."⁵ To escape the constraints of her concerned family, Carrington had just married poet Renato Leduc, then the Mexican ambassador to Portugal (81–82, 88). Carrington traveled to Mexico with Leduc via New York, settling in Mexico City. There, she was part of a lively group of émigré artists, which included her friends Remedios Varo

(1908–1963), the Spanish Surrealist, and Kati Horna (1912–2000), the Hungarian photographer (103). It was through Horna that Carrington met the Jewish Hungarian photographer Emerico “Chiki” Weisz; they married in 1946, and had two sons, Gabriel and Pablo Weisz (111–13). Carrington lived and made art in Mexico City for the rest of her extremely long life.

Ingarao goes into great detail in her close readings of Carrington’s artworks. One such instance is her analysis of *Green Tea* (1942; Fig. 2), which Carrington made while she was living in New York. The single female figure, swaddled in a cow-spotted cloth with an elaborate headdress, draws into herself and closes her eyes. Ingarao describes the image as “evok[ing] a moment of stasis, the pause before a return to life” (93). The author sees a parallel between this painting’s subject matter and the man and woman wrapped in a catskin in Carrington’s drawing *Brothers and Sisters Have I None* (1942), exhibited in the *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition in New York that year. The swathed figures in both of these works emphasize sensations of personal isolation that border on the imaginary. In *Brothers and Sisters Have I None*, the title identifies the subject (perhaps Carrington herself) as an only child, even though the artist did, in fact, have three brothers. Two years later, when she was in Mexico, Carrington painted the enigmatic and haunting *Chiki, ton pays* (Chiki, Your Country, 1944), named for the man she would later marry. The words “your country” in the title of the work seemingly refer to Weisz’s tenuous status as a Jewish Hungarian refugee in Mexico.

In her analyses, Ingarao relies too heavily on the artist’s voice—and also on the fiction Carrington wrote that sometimes referred to her own life—and in so doing obscures the reader’s perspective on Carrington’s art. However, one of the biggest reasons the reader is left searching for meaning in *The Image of Dreams* is because of the design of the book itself. Only eight images are reproduced in color, with an additional six reproduced in black-and-



Fig. 2. Leonora Carrington, *Green Tea* (1942), oil on canvas, 24" x 30". Museum of Modern Art, New York.

white. The nearly two-hundred-page paperback book almost entirely lacks the visual material that would have made Ingarao’s arguments salient. This was absolutely a missed opportunity on the part of publisher Mimesis, and it weakens the text itself. In comparison, *Meret Oppenheim: My Album* could just as easily be considered a picture book as a monograph on the artist. Publisher Scheidegger & Spiess richly illustrates the album, including the pages of reproductions within the facsimile that allow the reader to see the artworks that the album discusses. *My Album* is printed in a much larger format than Ingarao’s monograph, and its 324 pages feature 190 color plates. The publisher is to be lauded for devoting such careful attention to the design and layout.

There is a single but significant moment of overlap between the biographies of Oppenheim and Carrington that is addressed only by Ingarao. Leonor Fini (1907–1996), a Surrealist artist who was friends with both Carrington and Oppenheim, had a falling-out with Carrington that led Fini to destroy a portrait she had made of her, which Carrington perceived as a

personal attack.⁶ After Ernst’s internment, when Carrington was in the throes of an emotional crisis, she made up with Fini, which Ingarao notes was at Oppenheim’s urging (*Image of Dreams*, 70, n. 3). Even though the two artists certainly knew each other, it is interesting to notice that Oppenheim did not address Carrington in her own autobiographical notes; by contrast, Oppenheim writes warmly of time spent with Fini (*My Album*, 212–13, 214–15, 313; Fig. 1). We can also see in both publications that Carrington and Oppenheim had to overcome the specter of Ernst during their careers.

Looking at *Leonora Carrington: The Image of Dreams* and *Meret Oppenheim: My Album* together raises interesting questions about the position of Surrealism and the legacy of Surrealist women artists in Italy and, separately, in the Anglophone world. As I have noted, Ingarao’s book on Carrington was first published in 2014, the same year as Corgnati’s biography on Oppenheim. What does this Italian interest reveal about Carrington and Oppenheim? And what does the translation of these publications into English give the

feminist art historian today? These publication histories are a reminder that scholarship can shift and change across languages and national contexts. Just as Carrington and Oppenheim lived and worked across countries and languages, we must do the same when we study modern artists.

In Italy, curator Cecilia Alemani took the title of the 2022 Venice Biennale, *The Milk of Dreams*, from the posthumously published illustrated children's book by Carrington (Spanish edition 2013, English edition 2018) that Ingarao adapted for the title of her monograph. Alemani's Biennale brought greater attention to women artists across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and placed the work of Surrealist artists and contemporary artists in dialogue. Carrington and Oppenheim both featured in Alemani's exhibition in its

opening historical section, "The Witch's Cradle."⁷ We can see that the intersections created by considering *Leonora Carrington: The Images of Dreams* and *Meret Oppenheim: My Album* together—in English in 2024—open onto even more realms. Carrington and Oppenheim remain so potent that they offer far more to discover, whether in English, Italian, French, German, or Spanish, as their art crosses languages and creates interconnections among avant-garde movements and artists. •

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Notes

1. Martina Corgnati, ed., *Meret Oppenheim*,

exh. cat. (Milan: Skira, 1998), and *Meret Oppenheim: Afferrare la vita per la coda* (Monza: Johan & Levi, 2014).

2. See MoMA's website for further information about this work: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80997>.
3. Nina Zimmer, Natalie Dupêcher, and Anne Umland, eds., *Meret Oppenheim: My Exhibition* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2021), reviewed by Barbara Stehle in *Woman's Art Journal* 41, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2022), 61–62.
4. See the recent edition of Leonora Carrington, *Down Below*, introduced by Marina Warner (New York: New York Review of Books, 2017).
5. Leonora Carrington quoted in Whitney Chadwick, *The Militant Muse: Love, War and the Women of Surrealism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2017), 102.
6. Chadwick, *Militant Muse*, 71.
7. See Cecilia Alemani, ed., *The Milk of Dreams: Biennale Arte 2022* (Rome: SIAE, 2022), 86–87.

The Activist Collector: Lida Clanton Broner's 1938 Journey from Newark to South Africa

By Christa Clarke
The Newark Museum of Art with
Rutgers University Press, 2022

Reviewed by Henone Girma

The protagonist of this book has long deserved the kind of study and documentation delivered here by Christa Clarke, independent curator and former senior curator of Arts of Global Africa at the Newark Museum (now The Newark Museum of Art). Lida Clanton Broner (1895–1982, Fig. 1) was a woman ahead of her time. The granddaughter of enslaved Africans brought to the United States, Broner traveled alone from her home in Newark, New Jersey, to segregated South Africa in 1938 on the eve of the Second World War, fulfilling her lifelong desire to visit her ancestral homeland. The book sheds light on Broner's incredible story through a close study of the objects that she assembled during this journey, a selection of which she donated to the Newark Museum in 1947.



Fig. 1. Broner displaying works from her collection at the Children's Youth Center, Brooklyn Urban League, news clipping (undated) in Broner's scrapbook. The Newark Museum of Art. The Lida Clanton Broner Collection, Gift of her grandsons Albert, David, and Thomas Clanton, 2014.

This extensively researched volume, supported by a grant from the Mellon Foundation, is an important contribution to scholarship. At the same time, the book's engaging narrative style, with its generous inflections of Broner's voice and its portrayal of her "spirited and independent personality and outspoken opinions" (19), has the potential to keep broader audiences cheering for this activist collector. Clarke's writing con-

veys Broner's wit and tact without varnishing her occasional tourist faux pas. It showcases her networking among prominent political leaders, intellectuals, and other "New Africans"—the growing Christian and educated Black middle class of South Africa—while acknowledging her affection for and interest in those from rural areas who were uneducated and who followed traditional belief systems. These qualities

make Broner an everywoman: fascinating and formidable, but also human, relatable, and entertaining. A trailblazing Black woman's legacy and voice are now recorded, undoubtedly able to inspire Black women still on today's literal and figurative picket lines and on a mission.

The volume comprises seven chapters divided into three parts, bookended by a prologue and epilogue. The author also provides a preliminary "Note to the Reader" regarding terminology that points to some of the complexities of race and ethnicity across two continents that informed Clarke's decision-making. She points out, for example, that the term "black," which she uses interchangeably with "African" to refer to the indigenous Bantu-speaking majority of South Africa, was employed in apartheid-era discriminatory practices and eventually came to denote all non-white South Africans. Clarke's choices of language were doubtless guided by the colleagues she recognizes in her acknowledgments, several of whom are Black South Africans and African Americans who can personally speak to the lived experience of being impacted by racial categorization. The text would have benefited from the addition of back matter, specifically a bibliography and an index, which could well have aided the work of the scholars who Clarke hopes "will find new and additional readings that will enrich Broner's inspiring legacy for future audiences" (21).

In the prologue, "Desire and Determination," the author opens with her first encounter with objects from Broner's collection in 2002. She writes that she was perplexed by the formal plainness and peculiarity of some of the works, including a mud brick and a jar filled with red clay, and curious about the presence of handwritten tags and labels recording aspects of the objects' provenance. This sparse museum documentation prompted questions whose answers would elude her for years but that went on to form the core of *The Activist Collector*: "Who was Lida C. Broner? Why did she go to South Africa? Who gave Broner these objects and what did these gifts mean to them and to her? What were her experiences as a black

woman traveling in segregated South Africa on the eve of the Second World War? And how did her collection end up on view, and then in storage, at the Newark Museum?" (16).

The prologue brings up Western collecting and museum practices, including the author's own blind spots as a curator and her initial inattention to objects that seemed "more like tourist trinkets than things a curator would choose for public display" (16). Clarke underscores the importance and relevance of Broner's story to "current debates about cultural representation, the role of heritage and whose voices are recorded, particularly in relation to identity, [which] are echoed in ongoing struggles for racial and gender equity," as she puts it in the epilogue (204). Her self-reflection and discussion set readers up for the museological call at the heart of this book—to look beyond conventional hierarchies that separate art and craft and to seek out the otherwise marginalized histories and people behind even the most unassuming works in our care. The fortuitous event that offered Clarke such an opportunity was the 2014 inquiry by Broner's grandsons about their grandmother's collection and their subsequent donation to the museum of her archive, including a travel diary, photographs, and additional objects from her 1938 trip to South Africa. "After twenty-eight years of desire and determination," Broner wrote in the travelogue, "I have visited Africa, the land of my forefathers" (18).

Part one of the book covers Broner's life before her epic trip. Born Lida May Tyler in Raleigh, North Carolina, Broner moved with her family to Kearny, New Jersey, in 1901 and then, once married, settled in neighboring Newark, where she raised a son and worked as a housekeeper and hairstylist. Clarke swiftly ushers South Africa into the picture by documenting the transatlantic ties Broner formed prior to her voyage, initially through her friendship with Rilda Marta, a young woman from East London, South Africa, whom she hosted at her home from 1933 to 1934. Broner's personal connections and political affiliations grew from there, providing her with "hands

across the sea," in Broner's own words (140), and leading to her deep involvement in the work of the International Committee on African Affairs (from 1941 the Council on African Affairs), a leading Pan-Africanist and anti-imperialist force in the struggle for African independence. Captivating in this two-chapter section are discussions on vernacular photography (as exemplified by the images in Broner's archive of her contacts in South Africa), Black beauty culture (in which Broner participated as a respected hairstylist), and the Black women's club movement (of which Broner was a member), each with its subtle but powerful refrain of activism and belonging.

The second part, comprising three chapters, traces Broner's travels to, from, and within South Africa and what is now Lesotho, from cities like East London and Johannesburg to distant villages and reserves. This section gives us the back story of the group of objects Broner assembled, often received as gifts. Clarke takes a deep dive into particularly potent examples, such as a Xhosa beadwork charm necklace and a European-style embroidered whitework placemat, which together with the rest of the collection "tell a story about shifting gender roles and black women's activism and related debates about 'tradition' and the role of culture in emerging African nationalism, all unfolding against the larger backdrop of segregated South Africa in the 1930s" (72).

In part three, Broner is back in the United States reflecting on her travels, filled with a sense of displacement but also prouder of her race and more determined than ever to fight for Black liberation. She successfully deploys her collection of humble objects in her consciousness-raising mission through display at Council on African Affairs fundraisers and other events (Fig. 1). A look at Black women's wartime and postwar internationalism and anticolonial activism are among the highlights here. Clarke's last chapter returns to where her own journey into telling Broner's story started: The Newark Museum. A brief history of the institution and its African art collection provides background for its progressiveness not only in exhibiting a Black

woman's collection of South American objects in 1943—"quite possibly the earliest museum exhibition of an African American woman's collection in the United States" (18)—but also in contextualizing the display as reportage of global politics and even, if implicitly, of colonialism. Nonetheless, Clarke reveals, the museum's brief exhibition texts fell short of looking beyond the objects at the people, places, and ideas that gave them meaning.

The epilogue is entitled "Mother of the Oceans" for the Zulu name, No'Lwandle, Broner was given in South Africa and took as her middle name upon her return. It starts with a 1948 letter from Broner to leading pan-African activist W.E.B. Dubois, as if ready to launch us onto a whole new trajectory. It

does, in fact, signal the many directions in which we could sail, guided by Lida Clanton Broner's extraordinary path. The epilogue also takes us back to the curatorial issue we faced with Clarke in her relatable opening, namely the question of what merits our attention: "Reconstructing the archival history of Broner's collection—its backstory and biography—replaces curatorial standards of evaluation with the meaningful strata of her lived experience that can embrace ambiguity and nuance" (204).

The text of the book is accompanied by over fifty scaled-down but good-quality reproductions, some full-page, of Broner's rich personal archive of photographs, newspaper clippings (Fig. 1), and mementos, along with beautiful museum photographs of the

objects she collected. Heading the chapters are enlarged reproductions spotlighting the historically neglected people, predominantly women, who formed Broner's international network. For the cover, Clarke chose the portrait Broner had taken at Columbus Studio in Newark right after her return from South Africa wearing one of her most notable acquisitions: an ensemble made for her based on attire traditionally worn by married Xhosa women. Overall, the well-chosen images and high-quality design befit the scholarly substance and vivid storytelling of *The Activist Collector*. •

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Mina Loy: Strangeness Is Inevitable

Edited by Jennifer R. Gross, with contributions by Gross, Ann Lauterbach, Dawn Ades, and Roger Conover
Princeton University Press, 2023

Reviewed by Martha Skye Murphy

Despite receiving recognition for her writing, the artist Mina Loy (1882–1966) has evaded art-historical study for over a century. The rich catalogue *Strangeness Is Inevitable* presents us with the first academic treatment of Loy's art, attempting not to "bring her back" but to raise the question of the significance of "bringing her up at all" (193), as Roger Conover, Loy's longest-running champion and chief literary archeologist, puts it in his essay. The issue of drawing canonical attention to an overlooked woman artist is that it demands initiation into an inadequate system. For Mina Loy, this project is particularly problematic, as it seeks for the artist to be included in an institutionally conventional structure that she spent her entire career rejecting. When asked why she didn't attend the opening of her one-person show co-curated by Marcel Duchamp at the prominent Bodley Gallery in New York in 1959, she explained, "I've already seen my work."

Intentionally dialectic, Loy's creative practice can be categorized neither by movement nor by medium. "I was never a poet (185), she wrote to one of her publishers,¹ while in her semi-autobiographical surrealist novel *Insel* (written c. 1937), her protagonist pointedly tells a character based on painter Richard Oelze, "I am not the museum" (196), perhaps nodding to the stance of Loy's friend and advocate Gertrude Stein, "You can be a museum or you can be modern, but you can't be both" (182).²

Strangeness Is Inevitable accompanies a show curated by catalogue editor Jennifer R. Gross at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art in 2023, the first major retrospective of Loy's artwork. In four expansive essays, the book proposes that Loy was an extreme manifestation of modernism even within her twentieth-century avant-garde cohort. This thesis is compelling, and the volume is a fascinating read. It explores Loy's transcendence of and distancing from the movements she was associated with, chiefly Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism, and highlights her refusal to be confined not only by discipline or style but also by artistic medium (she worked in watercolor, drawing, oils, and eventually trash), by language (she spoke five [190], while writing prose and poetry in English), or by geography

(she lived in London, Munich, Paris, Florence, New York, Berlin, and Aspen at various points in her life). She predated paintings and postdated writings. She changed her birth name from Lowy to Loy in 1903, aged twenty-two, and reinvented herself throughout her career with anagrammatic pseudonyms (187). This scheme of inconsistency, it would appear, was a tactic to stymie anyone seeking to formulate a clear history or understanding of Loy or her art, turning her life's work into a kind of Dadaist game. The Bowdoin catalogue successfully demonstrates the breadth of Loy's practice by presenting selected poems and writings as well as an extensive collection of her visual works, including pieces that have been lost.

Gross's detailed biography in her lead essay, "Truant of Heaven," shows Loy to have been a visual artist, poet, playwright, novelist, essayist, actor, inventor, and designer. The trajectory of Loy's career reads, in Gross's telling, as an iconoclastic campaign for artistic self-exile in response to convention. Born into a middle-class family in London to a non-observant Jewish immigrant father and a conservative English mother, Loy later recalled her mother's "incessant" destruction of young Mina's drawings and poems,

works Loy said had “so comforted” her (146).³ Keen to escape her stifling home, Mina received her father’s permission to study art in Munich at the Kunstverein and then, in 1903, at the Académie Colarossi in Paris. While in Paris, she began to build a group of influential creative peers, among them modernist poet and artist Wyndham Lewis, the inspiration for her poem “*The Starry Sky*” of Wyndham Lewis (probably written c. 1917–18). She had six watercolors accepted into the 1904 Salon d’Automne, exhibiting there again in 1905 and 1906, whereupon she was elected to its drawing society. By then, the pregnant Loy had been rushed into an unharmonious marriage with English art student Stephen Haweis. Their first child died on her first birthday, devastating Loy. Haweis insisted that the couple move to Florence in 1909, where they welcomed a daughter, Joella (the child of another man), and a son, Giles. When the ailing Joella recuperated after a treatment by a Christian Scientist, Loy converted to the faith, remaining an adherent throughout her life. Loy repeatedly petitioned Haweis for a divorce, but he refused for over a decade and eventually absconded with Giles, who died in 1922 without Loy having seen the boy in two years, another devastation (2–19, 45, 51).

In Florence, Loy joined the salon of American heiress Mabel Dodge and connected with more dissonant modernists, including Stein and the Futurist Filippo Tomasso Marinetti. She exhibited four works in the International Futurist Exhibition in Rome in 1914, all now lost, but her dalliances with Futurist thinking occurred chiefly in her writing, such as the experimental play *The Sacred Prostitute* (1914), the manifesto *Aphorisms on Futurism* (1913), and the novel *Insel*. Loy moved to New York alone in 1916, where she thrived in a circle of cross-disciplinary dissidents. Through befriending author and editor Alfred Kreymborg and collectors Walter and Louise Arensberg (founders of the Society of Independent Artists), she contributed to the Dada journal *The Blind Man* and starred in Kreymborg’s experimental play *Lima Beans* (1916); she

also designed its costumes, notably a stocking-shaped hat. She developed a bond with Man Ray and a deep connection with Duchamp (19–40).

Loy married the love of her life, intellectual provocateur Arthur Cravan, in 1918, but he disappeared in a probable boating accident before the birth of their daughter Fabienne late that year. In the 1920s and 1930s, amid much travel, and despite bouts of depression and a voluntary stay in a sanatorium, Loy worked prolifically. She drew portraits of illustrious subjects in the social ether of which she was a part (among them James Joyce, Sigmund Freud, and artist Jules Pascin), exhibiting some in 1925 in small venues near New York, while also penning poetry, including *Brancusi’s Golden Bird* (“an incandescent curve / licked by chromatic flames/ in labyrinths of reflections,” 1922) and the collection *Lunar Baedeker [sic]* (1923). Julien Levy, then married to Joella, held Loy’s first major solo exhibition at his gallery in New York in 1933, showing a series of paintings Levy deemed Loy’s *bleuaille*—“hazy bluish halo”—after a poem by Dadaist Tristan Tzara. In *The Bewitched, Dawn (L’Aube)*, *Teasing a Butterfly*, *Stars*, and other *bleuaille* paintings (all 1932), pairs or groups of profile heads, endowed with necks and sometimes hands but lacking any other anatomical form, float in a gray-blue sky, emanating light, alluding to Spiritualist theories of the aura, thought to be an immaterial energy emitted from the cranium. Loy painted the dark *Drift of Chaos* series in 1933, the surviving works of which are beautifully reproduced in the catalogue. Grounded in the surrealist device of fragmented matter suspended in equivocal spaces, their compositions recalling Giorgio de Chirico’s, the *Drift of Chaos* paintings are feral yet dignified, featuring lone archetypal figures—beasts, putti, kings, queens—and wisps of layered white oil paint that resemble

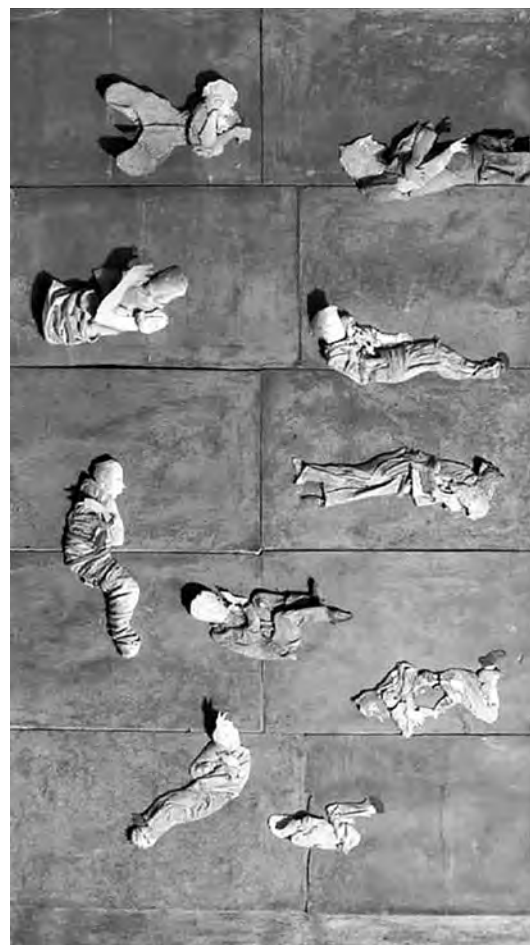


Fig. 1. Mina Loy, *Communal Cot* (1949), cut paper and mixed-media collage mounted on board, 27" x 46 1/2". Private collection, Chicago.

the Milky Way, Narcissus, Venus de Milo, and a drifting iceberg dissolving into an aqueous mass. Around the same time, Loy designed lampshades for an inter-nationally recognized business she co-owned in Paris with collector Peggy Guggenheim (40–83). In her paintings, lampshades, and poetry from this period, the sea is frequently Loy’s backdrop, an emblem of her mutability and an evocation both of her transatlantic voyages and of Cravan’s mysterious disappearance.

Between 1940 and her death in 1966, Loy lived between humble residences in New York and her daughter Fabi’s house in Aspen. She continued to write poetry. Collagist Joseph Cornell became a close friend. She composed figural and abstract constructions from street detritus and other media (Fig. 1)—“Refusees,” Loy called the works—as

well as mostly unrealized designs for inventions, exhibiting the former in the 1959 solo show at the Bodley Gallery facilitated by Duchamp along with Levy and art dealer David Mann (82–103).

Dawn Ades's excellent chapter, "From Rogue To Rags," offers an astute critical analysis of these constructions. Composed of garbage collected earnestly for Loy by her homeless Bowery neighbors, the works grapple with existential and spiritual despair. The coinage "Refusees," Ades observes, evokes the notorious 1863 Salon des Refusés; Loy's perception of herself as a refugee from society and as an exile; her refusal either to be part of a movement in practice or to pursue only one creative discipline; and her use of rejected scraps—refuse—for artistic production.⁴ Ades draws enlightening connections between the figural works among these collages and Duchamp's contemporary tableau *Étant donnés* (1946–66): both depart from the prevailing abstract mode in favor of presenting a kind of hyper-reality. Ades suggests that Loy's cross-dimensional assemblage *Communal Cot* (1949), depicting ten homeless men asleep on oversized paving stones as if seen from above (Fig. 1), creates a disconcerting experience of scale that resonates with *Étant donnés*. On the invitation to Loy's 1959 exhibition, Duchamp described her assemblages as "MINA'S POEMS À 2 1/2 DIMENSIONS," drawing a connection between Loy's principal mediums while suggesting that, like himself, Loy employed distorted proportions to create an in-between dimension. Ades wonders why Loy's constructions were not included in the major 1961 *Art of Assemblage* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art: "Was there something in her work that grated" even on open-minded curator William Seitz (173)?

Much is made throughout the essays of Loy's *déagé* manner and the indelible yet ineffable impression she made on people, akin to the radiant aura of her *bleuaille* heads. American author and Académie des Femmes salon host Natalie Barney, Gross notes, described Loy as an "ethereal being, totally absorbed with the human condition ... [who] comes only to engage society for five minutes ... to

explain her detachment from the world, before moving on" (66).⁵ Loy's dedication to what Ades calls "the spiritual in the physical" (160), her view of reality as spiritual and the material world as an illusion, explains the links among the seemingly opposing strains in Loy's art, from the *bleuaille* celestial figures to the desperate subjects of the Refusees collages (Fig. 1). Loy, like Duchamp, appreciated reality as a surreal, uncanny entity and was enticed by what it could offer the conscious mind, as opposed to the Surrealists, preoccupied as they were with the reality hidden within the subconscious.

Ann Lauterbach's essay, "Art of The Unbeautiful True," argues that Loy addresses notions of universality and beauty through invented and ugly forms, finding truth in lived experience rather than in conventionally defined beauty. Loy pursued "the hideous in order to find the sublime core" (112, "Aphorisms on Futurism," 1914). Lauterbach follows Loy's creative path of truth-seeking from her portrait drawings of the elite avant-garde or "chandelier souls" (142, "Lunar Baedeker," 1923) to the cosmologically inclined *bleuaille* paintings depicting the artist's own melancholy to, eventually, the New York assemblages that evoke the homeless "embalmed in rum / under an unseen / baldachin of dream" (129, "Hot Cross Bum," 1949).

Conover, editor of two posthumous collections of Loy's poetry, is a percipient, if enamored, commentator on Loy's wide-ranging creative practice in his concluding essay, "'I'm Not the Museum.'" His point is to begin connecting Loy's creations as constellational, from her writing and visual art to her punning wordplay and her accumulation of discarded scraps. "Each piece of so-called art or non-art she made," the author muses, "tells some fragment of a story—other parts of which might be lost, hidden, ventriloquized, or convulsed through other means or objects. To 'the interesting and challenging questions that pertain to bringing her up at all' (193), Conover looks not for a concrete answer but rather at the 'infinite intelligence' Loy herself said inspired

"such an idea as immortality" (161).

Mina Loy: Strangeness is Inevitable adeptly embarks on unearthing a prolific avant-garde artist whose long-lived conceptual practice has until now eluded art history, raising questions about relevance and rediscovery. In light of Loy's success as an escape artist from the canon and from traditional methods of art-historical documenting and categorizing, this catalogue presents an impressive, brilliant overview of the dynamism of Loy's work. It also provides an inspiringly wide scope for further intensive critical analysis. Loy has left herself for us: she now "LIVE[s] in the future" (151, "Aphorisms on Futurism"); her "decease/ infects us with unendurable ease" (105, "Moreover, the Moon—," c. 1940s). •

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Notes

1. Both quotations from Loy in conversation with Jonathan Williams as relayed to Conover on October 7, 1979.
2. Stein in John B. Hightower, *Four Americans in Paris: The Collections of Gertrude Stein and Her Family* (New York: MoMA, 1970), 8.
3. Loy in "Notes on Childhood," in *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, edited and introduced by Roger Conover (Ashville, NC: Jargon, 1982), 314.
4. For the argument that Mina Loy was influenced by the compositions of Surrealist photographer Umbo (Otto Umbehr), see Linda A. Kinnahan, *Mina Loy, Twentieth-Century Photography, and Contemporary Women Poets* (Oxford: Routledge, 2017).
5. Natalie Barney, *Aventures de l'esprit* (Paris: Émile-Paul, 1929), 159, trans. Gross.

Berthe Morisot: Shaping Impressionism

Edited by Marianne Mathieu, with essays
by Mathieu, Dominique d'Arnoult, Lois
Oliver, and Claire Gooden
Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2023

Reviewed by Julia Dabbs

One might assume from the title of this exhibition catalogue that the subject would involve the interactions of Berthe Morisot (1841–1895) with her colleagues in Paris as they devised the groundbreaking styles that would eventually come to be known as Impressionism. But that assumption would be incorrect. In fact, the content pertains to Morisot's indebtedness to eighteenth-century art by French and English artists, and how she transformed her interest in this part of the past into something quite modern. Although the title is thus somewhat obtuse, it at least gives Morisot full agency and avoids relegating her to the role of “woman impressionist,” as other exhibitions have done.¹ Indeed, an objective statement of Morisot's importance is present from the beginning, for in the catalogue's foreword the organizing museum directors, Érik Desmazières of the Musée Marmottan Monet in Paris and Jennifer Scott of the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London, strongly assert that “Morisot stands shoulder to shoulder with her fellow ‘founders’ of Impressionism: Monet, Degas, Pissarro, Renoir” (8).

The collaborative effort of these two institutions is noteworthy, given that the Musée Marmottan Monet has the largest collection of works by Morisot in the world and the Dulwich Picture Gallery has significant holdings in eighteenth-century art. It is also auspicious that this exhibition is the first to focus specifically on Morisot's interests in eighteenth-century art, and the five essays in the catalogue, which frequently cite primary source material and are supported by numerous color illustrations, provide a solid, scholarly foundation to the subject. Marianne Mathieu, Scientific Director of the

Musée Marmottan Monet and co-curator of the exhibition, initiates this exploration with her overview essay, entitled “A Dialogue with Chardin, Watteau, Fragonard and Boucher.” Mathieu begins this assessment by briefly discussing the revival of interest in eighteenth-century French art after a period of neglect following the style's condemnation by philosopher and critic Denis Diderot in the later eighteenth century. She then addresses the effect of each major eighteenth-century French artist on Morisot in an order that is simultaneously chronological within Morisot's career and ascending from least impact (Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin) to arguably the greatest (François Boucher). As Mathieu points out, Morisot was not trained by artists who had affinities with these historical masters, but she might have turned towards the latter of her own accord through her exposure to eighteenth-century works in the homes of collectors—particularly painter Léon Riesener, a family friend—and in museums. Beginning in 1875 with her painting *Au Bal* (At the Ball; Fig. 1), critics came to note Morisot's “spiritual” association with such artists as Jean-Antoine Watteau and Jean-Honoré Fragonard, and in a consistently positive manner, according to Mathieu. One of the most powerful quotations among the many Mathieu uses effectively comes from Philippe Burty, who wrote in 1880, “Since the eighteenth century, since Fragonard, no one has spread lighter colours with such intelligent boldness” (21).² Mathieu's essay is an excellent introduction to the topic at hand, and to its importance.

Dominique d'Arnoult, a specialist on the eighteenth-century pastellist Jean-Baptiste Perronneau and a contributor to the 2021 catalogue on Julie Manet (Berthe Morisot's daughter, 1878–1966), is the author of the next essay, “Morisot and the Eighteenth Century: An Insider.” In this relatively brief study, d'Arnoult explores Morisot's intimate connections with eighteenth-century art objects throughout her life, including tapestries, ceramics, fans, and furniture, and her representation of some of them in her paintings. We learn that she even



Fig. 1. Berthe Morisot, *Au Bal* (At the Ball) (1875), oil on canvas, 24" x 20". Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris.

decorated her atelier-salon in a variation on Rococo style, which was not popular at the time (39). But why did Morisot gravitate to this style of décor? Was it purely for aesthetic reasons? Was she emulating wealthy collectors? Could there have been any political motivation? These questions remain unanswered, but d'Arnoult argues persuasively that Morisot nurtured a strong interest in eighteenth-century art and design.

D'Arnoult also authors the essay “Morisot's Craft: Concealing Knowledge with Grace,” which focuses on the development of Morisot's pastel drawings and their eighteenth-century inspiration, especially in the work of Perronneau. D'Arnoult demonstrates how the Italian concept of *sprezzatura* (artful effortlessness), a quality the Impressionists admired in Perronneau, was “essential” to Morisot's technique. The author employs detailed analysis to reveal this trait in such works as the artist's 1886 combined wet and dry pastel *Girl in a Blue Jersey* (75), and even in oils Morisot painted on the basis of pastel sketches, a practice that “allowed her to paint quickly and to give the impression of spontaneity in her brushwork” (76). The author effectively supports her argument that “Morisot's most fertile relationship with the eighteenth century

was maintained in her practice and technique" using quotations from contemporaneous art critics, such as the poet Stéphane Mallarmé, a friend of the artist: "[She] has all the lightness expected of the craft with a touch of the eighteenth century, magnified by the present" (65).³ This quotation magnificently sums up a major aim of this exhibition, namely to show that while Morisot undoubtedly borrowed from eighteenth-century art, she transformed her sources into something entirely new and uniquely her own.

Lois Oliver, an art historian at the London program of the University of Notre Dame (US), who is credited with conceptualizing the exhibition and is also its co-curator, provides useful insight into the artistic importance of Morisot's visit to England in her essay, "Berthe Morisot and England." Morisot and her husband, Eugène Manet, went on a honeymoon to England for a number of weeks in the summer of 1875, during which Morisot regularly painted the new sights she encountered, such as the harbor at West Cowes on the Isle of Wight. In London, she sought out contacts in the art world who might assist in marketing her paintings. Oliver's essay reconstructs Morisot and Manet's itinerary in extensive detail, including days at such fashionable events as the Royal Yacht Squadron Regatta. The second half of the essay gets to the crux of Oliver's thesis that eighteenth-century British painting was "key to [Morisot's] art" (57). Citing Morisot's correspondence, Oliver succinctly demonstrates the significant influence of paintings by Thomas Gainsborough, Joshua Reynolds, and George Romney on the artist in both subject matter and style. Although the accompanying illustrations help to buttress Oliver's argument, as seen, for example, in the similarities of the figure in Morisot's *Young Girl with Doll* (c. 1884) to the child in Reynolds's *Age of Innocence* (c. 1788) in London's National Gallery, which Morisot visited, the subject would benefit from further development beyond the confines of an exhibition essay.

Finally, Claire Gooden, a Curatorial Assistant at the Musée Marmottan

Monet, investigates the family ties to Jean-Honoré Fragonard ascribed to Morisot by writers from 1892 onward in "Fragonard and Morisot: Resolving the Family Connection." The first part of her essay is densely packed with information tracing the history of Morisot's family and reconstructing the origins of a female portrait by Fragonard's son, Alexandre-Évariste, in the family's collection; Gooden concludes that indeed there is no actual family connection with Fragonard. The next, and perhaps more interesting, question the author explores is why Morisot was erroneously identified as a descendant of Fragonard, and why this misidentification has persisted until the present. As Gooden reveals, critics initially linked Morisot *stylistically* to Fragonard in reviews of Impressionist exhibitions, noting their similar "fugitive lightness" (84).⁴ But in 1892 a writer who knew Mallarmé indicated that Morisot was Jean-Honoré's grandniece, and Mallarmé himself identified her as Fragonard's great-grandniece in the catalogue of her posthumous 1896 retrospective (84). Could this supposed genealogical connection with a prominent male artist of the past have been an attempt to justify the praise given to a woman artist's work? Gooden doesn't explore this possibility, which would seem worthwhile to consider, given the art-historical tradition of associating women artists with well-known male artists.

Among the color plates of the forty-four works in the exhibition, twenty-nine are by Berthe Morisot, with one painting by her sister Edma (1839–1921), whose career as an artist ended after her marriage. The plates are large and the artwork well-reproduced, but many extend across the gutter of the book, which seriously hinders legibility. It also would have been useful if more of the comparisons of works by eighteenth-century artists and by Morisot were on facing pages.

Following the plates is a relatively short section entitled "From Morisot's Papers," in which two previously unpublished letters from Morisot concerning her time in England—including her viewing of "many

Turners ..., Wilkies, Gainsborough, and Hogarths" in the National Gallery (173)—are reproduced and translated into English. I found these letters to be an interesting and relevant addition to the catalogue's content, although I also wish that more than two examples might have been included, especially given the breadth of the archive of Morisot's papers at the Musée Marmottan Monet.

One critical question remains unresolved: *How* did Morisot shape Impressionism, as the exhibition and catalogue's subtitle asserts? Although the essays convincingly demonstrate the impact of French and British eighteenth-century art on Morisot, and her transformation of those influences into her signature brand of Impressionism, the volume's discussion of that movement does not extend beyond Morisot—which was perhaps never the intention, but for the reader or museum visitor, subtitles matter. •

Julia Dabbs is a Professor of Art History at the University of Minnesota, Morris, and has been researching and publishing on historical women artists for over twenty years. Her most recent book is on the nineteenth-century American artist May Alcott Nieriker (Anthem Press, 2022).

Notes

1. For example, *Berthe Morisot, Woman Impressionist* (New York: Rizzoli Electa, 2018), the catalogue for an exhibition at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec and other venues; and Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein, eds., *Women Impressionists* (Frankfurt am Main: Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, 2008), accompanying an exhibition held at the publishing institution and at the Legion of Honor in San Francisco, featuring the work of Morisot, Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), Eva Gonzalés (1849–1883), and Marie Bracquemond (1840–1916).
2. Philippe Burty, "Exposition des œuvres des artistes indépendants," *La République française* 10, no. 3058 (April 10, 1880), 2.
3. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Berthe Morisot (Madame Eugene Manet): Exposition de son œuvre* (Paris: Durand-Ruel, 1896), 10.
4. Charles Ephrussi, "Exposition des artistes indépendants," *La Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 21 (May 1, 1880), 487.



Pl. 1. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, *Spirit of Emancipation* (1913; cast 1998), bronze and marble, 84" tall. Photograph courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University.



Pl. 2. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, *Waterboy I* (1930), painted plaster, 11 3/8" x 6 1/4" x 3 1/2". Courtesy of the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University. Gift of the Meta V. W. Fuller Trust.

De cette source d'inspiration, je retiens tout d'abord, le Vieux mineur, de M. Constantin Meunier, puis le Besogneux, et trois petits bas-reliefs (Femme au panier, Femme au lacet et Chiffonnier), de M. E. Cavaillon, Esclave du travail, une Femme pauvre, de M. Ch. Faller, le Mauvais larron de Mme M. Warrick, l'Homme à la pipe et la Bacchante moderne, de M. Toussaint; les cires très curieuses de M. Ganesco, qui semblent émanées de l'œuvre de Daumier, — ceci n'est pas une critique, mais un éloge; Moines, Bazile, les Anglois de l'Avare, etc.; Blanchisseuse et les Résignés, ceux qu'a chantés en ses poèmes vécus Jehan Rictus, par M. J. Tarrit; la Silhouette de vieux, de M. Clostre; les Miséreux, l'Ouvrier, l'Homme des Champs, de M. Wittmann.

"Bartholdi 'Schlummer Schächer' übertrifft vielleicht für den Witz des Naturalismus ein wenig, es spricht aber doch ein gewisses Andachtsvermögen für das Entschlossene aus diesem Werke."

D'une artiste américaine, M^{me} Méta Warrick, un plâtre assez curieux du mauvais larron expirant sur la croix.

Mme Méta Warrick a envoyé un Mauvais Larron qui grimace si fort que, malgré un soin attentif qu'il faut reconnaître, cela confine un peu à la caricature.

mouvementé de M^{me} Méta Warrick

œuvre de M^{me} Méta-Warrick

Sous la coupole, voici de M. Constantin Meunier l'admirable tête de vieux mineur, un chef-d'œuvre, et le buste puissant du peintre On. Cottet; de M. Boleslaw-Biegas, un buste très remarquable et par l'interprétation et par l'expression; de M. Ganesco des cires d'une grande puissance et comme conception et comme études d'expressions; de M. Wittmann, des œuvres d'un réalisme saisissant; de Mlle Méta-Warrick, les malheureux, les naufragés de la vie qui ne voient rien potandre à l'horizon pour venir à leur secours: c'est un groupe mouvementé et tragique.

Mlle Méta-Warrick a vu Les Malheureux un jour qu'ils n'étaient pas en veine de résignation et, dans un groupe très habilement conçu, elle a exprimé leurs haines longtemps amarrées, leurs colères, leurs fureurs, leurs rages; noté leurs airs de sombre désespoir et de sinistre résolution; rendu leurs allures farouches et leurs menaces.

Dans le jardin voici de M. Mulot, sa douche (fontaine en grès) œuvre originale, gracieuse et harmonieuse composition; de Mme Méta Warrick le mauvais larron, qui est comme le symbole de la douleur, de l'humanité rucifiée; de M. Faller, esclave du travail, une femme pauvre; de M. Bourdelle, un Beethoven, une évocation puissante.

AWARDED A PRIZE.

Miss Myta Warwick, daughter of Mrs. Emma Warwick, of this city, has just been awarded a prize of \$25 for an exhibition of pottery at the School of Industrial Art, in Philadelphia. Miss Warwick is a graduate of that institution but spent some time in Paris, studying after her course in Philadelphia was completed.



Pl. 4. Joyce J. Scott, *Cuddly Black Dick #3* (1995), glass beads, thread, ceramic, and wire, 7 1/2" x 4 1/2" x 5".
Collection Francine Pilloff, Beachwood, Ohio. Image courtesy of Goya Contemporary Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland.



Pl. 5. Joyce J. Scott, *Still Funny: Flutist* (2011), Japanese figurine, beads, and thread, 5 1/2" x 3 3/4" x 3". Courtesy of Goya Contemporary Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland.



Pl. 6. Joyce J. Scott, *Still Funny: Mammy/Penis* (2011), figurine, beads, and thread, 3 1/2" x 2" x 2". Collection Glenn Dellon and Hillary Belzer, Baltimore, Maryland. Image courtesy of Goya Contemporary Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland.



Pl. 7. Joyce J. Scott, *Man Eating Watermelon* (1986), beads and thread, 2" x 8" x 3". Collection Edward and Ursula McCracken, Baltimore, Maryland. Image courtesy of Goya Contemporary Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland.



Pl. 8. Sharon Norwood, *Look/See* (2023), installation view of the Drawing Room at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters, Savannah, GA. Photo: Sharon Norwood. © Sharon Norwood.

Pl. 9. Sharon Norwood, table display in *Look/See* (2023), mixed media fabric, found objects, ceramic, and bricks, installation at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters, Savannah, GA. Photo: Sharon Norwood. © Sharon Norwood.



Pl. 10. Sharon Norwood, mantelpiece in *Look/See* (2023), installation view of the Drawing Room at the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters, Savannah, GA. Photo: Sharon Norwood. © Sharon Norwood.



Pl. 11. Varnette P. Honeywood, *Dixie Peach* (1978), color lithograph, 30" x 22 1/2". Private Collection.



Pl. 12. Annie F. Lee, *Ash* (1983), acrylic on canvas, 8" x 10". Private Collection.



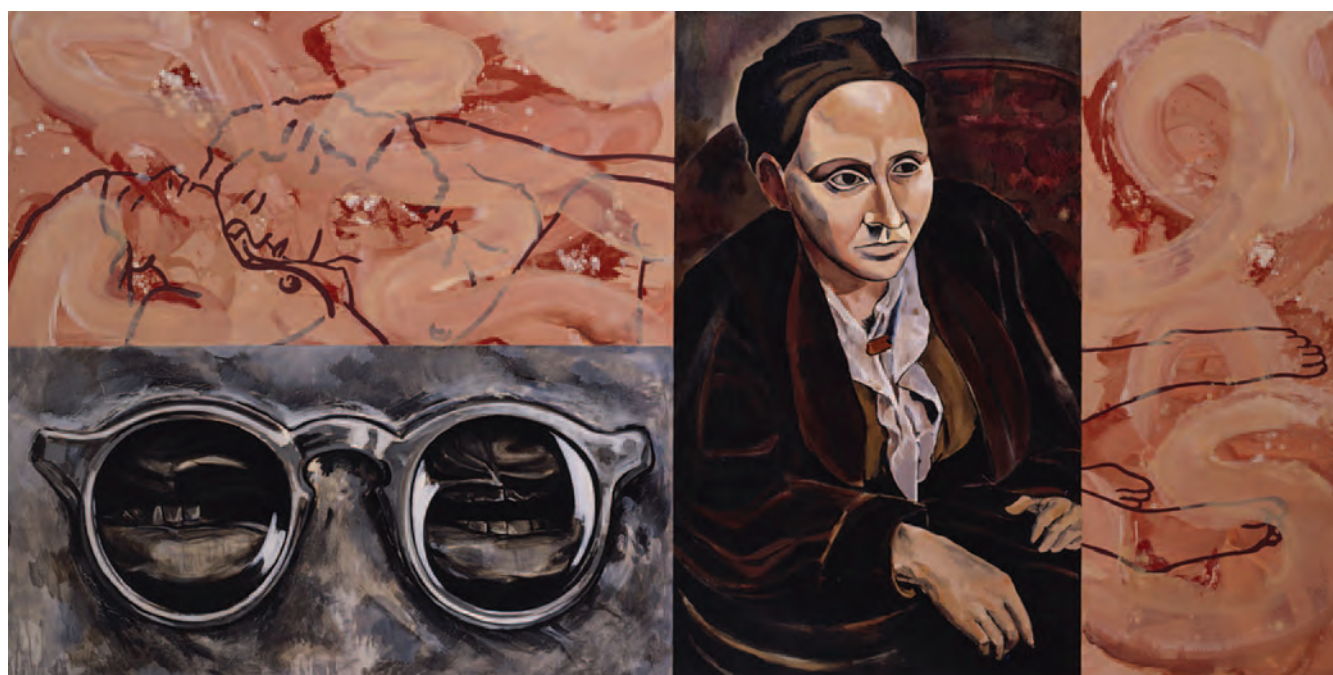
Pl. 13. Varnette P. Honeywood, *St. Sapphire* (2000).



Pl. 14. Annie F. Lee, *Humility* (2007), acrylic on canvas, 8" x 10". Private Collection.



Pl. 15. Deborah Kass,
Daddy I Would Love to Dance
(2008), acrylic on canvas,
78" x 78". © Deborah Kass /
Artist Rights Society (ARS),
New York.



Pl. 16. Deborah Kass, *How Do I Look?* (1991), oil on canvas, 50" x 100". © Deborah Kass / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

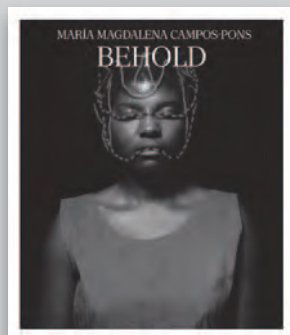


Pl. 17. Deborah Kass,
Desert Daddy (2007),
enamel, ink, and acrylic
on canvas, 78" x 78".
© Deborah Kass / Artist
Rights Society (ARS),
New York.



Pl. 18. Deborah Kass, *You Made Me Love You* (2007), oil and acrylic on canvas, 24" x 70". © Deborah Kass / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

NEW & NOTABLE



María Magdalena Campos-Pons
Behold

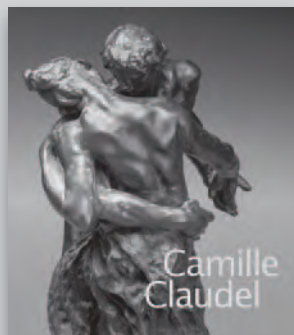
Edited by Carmen Hermo, with contributions by Mazie M. Harris, Jenée-Daria Strand, Phillip Townsend, and Selene Wendt and an introduction by Amalia Mesa-Bains

This expansively illustrated survey of the career of contemporary artist María Magdalena Campos-Pons delves into her diverse oeuvre of painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, film, and performance.

Louise Moillon

Lesley Stevenson

This illustrated biography is the first scholarly monograph in English devoted to the French still-life artist Louise Moillon.



Camille Claudel

Edited by Emerson Bowyer and Anne-Lise Desmas

Featuring more than two hundred and fifty photographs, this publication provides a fascinating and comprehensive reevaluation of the visionary French sculptor Camille Claudel.

Uta Barth
Peripheral Vision

Edited by Arpad Kovacs, with contributions by Lucy Gallun and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe

This retrospective of contemporary artist Uta Barth's decades-long career explores the ways in which she uses the camera to investigate sight, perception, light, and time.



Sofonisba Anguissola

Cecilia Gamberini

Offering new scholarship, this illustrated monograph explores the life, career, and art of the Italian Renaissance painter who established an international reputation during her lifetime.

Ruth Asawa
An Artist Takes Shape

Sam Nakahira

Featuring lively illustrations and photos of renowned Japanese American artist Ruth Asawa's work, this graphic biography chronicles her young adult years.

Kyra Belan

BFA, MFA, Ed.D

Artist, Author and Women's Rights Advocate



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