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(on the cover): Lee Krasner,
Listen (1957). oil on cotton
duck, 63 1/4" x 58 1/2".
Private collection.

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Lee Krasner was among the leading artists associated with Abstract Expressionism. Ten years ago, a striking *W&J* cover featured an untitled collage by Lee Krasner. It accompanied an innovative reading by Ellen G. Landau of the artist's collages from the early 1950s. Now again, Krasner's work graces our cover, as we take the opportunity to honor the one hundred year anniversary of her birth with a collection of articles dedicated to new considerations of this legendary artist.

Last April, Gail Levin organized a two-day symposium entitled "The Art and Life of Lee Krasner: Recollections, Cultural Context and New Perspectives," on the Manhattan campus of Stony Brook University. The presenters looked into Krasner's role in the history and trajectory of American modernism to explore facets of her work. We are pleased to publish five of their essays here.

Robert Hobbs views Lee Krasner as a "postmodern" artist and examines discrete periods and emblematic works that "emphasize [a] contingent and continuously emergent self." Krasner, saying that "the one constant in life is change," moved "from series to series" throughout her career. Hobbs writes that she embraced radical departures in her artistic development that separated her from the first-generation male Abstract Expressionists. She broke "away from Abstract Expressionist claims of autonomy and transcendence as she embrace[d] the countering ideas of contingency and fragmentation," Hobbs adds.

Ann Gibson places Krasner in the context of three other female Abstract Expressionists—Elaine de Kooning, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler—who, like her, were associated with successful male artists. "All produced work that arguably influenced the art of their male partners," claims Gibson. That each "developed impressive signature elements," she writes, "has received attention only recently, as have observations that in some cases they preceded their partners and other male contemporaries in compositional forms that became hallmarks of the men's work."

Examining ways in which the pastoral tradition underlies the work of many New York School artists and writers, Daniel Haxall notes how "Krasner found repose within the sensations of nature." At the same time, he explains, her "collages served as a substitute for emotional detachment, and like the pastoral, emerged from discontent." Collage "provided a means to channel her 'disappointment and desire' into 'imaginative possession.'" As she drew her inspiration "from nature's forms and sensations," she imbued the works with a "natural rhythm," concludes Haskell.

Gail Levin's essay serves as an introduction to her biography of the artist. Levin considers the importance of Krasner's Jewish heritage, giving details regarding her ambivalent relationship to that heritage, and concluding that "despite later estrangement from religious practice, she remained identified as a Jew." Krasner often claimed that she was ignored by establishment critics such as Greenberg and Rosenberg because, as Jewish men, they retained traditional attitudes about women's inequality, Levin writes, noting that many of her early promoters, such as Barbara Rose and Cindy Nemser, were Jewish women.

W&J editors usually don't appear in the journal pages beyond this page. However, since Joan Marter was a symposium presenter, her essay is included. She explores Krasner's early abstractions and her association with Mercedes Carles Matter, a painter and close friend during the 1930s and 1940s. It was probably Matter who

introduced Krasner to Hans Hofmann's instruction and encouraged her involvement with the American Abstract Artists group. In previously unpublished letters to Matter, Krasner sheds light on her life with Jackson Pollock and the impact of her father's death. Marter also suggests that Krasner was a formidable, well-connected young modernist before she met Pollock.

Most of the reviews in this issue focus on the twentieth-century, including some artists working contemporaneously with Krasner. An artist sometimes connected to Abstract Expressionism is the subject of *Uninterrupted Flux: Hedda Sterne*, a catalogue by Sarah L. Eckhardt, reviewed by Vittorio Colaizzi. He notes that Sterne "was never swept up in any single ideology, but was able to observe modernism as a set of interchangeable options."

The World War II resistance exploits of two iconoclastic women is the subject of *Don't Kiss Me: The Art of Claude Cahun & Marcel Moore*, one of two books reviewed by Christine Filippone. The other, about interwar Paris, is *Women Together/Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris*, by Tirza True Latimer, who, Filippone writes, "unveils the efforts" of Cahun and Moore, the painter Romaine Brooks, and performer Suzy Solidor "to shape their identities and inscribe themselves into history through portraiture."

Karen Kurczynski reviews five recent books on Eva Hesse. "We are witnessing the apotheosis" of this artist, Kurczynski writes, pointing to the breadth of "insights into [Hesse's] process and interpretation" they contain. Reviewed are three anthologies: *Encountering Eva Hesse*, edited by Griselda Pollock and Vanessa Corby; *Eva Hesse Drawing*, edited by Catherine de Zegher, and *Eva Hesse: Sculpture*, edited by Elisabeth Sussman and Fred Wasserman, as well as the two-volume *Catalogue Raisonné*, edited by Renate Petzinger and Barry Rosen, and a facsimile edition of Hesse's *Datebooks, 1964-65*.

Evelyn Kain reviews *Gabriele Münter: The Search for Expression 1906-1917*, with essays by Annegret Hoberg and others that illuminate Münter's art and legacy well beyond her celebrated connection with Kandinsky. Reviewing a new edition of *Martha Rosler: 3 Works*, originally published in 1981, reviewer Don Gill notes that great "improvements in print technology" and relevant critical views in this collection of documentary works make it worth re-visiting. In Maria Elena Buszek's *Pin-Up Grrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture*, reviewer Rachel Epp Buller found "pin-up history unfold[ing] within and alongside of the history of the women's movement."

Almost 3500 years have passed since Hatshepsut of Egypt donned a kingly false beard and presented herself as the equal of male leaders. She "understood the limits of male-defined power structures and conventions," and fashioned herself as a female king, writes Christine Havice in her review of *Hatshepsut from Queen to Pharaoh*, edited by Catharine H. Roehrig. The text and essays in this monumental catalogue that accompanied a Metropolitan Museum exhibit "reward even the nonspecialist with insights" and complement a vast array of visual material, writes Havice.

Finally, we thank Helen Harrison, Director of the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, and staff member Ruby Jackson, and the staff of the Robert Miller Gallery for providing us with images of Lee Krasner's work to accompany the articles in this issue.

Joan Marter and Margaret Barlow, co-editors

LEE KRASNER'S SKEPTICISM AND HER EMERGENT POSTMODERNISM

By Robert Hobbs

Lee Krasner's art both affirms and violates the Abstract Expressionist criteria for a convincing subjectivity: throughout her work, she moved from series to series, first adopting one style and then abandoning it as her search continued. Her open-ended view of herself differs substantially from most of the first-generation male Abstract Expressionists' late modernist and highly romantic accounts of themselves and their unconscious as complete distilleries of essential truths. Their point of view is predicated on conceiving their work in terms of symbols, which the nineteenth-century Romantic poet/critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge described in terms of imagination. He wrote, "The imagination. . . gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors."¹ In symbolic constructions, the work of art, considered as a metaphor, is viewed as representing a whole; it functions as a synecdoche in which outer form is believed to be an adequate stand in for inner essence. Differing from this symbolic and synecdochic view, Krasner's work plays on metonyms in which both she and her related attributes are connected through a chain of signifiers without being hypostatized as their essence. By relying on metonyms as opposed to metaphors, Krasner breaks away from Abstract Expressionist claims of autonomy and transcendence as she embraces the countering ideas of contingency and fragmentation. Looking at Krasner's work in this manner allows one to see how both her postmodern works made first for the 1976/1977 Pace Gallery exhibition entitled "Eleven Ways to Use the Words to See," and those created subsequent to it are not radical departures from her earlier work, but instead are far more self-conscious developments of attitudes and practices appearing in it since the 1940s, when she began viewing the self as other.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s many male Abstract Expressionists proclaimed themselves to be art's internal mirror. David Smith said pointedly, "Art. . . comes from the inside of who you are when you face yourself."² In the process of defining art in terms of themselves, a number of these first-generation male Abstract Expressionists also took refuge in heroic allusions and mythic terminology, which Krasner on occasion also adopted. Adolph Gottlieb, for example, poetically suggested in the 1940s that his work evolved from the deep strata of primordial memory that Jung articulated as "archetypes," genetic predispositions to hypothetical universal image banks situated in the

unconscious of each individual and indirectly available through dreams and free association. In 1944 he wrote, "I disinterred some relics from the secret crypt of Melpomene [the Muse of Tragedy] to unite them through the pictograph, which has its own internal logic."³ Embracing Delacroix's highly romantic and instrumental concept of the work of art as a bridge between the mind of the artist and the observer, Gottlieb continued, "Like those early [Greek] painters, who placed their images on the grounds of rectangular compartments, I juxtaposed my pictographic images, each self-contained within the painter's rectangle, to be ultimately fused within the mind of the beholder."⁴

Together with Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, Gottlieb subscribed to the idea of a universal and ultimately static art that transcends time. In their collaboration "The Romantics Were Prompted. . .," these artists wrote, "Since art is timeless, the significant rendition of a symbol, no matter how archaic, has as full validity today as the archaic symbol had then."⁵ However, instead of looking outside themselves to nature as did the Romantics, these artists searched within and found "inscapes" (to use Gerard Manley Hopkins's term) that connected them with what they regarded as the very beginnings of human culture.

These and other Abstract Expressionists began evolving in the early and mid-1940s formal signs for communicating the self's great internal reservoirs, which are apprehended indirectly and dynamically, and they devised a number of formal means for doing so, including pentimenti, the break-up and radical overlapping of forms, extension beyond the limits of a given surface, and lack of finish, which can be communicated by liberal drips and splashes of paint. The irony of their situation is that once these formal codes became part of the stylistic apparatus recognized as Abstract Expressionism, they ceased to communicate the dynamics of this internal repository, associated with either the subconscious or unconscious, and promulgated instead the formalist conventions of a reified self, through the aesthetic branding of drips, zips, veils, *Elegies*, *Bursts*, etc.

Among first generation members of the New York School, Lee Krasner (1908-84) is remarkable for continuing to explore an iterative and protean self. In conversation with art historian Barbara Novak, she first disclaimed affinities with the one-image art of her peers and then attacked it. She stated, "I've never understood the fixed image. I've never experienced this state of being where you fix an image and this becomes your

identification. . . It's rigid. Its purity is alarming, so to speak. It terrifies me in a sense." To make sure her point was completely understood, she enunciated, "It's rigid, as against being alive."⁶ At another time, she affirmed, "The one constant in life is change. I have regards for the inner voice."⁷ Always in advance of her ability to realize it, this inner voice characterized a dynamic that kept Krasner open to the contingencies of a self that can only be partially understood, a self that is much more a clarion call for continued action than a reified one, which many of her peers believed to be fully manifested in terms of a single signature image.

From the perspective of the twenty-first century, this Abstract Expressionist quest to manifest an essential self in a work of art seems hopelessly romantic and surprisingly naïve. This modernist assumption of a monolithic self that can be directly manifested in art has become highly suspect in recent years, when art historians conversant with the poststructuralist theories of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Lacan have decentered the self and looked at ways this now highly improbable construct became naturalized in art historical discourses. But during and after World War II, the legacy of Romanticism was still so strong that artists believed in a seamless self that could be actuated in their art. They subscribed to an expressive aesthetics, which has its origins in William Wordsworth's externalization of his internal thoughts and intuitions in his poetry. According to literary theorist M.H. Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, a standard text on the Romantic English literary imagination, Wordsworth's program was as follows:

The first test any [romantic] poem must pass is no longer, "Is it true to nature?" . . . but . . . "Is it sincere? Is it genuine? Does it match the intention, the feeling, and the actual state of mind of the poet while composing?" The work ceases then to be regarded primarily as a reflection of nature, actual or improved; the mirror held up to nature becomes transparent and yields the reader insights into the mind and heart of the poet himself.⁸

Expressive theories such as Wordsworth's and the similar ones embraced by most first generation Abstract Expressionists assume communication between creators and observers to be direct and unmediated. Both surrogates for their creators and direct conduits to their feelings, their paintings become "objective correlatives," to use T.S. Eliot's terminology, "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion, such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."⁹ Eliot considered poetry to be universally intelligible because its language corresponds to a unique intellectual and emotional experience, which it in turn is capable of communicating, a belief that is consistent with the principles of New Criticism, which he helped to formulate. Robert Motherwell was fond of referring to Eliot's "objective correlative" when discussing painting, and other first generation Abstract Expressionists accepted this theory as a general truth.¹⁰

Rather than subscribing to such romantic and New Critical

ideas in poetry, Lee Krasner embraced the renegade early Symbolist approach of Arthur Rimbaud, who wrote in 1871 to his friend Paul Demyen: "I wish to be a poet and work to make myself a seer. . . . It is false to say: I think. One should say: I am thought. Pardon the play on words. I am another."¹¹ Apropos this passive construction, Krasner told her assistant John Post Lee in 1981, fully four decades after fully embracing Rimbaud's poetry, that she did not filter nature through her work, instead insisting, "It filters through,"¹² thus referring to the self as a Rimbaudian other, a concept that remained one of the key aspects of her work.

So important was Rimbaud to Krasner's early work that she wrote several lines from his *A Season in Hell* on her studio wall and kept them there until the fall of 1942, when she moved into Pollock's apartment. Often cited, the lines are:

To whom shall I hire myself out? What beast must I
adore?
What holy image is attacked? What hearts shall I break?
What lie must I maintain? In what blood tread?¹³

Clearly the self suggested by these lines is chameleon-like and predicated on contingency—a self that is dynamic, mysterious, and quixotic—a moving target and not the profound internal fountainhead her fellow Abstract Expressionists maintained. Throughout her work Krasner forged a number of constructed selves that she considered likely candidates for an ultimately indeterminable and hypothetical "real" self. Relying on an insistent open-endedness that is existential in character, Krasner's constructed images of herself in her art are always exceeded by a superfluity of new choices, becoming a never-ending cycle lasting throughout her life.

Krasner erected in her life and work a number of provisional metonymical selves. Beginning with the range of names she devised during the first thirty years of her life, she assumed a number of provisional identities. Born Lena Krassner, she chose the highly fanciful Lenore, perhaps because of the Edgar Allan Poe poem with this title; later she changed her name to Leah, and finally, in the 1930s, she settled on Lee Krasner (with one s), which was sometimes abbreviated in her work to the initials L.K.

In the 1940s Krasner's relation to her work was a provisional one, as one can see looking at her gray slabs and Little Image series. According to Krasner, "I went into my own black-out period [later notable for the gray slabs] which lasted two or three years [from approximately 1943 to 1946-7] where the canvases would simply build up until they'd get like stone and it was always just a gray mess. The image wouldn't emerge. . . . I was fighting to find I knew not what."¹⁴ Later, on a number of occasions, Krasner described her intention to use intuition as a way to move from Hofmann's external nature to Pollock's "I am nature."

Whatever the reason for Krasner's gray slabs, from a postmodern perspective they represent the commendable failure to come to terms with a limited view of the self and an inability to use intuition as a means for distilling an image capable of encompassing and representing it. Instead of a single image, Krasner kept layering one on top of another, with none of them definitive enough to be accepted, with the notable exception of a very few works, including *Image*

Surfacing (see p. 12, Fig. 1), with its accusatory eye. Each layer or image canceled out the one below it until the painting attained the quality of mud. Krasner would then soak this Sisyphean accrual of paint in the bathtub and scrape it down down to the bare canvas, only to begin yet again.

When Krasner came close to achieving a signature image in the late 1940s with her Little Image series, it was plural, not singular, and it could easily be sorted into daubs of paint, archaic script, and drips, making up the various sub-series comprising this overall group. The visual languages of the Little Images replaced the putative presence of the artist with a series of absences—or as Derrida noted, “signs represent[ing] the present in its absence.”¹⁵ Since none of the individual sub-series comprising the Little Images provided the type of definitive solution that in turn could be refined and explored in increasing depth over the artist’s lifetime or even a five to ten year period, we must assume that they were stopgaps on a personal journey that continued to outdistance the artist, resulting in abrupt shifts and new cycles, each appearing for a time as a consummate solution, only to be discontinued over the years as a provisional one.

The year after Pollock’s death in 1956, Krasner began elaborating her own signature to the point that it became the armature for the entire painting *Listen* (1957; front cover), which she named with the help of her friend, the writer B.H. Friedman. This emphasis on her name occurs in a number of other contemporaneous works, including *Sun Woman I*, *Sun Woman II*, and *The Seasons*, as well as *Black, White and Pink Collage*, which was begun at the same time as the others but was completed in 1974.

At the time Krasner painted *Listen*, many Abstract Expressionists had already settled on their “signature images.” In consideration of this fact, we might conjecture that on one level Krasner’s extended signature in *Listen* could be considered a parody of this type of art. But the signature suggests other possible references.

Starting in the lower right, Krasner’s sprawling name appears either to have initiated or concluded the initial phase of outlining the composition with an umber imprimatura. Whether undertaken at the beginning or reinforced at the end of this process, the integral use of the artist’s name allies the overall work with her identity and helps to explain the intense emotional reaction she felt while making it. She later told her friend, the poet Richard Howard, “I can remember that when I was painting *Listen* which is so highly keyed in color—I’ve seen it many times since and it looks like such a happy painting—I can remember that while I was painting it I almost didn’t see it, because tears were literally pouring down.”¹⁶ Instead of invoking a holistic sense of self in this painting, Krasner presents a metonymical chain of images, consisting of her signature and the breastlike forms, that can be associated with her: she later acknowledged that no one was more surprised than she was when breasts began appearing in her work. In *Listen* these forms occupy the position traditionally accorded flowers arranged in a vase, a container that is partially comprised of her signature. The artist’s nature, which



Fig. 1. Lee Krasner, *Untitled* (1940), oil on canvas, 30" x 25". Collection of Faye Sarofim.

may also be metonymically connoted by the leaf-like shapes in this painting, can be equated with the same scraggly indoor plant used for some of Krasner’s circa 1940-43 Picasso-style still lifes (Fig. 1).

Krasner’s Earth Green series, including *Listen*, relates to contemporaneous conversations she had with her friend, the writer Sanford Friedman, brother of B.H., regarding Jane Ellen Harrison’s book on Greek tragedy entitled *Ancient Art and Ritual*, which was part of the Pollock-Krasner library at The Springs, and which they both read. In this book, Harrison set herself the task of trying to understand why the Greek tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were performed in Athens in early April at the Great Dionysian festival and discovered that they are all connected with the birth of Dionysus known as the Dithyramb, which is the song of rebirth. Given the importance of Krasner’s painting *Birth*, made soon after Pollock’s death and at the time she was reading Harrison’s book, we might consider it and the Earth Green series, including *Listen*, as playing the compensatory role of a willed rebirth. Continuing in this vein, we might connect the fragmented realm of *Listen* with the Dionysian theme of self-sacrifice and dismemberment, coming before metamorphosis and rebirth.

Despite its abstractness, *Listen* correlates with the Freudian psychologist Dr. Otto Rank’s theory of creation through naming. As Rank explains:

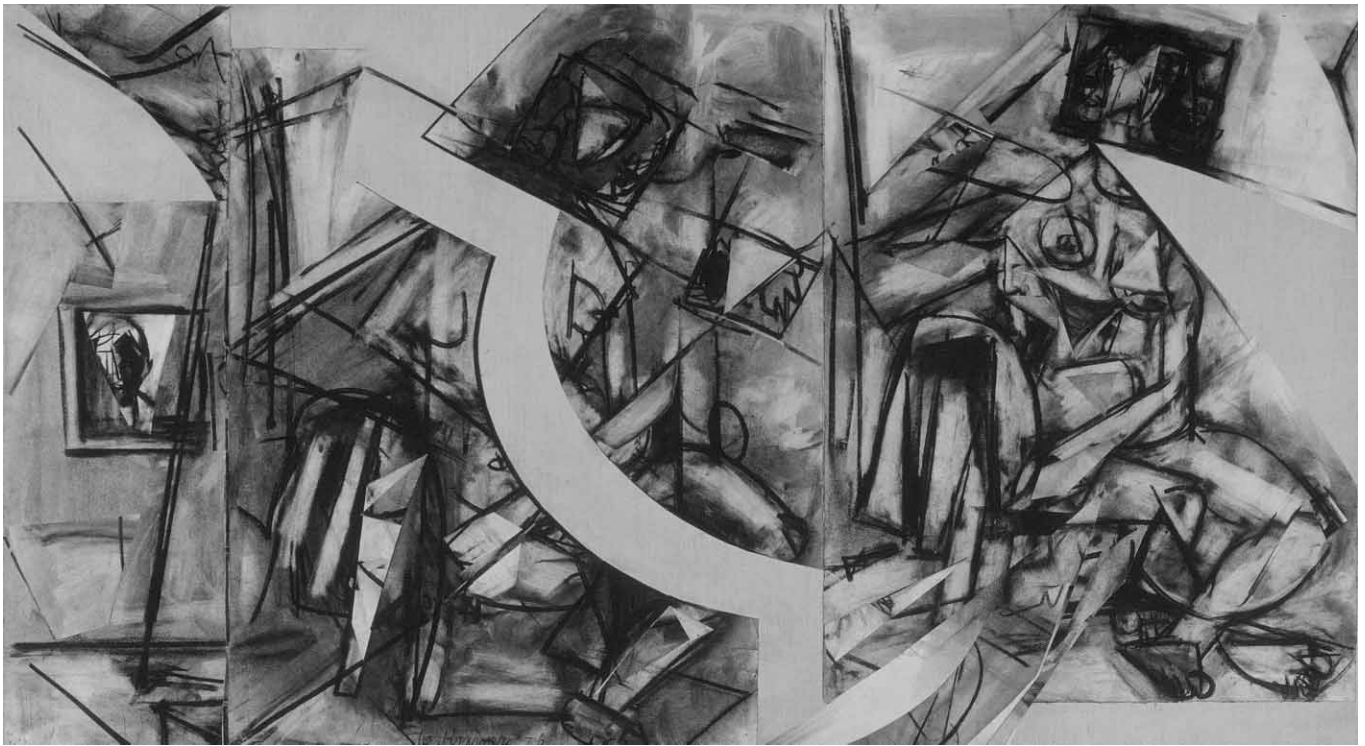


Fig. 2. Lee Krasner, *Past Conditional* (1976), collage on canvas, 27" x 49". Pollock-Krasner Foundation. Photo courtesy Robert Miller Gallery.

The myths which deal with the creation of the world out of the human body are really speech-myths which represent man's conquest (that is, his creation) of the world by naming the objects (that is, by metaphorically expressing them through speech). This creative power of language. . . does not merely "tell" the myths, but forms them physioplastically. . . [since they] are only grand linguistic metaphors for this projection of the parts of the body onto the whole universe.¹⁷

In *Listen* Krasner's speech myths are transformed into a written and painted myth—the metonymical chain associated with her through her signature and the breasts—but instead of comprising a new word and world, this painting conflates what is known, thus the imperative "[to] listen" as its title rather than the originary injunction "to name." In consideration of this painting's rich saturated hues, *Listen* might at first seem a "happy" picture as the artist suggests; however, on reflection it is not surprising that she cried when she considered the amputated breasts, the hothouse plant leaves, and the lack of connection with either an integral or self-sustaining nature that this metonymical chain of imagery underscores.

To *Listen* we can apply Derrida's description of the incorporation of a signature in an artistic work as a type of self-sacrifice in which a creative individual's identity loses its sovereignty as it is siphoned into the art. Although Derrida describes a literary situation, his observation is equally applicable to art:

The law producing and prohibiting the signature . . . of the proper name, is that by not letting the signature fall outside the text any more, as an undersigned subscription, and by inserting it into the body of the text, you monumentalize, institute and erect it into a thing or strong object. But in doing so, you also lose the identity, the title of ownership over the text; you let it become a moment or a part of the text, as a thing or common name.¹⁸

Similar to a number of Krasner's best works, *Listen* seems poised between being made and starting to deliquesce. Its present status is conditional and almost miraculous, since change seems so much a part of its being. Its present alliance with the artist's name is a situation that appears on the verge of transformation, and thus one's interpretations also appear to be subject to change. We might say that instead of producing an art that only objectifies process, which it inadvertently does, Krasner creates paintings whose ostensible subjects are predicated on contingency, making both their current state and any ventured reading appear to be only momentarily applicable. Her means correlates with another and less rigid definition of imagination—differing from the symbol—and also provided by Coleridge, who discussed the importance of creating images that are not easily verifiable. Emphasizing the importance of "hovering between images," Coleridge stated in his 1812 lecture on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, "As soon as it [imagination] is fixed on one image, it becomes understanding; but while it is unfixed and wavering between them, attaching itself permanently to none, it is imagination."¹⁹



Fig. 3. Lee Krasner, *Present Conditional* (1976), collage on canvas, two panels: left, 72" x 60"; right, 72" x 48". Photo courtesy Robert Miller Gallery.

For her first retrospective exhibition, which Bryan Robertson curated for the Whitechapel Gallery in London in 1965, Krasner provided a statement that poetically underscores her denial of both an essential self and an integral style, even though on first appearance her analogy to a lettuce leaf seems to support the opposite conclusion. It is reproduced on a separate page that concludes this catalogue's general stocktaking of her work. She began by pointing out that "Painting, 'when it really happens' is as miraculous as a natural phenomenon—as say a lettuce leaf. By 'happens,' I mean the painting in which the inner aspects of man and his outer aspects interlock."²⁰ She elaborates on her initial idea by stating, "One could go on forever as to whether the paint should be thick or thin, whether to paint the woman or the square, hard-edge or soft, but after a while such questions become a bore. They are merely problems in aesthetics, having only to do with the outer man."²¹

She then emphasizes a highly romantic and modernist concept of the work of art as an autonomous and transcendent whole, "But the painting I have in mind, painting in which inner and outer are inseparable, transcends technique, transcends subject and moves into the realm of the inevitable—then you have the lettuce leaf."²²

Taken on face value, the statement would appear to support a belief in an essential self in which inner and outer worlds reinforce opposite sides of a permeable membrane, representing the artist's inner and outer worlds. But if one considers a lettuce leaf as a fragile element of a larger entity, then each internally and externally consistent leaf, which might be construed as synonymous with one of Krasner's many

discrete styles presented at the Whitechapel retrospective, is broken away, one after another, over a period of time.

Because Krasner's metaphor is so remarkable, one wonders about its source, and the most convincing candidates are the series of photographs of cabbage leaves that Edward Weston made in 1931 and exhibited in New York soon thereafter. These sensuous, undulating shapes, looking very much like lettuce, are beautiful in their fragility and transience, each discretely unified, and each self-consistently seeming to support an essence that differs, however, with each successive image in the series, thereby constituting a dynamic while framing a contingent, not autonomous situation.

In 1976 Lee Krasner embarked on a radical new course in which she dramatized confrontations between modernism and incipient postmodernism as well as between her own earlier and recent work in the important series *Eleven Ways to Use the Words to See*, which includes such pieces as *Imperative* (Pl. 1), *Imperfect Subjunctive*, *Past Conditional* (Fig. 2), *Present Conditional* (Fig. 3), and *Present Subjunctive* (all made in 1976). The significance of the different verb tenses used to title this series is that they change the act of looking from Clement Greenberg's and Michael Fried's insistence on the *presentness* of modernist art in the 1960s to a delayed and extended form of viewing more in keeping with Derrida's post-structuralist theories, particularly his concept of *difference*—his special conjunction of "difference" and "deferring" that is spatial in demarcating distinctions among closely associated entities and time-bound in delaying ultimate or transcendent meanings.

In 1975, the year before Krasner created this important new

series, an exhibition of her works on paper, beginning with pieces from the year 1933 and continuing up to that time, opened at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. It was curated by New York critic Gene Baro. This and other contemporaneous exhibitions of Krasner's works on paper caused her both to think about her past accomplishments and to consider ways that her art had gone through dramatic changes in the over four decades that she had been making it. In addition to the Corcoran showing, the print and drawing room of Marlborough Gallery in New York featured a companion exhibition subtitled "Works on Paper: 1937–1939." The two exhibitions were selected in part from a cache of Krasner's Hofmann School drawings (ca. 1937–1940) that Robertson had found in the early 1960s when they were stored in a barn on The Springs property where they had been summarily deposited almost two decades earlier and promptly forgotten. At the time Robertson had been assiduously searching for works by Krasner to include in her Whitechapel retrospective. He chided Krasner for not using fixative on these early pieces, since some charcoal drawings had smudged, while still others had left ghostly mirror impressions on the sheets of paper separating them. After selecting the best works, Krasner put the rest in storage and again ignored them until the advent of the Corcoran and Marlborough exhibitions caused her once again to search for this early body of work.

In 1976, the year following these two exhibitions, Krasner began thinking yet again about these drawings and decided to use discarded pieces of them for a series of monumental collages. Such a process of recycling her own and even Pollock's discarded paintings and drawings had been important for both her relatively small black-and-white and large, intensely colored collages of the 1950s, and so she repeated this practice albeit with an important difference: instead of cohering the collected remnants into seamless yet intense and highly rhythmic works, she exaggerated differences between the old drawings and the new structures under which they were now subsumed. The artist recalled, "At first I did have some nostalgia about the drawings, but then I began to look at them as if they weren't done by me—simply pieces of material for making new work."²³ The thirty-five to forty-year-old drawings were mostly studies of studio models in which Krasner had carefully adhered to Hofmann's method and had taken as a key compositional determinant the overall dimensions of the paper employed (See for example p. 35, Fig. 1.).

This series was made in the late 1970s when Greenberg's prescriptive formalist program was considered bankrupt, painting was regarded as an old fashioned art form, and originality was thought to have been provided a *coup de grace* by Roland Barthes's 1968 essay signaling the author's death. In this series Krasner mines both her past and her present to create a disjunctive rather than a nostalgically retrospective view and a style of poised contradiction and artfully placed crosscurrents. And the work in turn destabilizes both past and present as it ricochets back and forth between them and the tremendous gaps in space and time separating them. In these works Krasner sets in motion a critical process of differing values through oppositions between modernist autonomy and a postmodern depreciation of that

sovereignty. These late works are meta-paintings, commenting even as they present different aspects of the artist's work.

These collages can be considered in general to be distantly related to contemporaneous Pattern and Decoration work and specifically to be conversant with aspects of the feminist art movement then being led by an associate from the early 1950s, Miriam Schapiro, the wife of Pollock's friend, painter Paul Brach. As part of her overall feminist program, Schapiro had developed a new hybrid art form based on patchwork quilts and collage that she called "femmage." Among the works that Krasner no doubt saw in the 1970s were Schapiro's widely published Collaboration, Fan, and Vestiture series that looked like the shaped canvases of Frank Stella, with the important proviso that they were composed of laces, richly embroidered silks, velvets, sequined appliques, and chintzes. Although Krasner did not indulge in the use of such elaborate materials for her work, her collage method did parallel Schapiro's desire to collect the fabric of women's lives—namely her own—and use it as a basis for her art.

Far less romantic and idealistic than Schapiro, Krasner was appropriating her own modernist exercises for compositions alluding to two different metonymical chains, depending on her early works and recent ideas, which were based on lateral extension and which in part deflected the original intent and meaning of her Hofmann school drawings. To appreciate the critical act that Krasner's collages enact, it is helpful to compare her approach with that of contemporary linguists. Prior to the 1960s, many linguists operated like modernists in positing ideal channels of communication in which messages were unmediated by misunderstandings and in ignoring the general cultural noise that might interfere with the original intent of a communiqué. Slowly, however, linguists became aware, as have postmodernists, that there are no ideal speaker/listener situations and no totally homogeneous communities ensuring perfect understanding.

In the collages, ironically titled *Eleven Ways to Use the Words to See*, Krasner turned early works into decorative patterns that are then cut up and rearranged without consideration of their original intention, thus interrupting their original message. The resulting collages exhibit a lack of sync between Hofmann's codification of the rules of modern art (exhibited in the original drawings) and the overall curvilinear rhythms to which Krasner subjected them. In this series, she dispensed with Hofmann's universally oriented modernist grammar as she raised the question of artistic language to a new level in which her German teacher's modernism became the object, but not the subject of the new works of art. In her collages, language is viewed diachronically and dialectically and no longer in terms of the harmonious universals that Hofmann had originally intended.

Instead of working with Sanford Friedman and Richard Howard to title *Eleven Ways to Use the Words to See*, Krasner relied on conversations with essayist and gallerist John Bernard Myers. Although Myers certainly contributed to the titles of these series, the idea of dealing with time through references to verb tenses was made by Krasner's longtime friend, the artist Saul Steinberg, who posed the idea of "a linguistic system suggesting time and its conditions"²⁴ as the subject for these

works. The importance of such verb tenses as “present conditional” and “past continuous” is that they undermine the full presence of the modernist work of art at the same time that they acknowledge multifaceted ways of looking at art. In addition, the series’ ongoing dialectic between past and present enabled Krasner to debunk the theory that artists create works with a unitary focus even if she employed contradiction as a stylistic device. In these collages, she carries on a point/counterpoint discussion with her past self about the continued relevance of modernism, its ghostly impressions, and aftermath. The artist quotes herself, only to undermine herself, and thus to throw art into a quandary of possibilities. The process is similar to the internal gaps occurring in Rimbaud’s poetry that force readers to develop their own readings of particular works that are then retroactively attributed to them.

This internal dialectic between the artist’s selves that have changed over time is also evident in the later piece, *Crisis Moment* (1972-80; Pl. 2), a collage painting for which she cut up lithographs from her Pink Stone editions (part of the Primary Series, 1969). The work is an abstracted still life consisting of blossoms that appear to be clotted with blood. The mixture of violence and beauty—unexpected though not unprecedented in Krasner’s work—gives new meaning to the French term for still life, *nature morte* (literally, “dead nature”). Some of the flowers or buds resemble egg shapes, complicating still further the intermingling of life and death, birth and growth. For *To the North* (1980), lithographs from the Blue Stone edition (taken from the same Primary Series) were employed. A similar deflection of present and past times can be seen in the postmodern *Between Two Appearances* (1981; Pl. 3), in which the spontaneity of Krasner’s dripped oil paint on paper has been reconstrued as a series of collage elements so that she both creates and cites quotations of her own creativity in this piece. In this metonymical construction, she contrasted two codes for her own expression: spontaneous drips and thoughtful representation. By cutting the drips out of older works, she transformed them from distinct signs for feeling—in effect, putting quotation marks around the drips and giving them an element of Neo-Expressionist irony prior to the time this type of art was becoming important in New York. The fact that the heads in the painting are not collaged and look as if they were heightens one’s sense of doubt, causing one to suspect that they may be real while the drips are counterfeit. But the drips are actual; it is only the excision that makes them look unnatural. The two appearances of the title thus become two contradictory illusions that the artist chose not to resolve.

Describing Lee Krasner, a first generation Abstract Expressionist and the wife of Jackson Pollock, in terms of postmodernism might appear to be merely an interpretative ruse mainly geared to provoke intense discussion. But I hope this essay has provided enough analysis to make this point. By choosing to look at certain discrete periods and works in Krasner oeuvre, my aim was to emphasize the contingent and continuously emergent self that she continued throughout her life to rename and to couch in often radically different styles, including painterly and constructivist approaches. It is important, too, to point out that Krasner’s 1970s and 1980s

departure from the basic tenets of Abstract Expressionism paralleled those of a number of her peers who entered into dialogues with art postdating Abstract Expressionism. While Barnett Newman served as a mentor for such a sixties minimalist as Dan Flavin, Rothko’s ascetic late work, Motherwell’s *Opens*, and Richard Pousette-Dart’s black-and-white works (to name the art of only three Abstract Expressionists) all responded to minimalism in highly individual ways that demonstrated their desire to keep abreast of recent developments while also personalizing them. Wishing to be part of the cultural dialogue, they found ways to approach contemporary discussions without totally rejecting their earlier work. Krasner did the same, and as this essay has indicated, she was admirably equipped to do so because of her early skepticism regarding the hyperbolic romantic goals that most first generation Abstract Expressionists espoused. Instead of making claims about her ability to reach some mythic Olympus, which was psychologically reconfigured in terms of archetypes and liminal imagery, Krasner was content in her work to reference herself in terms of an evolving metonymic chain that connected the prosaics of her actual world with the poetics of her collages and paintings. •

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Notes

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Statesman’s Manual” in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Lay Sermons*, ed. R.J. White, vol. 6 of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1816; rpt. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 29.
2. David Smith, “Tradition and Identity,” (1959) in Clifford Ross, ed., *Abstract Expressionism: Creators and Critics* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), 184.
3. Sidney Janis, *Abstract Art and Surrealist Art in America* (New York, 1944), cited in Lawrence Alloway, “Melpomene and Graffiti” in *Topics in American Art Since 1945* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), 27.
4. Ibid.
5. Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko with Barnett Newman, “Statement” (*New York Times*, June 13, 1943) in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1992), 562.
6. Barbara Novak, “Excerpts from an Interview with Lee Krasner” (Boston, October 1979) in *Lee Krasner: Recent Work* (New York: Pace Gallery, 1981), n.p.
7. Lee Krasner, interview by Gaby Rogers, 1977; Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C. (microfilm 3774).
8. M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic theory and the Critical Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953, rpt. 1971), 23.
9. T.S. Eliot, “Hamlet and His Problems” in *Selected Essays*, 3d ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950), 124.
10. Motherwell, conversations with author, 1974-1979. During the period of writing my dissertation on Motherwell’s *Elegies to the Spanish Republic*, followed by the year I lived in this artist’s guest house while

teaching at Yale (1975-1976) and the period of co-curating the exhibition *Abstract Expressionism: The Formative Years* with Gail Levin for the Whitney Museum of American Art, I spent many hours discussing Abstract Expressionism with Motherwell. At that time, the term "objective correlative" was one of his favored expressions for referring to his art.

11. Harold Rosenberg, "The Profession of Poetry," *Partisan Review* 9, no. 5 (September/October 1942): 407. I have chosen to cite here and in my other work on Krasner this citation rather than other published references to Rimbaud's statement because Krasner was lifelong friends with Harold Rosenberg and most likely would have known about it from her conversations with him. Cf. Robert Hobbs, *Lee Krasner* (New York: Independent Curators International in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1999).
12. John Post Lee, "Interview with Lee Krasner, East Hampton, New York, November 28, 1981" in "Lee Krasner and Eleven Ways to Use the Words to See" (senior thesis, Vassar College, December 4, 1981), 36.
13. Arthur Rimbaud, *A Season in Hell: Un Saison en Enfer*, trans. Delmore Schwartz (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1932), 27.
14. Cindy Nemser, *Art Talk: Conversations with 12 Women Artists* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 86ff.
15. Jacques Derrida, "Difference," in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 138.
16. Richard Howard, "A Conversation with Lee Krasner" in *Lee Krasner Paintings: 1959-1962* (New York: Pace Gallery, 1979), n.p.
17. Otto Rank, *Art and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 227ff.
18. Jacques Derrida, *Singeponge/Singsponge*, trans. Richard Rand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 56.
19. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Text of Lectures 1,2,6,7,8,9, and 12 of the 1811-1812 Series as published by John Payne Collier in *Seven Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton* (1856)" in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, vol. 2, *Lectures 1808-1819 on Literature*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 495.
20. Lee Krasner, "Statement" in Bryan Robertson and B.H. Friedman, *Lee Krasner: Paintings, Drawings, and Collages* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1965).
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Grace Glueck, "Art People: How to Recycle Your Drawings," *New York Times*, February 25, 1977, sec. C, p. 18.
24. Jeanne Siegel, "Collage Expanded," Visual Arts Museum, New York, October 1-20, 1984, n.p.

ART, MYTHS, AND RITUALS



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LEE KRASNER AND WOMEN'S INNOVATIONS IN AMERICAN ABSTRACT PAINTING

By Ann Gibson

Women artists associated with Abstract Expressionism had to contend with the same challenges as men: anti-intellectualism, traditional museums and collectors' reluctance to buy American art, especially abstraction, and a simple refusal of what did not appear "artistic." These were not the only barriers to recognition faced by women artists, even those who were closely associated with men who were instrumental in defining the movement in the United States and Canada. Having a partner of renown opened some doors, but its downsides were considerable. The difficulties Lee Krasner encountered were not quite the same, nor yet entirely different from those of other women. While this essay concentrates on Krasner and three of her peers with successful partners who were seen as major artists at the time of these relationships—Elaine de Kooning, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler—other women artists were similarly affected.¹

These four women were heterosexual and Caucasian. Krasner and Frankenthaler were of Jewish lineage, and even at mid-century and after, they were susceptible to racializing prohibitions and stereotypes.²

Other significant differences among these four artists aside, namely class and personal financial support, this article concentrates on the process of forming "Abstract Expressionism" as not only a style of painting, but also a category of morally imperative hierarchies for postwar American Art whose highest values were constructed in such a way that even the achievements of women who were financially secure—especially women in close relations to male artists—could not be seen.³ This blind spot hindered most prominent art historians of these artists' own generation and the next, no matter how gifted and committed they were. Their preoccupations were the admittedly challenging ones of defining a new movement and its most prominent practitioners, and determining its limits. Most abstractionists aimed to produce painting that was neither recognizably gendered, nor overtly figurative, nor political. The intellectual atmosphere for such an approach was set by critics such as Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg, who were concerned with identifying the boundaries of what is now called Abstract Expressionism and articulating the significance of developments within them.⁴ One of those boundaries that

has until rather recently functioned most silently and effectively was that formed by intimate personal relations.

However disparate the early lives and experiences of these four women were, all produced work that arguably influenced the art of their male partners. These men went on to play significant parts in the establishment of Abstract Expressionism, both inside and outside the United States, before the work of the women with whom they were associated was widely recognized. Lee Krasner married Jackson Pollock in 1945; Elaine Fried married Willem de Kooning in 1943 and was later close to Harold Rosenberg and Thomas Hess. In 1949 Joan Mitchell married Barney Rosset, founder of Grove Press and publisher of *The Evergreen Review*; they divorced in 1952. She moved to France in 1959 to be with (not to marry) Jean-Paul Riopelle, one of Canada's best recognized abstractionists, then living in Paris but working in an idiom similar to Abstract Expressionism in the U. S. Helen Frankenthaler kept company with Clement Greenberg steadily from 1950 to 1955, then married Robert Motherwell in 1958.⁵

As Joan Marter and others have noted, when the work of women such as these has been discussed in connection with Abstract Expressionism, mention has been parenthetical.⁶ In the earlier years especially, critics predictably noted the ways their art echoed that of their husbands, rather than dwelling on its difference, cultural relevance, or (never!) its precedence. In this way, a direction of so-called "influence" was established and a hierarchy maintained. While these are not new observations, I want to speculate about some of the specifics that can be marshaled to support claims that Krasner, E. de K. (as one critic called her), Mitchell, and Frankenthaler appear to have been in advance of their partners in their understanding of certain themes and techniques. The fact that they developed impressive signature elements in their work (E. de K.'s faceless gyroscope men, Krasner's "cannibal" collages, Mitchell's densely, complex central forms, Frankenthaler's purposefully formed pools of poured and then sponged stains) has received attention only recently, as have observations that in some cases they preceded their partners and other male contemporaries in compositional forms that became hallmarks of the men's work. Mitchell's success in keeping her partnerships more generally out of the press (and, finally, out of the United States), proved to be helpful



Fig. 1. Lee Krasner, *Image Surfacing* (c.1945-47) oil on linen, 27 x 21 1/2". Pollock-Krasner Foundation.

to her career in this regard. Nevertheless, Mitchell experienced difficulties specific to younger women in the movement, whose achievements—as has been noted—were seen by important art historians in relation to their “elders of Abstract Expressionism.”⁷

Lee Krasner, (1908-84), Elaine Fried de Kooning (1918-89), Joan Mitchell, (1926-92), and Helen Frankenthaler (b. 1928) were neither precisely contemporaries nor exactly in succeeding generations but comprise a continuum of possibilities in the orbit of Abstract Expressionism, Post-Painterly Abstraction, and eventually, postmodernism. “Possibilities,” because none of the developments introduced by these women are yet considered to be their contributions. In early exhibitions or studies of Abstract Expressionism, and as late as 1970, only Frankenthaler was included in the prestigious *Britannica Encyclopedia of American Art*. Interestingly, even though women were not permitted at first to join the notably male “Club,” by 1951, at least three were attending (Krasner’s presence is still questionable), although not at the same levels of membership.⁸

Not too surprisingly, the public recognition of the importance of these women’s views, has come neither in order of the artists’ respective ages nor in the chronological order of their decisions to paint in an “Abstract Expressionist” manner. It has occurred, rather, in the order in which each artist

achieved significant institutional support. As a color field painter, Frankenthaler had her first retrospective in the U.S at The Jewish Museum in 1960.⁹ Krasner was second, emerging in 1983 as an Abstract Expressionist worthy of note with a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).¹⁰ Next, Mitchell, had her first retrospective at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell in 1988.¹¹ Elaine de Kooning was the last, receiving her first retrospective exhibition only posthumously, in 1992.¹² Perhaps the most surprising emergence: her work, like Krasner’s, can be heralded as a prescient antecedent of postmodernism’s parodic stance.

Lee Krasner was the first woman of what Barbara Rose called the “heroic first generation”¹³ of Abstract Expressionists (and one of the two first American painters to work completely abstractly before World War II—the other was Ad Reinhardt). Her inclusion in this company, however, has been based on seemingly contradictory claims. It has been argued that she was unjustly left out, since her work is comparable to that of her better-known colleagues. In 1973, for instance, Cindy Nemser reasonably claimed that the artist’s Little Image series of paintings, such as *Night Life* (1947; Pl. 4), entitled her to be considered “one of the leading artists of the first generation of Abstract Expressionists.” Nemser cited the works’ nonhierarchical, all-over format, emphasis on the picture plane caused by tension between forms that seem to move forward and backward, and their “intensely personal, highly distinctive kind of handwriting.”¹⁴

In 1993, Robert Hobbs extended this claim, entering a similar argument for Krasner’s work just *prior* to the Little Images. As early as *Image Surfacing* (1945-47; Fig. 1), he noted, Krasner is “definitely Abstract Expressionist” because of the “heightened drama created by [her] spontaneously applied brushstrokes.”¹⁵ Krasner has been hailed as an Abstract Expressionist not only because her paintings *looked* like Abstract Expressionism but also because of her subject-matter (the struggle to establish the self in the act of painting). Ellen Landau, who wrote the catalogue raisonné for Krasner, noted as early as 1981, for instance, that her Little Image paintings are the key to her “quintessentially Abstract-Expressionist assertion that her work constitutes her autobiography.”¹⁶

If one paints from one’s inner self, then why, one wonders, should a woman’s painting look precisely like *anyone* else’s—especially that of a group comprising only men? Even asking this has a disturbing effect; especially when, with retrospectives of Willem de Kooning at the National Gallery and the Hirshhorn and Pollock at MoMA, a hierarchy seems to have been settled finally. But couldn’t this rigidifying of the movement suggest also that it is ripe for re-examination?

But there are many reasons that women have been left out of this first argument: more structural ones, such as the economy, for instance. After World War II, the United States, which was struggling to provide jobs for returning G.I.’s, wanted women out of the professions and back in their homes. Collectors were reluctant to take a chance on a woman painter, who might decide to turn the studio into a nursery. The occupational status of women was a problem everywhere, not just in art. In the 1940s and 1950s, women’s

self-sufficiency was seen as not only threatening to men; it was seen as unnatural. As art historian Michael Leja has remarked, “a dame with an Abstract Expressionist brush is no less a misfit than a *noir* heroine with a rod.”¹⁷ In other words, just as in this genre of forties film, a woman may take a gun, or in this case, a brush, in hand, but she cannot be a hero. Although “Mrs. Pollock,” as most reviewers called her, painted exemplary Abstract Expressionist paintings in the 1940s, such as *Image Surfacing* and *Noon* (1947; Pl. 5), she was cast (and often permitted herself to be cast) in a supporting role. Ambition in a woman was considered dangerous, and a woman who became assertive enough to be a hero was, by definition, less of a woman.

It was partly for this reason that feminist arguments in the seventies about unfairness—that women were not well represented, that some women were as good as the men and produced elements of the style as early as or earlier than the men—*still* failed to effectively catapult women into the realm of serious consideration. Women could sacrifice, they could assist, but they could not win in any field that included heterosexual men. And the more solidly entrenched the dominant roster of Abstract Expressionism became (divided as it was into gesture and color field), the harder it was to add names that did not fit easily into that dual template. The better the suggested additions were, the more threatening to the movement’s hard-won definition they became, and the more necessary to ignore.

Another kind of argument has begun to surface as well. It differs from the first in that it does not assume that the established painters, their themes, or their personal stages of development are necessarily the only models by which what is called “Abstract Expressionism” can be determined, or indeed, that Abstract Expressionism was the most significant development in mid-century American Art. David Anfam took a bold step in 1990 when he argued in his survey of Abstract Expressionism that with paintings such as *Noon*, Krasner showed Pollock the way to the “atomized” quality that characterized his classic paintings like *Lavender Mist* (1950).¹⁸ This is not a small claim. Clement Greenberg, the most influential critic of the period, wrote in 1955 that the “huge ‘sprinkled’ pictures” Jackson Pollock showed in 1951 (such as *One* and *Lavender Mist*, both 1950), were “the best pictures he has ever painted: value contrasts are pulverized as it were, spread over the canvas like dusty vapor.”¹⁹ If Pollock was following Krasner’s lead, who was really the apex of Abstract Expressionism?

Along this line, in 1991 Stephen Polcari noted that “the original contribution of Krasner’s *Little Image* series . . . and of her work throughout, such as her *Untitled* (1949) is her development of metalanguage painting,” that is, painting that bridges the languages of visual art and literature, demonstrating a “concern with an archaic visual *and* verbal image.”²⁰ He was referring not only to *Little Image* works such as *Night Life* and *Painting No. 19* (see p. 29, Fig. 1), but also to later work such as *Past Conditional* (see p. 6, Fig. 2). When Krasner made this series, she drew over cut-up pieces of her own early drawings (for example p. 35, Fig. 1). She said she



Fig. 2. Elaine de Kooning, *Al Lazar #2* (1947), oil on canvas, 29 3/4" x 24 3/4". Estate of Elaine de Kooning.

did it to make a stylistic “oneness,” as she called it, with the past. While the style of both the early drawings and the later collages refers to cubism with a directness that would have been anathema to canonical Abstract Expressionists, their “flashing angular shapes. . . evoke the gothic,” too, as Polcari noted, even as their titles—such as *Present Conditional*—refer to the grammatical structures of verb tenses.²¹ This flouted Abstract Expressionist doxa, which refused any alliance with the literary (one of the reasons so many of the works are simply numbered, or called “untitled”) and which also abjured as much as possible references to styles of the past.

In producing in these works a self so clearly split between seeing and reading, between present and past, and between presentation and representation, Krasner rejects Abstract Expressionism’s earnest conviction of moment-to-moment truth to oneself and the developing meaning of the work at each and every stroke. Rather than delivering themselves as the record of a specific set of new realizations by the artist, these works ask to be read, and offer themselves most fully to viewers who are willing to think about the ways that elements of the past endure in their present and how are they changed by it. This offers an opposition to the pursuit of pure presence claimed for Abstract Expressionism, including some of Krasner’s own earlier work. As Robert Hobbs has suggested, such opposition as Krasner’s has been more often associated with the work of Jasper Johns (who also recycled his work) and



Fig. 3. Elaine de Kooning, *Carmine Street* (1947), oil on paper on canvas, 11" x 13 7/8". Cline Fine Arts, Scottsdale, Arizona.

that of the minimalists in general, to which Krasner can now be seen to respond.²² One can also observe that in her choice of titles as tenses that refuse the ideal of pure presence (titles in the series include not only *Past Conditional*, but also *Imperfect Subjunctive*, *Present Conditional* and *Imperfect Indicative*), the "delayed and extended form of viewing" she adopts is more characteristic of the critique of presence proposed by the post structural philosopher Jacques Derrida and pursued by postmodernists such as Sherrie Levine and Cindy Sherman, whose familiarity to American audiences it precedes.²³

Ellen Landau has since raised another concern. In 1953, Krasner began a series of painted and collaged works. The pieces were cannibalized, that is, introjected—cut up and appropriated into Krasner's canvases—from rejected paintings of Jackson Pollock, used with his knowledge and permission.²⁴ In the first work to incorporate Pollock's pieces, *Black and White* (1953), Krasner presents a curvaceous figure with its arm upraised, contemplating, as Landau has suggested, what she has herself produced.²⁵ Krasner made more than a dozen collages in this way between 1953 and 1955. *Bald Eagle* (1955; see p. 20, Fig. 1) is one of the later works in the series. Landau, who published an article in *Woman's Art Journal* on these collages in 1998, believes that by incorporating Pollock's work, Krasner precipitated for herself an experience of liminality, in which one can escape from one's present role, crossing boundaries into another.²⁶ Such crossing, implicit in Polcari's and Hobbs's remarks as well, may have let her see beyond the conceptual limits that had by then been set for Abstract Expressionism as it concerned both men and women.

Few scholars were aware until the 1980s that Elaine Fried de Kooning painted a series of "faceless men" such as *Al Lazar # 2* (1947; Fig. 2) during the time her husband was painting his famous *Women* series of the early fifties. I am not suggesting that Willem copied his fragmented and flattened women (whose sources are multiple) from Elaine, but rather that a possible interchange after ten years together needs to be explored, and that Elaine's slashing series of male portraits, even the earlier ones with faces (begun in the mid-forties), are more persuasive preludes to his *Women* than are his own, less painterly and more linear series of women, such as *Pink Lady* (c. 1944). It is this series of her husband's to which Elaine may have been responding—in part, at least—when she started her own.

Elaine Fried came to de Kooning as precocious student in 1938, and was surely both formed and influenced by de Kooning's ideas and procedures. In the mid 1940s, she painted a series of portraits of a friend, Joop Sanders. By 1946, in *Joop Pink*, her model, like Willem de Kooning's women, had begun to fuse with the background. Her portraits took another turn towards abstraction as well. Willem had been working

between abstraction and recognizable images for some time, abstracting various parts of the body but seldom losing anything altogether but hands and feet. In Elaine's concurrent series of men, the faces disappeared. It wasn't a question of anonymity. Her faceless men were named (unlike most of the women her husband painted), and, as far as is known, were men of whom she was fond: her brother, in *Peter Fried #2* (1952), and her friend Al Lazar. The fractured, suited bodies and featureless heads of these men became more strongly interpenetrated by the animated colored space around them. It was as if the forces acting on their bodies had wiped out the most obvious sign of their identity.

She called them her "gyroscope men" because the rigidity of a spinning gyroscope's position, always geologically perpendicular to the earth, reminded her of men's resistance to changes in local circumstance. She saw this reflected in the regimentation of business suits, where so many fewer variations were permitted than in women's clothing. Of this series, Elaine de Kooning later recalled thinking that "women painted women: Marie-Louise-Elizabeth Vigée Lebrun, Mary Cassatt, and so forth. And I thought, men always painted the opposite sex, and I wanted to paint men as sex objects."²⁷ She also, however, demonstrated that Abstract Expressionism's apparently spontaneous brushwork, the guarantee of its painter's sincerity, does not have to produce abstraction, but can also produce not only representation but *mimetic* representations of specific people.

A year after painting *Al Lazar # 2*, in 1948, Elaine de Kooning summered at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where Bill taught painting and she audited classes. During this time



Fig. 4. Joan Mitchell, *Cross Section of A Bridge* (1951), oil on canvas, 79" x 119 3/4". Osaka City Museum of Modern Art.

she painted a series of hard-edged, biomorphic forms on wrapping paper, based on a new direction evident in her drawings and paintings of the previous year—such as her 1947 *Untitled (Carmine Street)* (1947; Fig. 3). While Willem struggled with versions of *Asheville*, Elaine produced seventeen painted versions of these abstractions, like *Black Mountain #5* (1948; Pl. 6).²⁸ Remarkable for their rejection of the angst implied by the expressionist brushwork of her portraits, Elaine's cartoon-style paintings can be as read as send-ups of the painterly marks that delineated abstracted body parts in Willem's work. In painting a hard-edged representation of his gesturally stroked style she parodied it as a sign of true feeling. But she also produced a net of geometric biomorphism whose flattened literalism was unlike that of any of her colleagues, a development that linked gesture and field approaches, but whose use of an apparently flat-footed naiveté was attempted by few at this time—i.e., by Danish painter Asger Jorn—although in the U.S., it would return in Eva Hesse's early painting and bas-relief, Yayoi Kusama's *Infinity Nets*, Roy Lichtenstein's large representations of brush strokes, and later, with Elizabeth Murray and others in what Marcia Tucker would dub "Bad Painting."²⁹

Elaine rolled up her proto-Pop *Black Mountain* paintings and stowed them away. They emerged only much later, in 1984. The subsequent obscurity and fame, respectively, of Elaine's and Bill's summer exploits, quite prescient in different ways, suggest that a more involved analysis of their relation and context is overdue.

Why, in the writing on Willem de Kooning, which includes numerous discussions of possible sources and comparisons for his *Women* paintings, is there not a single mention of Elaine's early paintings, an artistic interchange, or the possibility that any of her painterly exploits may have served as models for his, or that they deserve billing as a significant development in Abstract Expressionism?

Early on, when Joan Mitchell was painting abstracted scenes of boats and the Brooklyn Bridge in New York in works such as *Cross Section of A Bridge* (1951; Fig. 4), the dealer Julius Carlebach told her he'd be better able to market her work if she were "French, male, and dead."³⁰ "The galleries had quota systems," she later recalled. "Two women to a gallery, if they were lucky. [Kootz] didn't show women. Janis didn't show women."³¹

From her student days in the 1940s through the year of her death in 1992, Joan Mitchell guarded her steadily growing recognition as a first-rate painter from what one could call the "contamination" of any of her male friends or partners, including the painter Michael Goldberg, whose work reportedly "had a big impact on her" at a formative time in her development, and Jean-Paul Riopelle, whom she called her "24-year-live-in."³² She did acknowledge the importance for her work of insights gleaned from early friendships with the de Koonings, Sam Francis, Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan, Franz Kline, and Philip Guston. She knew the latter in France and renewed the acquaintance in New York when she moved into the studio below his. Paintings she did after she moved



Fig. 5. Helen Frankenthaler, *Mountains and Sea* (1953), oil on canvas, 7'2 5/8" x 9'9 1/2". Collection of the artist, on extended loan to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

into her next studio, in 1952, such as *Rose Cottage* (1953; Pl. 7), appear to emulate or “perhaps foreshadow,” in their close values and hues and the shimmering intricacy of their allover compositions, the paintings of Guston’s early mature style, that he would show soon after.³³

Mitchell and Riopelle met in 1955. Riopelle’s canvases in the preceding years were thickly painted, some with palette knives; others, such as his *Robe of Stars* (1952) looked a bit like some of Krasner’s Little Image series. Two years before their meeting, Mitchell had begun to move into what would be her signature style, with paintings such as *Rose Cottage*. Riopelle had been acknowledged for some time as one of Canada’s most important painters, and was searching for new avenues, whereas Mitchell, still comparatively unknown, was searching, like a good Abstract Expressionist, for the utmost personal authenticity in visual form.³⁴ When she moved permanently to France in 1959 to live with Riopelle, she cited only “personal reasons” for the move.³⁵ Mitchell had by then outstripped him in the United States, at least, in terms of reputation, and in the estimation of some, in her achievements as a painter.³⁶

Such determined independence was rare. Predictably, as Linda Nochlin has noted, “much has been made of the ‘impact,’ or ‘influence’ of Mitchell’s longtime companion, the Canadian-born abstractionist, Jean-Paul Riopelle, on her style.” Nochlin convincingly describes their differences—Riopelle’s patterning is more controlled, rhythmic, preconceived.³⁷ But their relationship, though stormy, was acknowledged by their contemporaries as one of mutual exchange. One suspects, on matching such pairs as Mitchell’s *La Ligne de la Rupture* (1970-71) with Riopelle’s *Michi Kanabi*

Kong (1975), Mitchell’s *Calvi* (1964) and Riopelle’s *Masque* (1979), and Mitchell’s *Blue Tree* (1964) with Riopelle’s *Untitled* (1967), that they stayed together as long as they did as much for aesthetics as for love. That exchange has seldom, however, included comparisons in the aesthetic arena that place Mitchell’s work in the lead.

When the rising young painter Helen Frankenthaler married Robert Motherwell in 1958, he was working on a series inspired by an earlier collage, *Histoire d’un Peintre* (1956). Excited by the contrast of writing and collage, history (the scrap torn from an art catalogue) and everyday life (the blue wrapper from a pack of cheap Gauloises cigarettes), Motherwell had incorporated the combination into his language of form in collage-paintings such as *Histoire* and *Jour la Maison, Nuit la Rue* (1957).³⁸

Motherwell’s iconography as well as his titles in the years following, in paintings like *Two Figures No. 1* (1958) and *Two Figures with a Cerulean Blue Stripe* (1960), coincided with his recent divorce and his marriage to Frankenthaler.³⁹ In this context the two figures, linked as they are, have suggested to scholars the establishment of his new relationship with Frankenthaler rather than the splitting of self, implied by the *Jour la Maison, Nuit la Rue* series. What has not been investigated is the degree to which Motherwell may also have been influenced by the technique of stain painting for which his younger but already accomplished partner had become known—if only as a connector from Jackson Pollock to the color field work of Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis—by the time they married.⁴⁰ This kind of debt is one usually readily admitted only to an eminent, earlier, and male painter. To entertain such a suggestion is to raise the possibility of an Abstract Expressionist sensibility that was equally shared by men and women. To consider this possibility, one must recall how limiting the typical identities for males as well as females were: “the feminine” (characterized as “sensitive,” “decorative,” “flexible”) was a domain that properly male (i.e., heterosexual) men were not supposed to quite comprehend for instance, let alone display; and for women to be capable, assertive, and reasonable was to be unnaturally “masculine.” Both situations were considered to be medically pathological.⁴¹ To see that some painters—those in this article, for instance, each in her own way—refused to accept this, is to open the door to a more complicated Abstract Expressionism than the one we are used to.

Frankenthaler’s monumental *Mountains and Sea* (1953; Fig. 5), could serve as an emblem of this fact since it received substantial, if unpublished, critical praise from Clement Greenberg. It has since found its way into survey books on American art, but only

as “a catalytic work for all of post-Pollock abstraction.”⁴² Which is to say, it is understood in relation to someone else, and is not counted as either gestural or color field Abstract Expressionism although her work done that year exhibits a degree of large scale abstraction similar to other senior Abstract Expressionists. Unlike Pollock, whose example she followed but whose linear stains seldom expanded into colored forms, Frankenthaler’s stained passages gradually expanded into fields. She was soon sponging her pools of paint into their final forms—in addition to brushing, pouring and dripping them to create paintings whose chroma was inseparable from the canvas itself. This produced a heightened tension between the indisputable flatness of color-soaked canvas and the atmospheric tendency of the more thinly stained shapes and lines to sink into, or to float outward from the picture plane.

In 1958, the year of their marriage, Motherwell’s small works on paper, like his *Sepia and Black Ink*, show him reaching for a more transparent, spontaneous facture, similar to Frankenthaler’s. During the next few years, much of his work would display more liquid, Frankenthaleresque forms, even when the paint was opaque, as in his *Black on White* (1962). Motherwell’s painting does demonstrate a powerful economy of means, in which a single large form so masters the canvas that it almost becomes ground. Frankenthaler would adapt a similar visual organization in her own work with paintings such as *The Bay* (1963; Fig. 6), and *Tangerine* (1964). If Motherwell oscillated in the late fifties between Frankenthaler-like transparency in his wash drawings and opacity in his *Elegies* and other large paintings, Frankenthaler would often apply opaque as well as stained color in her painting. She has seldom, if ever, though, abandoned some degree of translucency.

It was Frankenthaler, however, who would unite and exploit the atmospheric and associative potential of staining’s articulation of color and light as theme as well as process. In *The Bay* and *Tangerine* she combined the chromatic play of soaked paint with shapes and color so strong but also piercingly evocative of human experience that they pull the body back to smells, light, and emotions it has known in the past. These the mind then recalls.

We are so unfamiliar with the development and motivations of most women painters who matured in the era of Abstract Expressionism that only as their work emerges will the ways they may have contributed become more apparent. If one explores these women’s art more closely, one finds not only expansions of familiar topics, themes, and relations of forms, but new ones.

If Elaine de Kooning’s treatment of “man,” one of the grand themes of Abstract Expressionism, pushes the envelope, formulating “man” quite differently from, say, Barnett Newman in his *Vir Heroicus Sublimis* (*Man, Heroic and Sublime*) (1950-51), or for that matter, the *Women* series in which her husband, Willem, was engaged in those years, Lee Krasner’s work by the mid-fifties, with another jump in the mid-seventies, had moved beyond Abstract Expressionism to a more post structural way of thinking and presentation in which the structures of language and memory played prominent parts, literally suspended in nets of first the shards of her own earlier work, and then those of her husband’s.



Fig. 6. Helen Frankenthaler, *The Bay*, (1963). acrylic on canvas, 6' 8 1/4" x 6' 9 1/4". The Detroit Institute of Arts. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Hilbert H. DeLawter.

As suggested by Elaine de Kooning’s men and Krasner’s collages made with bits of both her own and Pollock’s paintings, then, Abstract Expressionist treatments of sexuality might include not only other views of mythologizing and portraiture, but also incorporation, parody, and an interdisciplinary stretch that was to characterize art called post modern.

Frankenthaler established that the luminous glow of a support through thinned paint could carry powerful messages and that it could be spread far beyond watercolor’s intimate scale. Mitchell demonstrated that a woman’s work could be a major influence on the work of an already significant painter outside the United States.

Such observations have begun to augment an earlier set of claims for women’s inclusion in Abstract Expressionism that were based on similar styles and subject matter, as well a later set that argues that no matter how well a woman painted she could not produce authentic Abstract Expressionism because the style is structured as a representation of the masculine psyche. Women artists’ achievements in this admittedly limited area of abstraction in the United States suggest the need to supplement and thereby change what we know about recent art history by

asking new questions about the work of dominant and less well-known figures, revising both formal and conceptual ideas of “movements” or “modes” of art whose definitions have stopped at boundaries such as gender. When those boundaries are troubled, one begins to see what has been defined as “Abstract Expressionism,” for instance, as a contested space, rather than a movement. This produces a more conflicted but useful past, and one that is somewhat more accurate than the one we have, or at least have had until recently. •

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Notes

1. Some of those not otherwise mentioned in this article include Louise Bourgeois (Robert Goldwater); Dorothy Dehner (David Smith); Gertrude Greene (Balcomb Greene); Buffie Johnson (critic Gerald Sykes); Mercedes Matter (Herbert Matter); Pat Pasloff (Milton Resnick); Helen Phillips (Stanley William Hayter); and Michael West (Francis Lee).
2. For the Jewish identity of Lee Krasner (born Lena Krassner), see Ellen G. Landau, *Lee Krasner: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 300. For Frankenthaler, see John Elderfield, “Preface,” *Frankenthaler* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), 12. Sociologist Ruth Frankenberg has shown that as late as the seventies, if not beyond, “Jewish women mostly viewed their cultural identity as linked inextricably to being a target, or potentially a target, for oppression based on ethnicity.” Frankenberg bases her conclusion on a group of Ashkenazi women, but notes that for all Jews, there was discrimination in the U.S. before the fifties in housing, jobs, university admission. She argues that often, the memory of such marginalization outlasted the experiences themselves, as did the awareness that some differences matter more in society than others. The result has been that Jewish women who had been marginalized continued to negotiate their whiteness, even if the oppression is not demonstrably ongoing. *White Women, Race Matters, The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1993), 215-229.
3. As Barbara Rose noted in 1983 of the reception of Krasner’s work, her immediate colleagues “were blind to its qualities.” See her “Introduction,” *Lee Krasner* (Houston and New York: The Museum of Fine Arts and the Museum of Modern Art, 1983), 10.
4. Other important writers include William Seitz and Dore Ashton and Irving Sandler, who, when they mentioned women artists as participants, cited them principally for their observations, not their art. Robert Rosenblum, as late as 1975 (when Krasner had already had eight solo shows in New York alone), used Georgia O’Keeffe’s late abstractions in his chapter on Abstract Expressionism in *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), demonstrating that even if one was willing to discuss a woman’s work in relation to Abstract Expressionism, the work of Krasner and others simply did not register.
5. Frankenthaler and Greenberg had become “an item” by 1955, wrote Florence Rubenfeld, in *Clement Greenberg, A Life* (New York: Scribner’s, 1997), 150-51.
6. Joan Marter, “Identity Crisis: Abstract Expressionism and Women Artists of the 1950s,” *Women and Abstract Expressionism, Painting and Sculpture, 1945-59* (New York: Baruch College/CUNY, 1997), 5-6.
7. Irving Sandler, “Joan Mitchell Paints a Picture,” *ArtNews* 56 (October 1957): 44-45, quoted in Joan Marter, “Identity Crisis,” 4.
8. Membership in the Club was not a clear-cut matter. Lists and notes were inconsistently kept. See Irving Sandler, *A Sweeper-up After Artists, A Memoir* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 30, 215. The founding meeting was held not in 1949 but in 1948, according to sculptor Philip Pavia, its first major organizer [but because no mailings were done until 1949, some sources give this as the date of the Club’s founding]. Ad Reinhardt listed 1948 in his chronology. The club had charter (founding) members, voting members, and “regular” members who did not vote, occasional attendees, and a mailing list that included those who were not members but who were invited anyway. See Philip Pavia, *A Club Without Walls*, Natalie Edgar, ed., (New York: MidMarch Arts Press, 2007), 53, 146 (for Reinhardt’s chronology), 55 (for membership levels), 141. Elaine de Kooning attended the meeting of the charter members of the Club at sculptor Ibram Lassaw’s studio in 1949, according to Sandler (or 1948, says Edgar), but was not granted membership then because she was a woman — “Such was the ethos of the time,” Sandler noted. In 1952, she was added to the voting committee, with two other women, Mercedes Matter and Perle Fine. Regular (non-voting) women members were added, too: they included the painters Ruth Abrams, Nell Blaine, Joan Mitchell, Jean Miles, Yvonne Thomas and Linda Lindeburg (Sandler, 28-30; Pavia 149, 150, 152). On the list of “voting members not registered yet,” Frankenthaler’s name appears, as did Clyfford Still’s (Pavia, 156). Joan Mitchell was on a panel in 1952 at the Club, typically an event that was limited to members. Krasner is not on membership lists in Pavia’s chronicle. In other sources, however, it is apparent that she was sometimes there—she is called a “regular” in Marjorie Luyckx’s chronology of Elaine de Kooning, in Jane Bledsoe, *Elaine de Kooning* (Athens: Georgia Museum of Art, Univ. of Georgia, 1992), 106.
9. The retrospective was at The Jewish Museum in New York. Elderfield, *Helen Frankenthaler*, 137.
10. It should be noted that Krasner did have an earlier retrospective, in 1965—in London! It was curated by Bryan Robertson: *Lee Krasner: Paintings, Drawings, and Collages*, at the Whitechapel Gallery. Barbara Rose, *Lee Krasner*, 10.
11. Thomas W. Leavitt, “Foreword,” in Judith Bernstock, *Joan Mitchell* (New York and Ithaca: Hudson Hills Press in association with the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, 1988), 8.
12. As far as I know, Elaine de Kooning’s first retrospective in an American museum was at the University of Georgia. See Jane Bledsoe, *Elaine de Kooning*.
13. Barbara Rose, “Introduction,” *Lee Krasner*, 9.
14. Cindy Nemser, “Lee Krasner’s Paintings 1946-49,” *Artforum* 12 (Dec. 1973): 61.
15. Robert Hobbs, *Lee Krasner* (New York: Abbeville, 1993), 37. Hobbs has also called attention to Krasner’s thematization of destruction and dissonance, and her stress, typical of Abstract Expressionism in general, on the human potential for change. Hobbs, *Lee Krasner*, 56, 83.
16. Ellen G. Landau, “Lee Krasner’s Early Career, Part Two: the 1940s,” *Arts* 56 (Nov. 1981): 87.
17. Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1993), 262.
18. David Anfam, *Abstract Expressionism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990), 125.
19. Clement Greenberg, “American-Type Painting,” (1955), in John O’Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg, The Collected Essays and Criticism: Affirmations and Refusals, 1950-1956*, vol. 3, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), 233.
20. Stephen Polcari, *Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 334.
21. *Ibid.*, 336.
22. For these observations on Krasner’s courting of interaction with viewers and more on this series as a response to Robert Morris and Donald Judd, see Robert Hobbs, *Lee Krasner* (New York: Independent Curators International in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 91, 182.
23. Although the Abstract Expressionists famously tried to escape

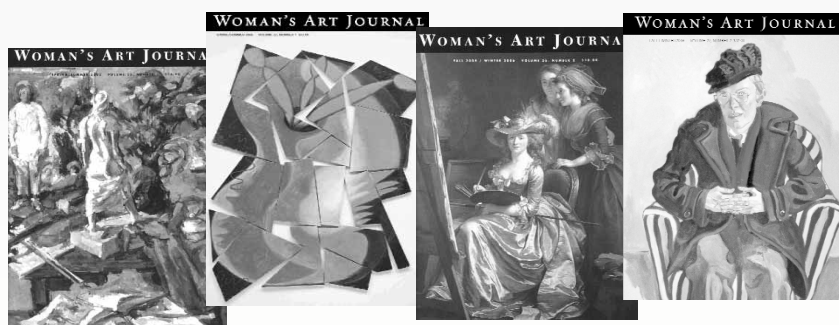
representing, it does now seem that although this was their intention, their achievement was quite the opposite. Such observations followed to some extent arguments offered by Jacques Derrida in *Of Grammatology*, translated into English in 1976. Recent writers looking at Krasner's late work have tended to see it as representing the split subjectivity with which she attended to her life and career, bridging her early and late approaches, demonstrating as well as consciously representing that these splits are integral to her art.

24. Ellen G. Landau, "Channeling Desire, Lee Krasner's Collages of the Early 1950s," *Woman's Art Journal* vol. 8, no. 2 (Fall 1997/Winter 1998): 27.
25. *Ibid.*, 29.
26. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1974), 13-15, 231-32, cited in Ellen Landau, "Channeling Desire," 30.
27. Elaine de Kooning, interview with the author, East Hampton, Summer 1987.
28. Lee Hall, *Elaine and Bill, Portrait of a Marriage*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 85.
29. Marcia Tucker, *Bad Painting*, (New York: The New Museum, 1978), n.p., but "bad" painting is defined in the first three pages of Tucker's eponymous essay.
30. Deborah Solomon, "In Monet's Light," *The New York Times* (Sunday, Nov. 24, 1991), section 6, p. 45.
31. Mitchell to Linda Nochlin, "Tape-Recorded Interview with Joan Mitchell at the Westbury Hotel, April 16, 1986." Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution (Hereafter, AAA), Transcript, 25.
32. For Goldberg, see Grace Hartigan's observation in Jane Livingston, *The Paintings of Joan Mitchell* (New York and Berkeley: Whitney Museum of American art and Univ. of California Press, 2003), 20-21. For Riopelle, as "24-year-live-in," see Linda Nochlin, "Joan Mitchell Interview," AAA, Transcript, 26.
33. Livingston, *The Paintings of Joan Mitchell*, 40, 20-22. Livingston's "emulate or foreshadow" is because Mitchell's work seems to have done both. See her *Metro*, 1958, on page 53 in Bernstock's *Joan Mitchell*. Bernstock describes it as "strikingly close to Guston's

centralized compositions of 1956-57," noting that Mitchell did not pursue the closed, [loosely] rectilinear forms of this direction.

34. In 1955, in fact, Greenberg called Riopelle "the pallid French equivalent" of "American-Type" painting. "American-Type Painting," [1955] in O'Brien, ed., *Clement Greenberg, The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 3, 235.
35. Solomon, "In Monet's Light," 45.
36. Livingston, in *The Paintings of Joan Mitchell*, 25.
37. Linda Nochlin, "A Rage to Paint," in Livingston, *The Paintings of Joan Mitchell*, 55.
38. The poet Paul Eluard's words, "day the house, night the street," appear in French in both paintings. Motherwell adopted this particular phrase suggesting the dissociation of home and emotional life as his marriage to Betty Little, his second wife, was coming to an end. But it also echoes the schizophrenic split between male domesticity and a more transgressive masculinity dramatized in *film noir*. See H. H. Arnason, *Robert Motherwell*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1982), 41-43.
39. *Ibid.*
40. See Caroline Jones's observations on the reasons and mechanisms deployed by her lover and then former lover, Clement Greenberg, to withhold or dole small tokens of support that effectively withheld from public view Frankenthaler's role as a major innovator of Color-Field painting, in her *Eyesight Alone, Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005), ch. 7, "The Tyranny of the Eye."
41. For an excellent analysis of such negotiation by Elaine de Kooning see Celia S. Stahr, "Elaine de Kooning, Portraiture, and the Politics of Sexuality," in *Genders Online Journal* (http://genders.org/g38/g38_stahr.html):14-18; for negotiations by Krasner, de Kooning, and other women in this article and others, see Ann Eden Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1997), 49-57, 139-40, 147-57.
42. Morris Louis, quoted in Daniel Wheeler, *Art Since Mid-Century, 1945 to the Present* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991), 191. This excellent survey is one of the few to have given Frankenthaler's work thoughtful consideration.

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COLLAGE AND THE NATURE OF ORDER

Lee Krasner's Pastoral Vision

By Daniel Haxall

In a 1946 review for *The Nation*, Clement Greenberg declared: "what characterizes painting in the line Manet to Mondrian . . . is its pastoral mood."¹ Defining this sentiment in a rather traditional manner, Greenberg described the pastoral as "the preoccupation with nature at rest, human beings at leisure, and art in movement." Greenberg further contended that two essential characteristics comprised the pastoral in modernist art: "the first a dissatisfaction with the moods prevailing in society's centers of activity; the second, a conviction of the stability of society in one's own time." For Greenberg, the pastoral involved a retreat from civilization as well as the marketplace of capitalism, a flight ironically achieved under the protection of society. This refuge, or shelter, generates a "feeling of pastoral security" for the artist, an affectation the critic considered crucial for the existence of the avant-garde.² Greenberg deemed Surrealism and neo-romanticism "falsely pastoral" in recycling previous artistic styles, whereas "genuinely pastoral art never turns to the past; it simply rejects one present in favor of another—and without escapism." Greenberg continued: "Even today one must look still to avant-garde pastoral art to see revealed the most permanent features of our society's crisis."³

Greenberg lamented how the pastoral spirit "is mistaken for the 'classical,'" denouncing artists like David Smith and Robert Motherwell for moving towards the baroque. He believed that Smith and Motherwell abandoned "pastoral tranquility" for "extravagance, disorder, and agitation."⁴ He criticized Smith for surrendering the "control" and "simple trajectory of line" that had characterized his early work, while Motherwell's visual "effects" lacked "organic relation" to the artist. Rather than "force and sensuousness," Motherwell merely provided a "hygienic" sampling of Picasso and Mondrian.⁵ Perhaps it was these elements comprising Greenberg's notion of the pastoral—control, simplicity, sensuousness, and organicism—that led the critic to praise Lee Krasner's 1955 exhibit of collages at the Stable Gallery. He called it "one of the great events of the decade" and a "major addition to the American art scene of that era."⁶ While other art historians have located naturalistic traits within Krasner's oeuvre, only Bryan Robertson has described her art as "pastoral and bucolic."⁷ Robertson employed the word "pastoral" to refer to Krasner's "preoccupation with nature," yet his review intimates the manner in which Krasner's art,



Fig. 1. Lee Krasner, *Bald Eagle* (1955), oil on paper and canvas collage on linen, 77" x 51 1/2". Collection Audrey and Sidney Irmas.

particularly her collages, can be considered pastoral in their iconography, methods, and sensibility.

The pastoral has traditionally defined a type of poetry, dating to Theocritus and Virgil in the third to first century B.C.E., concerned with the activity of shepherds, including leisure,

animal husbandry, and lyric competition. However, since the modern era, literary and art critics have employed certain aspects of the pastoral, such as its oppositional strategy or emphasis on repose, to bestow new meanings upon this formerly archaic term. As such, it has been reinterpreted by some who attribute the importance of the genre to its modesty and simple means, while others find significance within related oppositions, such as the contrast between simple and complex, or urban and rural.⁸ At the heart of these revisions lay a distinction between the pastoral as a genre, based upon formal qualities, and as a mood or perspective of the world, elements that come together in Krasner's collages.⁹

Although the bucolic tradition may seem historically distant from Lee Krasner's (1908-84) milieu, the idea of the pastoral surfaced quite frequently within the New York School. Beyond Greenberg's essay, pastoral imagery and references recurred in the work of numerous writers and painters, including Arshile Gorky and Willem de Kooning, who each titled works for the genre.¹⁰ De Kooning's stylized women evoked the reclining nudes of Venetian Renaissance idylls, while Gorky's abstract landscapes offered repose from the Armenian genocide of the early-twentieth century. The bucolic tradition also persisted in literature.¹¹ For example, in the 1954 issue of *Folder*, John Ashbery published "A Pastoral," an erotic poem filled with allusions to corrals and glades, herds and melodies. Frank O'Hara's poetry also has been considered pastoral for its escapist mindset and ambiguous subjectivity.¹² Timothy Gray has argued that, despite living and working far from the countryside, these New York School poets "promoted the idea of an urban pastoral, a cosmopolitan bohemian retreat from which they sought to resist the dictates of cold war conformity while developing a literature in tune with the more progressive elements of European modernism."¹³ Gray further notes how they drew from rustic encounters in formulating modern variants of the pastoral. Ashbery, O'Hara, and James Schuyler were either raised or lived on farms, and their "nostalgia for a rural past" informed much of their poetry.¹⁴

Many of the artists and writers associated with Abstract Expressionism were attracted to New York City for the opportunities and diversions it offered, while some native New Yorkers, like Krasner, found comfort and repose in the rural experience. The countryside provided a pastoral retreat for many of the Irascibles, and in 1945, Krasner and Pollock moved to The Springs, a small community of fishermen and farmers on Long Island's eastern tip. Through an arrangement with Peggy Guggenheim, they purchased an old farm, including a small house and barn that was later converted into a studio.¹⁵ Isolated and a mile from the nearest country store, the artists' home initially lacked amenities such as central heat and indoor plumbing. This rural setting liberated the couple from crowded bars and

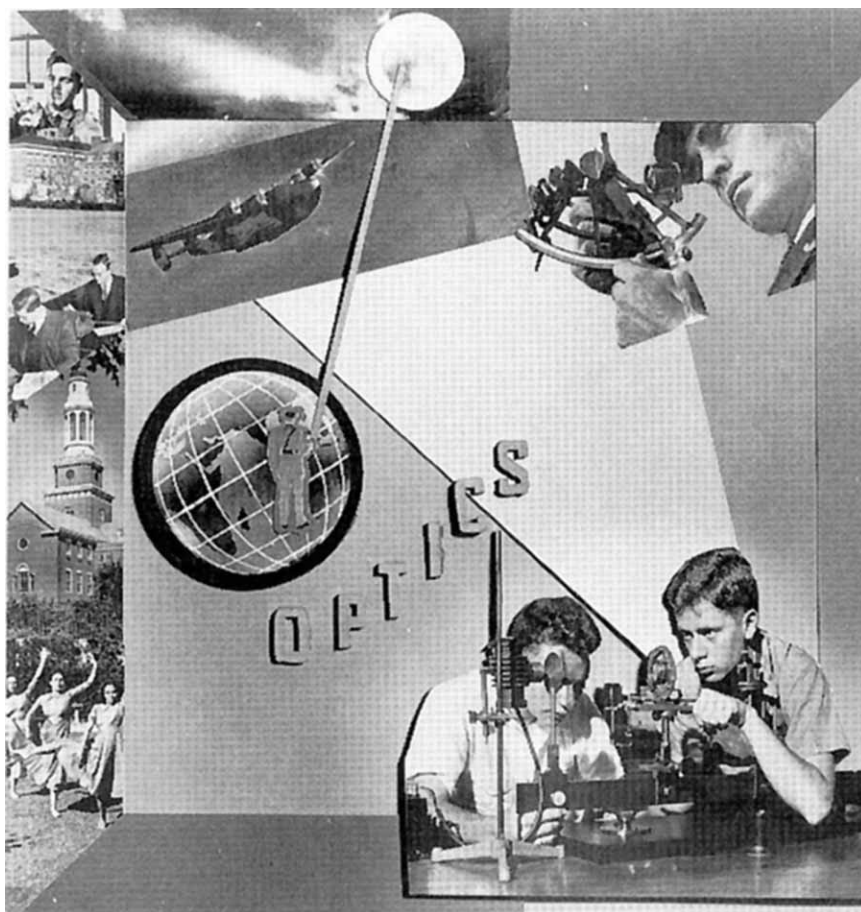


Fig. 2. Lee Krasner, *Optics* (1942) (lost).

pushy gallerists, precisely the outcome Krasner desired, later recalling it "allowed Jackson to work. He needed the peace and quiet of country life. It enabled him to work."¹⁶ The move to Long Island not only impacted Pollock. Krasner admitted that "moving there meant far more to me than I thought at the time. . . Together we cooked, canned, gardened; it was all a beautiful new experience."¹⁷ Barbara Rose has suggested that "life in The Springs had been a refuge from the storm that was Pollock's essential subject matter," a pastoral retreat in the most literal sense.¹⁸

Literary scholars have defined the pastoral as a simple, rural existence, considering it a metaphor for "an ordered and happier past set against the disturbance and disorder of the present."¹⁹ David Halperin has argued that the "pastoral achieves significance by oppositions," distinctions not limited to country and city, and functions instead as an allegorical trope wherein variances of scale, form, and identity can be contrasted.²⁰ Krasner similarly engaged in dialectics with her collages, fusing formal dichotomies into complex compositions. In works like *Blue Level* (1955), the artist arranged organic shapes against measured rectangles, challenging geometric linearity with ovular cutouts. She also juxtaposed the texture of frayed burlap with large zones of flat, opaque coloring, signaling differences in surface and material. In *Shooting Gold* (1955), for example, Krasner explored tonal contrasts, positioning pinks and whites against black brushmarks and cutouts. In her canonical *Bald Eagle* (1955; Fig. 1),

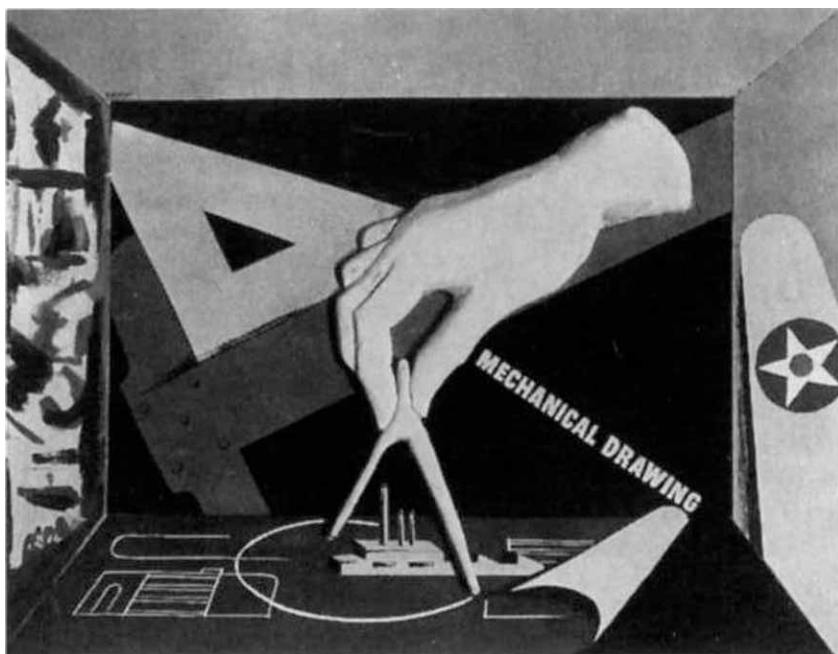


Fig. 3. Lee Krasner, *Mechanical Drawing* (1942) (lost).

she balanced bright with dark and line with color, fusing Pollock's linear drawings with colorful forms inspired by the decoupage of Matisse. Finally, *Untitled* (1954) features the interplay of latticework with automatist dripping, as Krasner again contrasted variations of light and dark, line and color, structure and improvisation.²¹ She considered these contrasts "healthy," stating: "you need the dichotomy—artist/museum, individual/society—for the individual to be able to breathe."²²

Contrasts and oppositions characterized the pastoral from the very beginning, as Virgil wrote in his *Bucolics*, "So I used to compare great things with small."²³ In fact, John Van Sickle has chronicled the "dialectical methodology in the Virgilian tradition," noting how works such as the *Eclogues* employed contradiction as a rhetorical device.²⁴ The relationship of irony to the dialectics of the pastoral remains a contested subject among classicists. To some, the "pastoral might be described as a cover in an age of irony," since irony would destroy the romantic idylls of this literary trope.²⁵ Acknowledging inherent contradictions would thereby alter the genre's escapist and bucolic mood; however, numerous critics have demonstrated that the pastoral tradition is rife with such qualities.²⁶ Judith Haber, for example, has located "a fundamental self-contradictoriness within the genre," having found its "presence, continuity, and consolation . . . related to [and] dependent on absence, discontinuity, and loss."²⁷ In fact, Haber and others assert that heroism recurs throughout Theocritus's *Idylls*, creating a dialectic between "heroic" and "bucolic" best considered "ironic."²⁸

Krasner's earliest collages, collaborations completed in 1942 under the aegis of the War Services Project, a late division of the Works Progress Administration, featured many of the ironic juxtapositions that typify the pastoral tradition as well as the medium of collage.²⁹ For example, in *Optics* (1942; Fig. 2), three

young women dance beneath a neoclassical cupola on the left side of the composition. Wearing long skirts and surrounded by greenery, these maidens herald either peacetime or victory. Yet their leisurely gestures clash with the airplane bomber that looms overhead, a startling reminder that this pastoral scene is threatened by war. Likewise, in *Chemistry of Explosives*, cannons and explosions appear next to classroom genre scenes and traditional college architecture. Abstract scribbles often frame the perimeter of these compositions, and in two representations of *Mechanical Drawing* (for example Fig. 3) t-squares, compasses, and drafting triangles are flanked by vertical panels of gestural markings. This ironic juxtaposition of automatic doodling with mechanical drawing parallels the nonsensical and contradictory effects of many Surrealist and Dada collages, indicating the playful potential of the medium.

Krasner's collages also matched the mood and origins of the genre, and while simplicity and repose are necessary components of the pastoral tradition, critics have demonstrated

how the idyllic mode was paradoxically born of frustration. Jeremy Strick has explained that despite "celebrating harmony and simple fulfillment, pastoral is generated by alienation and dissatisfaction. The ideal world of pastoral finds the real world wanting."³⁰ Indeed, historians and classicists have noted how Virgil's *Eclogues* responded to the strife facing Rome after Julius Caesar's murder, providing an imagined escape from civil war while subtly protesting the confiscation and redistribution of land that occurred under Octavian.³¹ Krasner, on the other hand, responded to her own personal crises, working through professional and personal anxiety in collage. For many years following the War Services Project she focused on painting, returning to collage only after destroying some of the works she disliked. Disappointed by her show at Betty Parsons Gallery in 1951, and unhappy with Pollock's increased drinking and emotional decline, Krasner found solace by annihilating and reconstructing what she considered failed compositions. In the process, she not only dealt with her discontent as an artist, but, as Ellen Landau has suggested, collage enabled Krasner to negotiate her relationship with Pollock, as she tore apart and incorporated remnants of his work into these montaged abstractions as well.³² By fusing her art with that of her husband, she attained an intimacy previously lacking in their relationship. Thus, Krasner's collages served as a substitute for emotional detachment, and like the pastoral, emerged from discontent. The medium provided a means to channel "disappointment and desire into 'imaginative possession,'" as Krasner achieved self-validation through the act of collage.³³

The therapeutic value of these compositions certainly aligns Krasner's work with the harmony and repose of the pastoral. The idea of refuge or rescue looms large in this tradition, with artistic expression providing an idyllic release from trouble.

Krasner's pastoral vision included numerous metaphors for escape, as the image of flight recurred in her collages, from the bird references and winged shapes of *Bald Eagle* and *Bird Talk*, to the preponderance of airplanes, zeppelins, and pigeons in her War Services Windows. Many of Krasner's collages further evoked the respite tendered by the natural world, and like Virgilian shepherds singing the praises of their bucolic surroundings, Krasner found repose within the sensations of nature. In collages like *Image on Green (Jungle)* (Pl. 8) and *Milkweed* (Pl. 9), both 1955, botanic forms appear among Krasner's cutouts and painterly gestures, while various shades of green, white, and red suggest foliage. The combination of vivid palette and organic line imbues the works with a natural rhythm. Krasner acknowledged that in these collages she drew inspiration from nature's forms and sensations, commenting: "I don't feel like I do anything that isn't related in some way, like to what's known as the word nature . . . I can't conceive of anything that doesn't have this kind of organic, rudimentary form . . . My work is founded in this prescribed thing called nature."³⁴

In addition to inspiring Krasner's imagery, nature also provided a structural tool during the heyday of abstraction. As Clement Greenberg suggested in "The Role of Nature in Modern Painting," the logic of nature organized modernist art beginning with Cézanne and Cubism. By "describing and analyzing" the natural world in a "simplified way," he wrote, artists discovered the internal structure of the picture plane.³⁵ Greenberg was not alone in connecting nature and abstract art during the 1950s. Frank O'Hara suggested that Abstract Expressionism employed nature to achieve order, and while curating the Whitney Museum of American Art's "Nature in Abstraction" show, John Baur claimed that the New York School's emphasis on materiality and medium drew upon the sensations of the natural world.³⁶

Being well-schooled in the methods of Hans Hofmann, who famously instructed artists to "work from nature," Krasner would have been well aware of these discourses surrounding nature as a compositional device. While her contemporaries suggested how the natural world informed the order and sensuousness of modernist painting, her work also drew upon its cycles and rhythms. Krasner worked in cycles throughout her career, recalling the evolution of the seasons in her serial approach to art, and by recycling previous works for her collages, she further evoked phases of regeneration. "If I'm going back on myself," she noted, "I'd like to think it's a form of growth."³⁷ In commenting upon her Solstice series of collages (ca. 1979-81), Krasner told John Bernard Myers:

I was thinking about the seasons and the ways they change. In particular, I was musing about the equinox, equinoctial transformations, the first day of spring, the beginning of autumn . . . the year is divided into cycles,

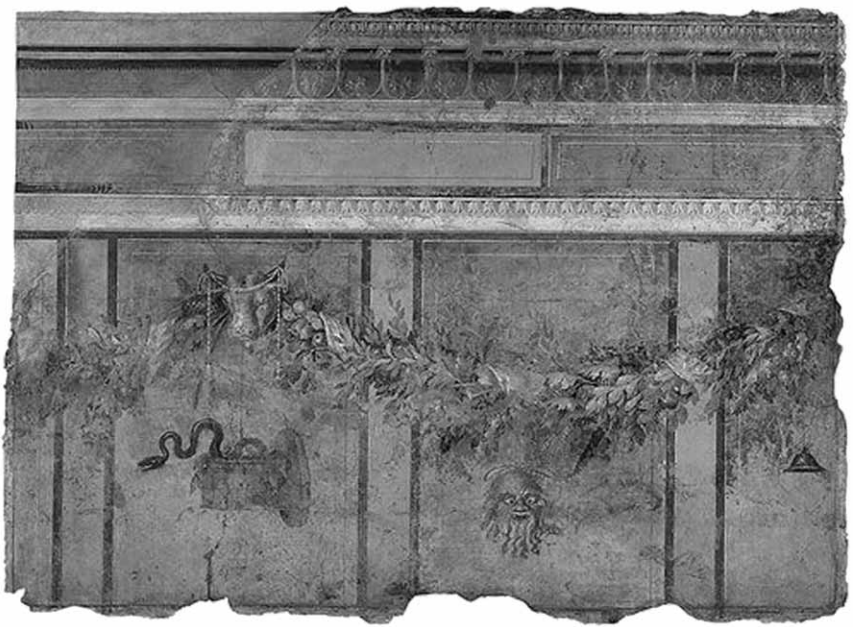


Fig. 4. Garland with mask, basket, and bucrania (ceremonial bulls' heads): From Room L of the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale, ca. 40–30 B.C.; Late Republican Roman Wall painting; Fresco: 77" x 107". Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1903 (03.14.4).

four seasons, and the cycles recur over and over—endlessly. . . I change, my work changes—but both remain within cycles that are peculiar to me.³⁸

Krasner's collages not only recall botanic forms and seasonal renewal, but her compositions engage landscape and architectural traditions rooted in the pastoral. By laying large strips of paper and burlap on canvas, and setting them against the abstract verticals of the background, Krasner's cutouts dominate the visual field. Pictorial depth becomes flattened through the allover patterning and absence of a horizon line. Her collages, with their organic forms, evoke plant growth or repoussoir devices set against oblique architectural backdrops. Landscape vistas are blocked from view, both by the foreground shapes and compressed background, suggesting the compact and intimate space of a grotto or grove. Akin to the collages, the grotto or grove traditionally juxtaposes the organic with structure, and the interplay of monument and vegetation has been considered pastoral for its contrasting elements and escapist reverie.³⁹ The geometric backgrounds of *Milkweed* and *Shooting Gold* call to mind the fresco cycles of Roman villas, as they similarly feature shallow space, colored panels, frame-like verticals, and superimposed plant forms (Fig. 4).⁴⁰ The landscapes she evokes are not vast, expansive panoramas, or Barnett Newman-like evocations of the sublime, but suggest the intimacy of the cultivated landscape.

The importance of nature for Krasner is further indicated by her involvement with organizations dedicated to its preservation. She cherished the natural landscape for the peace and order it provided, working with the East Hampton Conservation Advisory Council and receiving an Honorary Membership by the Board of Governors of the Nature



Fig. 5. Lee Krasner, *The City* (1953), oil and paper collage on board, 48" x 36". Private collection.

Conservancy.⁴¹ Along with establishing the Pollock-Krasner house as a historic building, the East Hampton Council fought to retain the pastoral character of The Springs, an area the board described as "woodlands, open agricultural fields, grazing lands, wetlands, and harbors."⁴²

Whereas Krasner's evocations of nature suggested a harmonious, pastoral state, those depicting urban life reveal a different experience. In *The City* (1953; Fig. 5), Krasner layered angular strips of black paper over discordant red dribbles and squares. Exposed paper edges suggest the tearing of parchment, while the scattering of collage elements undermines Krasner's cubist grid. Elongated scraps of black and white verticals further mimic decollage, simulating voids ripped from the composition's surface. Robert Hobbs has considered *The City* "an apocalyptic work with exploding forms," wherein "the overlapping rectangles . . . seem illogical, suggesting a toppled system of order. Black forms look like giant malignant stalks, reiterating the image of the city as an asphalt jungle."⁴³ Ellen

Landau also has written how the "hectic quality of Manhattan life is projected" in this collage.⁴⁴ Likewise, in *City Verticals* (1953), the urban experience lacks a center. Forms reminiscent of skyscrapers encompass the pictorial surface, and the underlying latticework becomes obscured by an assortment of colored paper. Krasner struggled to negotiate the city, a difficulty she shared with her husband. In letters to Alfonso Ossorio, Pollock wrote that "NYC is brutal" and "terribly depressing—and nearly impossible."⁴⁵ Krasner and Pollock preferred the peace and simplicity of their rural retreat. She reminisced how, "With Jackson there was quiet—solitude. Just to sit and look at the landscape. An inner quietness. After dinner, to sit on the back porch and look at the light. No need for talking. For any kind of communication."⁴⁶

In his book, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935), William Empson, a literary critic widely read among the New York School, described the "pastoral process" as "putting the complex into the simple."⁴⁷ The tranquil lifestyle of The Springs embodied Empson's notion, a concept many critics have applied to further connect the pastoral to modernist art. Thomas Crow questioned whether artistic genres, such as the pastoral, remained intact following modernism's assault upon the hierarchy of subject matter.⁴⁸ Like Greenberg, Crow defined modern pastoralism through simplicity, claiming that the common and vernacular elements of the pastoral challenged the heroism of epic poetry. Thus, Crow located the pastoral within the Cubism of Picasso and Braque because these artists integrated everyday objects with "high art." Krasner and the Abstract Expressionists, on the other hand, failed to meet Crow's criteria because of their heroic ambition and grand aspirations. Instead, he linked artists like Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Marcel Duchamp to the

pastoral because of their efforts to incorporate childishness and popular culture into the parameters of the elite.⁴⁹ However, the modesty of authorial presence that Crow attached to the pastoral was hardly a trope employed by Virgil's shepherds as they contested the merits of their songs in idyllic pastures. For example, in Theocritus's *Idylls*, Simichidas longs to attain the skill of the great poets, Asclepiades and Philetas, and in Virgil's seventh *Eclogue*, Corydon vanquishes Thyrsis in an epic singing match.⁵⁰ Ambition marked the pastoral from the very beginning, and Crow's focus on genre overlooked the manner in which New York School artists like Lee Krasner engaged in literal, and metaphoric, pastoral processes.

Furthermore, the artists known as Abstract Expressionists did not entirely eschew modesty and humble means while working in collage. In fact, Harold Rosenberg's primary criticism of the medium stemmed from its inherent simplicity. Considering collage "a decisive upheaval in [art] history" and an "adversary" within modern art, Rosenberg wrote:

There is an element of mockery in collage: the put-together is like a painting, but without the effort of painting or the need to know how to paint. Its materials, besides being inexpensive, have the air of having been picked up by chance, so the collage seems to say to the spectator, "See how easy it is to make a work of art."⁵¹

Although Krasner employed rather unique objects for her collages, favoring canvas and preexisting artworks over newspaper or other quotidian materials, her manner of execution conveyed the ease and simplicity that characterize many definitions of the pastoral. Rosenberg would have found Krasner's use of scissors an example of the minimal effort required for collage, while Hobbs has associated Krasner the collagist with domestic craft, likening her frugality and thriftiness to quilting traditions.⁵² In an interview with Dorothy Seckler, Krasner acknowledged how collage offered a lighter approach to artistic practice. When asked about *Blue Level* and *Desert Moon*, Krasner explained that, with these works she was "having fun." Seckler replied, "You feel very free and easy," to which Krasner confirmed, "Yes. Opened up."⁵³ Many of Krasner's peers worked in collage because of the pleasure and freedom tendered by the medium. Robert Motherwell stated, "I do feel more joyful with collage, less austere. A form of play. Which painting, in general, is not."⁵⁴ Esteban Vicente also wrote that "the range of collage possibilities is unlimited . . . Painting can be heroic; collage, on the contrary, has to retain its original quality of intimacy. . . In collage I find a valuable serenity."⁵⁵ Vicente further likened the layering of collage materials to gardening, claiming that collage provided a new reality and the "highest level of satisfaction."⁵⁶ The language that Vicente, Motherwell, and Krasner employed while describing collage invoked many aspects of the pastoral: leisure, simplicity, and fun.⁵⁷ And though Greenberg hailed the "revolutionary" qualities of collage, namely in its assertion of the picture plane's inherent flatness, his pastoral vision favored artists who "conceived of pleasure . . . in luscious color, rich surfaces, [and] decoratively inflected design."⁵⁸

Sensual experience and pleasurable response are often considered key remnants of the pastoral that continued into modernity. In questioning the future of pastoralism, Leo Marx has stated that new versions of the pastoral will include "a preference . . . for the satisfactions of immediate, personal experience rather than for the triumphs of. . . 'the aspiring mind.'"⁵⁹ Krasner's collages, with their frayed burlap and brilliant colors, certainly privileged tactile and optical sensations, embracing the materialism that Marx and Greenberg regarded as bucolic. This pastoral vision informed much of Krasner's work, as her oppositional strategy, emphasis on repose, and evocations of nature established a mood akin to Virgilian shepherds. By emphasizing materiality, revision, and contrast, Krasner connected to rhetorical devices rooted in antiquity, yet the contingency and relativism of her collages were grounded securely within the modern. A medium based upon order and interrelatedness, collage served as a means for mapping Krasner's alienation as an artist and wife. Ultimately, the act of arranging collage elements became a pastoral

endeavor unto itself, Krasner's pursuit of psychological and compositional order. •

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Notes

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1. Clement Greenberg, "Review of Exhibitions of Hyman Bloom, David Smith, and Robert Motherwell," in *The Nation* (26 January 1946); reprinted in John O'Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2, *Arrogant Purpose, 1945-1949* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), 51.
2. See Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon," in *Partisan Review* (July-August 1940); reprinted in John O'Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1, *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), 23-38. Greenberg's pastoralism reaffirmed the principles of the avant-garde he established in this seminal essay, wherein the avant-garde art should turn inward to its own standards and self-preservation, concurrently negating and confirming the bourgeoisie. Recent scholarship has revisited Greenberg's use of the pastoral, see: Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2006), 274-90; also John O'Brian, "Critics: Clement Greenberg's Defense of Material Pleasure," in *Ruthless Hedonism: The American Reception of Matisse* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999), 173-91.
3. Greenberg, "Review of Exhibitions," 52.
4. *Ibid.*, 54.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Bryan Robertson recorded that, "In 1955 Lee Krasner held an exhibition of collages in New York which Clement Greenberg has described as a major addition to the American art scene of that era." Bryan Robertson, Preface to *Lee Krasner: Paintings, Drawings and Collages* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1965), 4. Robertson later wrote, "In a long conversation that I once had with Clement Greenberg in the early sixties, he told me that the exhibition of Krasner's collages at the Stable Gallery in 1955 was in his view one of the great events of the decade"; see his "Krasner's Collages," *Lee Krasner Collages* (New York: Robert Miller Gallery, 1986), n.p. Greenberg never wrote directly about Krasner or her work, but he mentioned her briefly as "competently" practicing late cubism as well as being influenced by Willem de Kooning. See his "New York Painting Only Yesterday," in *Art News* (Summer 1957); reprinted in John O'Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 4, *Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), 24. Greenberg also noted Krasner's role in the life of her husband, Jackson Pollock, recognizing her importance during his formative years; "even before their marriage her eye and judgment had become important to his art, and continued to remain so." Clement Greenberg, "Jackson Pollock," *Evergreen Review* 1, no. 3 (1957); reprinted in *ibid.*, 45.

- Greenberg also wrote: "In my opinion he [Pollock] saw more in art and knew more of it than did almost anybody (with the exception of his wife, the painter Leonore Krasner) who talked to him about it." Greenberg, "Jackson Pollock: 'Inspiration, Vision, Intuitive Decision,'" *Vogue* (1 April 1967); reprinted in *ibid.*, 249.
7. Bryan Robertson, "The Nature of Lee Krasner," *Art in America* 61, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1973): 87.
 8. William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935; rpt. New York: New Directions, 1960); Thomas Crow, "The Simple Life: Pastoralism and the Persistence of Genre in Recent Art," *October* 63 (Winter 1993): 41-67; David Halperin, *Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983).
 9. Leo Marx, "Does Pastoralism Have a Future?" in John Dixon Hunt, ed. *The Pastoral Landscape* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1992), 210.
 10. See, for example, Arshile Gorky's *Hugging, Good Hope Road II* (*Pastoral*) (1945, Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection) and *Pastoral* (1947, Private Collection) as well as Willem de Kooning's *Pastorale* (1963, Private Collection, New Orleans).
 11. Pastoral imagery and ideals recurred in theatrical performances in New York City during the 1940s and 1950s as well. Several of the Ballet Society's productions at the Ziegfeld Theatre evoked pastoral naturalism, including Paul Bowles' *Pastorella* ([1941], performed Jan. 13, 1947) and *The Seasons* (music by John Cage, choreography by Merce Cunningham, and set/costume design by Isamu Noguchi, performed May 18, 1947). Jed Pearl has claimed that "Cunningham's dance helped to define a new kind of American pastoral sophistication . . . an experiment, a look inward, a search for the self—a psychological pastoral." Jed Pearl, *New Art City: Manhattan at Mid-Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 253.
 12. See Timothy Gray, "Review: Process and Plurality in New York's Urban Pastoral," *Contemporary Literature* 44, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 367. Gray also has suggested that, in the poetry of Gary Snyder and O'Hara, "the city (like the pastoral) is a place of escape, and that the pastoral (like the city) is a space wherein artificial role-playing reigns. To put it more succinctly, both the 'urban' and the 'pastoral' mark zones where subjectivity is always in play and hence subject to newly ambiguous possibilities that allow one to escape from deleterious proscriptions. The city is, in fact, one of the best sites for the pastoral, since it contains a wealth of offerings available for those who want to change their roles, abandon a fixed identity, or otherwise disguise themselves." Timothy Gray, "Semiotic Shepherds: Gary Snyder, Frank O'Hara, and the Embodiment of an Urban Pastoral," *Contemporary Literature* 39, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 523-59. Pearl also has written, "one of the finest passages in Frank O'Hara's poetry is about the preparations for a pastoral getaway, albeit nothing more than the train ride out to Long Island for the weekend"; Pearl, *New Art City*, 254.
 13. Gray has claimed that, "even in its simplest invocations, the urban pastoral subgenre suggests a complex reversal of ordinary lines of flight. In traditional pastoral, stressed-out city dwellers leave the city for rural climes, usually with the hope of recovering a peaceful sense of leisure (*otium*) and brotherhood destroyed by the encroachment of civilization. In contemporary urban pastoral, by contrast, the big city functions as a playground for rural folk who believe the simple life of the countryside to be a little too simple, and sometimes downright restrictive. Putting on the disguise crucial to the workings of pastoral plots, urban émigrés from the hinterlands thus mimic the shepherds who appear in traditional pastoral literature, playing the roles denied them back home in an attempt to realize their lyric gifts and locate their true selves." Gray, "Process and Plurality in New York's Urban Pastoral," 363-67.
 14. *Ibid.*, 364.
 15. The farmhouse and surrounding land cost \$5,000, but it was available for a down payment of \$2,000. Krasner convinced Peggy Guggenheim to loan them money for the purchase by deducting \$50 per month from Pollock's \$300 stipend (which Guggenheim paid Pollock for his annual artistic output).
 16. Lee Krasner, in Francine du Plessix and Cleve Gray, "Who was Jackson Pollock?" in *Art in America* 55, no. 3 (May-June 1967): 48-51; reprinted in Pepe Karmel, ed., *Jackson Pollock: Interviews, Articles, and Reviews* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 33. Marcia Brennan has recently argued that moving to The Springs not only inspired and helped Pollock concentrate on painting, but it had a crucial role in how his work was received in the public's eye. The proliferation of photographs illustrating Pollock and Krasner's pastoral domesticity, particularly those by Hans Namuth and Wilfred Zogbaum, served to "stabilize" Pollock's image. As Brennan observed, these images portrayed Pollock neither as a reckless bachelor incapable of leading a settled life nor as the man in a gray flannel suit. Instead, Pollock became mythologized for blending the radical with the bourgeois, an icon of the "creative nonconformist." Marcia Brennan, "Pollock and Krasner: Touching and Transcending the Boundaries of Abstract Expressionism," in *Modernism's Masculine Subjects: Matisse, the New York School, and Post-Painterly Abstraction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 104.
 17. Grace Glueck, "Scenes from a Marriage: Krasner and Pollock," *Art News* 80, no. 10 (December 1981): 58-60.
 18. Barbara Rose, *Krasner/Pollock: A Working Relationship* (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University, 1981), n.p. Peter Marinelli has argued that, as opposed to the imagined classical pastoral, the modern variant was located in the "ordinary country landscape of the modern world," positioning "the complexities of human life against a background of simplicity." Peter Marinelli, *Pastoral* (London: Methuen, 1971), 3.
 19. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975), 60.
 20. David Halperin, *Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983), 65-68.
 21. Barbara Rose has argued that "collage . . . permitted Krasner to find a way out of an impasse that had been troubling her for some years, a problem exacerbated by the division between color and line studies in the Hofmann school. That was the problem of how to create shapes without separating line from color, or simply using color to fill in contour in the manner of academic art." Barbara Rose, *Lee Krasner: A Retrospective* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts; New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1983), 75.
 22. Lee Krasner, Statement in "New York Today: Some Artists Comment," *Art in America* 65, no. 5 (Sept. - Oct. 1977): 82.
 23. Virgil, *Bucolics*. 1.23. Halperin, *Before Pastoral*, 66.
 24. John Van Sickle, "Studies of Dialectical Methodology in the Virgilian Tradition," *Comparative Literature* 85, no. 6 (Dec. 1970), 884-928. See also his *The Design of Virgil's Bucolics*, 2d. ed. (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2004).
 25. Adam Parry, "Landscape in Greek Poetry," in *YCS* 15 (1957): 11-14. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), 33-43.
 26. Renato Poggioli has argued that, despite the innocence and escape proffered by the pastoral, death, work, and other "realities" exist within the genre. Renato Poggioli, *The Oaken Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975), 1-8. This urban fantasy has been described as a "false vision" because the idealized depiction of shepherds did not correspond to the realities of that lifestyle. John Barrell and John Bull, eds. *The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse* (London: Penguin, 1974), 4-5.
 27. Judith Haber, *Pastoral and the Poetics of Self-Contradiction: Theocritus to Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 1.
 28. *Ibid.*, 14-15. See also: Thomas Rosenmeyer, *The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric* (Berkeley: Univ. of California

- Press, 1969); Charles Segal, *Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral: Essays on Theocritus and Virgil* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981).
29. Working in conjunction with the Higher Education Division of the New York City Board of Education, Krasner led a group of artists that created a series of collaged window displays advertising the wartime curricula of New York area colleges. While these works have been lost and their dimensions remain unknown, record of the *War Services Windows* exists via photographs. Jackson Pollock was one of several artists who worked with Krasner on this project. For more on Krasner's WPA work, see: Ellen G. Landau, "Lee Krasner's Early Career, Part One: 'Pushing in Different Directions'," in *Arts Magazine* 56, no. 2 (Oct. 1981): 110-122; Ellen G. Landau, *Lee Krasner: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1995), 93-96.
 30. Jeremy Strick, "Notes on Some Instances of Irony in Modern Pastoral," in Hunt, ed. *The Pastoral Landscape*, 199.
 31. Guy Lee, "Introduction," to Virgil, *The Eclogues*, trans. Guy Lee (New York: Penguin, 1984), 19. Judith Haber has also noted how Virgil "is now confronting us with the loss of home and all that it represents. The Roman poet clearly views his own era not only as more limited than that of his model [Theocritus], but also as more turbulent and unsettled." Haber, *Pastoral and the Poetics of Self-Contradiction*, 36-37.
 32. Ellen G. Landau, "Channeling Desire: Lee Krasner's Collage of the Early 1950s," in *Woman's Art Journal* vol.18, no. 2 (F 1997/ W 1998), 27-30.
 33. Ibid. Robert Hobbs also has suggested that collage was a "way to deal with her frustration regarding Pollock's drinking through alternate destructive and reconstructive acts." Hobbs, *Lee Krasner*, 113-16.
 34. Emily Wasserman, Unpublished Interview with Lee Krasner, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., p. 9. (Hereafter, AAA)
 35. Clement Greenberg, "The Role of Nature in Modern Painting," in *Partisan Review* (January 1949); reprinted in O'Brian, ed., *Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2, 272-73.
 36. Frank O'Hara, "Nature and New Painting," in *Folder 2*, no. 1 (1954-55): n.p. John I. H. Baur, *Nature in Abstraction: The Relation of Abstract Painting and Sculpture to Nature in Twentieth-Century American Art* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and Macmillan, 1958), 13.
 37. Barbara Novak, *Lee Krasner: Recent Work* (New York: Pace Gallery, 1981); quote reproduced in Landau, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 146.
 38. John Bernard Myers, "Naming Pictures: Conversations between Lee Krasner and John Bernard Myers," in *Artforum* 23 (Nov. 1984): 72.
 39. Bettina Bergmann, "Exploring the Grove: Pastoral Space on Roman Walls," and Alfred Frazer, "The Roman Villa and the Pastoral Ideal," both in Hunt, ed., *The Pastoral Landscape*, 21-48, and 49-62, respectively.
 40. Mark Rothko's work has been compared to Roman murals, such as those at Boscoreale and Boscotrecase. See: Stephen Polcari, *Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 141; Dore Ashton, *About Rothko* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 115.
 41. The award states: "In recognition and with appreciation of outstanding generosity and dedication to the goal of preserving America's natural world and the rich variety of life it shelters." The commission's report hoped to make "possible for a community to grow and prosper while scarcely disturbing the natural environment." Report to the East Hampton Conservation Advisory Council by the Civic Association of the Springs, September 16, 1968. Certificate of award and commission report contained in Lee Krasner Papers, AAA.
 42. Ibid.
 43. Robert Hobbs, *Lee Krasner* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993), 52-54.
 44. Landau, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 133.
 45. Jackson Pollock, Letters to Alfonso Ossorio (January 1952), Alfonso Ossorio Papers, AAA
 46. Eleanor Munro, *Originals: American Women Artists* (Boulder: De Capo Press, 2000), 114.
 47. Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral*, 23. William Empson's books appeared in the libraries of various New York School artists, including Barnett Newman. Frankenthaler dedicated her 1957 painting, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, to Empson's work of the same name. Kenneth Burke assigned Frankenthaler to read the book when she was an undergraduate at Bennington College, and John Elderfield has noted the manner in which Frankenthaler employed the ambiguity described by Empson in formulating her own artistic method. John Elderfield, *Frankenthaler* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989), 116. Clement Greenberg mentioned a review of Empson's work by Dunstan Thompson, and John O'Brian has argued: "In his construction of avant-garde pastoral art, Greenberg almost certainly drew on the ideas of William Empson in his group of essays published as *Some Versions of Pastoral* in 1935." O'Brian, "Critics: Clement Greenberg's Defense of Material Pleasure," 177. For Greenberg's mention of Thompson's "competent and mature review," see his "The Renaissance of the Little Mag: Review of Accent, Diogenes, Experimental Review, Vice Versa, and View," in *Partisan Review* (Jan. - Feb. 1941); reprinted in O'Brian, ed., *Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1, 44.
 48. Crow, "The Simple Life," 41-67.
 49. Ibid., 47-52.
 50. Lee, "Introduction," 25. Theocritus, "Idyll VII: The Thanksgiving Festival," in *Idylls and Epigrams*, trans. Daryl Hine (New York: Atheneum, 1982), 28-29; *The Poems of Theocritus*, trans. Anna Rist (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1978), 90-91, particularly lines 39-42. Virgil, *The Eclogues*, 79-83.
 51. Harold Rosenberg, "Collage: Philosophy of Put-Togethers," chapter 15 in, *Art on the Edge* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 176-78.
 52. Robert Hobbs, *Lee Krasner* (New York: Independent Curators International, Harry Abrams, 1999), 113.
 53. Dorothy Seckler, Interview with Lee Krasner, AAA, p. 33.
 54. Robert Motherwell, "A Conversation at Lunch," in *An Exhibition of the Work of Robert Motherwell* (Northampton: Smith College Museum of Art, 1963), n.p.
 55. Esteban Vicente, "Collage as Painting," *It Is 1* (Spring 1958): 41.
 56. Ibid. Vicente wrote, "There is the white paper inviting me to unload my vision, my feelings, to find a new plastics reality. Like the gardening of the earth the surface gets richer and more sensuous; the limited area becomes intimate, luminous, an entity, and for moments it seems that the highest level of satisfaction will be attained."
 57. Dorothy Seckler, "Amateur Standing: Try a Collage," in *Art News* 53, no. 2 (April 1954), 8. Seckler further underscored the medium's ease, noting: "Making a collage involves taste and inventiveness without requiring drawing skill."
 58. Clement Greenberg, "Review of an Exhibition of School of Paris Painters," in *The Nation* (29 June 1946); reprinted in John O'Brian, ed., *Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2, 89. For more on Greenberg's "material pleasure," see: O'Brian, "Critics: Clement Greenberg's Defense of Material Pleasure." For Greenberg's take on collage, see: "Review of the Exhibition *Collage*," in *The Nation* (27 November 1948); reprinted in O'Brian, ed., *Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2, 259-63; and "The Pasted-Paper Revolution," *Art News* 57, no. 5 (Sept. 1958): 46-49, 60-61; altered considerably as "Collage," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961): 70-83; reprinted in O'Brian, ed., *Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 4, 61-66. Greenberg also wrote about collage methods and the invention of assemblage. See: "The New Sculpture," in *Partisan Review* (June 1949); altered considerably in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 139-45; reprinted in O'Brian, ed., *Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2, 313-19.
 59. Marx, "Does Pastoralism Have a Future?," 223.

BEYOND THE PALE

Lee Krasner and Jewish Culture

By Gail Levin

In 1978, while planning the show “Abstract Expressionism: The Formative Years” with Robert Hobbs, I insisted on giving prominence to Lee Krasner along with her male contemporaries. She was persuaded to show work she had produced while still studying with Hans Hofmann—work proving that she was a fully formed abstractionist before meeting her future husband, Jackson Pollock. My strategy worked, convincing critics of her status as a first-wave Abstract Expressionist.

Given my friendship with Krasner—I first interviewed her in 1970—time has been required to gain the critical distance necessary to write her biography. Among my first steps, here I explore her links with Jewish culture from childhood on, based on our frequent discussions of Jewish ethnicity. I argue that despite later estrangement from religious practice, she remained identified as a Jew, even though, at his insistence, she agreed to marry Jackson Pollock in New York’s Marble Collegiate Church on October 25, 1945. Krasner, then 37, had lived with him since 1942, and later recalled that her father’s recent death (November 17, 1944) had motivated her to marry.¹

Lena Krassner was born October 27, 1908, in Brooklyn, New York, just nine months and two weeks after her mother, Chane (Anna), age 33, arrived from Shpikiv in Russia, not far north of Odessa in the Pale of Settlement, the area where the Russian Imperial government permitted Jews to live.² Her father, Joseph, age 38, had been in America for four years. In their shtetl (village), where some 530 of the nearly 3000 residents were Jews,³ Joseph and Chane had earned their living helping a rabbi manage ritual observances. Krasner considered her mother’s family more orthodox than her father’s.⁴

A family photograph taken in Shpikiv showing a modern, well-dressed family group suggests motives other than poverty for their emigration. The massive Jewish flight from Eastern Europe around the turn of the century stemmed also from anti-Semitism, oppressive taxation, and enforced conscription of sons. Pogroms, violent attacks directed at Jews and other minorities, increased pressure to flee.⁵ As conditions deteriorated in Russia, many Jews sought asylum in America, bringing with them their belief in social justice and political reform. Faced once again with harsh working conditions, a vocal and visible fraction became strike leaders and union organizers. Jewish militancy no doubt reflected disillusionment with the stories of a better life in America that had fueled emigration.

It was into a world teeming with impoverished and often radicalized Jewish immigrants in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn that Lena was born. Joseph, an orthodox Jew, pursued a disciplined study of religious texts and was said to be sensitive and introspective.⁶ “I adored him,” Krasner said, “But he was very remote.”⁷ His religious books fascinated Lena, with their elaborate decorations and Hebrew script. He also liked to tell the children stories, which she loved: “Marvelous tales! About forests. Beautiful, beautiful stories, always like Grimm. Scary things. . . . A foreign world to me.”⁸

Lena’s eldest sister, Edith, cooked for the family and took charge of the younger siblings.⁹ The Krassners shared their modest quarters with Anna’s younger, unmarried brother, William, who worked in a clothing factory. Dominating the traditional household, Anna, who experienced culture shock as she encountered modernity and secularism, enforced the observance of Jewish ritual. She never learned to read and write in English and remained fearful and superstitious.¹⁰

In Eastern Europe, the most prestigious life for a Jewish male was to be a religious scholar. Scholarly circles excluded women, who, in the absence of family wealth, were expected to provide support to make possible their husbands’ devotion to study.¹¹ Their roles as breadwinners gave wives more power in practice, but little respect or prestige. By the nineteenth century, however, some Jews in Eastern Europe had rejected Orthodox restrictions, believing that reconciling Judaism with modern Western ideas and customs would bring them emancipation and equality.¹² Instead of discouraging girls from obtaining all but the most basic literacy, they stressed secular education for both sexes. The most observant Jews, however, faced with growing anti-Semitism, held tight to their traditional attitudes, transporting them to the new world.

In effect, Jewish men “displaced their own anxieties upon women,” according to historian Paula Hyman, who argues that the men “constructed a modern Jewish identity that devalued women, making them the Other within the Jewish community.”¹³ The men, who were experiencing emancipation and economic success, responded to anti-Semitism “by creating negative representations of Jewish women.” This “coincidence of antisemitism and misogyny” reflects the efforts of both Jews and women to challenge their place in society and to assert their claims to equality. Ironically, Jewish women became what has been called the “oppressed of the oppressed.”¹⁴

Brownsville's population grew after the extension of the Fulton Street El in 1889 enabled easy access to Manhattan for those, like Lena's uncle, who worked in the garment industry. Yiddish was the language most often heard in the shops and the open-air markets. *Cheders*, schools where young Jewish boys learned orthodox traditions and rituals, were plentiful. Girls, including Lena, attended a separate Hebrew school, where they learned basic reading and writing skills, primarily in order to pray.¹⁵ Later she remarked:

I think it was in my show at the Whitney that Marcia Tucker pointed something out to me I had been totally unaware of, and that is that I started my painting at the upper right hand at all times and swung across the other way, which she related to my early training in Hebrew writing. I had never made the connection. She pointed that out to me. I was doing it for many, many years without being conscious of it in any sense. And so at all times I was preoccupied with a kind of writing which I nor anyone else could read, and I wanted it that way. I don't know why.¹⁶

Krasner appears to have accepted Tucker's suggestion that her early study of Hebrew writing influenced her series of abstractions known as "Little Images" (Fig. 1).¹⁷

Krasner told Eleanor Munro that she was conscientious and observant as a girl: "I went to services at the synagogue, partly because it was expected of me. But there must have been something beyond, because I wasn't forced to go, and my younger sister did not."¹⁸ That "something" might have been her strong identification with her adored father; still, she disliked the segregation of the sexes in the synagogue, and remained resentful that orthodox Judaism did not allow women equality with men. "The beginnings were there in the synagogue, and I am told to go upstairs, I have never swallowed it to date," she insisted late in life.¹⁹

As a child she recited the daily morning prayer in Hebrew from memory. Later, after finally reading a translation, she referred to this prayer as "my own shattering experience." She explained that it "is indeed a beautiful prayer in every sense except for the closing of it...if you are a male you say, 'Thank You, O Lord, for creating me in Your image'; and if you are a woman you say, 'Thank You, O Lord, for creating me as You saw fit.'"²⁰

By the time she entered elementary school, Lena's family had moved about two miles to East New York, to a two-family clapboard row house on Jerome Street. Joseph Krassner ran a fish, vegetable, and fruit stand at the nearby Blake Avenue Market. His work required him to rise at dawn and travel to Manhattan's wholesale fish market, buy fish packed in wooden crates, haul it by horse and wagon to the small retail stall, and try to sell out by late afternoon before the ice melted and the fish spoiled.²¹ The business left the Krassners little free time, and their children had to help both at home and in the market. "Yes we were very poor. Everyone had to work. Every penny

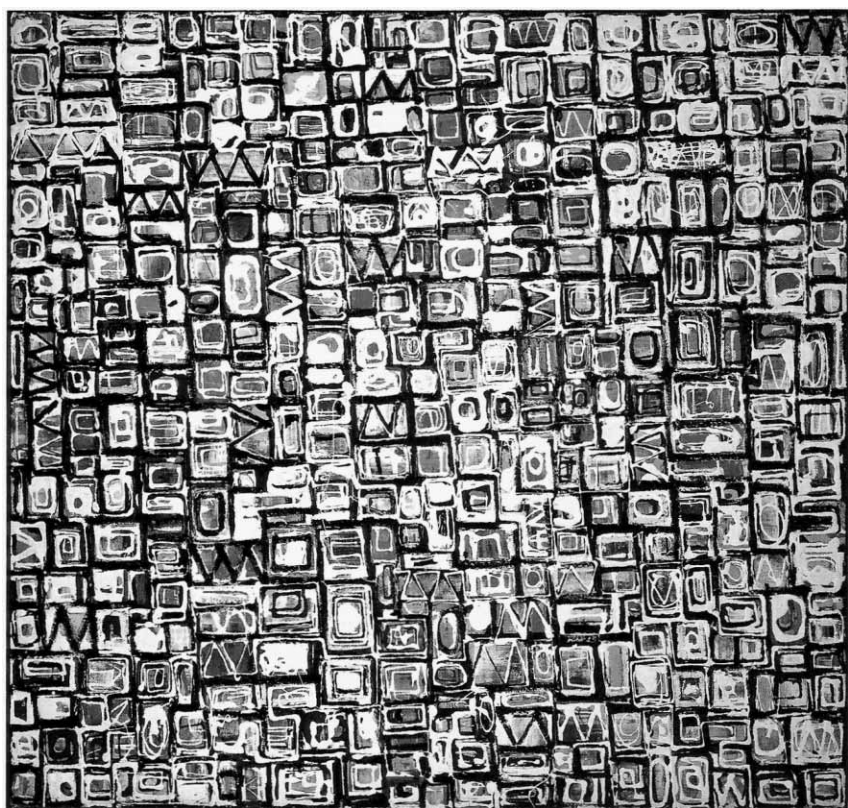


Fig. 1. Lee Krasner, *Painting No. 19* (1947-48), oil and enamel on masonite, 32 1/4" x 32 1/4". Private collection.

had to be dealt with," Krasner said later, adding that her parents demanded obedience and respect.²²

At her school, P.S. 72, there were more girls than boys among its 1500 students, presumably because many neighborhood boys attended private *yeshivas* (religious schools). Here Lena was introduced to the idea of art, though she later said that she did not yet draw.²³ Her sister Ruth recalled, however, that Lena copied fashion advertisements from the newspaper: "She used to draw clothed women figures all the time. We were all aware of that—how marvelous it was to be able to put her pencil to paper and get a figure."²⁴ (It was one of the few nice things that Ruth ever recollected about her sister.) The only other art that Lena saw was in library books, including the illustrated fairy tales she loved.²⁵

Brownsville during these years welcomed radical social movements and philosophies including anarchism, Socialism, and Communism. Women's activism, too, was acceptable among segments of the Jewish immigrant community.²⁶ Women led protest movements and rent strikes, and Jewish women worked hard to get out the vote, participating in the state elections of 1915 and 1917. In fact, the Jewish immigrant community in New York supported woman's suffrage more than other immigrant groups.²⁷ In 1916, the first birth control clinic in America, an experiment led by Margaret Sanger, opened briefly in Brownville.²⁸

Lena's role models at home were her father and brother, both of whom she favored over her mother and sisters. Her brother Irving, who studied chemistry, introduced her to various cultural pursuits: books by Dostoevsky, Gogol, Gorki,



Fig. 2. Lee Krasner, *Self-Portrait* (c. 1928), oil on linen, 30 1/8" x 25 1/8". Collection Pollock-Krasner Foundation. Photo courtesy Robert Miller Gallery.

and Maeterlinck, and the music of Enrico Caruso, then the leading male singer at New York's Metropolitan Opera.²⁹ Irving, who never married, later collected art.

In 1921, Lena, now calling herself "Lenore," applied to study art at Washington Irving High School in Manhattan. That unique institution then claimed to be "the only school in greater New York offering an industrial art course for girls."³⁰ She was "told that they were filled and as I lived in Brooklyn I couldn't enter. It led to a good deal of complication as I had to go to a public high school."³¹

Krasner's parents did not try to dissuade her from her educational goals, as long as she made no demands on them, financial or otherwise.³² Although still observant Jews, they had begun rejecting some orthodox restrictions. "I think my parents had their hands full acclimatizing themselves and putting their children through school. They didn't encourage me but as long as I didn't present them with any particular problems, neither did they interfere. If I wanted to study art, it was alright with them."³³ Her second choice was to study law, and she entered Girls High School in Brooklyn. Doing poorly, after six months she reapplied to Washington Irving. "This time I was admitted and so I started my art career. . ."³⁴

Under her brother Irving's influence, imbibing the ideas of German philosophers Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, she began turning away from Jewish belief. Nietzsche's dictum that "God is dead" affected her just as his

insistence that humanity "take responsibility for setting its own moral standards" inspired existentialists. Krasner may have taken license to leave religion behind from statements by Schopenhauer such as: "The power of religious dogma, when inculcated early, is such as to stifle conscience, compassion, and finally every feeling of humanity."³⁵

The gender inequality Krasner so disliked together with her reading gradually eroded her faith. She recalled arriving home one Shabbat (Sabbath) while her parents entertained a friend over a cup of tea; she described herself as a young teenager coming in "like a charging banshee" and announcing that she was done with religion.³⁶ Afterwards, she remained identified as Jewish, but rejected religious practice.

Washington Irving was just where Lenore wanted to be. It was conceived by the progressive educator William McAndrew, who sought to mix girls training for trades with those pursuing an academic curriculum, hoping they would learn from each other. In 1921, the *New York Times* described the large, all female student body as having "6000 pupils, almost wholly Jewish."³⁷ The commute from Brooklyn was about an hour each way. Greenwich Village, with its lively bohemian scene, was near the school. It was the heyday of the jazz age, flappers, free love, the new woman, and other thrilling new types. New York had galleries and museums to explore, starting with the vast Metropolitan Museum of Art. She learned to savor great art and to dance the latest steps with equal passion.

Although Lenore was taking "more and more periods of art,"³⁸ her determination and sense of purpose were not enough to win her art teacher's praise. In her senior year, after she decided to go to Cooper Union, a woman's art school, the teacher pulled her aside, she later recalled: "'The only reason I am passing you in art...is because you've done so excellently in all your other subjects, I don't want to hold you back'...In other words, I didn't make the grade in art at all."³⁹ Confident in her own abilities, Krasner remained resolute: "... I picked the best, or what I thought was the best I'd done in Washington Irving and used that to get entrance into Cooper Union. I was admitted."⁴⁰

When Lenore's older sister Rose died suddenly of appendicitis, leaving behind her husband and two small daughters, Jewish tradition called for Lenore, the next oldest, to marry her brother-in-law and raise the children. She refused, believing she had another destiny—to be an artist. Her younger sister, Ruth, just sixteen, accepted the responsibility and married William Stein, who worked as a movie projector operator.⁴¹ Meanwhile Joseph and Anna, their children grown, relocated further out on Long Island to Greenlawn, near Huntington Station.⁴² Needing to be close to Cooper Union, Lenore moved into the Stein household after all—though not as the new wife—gaining freedom to come and go as she pleased.

By the fall of 1928, Lenore had enrolled at the National Academy of Design. Among her teachers were two artists who represented successful models of assimilation, in contrast with her parents. They were the Russian Jewish immigrant, Ivan Gregorewitch Olinsky,⁴³ and Leon Kroll, the American-born son of an earlier wave of German-Jewish immigrants. Assimilation seemed essential to Krasner's vision for her future as an artist; her goals were not those traditionally expected of a Jewish

woman. The often quoted words of the Princess to Daniel Deronda (in George Eliot's 1876 novel) might well express Krassner's dilemma:

You are not a woman. You may try—but you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. To have a pattern cut out—this is the Jewish woman! This is what you must be; this is what you are wanted for; a woman's heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet...⁴⁴

Krassner's determination to be an artist made her eager to move from copying plaster casts to life drawing. Anticipating the entry requirement for the life drawing class, she must have painted her *Self-Portrait* (Fig. 2) during the summer of 1928, working outdoors at her parents' home on Long Island.⁴⁵ She nailed her canvas to one tree and a mirror to another. Members of the committee claimed that she had merely pretended to be working *en plein air*, but she was promoted "on probation" on January 26, 1929.

At the Academy she met and then lived with the painter Igor Pantuhoff (who was not Jewish). He liked to dress, pose, and photograph Krassner. A few years later, the pair shared an apartment on West 14th Street with writers May Tabak and Harold Rosenberg, whom Krassner had first met while a waitress at Sam Johnson's, a night spot in Greenwich Village. Beginning in August 1935, Krassner and Rosenberg began working for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), initially assigned to assist the muralist Max Spivak, who was just two years older than Krassner.

Years later, when Barbara Rose asked Krasner if it was difficult to be a woman artist during the thirties, forties, and fifties, she replied: "I never got any very positive responses to my work." One bright spot, though, was Hans Hofmann, with whom she began studying in 1937.

When I met him, he said: "Zis is so good you would not know it was done by a woman."—meaning the highest compliment he could pay me. That was always there, maybe it will be for a long time. It's as old as Judeo-Christianity. In Western thought—not Eastern—the God image is a male concept and there isn't much room for the female. Those are facts not to be denied. I had some awareness of this way back, somewhere when I was studying at Cooper Union. But it didn't hit me too hard until the recent women's movement. Now, there is an attempt to get a number of women on the scene. For me, it comes a little late.⁴⁶

Taking to heart the political activism of the community where she grew up, Krasner took part in organized protests against periodic firings and rehiring by the WPA. She participated in "Pink Slips Over Culture," the summer 1937 exhibition held at ACA Galleries, which supported leftist causes. In 1939, appointed to the executive board of the Artists Union, she got caught up in fierce debates over Stalinist versus Trotskyite politics. That year she also joined the American Abstract Artists.

Both Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg, who were rivals,

would take an interest in Pollock, but neither would write about Krasner's art.⁴⁷ At least one critic has described Rosenberg as "a secular rabbi carrying on the Hassidic tradition of scholarly infighting in an assimilated world."⁴⁸ They were not the only Jewish men in the art world whom Krasner resented. In 1950 Barnett Newman, who was, like her, of Eastern European Jewish ancestry, called to invite Pollock to pose for the now famous group photograph, known as the "The Irascibles," taken for *Life* magazine by Nina Leen. Krasner answered the phone, but Newman asked to speak with Pollock, ignoring her.⁴⁹ In their attitudes towards Jewish women, Greenberg, Rosenberg, and Newman, consciously or not, adhered to the cultural model for gendered roles formed in Eastern Europe and perpetuated in Jewish immigrant culture.

"I had a running bout with Barney Newman about my objections to the role of women in Judaism," Krasner later explained.

We battled till he died; he said I misunderstood and I said I understood loud and clear but I objected. Then one time he asked me whether I had seen the plans for his synagogue. I asked why I should see them. He claimed that his design would settle the argument. "Well, where are the women in your synagogue," I asked. "You'll see! You'll understand!" he said. "Right on the altar! And I said, "Never. *You* can sit on the altar and get yourself slaughtered. I want the first empty seat on the aisle."⁵⁰

In a 1973 television interview, Krasner blamed her lack of previous recognition on "the fact that she was a woman artist coming up in the 1950s and on the fact that she's Jewish."⁵¹ She often spoke about the problem of "Jewish attitudes towards women" with me and with others, for example, her friend the author, Naomi Goodman.⁵² Krasner attributed the failure of Newman, Rosenberg, and Greenberg to support her art to the fact that they were all Jewish men.

In an interview late in her life, Michael Cannell told Krasner: "Clement Greenberg has said of you: 'Lee should have had more faith in herself and more independence; but then that is the problem of all women artists.'" She responded: "Well he claims women artists couldn't paint, with the exception of his special friend Frankenthaler. But she was his close amour, so she could paint. Well, that's for the birds! Who could take that seriously? Either women can't paint, or some can. It isn't just who your amour is."⁵³ Helen Frankenthaler came from a much wealthier class of German Jews, while Krasner's poor immigrant Russian roots, as Greenberg's writing reveals, were too close for comfort to his own family background.⁵⁴

Krasner and her family represented the legacy of The Pale to Greenberg, who wrote about it, noting that.. "The ghetto taught the Jew to keep his eye on the main thing. . . . The poor everywhere are impatient with etiquette, if not decorum, but none so much as the Jews. For them the only etiquette impervious to ridicule is that of ideas. Why deny that man lives by cruel competition in this particular world?"⁵⁵

Even more telling, Greenberg participated in a symposium on American literature for the editors of *Contemporary Jewish Record* in 1944, causing him to write about his own Jewish

heritage. He pointed out that his “father and mother repudiated a good deal of the Jewish heritage for him in advance by becoming free-thinking socialists who maintained only their Yiddish, certain vestiges of folk life in the Pale, and an insistence upon specifying themselves as Jews—i.e., to change one’s name because it is too Jewish is shameful.”⁵⁶ Greenberg also wrote about “the Jewish self-hatred in myself, of its subtlety and the devious ways in which it conceals itself, from me as well as from the world outside, explains many things that used to puzzle me in the behavior of my fellow Jews.”⁵⁷

Not coincidentally, most of the women who began promoting Krasner during the late 1960s and 1970s were Jewish, including the critic and curator Barbara Rose, the video artist Hermine Freed, the curator Marcia Tucker, the critics Emily Wasserman and Cindy Nemser, and myself as a curator at the Whitney Museum.⁵⁸ The strong desire to find female heroes felt by Jewish women (and others) during the emergence of second-wave feminism surely affected changing attitudes toward Krasner’s work. In the next two decades, the Jewish art historian Ellen Landau would make Krasner’s work the subject of her doctoral dissertation and a series of articles, eventually completing a catalogue raisonné.

Krasner once commented to Barbara Rose: “I don’t suppose I know what’s meant by ‘feminine’ subject matter, any more than I understand, what’s meant by ‘masculine’ subject matter. I’m sympathetic to the women’s movement, but I could never support anything called ‘American art.’”⁵⁹

The lens of Jewish immigrant culture may offer further understanding of Krasner’s art and life. Recalling her comments about the family’s intense poverty, for example, we may view her involvement with collage as an aspect of her thrift and desire not to waste resources, a habit that continued until her death, long after it was necessary. Thus, I would argue that this concern was a major motivation for her recycling of cut-up fragments of both her own earlier work and of Pollock’s discards (see for example, color plates 1, 2, 3, 8, and 9).⁶⁰ Given the expensive paper that Pollock purchased, used, and sometimes discarded, Krasner had ample motivation to recycle it.

For her mature works as a painter, Krasner recalled the marvelous stories of the old world told to her by her father. Stories about the romance of Russia had fueled her imagination as a child, sometimes frightening her. Krasner recounted a time when, about five years old, she was standing alone in a dark hall and thought she witnessed something leap over the banister. Thoroughly terrified, she exclaimed: “half man,



Fig. 3. Lee Krasner, *Prophecy* (1956), oil on cotton duck, 58 1/8" x 34". Photo courtesy Robert Miller Gallery.

half beast.” This childhood memory was an enigma that resurfaced during the psychoanalysis of her adulthood and found its way into a painting she called *Prophecy* (1956; Fig. 3). This was the painting that remained on her easel when she left Pollock to go to Europe, fleeing his infidelity, only to return after his fatal car crash. The imagery took the form of a monster with a staring eye, possibly reminiscent of Krasner’s Russian grandmother Pesah, who was said to have had the power of the evil eye.⁶¹

Although Krasner broke with organized Jewish religious practices, her roots in Jewish culture went deep. Her politics and her intellectual life were not so distant from that of Rosenberg or Greenberg or Newman. She continued to support liberal political causes and to give to Jewish charities—from the Israel Emergency Fund of the United Jewish Appeal to the Women’s Campaign for UJA-Federation—and carefully preserved the documentation in her papers.⁶² Even when she became wealthy, she lived simply. She arranged to bequeath her entire estate to the

Pollock-Krasner Foundation to provide funds for needy artists, reflecting the core Jewish value—*Tsedakah* or righteousness and justice toward others, community responsibility, and mutual aid.⁶³ It is also true that she had come to see artists as her community. Perhaps it was art that had taken the place of religion. •

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Notes

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1. Eleanor Munro, *Origins: American Women Artists* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 113. This interview is notable in that Munro coaxed Krasner to add detail beyond the stories she usually repeated to interviewers. Krasner often said similar things in conversation to me.
2. Her mother entered Ellis Island with only one “s” in the spelling of their surname, while her father chose to double the letter after his arrival. Lee would later drop the second s. She began to call herself “Lenore” in

- high school, then "Lee" informally during the late 1930s, but was still referred to as Lenore Krassner in the press through the middle of 1945. By 1948, she is known and appears in reviews as "Lee Krasner."
3. See Victoria Khiterer, "Shpikov" in *One Hundred Shtetls of Ukraine. Historical guide*, Issue 2, (St. Petersburg, 2000):451-66 (in Russian). These statistics are at The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP), document HM2/7771.1.
 4. Bryan Robertson and B.H. Friedman, *Lee Krasner Paintings, Drawings and Collages* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1965), 5.
 5. 77,544 left in 1904 alone, almost double the number that fled in 1902. In 1905, at least 92,388 left Russia for America; in 1906, 125,234; in 1907, 114,932; and in 1908, when Krasner's mother and siblings left, they were part of a total of 71,978. Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews 1870-1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), 270. Spurring the exodus, for example, in the spring of 1903, in Kishinev, in southern Russia anti-Semitic propaganda by local journalists stirred rioters to attack Jews, looting and destroying shops and homes. Next day, looting turned to savagery—women raped, the synagogue destroyed, 49 people tortured and killed, and nearly 6000 injured. See Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, vol. III (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1920), 69-75. See also, "Jewish Massacre Denounced," *The New York Times*, April 28, 1903, 6.
 6. Barbara Rose, *Lee Krasner* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1983), 13.
 7. Munro, *Originals*, 104.
 8. Ibid.
 9. Author's interviews with Krasner's relatives are the source for these previously unpublished details of her family.
 10. Deborah Solomon, *Jackson Pollock: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 111.
 11. See Tova Cohen, "Reality and its Refraction in Descriptions of Women in Haskalah Fiction," in Shmuel Feiner and David Sorkin, *New Perspectives on the Haskalah*, (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001), 151.
 12. These were the followers of the Jewish intellectual and literary movement known as *Haskalah* (secular enlightenment).
 13. Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History The Roles and Representations of Women* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1995), 134-35, 137.
 14. Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990), 34.
 15. Lee Krasner to Dorothy Seckler, Interview. Nov. 2, 1964, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Hereafter, AAA.
 16. Lee Krasner quoted in Barbaralee Diamondstein (New York: Rizzoli International, 1979), 204. Krasner also discussed this issue with me in 1977. See my "Lee Krasner," in Robert C. Hobbs and Gail Levin, *Abstract Expressionism: The Formative Years* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1978, repr. Cornell Univ. Press, 1978), 86.
 17. See also, for example, Robert Hobbs, *Lee Krasner* (New York: Abbeville, 1993), 45; Ellen G. Landau with the assistance of Jeffrey D. Grove, *Lee Krasner: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 108. Barbara Rose, *Dialogue: Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock* (New York: Robert Miller Gallery, 2006), n.p.
 18. Munro, *Originals*, 104.
 19. Ibid., 105. Krasner told this story to more than one interviewer, but this is the most complete version.
 20. Lee Krasner to Dorothy Holmes, Oral History Interview, 1972, AAA.
 21. Solomon, *Jackson Pollock: A Biography*, 110.
 22. Munro, *Originals*, 103.
 23. Lee Krasner to Dorothy Seckler.
 24. Ruth Krassner Stein, quoted in Solomon, *Jackson Pollock: A Biography*, 111.
 25. Robertson and Friedman, *Lee Krasner: Paintings, Drawings and Collages*, 5.
 26. See Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*, 112-13.
 27. Ibid., 113.
 28. Neil M. Cowan and Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *Our Parents' Lives: The Americanization of Eastern European Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 170, 172, 183. The clinic attracted many Jewish women before the government closed it clinic and arrested Sanger for violating postal obscenity laws.
 29. Munro, *Originals*, 104. See also Robertson, *Lee Krasner: Paintings, Drawings*, 5-6.
 30. "Public School Notes," *The New York Times*, 7 October, 1922, 25.
 31. Lee Krasner to Dorothy Seckler.
 32. Lee Krasner to the author, summer 1977, and again many times in the course of conversation.
 33. Cindy Nemser, *Art Talk: Conversations with 15 Women Artists*, (New York: Scribner's, 1975), 83.
 34. Lee Krasner to Dorothy Seckler.
 35. Arthur Schopenhauer, "Religion—A Dialogue," in Will Durant, ed., *The Works of Schopenhauer*, (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1955), 467-68.
 36. Munro, *Originals*, 105; Nemser, *Art Talk*, 83.
 37. Rollin Lynde Hartt, "New York and the Real Jew," *The New York Times*, June 25, 1921, 659. From the size of the graduating class, 600 students seems more accurate.
 38. Nemser, *Art Talk*, 83.
 39. Lee Krasner to Dorothy Seckler.
 40. Ibid.
 41. Ruth Krassner's age at her marriage is incorrectly cited as fourteen by Jeffrey D. Grove in "Chronology: Lee Krasner 1908-1984," in Landau, *Lee Krasner: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 300-01, when he also lists Ruth's year of birth as 1910 and implies that she married as late 1927 or early 1928.
 42. Grove, "Chronology," in Landau, *Lee Krasner: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 301, claims that Krasner's parents moved to Huntington, when they actually first went to Greenlawn. Confirmed by the author's interviews with Krasner's nieces.
 43. Ivan G. Olinsky is identified as a Jew in Isaac Landman, ed., in collaboration with ... Louis Rittenberg ... [et al.]; *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. (New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, c1939-43). Olinsky did not advertise his Jewish identity, and when he returned from studying in Europe, on Sept. 12, 1910, immigration agents at Ellis Island noted with skepticism that for ethnicity, he "claims U.S.A."
 44. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (1874-76; repr. Ware, Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions, 1996), 523.
 45. Landau, *Lee Krasner: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 25-26, CR3, dates this *Self-Portrait* "c. 1930"; however, Krasner's records at the National Academy show that by Jan. 26, 1929, she had won admission to the Life Class on probation, so this work had already been submitted.
 46. Lee Krasner to Barbara Rose, "American Great: Lee Krasner," *Vogue*, June 1972, 120.
 47. Rosenberg and Greenberg typically mentioned Krasner as either Pollock's wife or his widow. For an exception, see Clement Greenberg, *Art News*, Summer 1957, in John O'Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg, The Collected Essays and Criticism: Affirmations and Refusals, 1950-1956*, vol. 4 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), 24, where he refers to Krasner in a list of eleven painters dismissed as producing "late Cubism," which was "the end of something, not the beginning."
 48. Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Art Czar: The Rise and Fall of Clement Greenberg* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2006), 137, referring also to Mary McCarthy's review in *Partisan Review* of Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (New York: Horizon, 1959).

49. This photograph was itself a response to an open letter written by 28 artists to the president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, protesting a juried exhibition intended to increase the museum's collection of contemporary art. Krasner was not invited to sign the letter.
50. Munro, *Originals*, 105. Krasner told this story to more than one interviewer, but this is the most complete version.
51. Lee Krasner interviewed by Carol Jenkins, November 14, 1973, NBC news archives, cartridge 003, p. 0369.
52. Naomi Goodman to Lee Krasner, letter of March 1, 1979, Lee Krasner Papers, AAA, reel 3773, frame 275.
53. See Michael Cannell, "An Interview with Lee Krasner," in *Arts Magazine*, 59, no. 1 (Sept. 1984): 87-PG#, reprinted in Wendy Slatkin, *The Voices of Women Artists* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 245.
54. Helen Frankenthaler's father was a judge in the New York State Supreme Court.
55. Clement Greenberg, "The Jewish Dickens: A Review of *The World of Sholom Aleichem* by Maurice Samuel," *The Nation*, October 16, 1943, in John O'Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism: Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), 156.
56. Clement Greenberg, "Under Forty: A Symposium on American Literature and the Younger Generation of American Jews," *Contemporary Jewish Record*, February 1944, in O'Brian, ed. *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1, 176-77.
57. Clement Greenberg, "Self-Hatred and Jewish Chauvinism: Some Reflections on 'Positive Jewishness,'" *Commentary*, November 1950, in O'Brian ed., *Clement Greenberg, The Collected Essays and Criticism: Affirmations and Refusals, 1950-1956*, vol. 3, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995), 45.
58. For a discussion of Jewish women and feminist art of this same era, see Gail Levin, "Censorship, Politics, and Sexual Imagery by Jewish-American Feminist Artists," in *Nashim*, (Fall 2007). Even Eleanor Munro tells me that she is part Jewish.
59. Barbara Rose Papers, The Getty, Box 3, folder 25, Krasner-Rose interview, 93.
60. For other theories about Krasner's collages, see Ellen Landau, "Channeling Desire: Lee Krasner's Collages of the Early 1950s," *Woman's Art Journal*, vol.18, no. 2,(Fall 1997/Winter 1998), 27-30.
61. Landau, *Lee Krasner: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 154-56.
62. See the Lee Krasner Papers, AAA, reel 3775, frame 933 for the Israel Emergency Fund in 1968 and reel 3776, frame 627 for the Israel Emergency Fund in 1969 and reel 3773, frame 261, for the Women's Campaign for UJA-Federation in 1979. She also supported such causes as the Civil Rights movement (reel 3775, frame 947) and various political campaigns, from Allard K. Lowenstein (reel 3771, frame 430) to Eugene McCarthy.
63. The Abstract Expressionist (Jewish) artist Adolph Gottlieb, who died in 1974, and his wife, Esther Gottlieb, earlier left their estate to a foundation which aids mature artists. In the Orthodox home in which Krasner grew up, an essential feature would be the tsedeka box, often placed next to the Sabbath candles, for donating money for the community. This ancient Jewish tradition sometimes took the form of a family donating money to Tsedakah on Friday, just before the Shabbat candles are lit. The Hebrew word tsedek means justice.



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NEGOTIATING ABSTRACTION

Lee Krasner, Mercedes Carles Matter, and the Hofmann Years

By Joan Marter

Lee Krasner began her serious involvement with abstraction at New York's Hofmann School of Fine Arts in 1937. There she developed a formal vocabulary that she sustained for much of her career. Hans Hofmann's impact can be measured in Krasner's angular charcoal drawings of the nude that she produced in his class (Fig. 1), and in her vivid still-life compositions from that period.

Another student at the Hofmann School was Mercedes Carles (later Matter; 1913-2001). While Krasner explored the dynamism of bodies thrusting in space, Carles had a bold but more static response to the male and female nudes they sketched in Hofmann's class. Both young women shared a passionate interest in the burgeoning involvement with abstraction among New York artists in the 1930s.

Krasner and Carles had first crossed paths on December 2, 1936, under most unusual circumstances: they met in jail. For these two young women artists from completely dissimilar backgrounds—two different worlds—an unlikely friendship followed.¹

An American-born child of a Russian immigrant family, Krasner was a product of the Brooklyn public school system and the tuition-free Woman's Art School of The Cooper Union (1926-28) before studying at the Arts Students League (1928), and the National Academy of Design (1928-1932). Her determination is evident in two early self portraits, one painted in the basement of her parent's house in Brooklyn (1929; Fig. 2), and the one made to fulfill a requirement for her promotion to the Academy's "Life Drawing" class (see p. 30, Fig. 2).² Krasner was active in the Artists Union and a frequent participant in artists' protests. She believed, like Trotsky, that artists could create abstract work and that art radicals should be more concerned with a better world than with making propaganda. After working for the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) for several months in 1934, the following year Krasner became an assistant in the Mural Division of the Federal Art Project (FAP), which was part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

Mercedes Carles was a privileged child of the Philadelphia artist Arthur B. Carles and Mercedes de Cordoba, a musician, actress, and sometime model for Edward Steichen and other members of the Photo Secession group. (In 1921 the family lived for a year in Steichen's home in the village of Voulangis, outside Paris.³) The beautiful, dark-haired "Mercy" lived mostly with her mother and was educated in private schools in the United States and Europe. She began painting at an early age, and after 1926 she visited her father in Philadelphia, and



Fig. 1. Lee Krasner, *Nude Study from Life* (1938), charcoal on paper, 25" x 20". Private collection.

spent the rest of the year in New York City and abroad.⁴ In the summer of 1932 Mercedes Carles studied with Alexander Archipenko in Woodstock, New York,⁵ and then began taking classes at the Art Students League, where she first encountered Hans Hofmann, a German artist who had just emigrated to the United States. By 1933 she was enrolled in his evening painting course, and soon after began an affair with Hofmann, who was living in America without his wife. He became Carles's mentor and father figure as well as her lover. The following year, Carles joined Hofmann and her father in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where the two men were teaching a summer course.⁶ Carles had not seen her father for several years, and the sojourn was an occasion to present herself to him as a young woman and aspiring modernist painter (Fig. 3).



Fig. 2. Lee Krasner, *Self-Portrait* (c. 1929), oil on canvas, 30 1/2" x 32 1/2". The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Eda Mirsky Mann, 1988.

By 1936 she was working on the WPA/FAP mural project, and she was present on December 2 of that year when a protest took place—one of the many during that period—over the sudden discharge of five hundred WPA artists and models who were supposed to have been employed that week. Among the crowd outside the WPA Arts Building at 6 East 39 Street were hundreds of screaming artists and models. Police battled with the rioters, resulting in injuries to fifty people and the arrest of more than two hundred for disorderly conduct. Decades later, Mercedes Carles Matter recalled the day:

I met Lee Krasner in jail. I was on the WPA, and I was seeing a lot of [Arshile] Gorky at the time and he wanted to educate me because I was from finishing schools, and knew nothing about politics. So he brought me a whole library of communist literature. Then I was on the WPA and hired a model and she said she couldn't pose for me because she was going to a meeting at the Artists' Union. So I decided to go to see what it was like. They were all fired up.... They were going to have a sit-down strike, so they all rushed from the Artists' Union up to the [WPA] headquarters. I rushed over to Gorky's studio and told him to come. He stayed home and I ended up in jail. I was just an observer. I landed in jail and Lee Krasner was there and that's how we first met.⁷

It was not Krasner's first such experience. She later recalled: "I was practically in every jail in New York City. Each time we were fired, or threatened with being fired, we'd go out and picket. On many occasions we'd be taken off in a Black Maria and locked in a cell."⁸

Krasner's friendship with Mercedes Carles, their links to

artists of the Hofmann School and the American Abstract Artists, and their art of the 1930s and early 1940s are illuminated by unpublished letters from Krasner to Carles and by the latter's unpublished autobiographical essay, written in the seventies. These documents provide insights not only to changes in Krasner's approach to abstraction but to connections between her personal life and her artistic trajectory.

Mercedes Carles considered Lee Krasner among her closest friends in the 1930s and into the 1940s. Their association probably led to Krasner's enrollment at Hofmann's school in 1937. "I couldn't afford my own model and the school was right there, a block away from where I lived," she said later.⁹ In Hofmann's studio, Krasner had an introduction to the European avant-garde and learned about advanced modernism. Hofmann had known Henri Matisse and Picasso in Paris, and had taught in Munich before coming to the United States. His teaching often was gender-biased, and even his personal letters to Mercedes, his erstwhile lover, were patronizing, as he remarked about his interest in "the reputation of his girl students."¹⁰

Krasner respected Hofmann and considered his instruction essential to her development as an artist, but she resented his practice of drawing corrections directly on his students' work, ripping their drawings into pieces, and other manifestations of his rigid and aggressive teaching methods. His emphasis on negative and positive space and on circular and rectangular motion is evident in her drawings of the time, such as the *Nude Study from Life* (Fig. 1). Krasner's untitled still life (1938; Pl. 10), in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, shows the interaction of color and form that resulted from her study with Hofmann. In it, Krasner eliminated the outline and constructed the composition of vivid hues that form shapes loosely related to one another. She retained a suggestion of a receding table top, and realized Hofmann's "push-pull" dictum with color. Hofmann taught his students that colors interact in a way that could be understood abstractly, and these mosaic-like



Fig. 3. Mercedes Matter, *Untitled* (1934-35), oil on canvas, 12" x 16". Private collection. Photo courtesy Mark Borghi Gallery.

dabs and patches forecast Krasner's later creation of mosaic tables and her continuing interest in fauvist color passages on a white ground. A comparison with Carles's *Tabletop Still Life no. 5* of the same year (1938; Pl. 11) demonstrates how Krasner had boldly abandoned discrete outlines of specific objects for sweeping curves and broadly-brushed passages of vivid colors, while Carles had moved from small, tight, heavily worked sections to more freely brushed areas.

Hofmann taught the importance of gesture and the dynamic movement of form, and his best students moved beyond cubism to unified compositions that provoke multiple readings. Some of Hofmann's students actually produced works more advanced than their instructor's by the end of the 1930s. Krasner and Carles also promoted *his* success by arranging exhibitions and sales of his paintings in the 1940s.

Many factors led to Krasner's individualized approach to abstraction. Among these were her friendships with Willem de Kooning and Arshile Gorky, her conversations about art with Harold Rosenberg, and her relationship with the artist Igor Pantuhoff, who worked in a conservative style but gave Krasner books on Matisse, Picasso, and Raoul Dufy. In addition, 1936 and 1937 were eventful years in New York, with two major exhibitions organized by the Museum of Modern Art: "Cubism and Abstract Art," followed by "Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism." Both featured primarily European modernists, with a few Americans such as Alexander Calder. These exhibitions had a profound effect on young American artists seeking to work in an abstract mode, whether geometric or biomorphic.

It was probably through Carles that Krasner became involved with the American Abstract Artists (AAA) group. In 1936 Mercedes Jeanne Carles (as she was called at the time) became a founding member of the AAA, exhibiting with the group until 1942. She later noted, "As in my case, the majority of its members had been students of Hofmann."¹¹ Other women artists working in progressive styles who joined the AAA in the 1930s included Gertrude Greene (1904-56), Alice Trumbull Mason (1904-71), Esphyr Slobodkina (1908-2002),¹² and Rosalind Bengelsdorf (1916-79). Although Carles exhibited with the group, her paintings (for example Pl. 12), do not indicate a similar acceptance of abstraction. One of her untitled still life paintings was reproduced in the 1938 AAA yearbook, and the following year "Jeanne Carles" was listed as a member of the group but did not have an image reproduced in the yearbook.¹³ She seems to have lost interest in the group as her relationship with Herbert Matter, the Swiss-born designer and photographer, deepened. They were married in 1941.

Krasner's energetic paintings of the period featured a geometric clarity, vivid palette, and elegant line that was indebted to such European modernists as Matisse and Piet Mondrian. While accepting the official AAA aesthetic philosophy, emphasizing abstraction,¹⁴ Krasner nevertheless followed her own creative trajectory that led in the late 1930s to sophisticated renditions of synthetic cubism. Krasner exhibited with the AAA from 1939 through 1943, showing exuberant abstract compositions that often surpassed those of the other accomplished female members of that group.

While active with the AAA, Krasner met Mondrian, whose



Fig 4. Lee Krasner, *Abstract Human Figure* (1938), collage and oil on paper, 25 3/4" x 20". Private collection.

principles of Neo-Plasticism certainly had an effect on her work. She even danced with the artist at the Café Society Uptown, later recalling, "I loved jazz and he loved jazz, so I saw him several times and we went dancing like crazy."¹⁵ She also escorted Mondrian through an AAA Annual exhibition at the Riverside Museum,¹⁶ where, upon seeing her painting in the show, he apparently complimented her "strong inner rhythm."¹⁷ Hofmann, who praised Mondrian, calling him "the architect of modern painting," demonstrated in his classes how he condensed and abstracted nature.

Krasner made compositions in the early 1940s that demonstrate her admiration for Mondrian in their use of geometric elements. The AAA considered "abstraction" to apply to all works by artists who recognized that color, form, and composition have qualities in and of themselves. As a result, hard-edge geometric works hung alongside biomorphic paintings. Krasner's abstractions typically were derived from the traditional still-life set up, as found at the Hofmann School. Works such as her *Abstract Human Figure* (1938; Fig. 4) and an untitled still life (1942; Fig. 5) feature brilliant hues, varieties of textures, thick lines, and no overlapping of forms as part of her sustained involvement with abstraction. Whether or not they are hybrids of still life and human figure, as Robert Hobbs has suggested,¹⁸ her emphasis is on the independence of color and form as separate from description.

By 1939 Krasner was appointed to the Executive Board of



Fig. 5 Lee Krasner, *untitled (Still Life)* (c. 1942) oil on linen, 21" x 27". Collection of Gordon F. Hampton. Photo courtesy Robert Miller Gallery.

the Artists Union. As she later explained, "My experience with leftist movements in the late 1930s made me move as far away from them as possible....They weren't interested in an independent and experimental art, but rather linked it to their economic and political program."¹⁹

When in January 1942, Krasner exhibited an abstract composition in "French and American Painting" at the McMillen Gallery on East 56 Street, organized by John Graham, she considered this a pivotal moment in her career. Her work appeared with such European masters as Matisse and Picasso, but also with de Kooning, Stuart Davis, and Jackson Pollock. This was her first meeting with Pollock, and later that year, they began living together. Now a successful abstract artist, she transferred her efforts from the WPA/FAP to the War Services Office, where she managed to employ Pollock on the display she was supervising.

Krasner was determined to secure art world connections for Pollock, later telling an interviewer:

When I met Pollock and responded to his work the way I did, which was . . . very enthusiastic, I certainly brought people in that I knew to see his work. Through Herbert and Mercedes Matter, who were close friends of mine at the time, we got Sandy [Alexander] Calder in to see his work, we got James Johnson Sweeney in to see his work.²⁰

Unlike Eva Hesse and many other twentieth-century women artists, Lee Krasner left few writings; however, letters she exchanged with Mercedes Carles Matter reveal her state of mind in the 1940s. From her home at 46 East 8 Street, probably in 1944, Krasner wrote to her friend, who had moved to Santa Monica, California, with her husband the previous year:

Dear Carles. If it's any consolation, to you,

we miss you and Herbert as much as you miss us. It's hard for me to realize that you are 3000 miles away. I keep thinking that you're on some prolonged vacation and Herbert is just too busy to see anyone. Your shack sounds wonderful and I really wish I was there—however don't start getting ideas—I just don't like the sound of California—but the waves and the aloneness that kind of aloneness, seems wonderful—the fact that you can think about painting again and be away from the hysteria of the city—all that I envy.²¹

In the same letter, she describes how she and Pollock helped to arrange a show for Hans Hofmann at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery.

I was pretty busy arranging a little dinner party.... The dinner was a complete success....Yes, I'm cooking these days—seriously. As I was saying after a most charming dinner we all went to Hans's place to show Peggy his work—now mind this business of casually walking down

four flights at 46 East 8th and walking up three flights at 44 East 8th. Took all winter to plot—nothing must go wrong.... However the gods had destined a successful evening and Peggy was terribly excited about the work and asked if she couldn't come up and see them quietly, and to sum up she's giving Hans a show this March.²²

Sidney Janis illustrated Krasner's *Composition* (c. 1939; Pl. 13)(now at the Smithsonian American Art Museum) in the catalogue for his pioneering exhibition in 1943, *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America*.²³ Her inclusion in both John Graham's 1942 group exhibition and a catalogue of the most advanced art in the United States signaled her growing recognition in the art world.

Pollock's first solo exhibition was held November 9-27, 1943, at Art of This Century Gallery. Howard Putzel, Peggy Guggenheim's assistant, was instrumental in bringing notice to Pollock's work and was attentive to both Krasner and Pollock. However, Krasner soon was struggling with her own work—trying to "lose Cubism" and "absorb Pollock."²⁴ After the vivid and forceful abstractions that she had created, her painting faltered as she devoted more attention to advancing Pollock's career. She wrote to Mercedes in 1944, "I'm painting and nothing happens. It's maddening. I showed [Sidney] Janis my last three paintings. He said they were too much Pollock—it's completely idiotic, but I have a feeling from now on that's going to be the story. As I said, I envied you your aloneness and the waves. Good night and my love to Herbert."²⁵

Krasner and Pollock had decided to leave Manhattan, and in 1944 they spent several months at the Springs, a small fishing village in the town of East Hampton, Long Island, on the Atlantic Ocean. There she experienced for herself "the waves" and the proximity to nature that she envied as an escape from

city life. Depressed after her father died in November 1944, Krasner wrote to her friend the following month that she felt:

a certain uninterest or rather a strong desire to be alone—It's all tied up with the death of my father. It happened a month ago after a two year illness. In spite of the fact that I knew it was coming and in spite of his age, he was 81, it pretty well tears you to pieces and is like some terrific eruption with everything being torn up.... I must wait until spaces are closed and time changes feeling.²⁶

Krasner went on to write that Pollock's work would be shown at the San Francisco Museum "in a month or so."

Many authors have noted that Krasner's exposure to Pollock's dynamic painting caused her to falter in her own artistic development.²⁷ But the death of her father and its devastating impact on her psyche has been insufficiently acknowledged as another source of her inability to complete a work at that time. After her father's death, Krasner changed her mind about not needing to be married to Pollock, and they were married on October 25, 1945. The following spring, Krasner set up her easel in the back bedroom of their house on Fireplace Road in the Springs and began her Little Image paintings. She initiated a new chapter in her quest for a personal style.

Krasner met Jackson Pollock at a time when she was considered a formidable, well-connected young modernist. Her negotiation with abstraction in the 1930s and early 1940s situates her among the avant-garde American artists of that period. Her trajectory, which had soared before Pollock, resumed in the 1950s.

Mercedes Matter warrants more attention. Often overshadowed by artists she energetically championed during her lifetime, she is among a group of women artists identified with the New York School who have yet to be fully recognized for their achievements. •

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Notes

1. My thanks to the estate of Mercedes Carles Matter and the Mark Borghi Gallery for making available to me unpublished archival materials on Matter, Lee Krasner, and Hans Hofmann.
2. John Russell, "Art: Self-Portraits at Long Island's Heckscher," *New York Times* (July 13, 1979). Although she was reprimanded by the Life Class Committee, which did not believe that her self-image was painted outdoors, critics have noted the honesty and tenacity of this painting. Ellen Landau writes of the self portrait holding a flower, that it "is closest to the style of her National Academy of Design teachers Leon Kroll and Charles Courtney Curran"; Ellen G. Landau, *Lee Krasner, A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York, Harry Abrams, 1995), 25.
3. Information from an unpublished autobiographical sketch, written by Mercedes Carles Matter c. 1977 in the collection of the estate of Mercedes Matter. (Hereafter, Mercedes Matter, autobiography)
4. Mercedes Matter's parents married in 1909 and divorced in 1926.

5. "Mercedes Matter Autobiography," *Mercedes Matter Drawings* (New York: New York Studio School, 1996), n. p.
6. Arthur Carles and Hofmann, who had first met years earlier in Paris, deepened their friendship that summer. See Barbara Wolanin, "Prelude to Provincetown: Hofmann, Matter, Carles, and the Legacy of their 1934 Gloucester Summer," in *From Hawthorne to Hofmann, Provincetown Vignettes, 1899-1945* (New York: Hollis Taggart Galleries), 40-57. Also see *The Provocative Years 1935-1945, The Hans Hofmann School and its Students in Provincetown* (Provincetown, MA: Provincetown Art Association and Museum, 1990).
7. Taped interview of Jeffrey Potter with Mercedes and Herbert Matter, July 6, 1982, on deposit at the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, East Hampton, New York.
8. Quoted by David Bourdon, "Lee Krasner: I'm Embracing the Past," *Village Voice* (March 7, 1977), 57. Also see Ellen G. Landau, "Lee Krasner's Early Career, Part One," *Arts Magazine* (October 1981): 110-22.
9. David Bourdon, "Lee Krasner," 57.
10. Letter from Hans Hofmann to Mercedes Carles, ca. 1936, Estate of Mercedes Matter.
11. Mercedes Matter, autobiography.
12. For more on Alice Trumbull Mason, see Marilyn R. Brown, "Three Generations of Artists," *WAJ* 4 (Spring 1983): 1-8; and Virginia Pitts Rembert's review of Gail Stavitsky and Elizabeth Wylie, *The Life and Art of Esphyr Slobodkina*, *WAJ* 15 (Fall 94/Winter 95): 52-53.
13. *American Abstract Artists, Yearbooks for 1938, 1939, 1946* (New York: Arno Press, 1969).
14. The General Prospectus of the American Abstract Artists of 1936 includes a statement on the Character of the Group: "We believe that a new art form has been established which is definite enough in character to demand this unified effort. We recognize, however, the need for individuals to experiment and deviate at times from what may seem established directions. For this reason we place a liberal interpretation upon the word 'abstract', a word which we moreover recognize as neither adequate nor accurate." (Quoted in *Abstraction across America, 1934-1946* (New York: Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, 1996).
15. Bourdon, "Lee Krasner," 57.
16. Ibid.
17. Jeffrey Grove, "Chronology: Lee Krasner, 1908-1984" in Landau, *Lee Krasner, A Catalogue Raisonné*, 305.
18. Robert Hobbs, *Lee Krasner* (New York: Abbeville, 1993), 26.
19. Jeffrey Grove, "Chronology," in Landau, *Lee Krasner, A Catalogue Raisonné*, 304-05.
20. Interview with Lee Krasner by Doris Holmes, 1972, transcript, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
21. Letter from Lee Krasner to Mercedes Matter, c. 1944, Estate of Mercedes Matter.
22. Ibid.
23. Sidney Janis, *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America* (New York: Arno Press, 1943), 55, fig. 31. The exhibition was held in New York at the Mortimer Brandt Gallery in January, 1944, and was also shown in Cincinnati, Denver, Seattle, Santa Barbara, and San Francisco.
24. Jeffrey Grove, "Chronology," in *Lee Krasner, A Catalogue Raisonné*, 307.
25. Letter from Lee Krasner to Mercedes Matter, c. 1944. Estate of Mercedes Matter.
26. Letter from Lee Krasner to Mercedes Matter, December 21, 1944. Estate of Mercedes Matter.
27. Ellen G. Landau, *Lee Krasner, A Catalogue Raisonné*, 97. Anne Wagner, "Lee Krasner as L.K.," *Representations* (Winter 1989): 42-56.

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Finding Afghanistan

A Bed of Red Flowers: In Search of My Afghanistan

By Nafiseh Pazira

New York: Free Press, 2005, 408 pp., \$15.00, paperback

Reviewed by Jasmine Dierckx

In 1978, five-year-old Nafiseh Pazira was marched to a prison in Kabul to visit her father, a prominent physician and one of thousands to be imprisoned by the Communist government that year. Frenzied and confused, she reached him only to be greeted with a stern rebuke. "You mustn't cry," her father warned her from behind the bars of his dark cell.

Organizing her family's escape from Afghanistan ten years later, Pazira still finds herself bound by the same injunction. "Boys my age are sent to the front line and return dead and injured. Girls carry the burden of an entire household." It is in part of the particular burden of the Afghan woman in exile, Pazira suggests, to make a final reckoning of her country's fate.

A Bed of Red Flowers is a memoir of young women's life in Afghanistan during the seventies and eighties, as well as Pazira's attempt, years later in exile, to understand her country's bloody disintegration. Pazira was born to a privileged



On Nafiseh Pazira, *Memories*, January 2004.

"Boys my age are sent to the front line and return dead and injured. Girls carry the burden of an entire household."

war. Barely older than life's purpose to Russian soldiers, a horse and a doll beside her to the Taliban. Early in her stay a window to take sound of gunshots. Women, her hands he were without windows of their to freedom in its identity as a Muslim. Here and in to suggest that cannot be at one point, all refugees can for her, as Afghanistan hand to us that I create an Pazira is exchanging of women. The man a long memo setting due. Talk and carry poor refugees (and the reluctance of a women to be "seen appear the next day enraged fathers. It and suspicion as a have the film now do down to be a p

POETRY

Suite For Eleanor



When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to protect human misery rather than avenge it?
—Eleanor Roosevelt, 1884-1962

I The Mountain
Difficult to say what the supreme Moment is in the life of a mountain, But in your vision when they made you a delegate To the United Nations you pushed through. A finished draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

But when you discovered you too could charm and organize. Opposition to lynching, support for a World Court. When banks were made of marble and people were growing hungrier.

You took to the road like he to clove, learned to emulate Opposition to lynching, support for a World Court. And for them dwellers, farmers, dirt farmers, negroes, Jews, women—

You backholed here At the golden end of it. A man like the Goffins and

Twanging this land is a ribbon connected And a Khan beauty of

Your enemies called you They said the two of you

That is what pigs do. With a nasty snorting. In their way, that they

iv **The Bird, 1950**

A war, and then the far Unintelligibly toward's Ahead, the mist. Still,

Swart land of liberty was Black contralto voice. Of the American Revolu

To sing in their hall, so On the Lincoln Memorial With war. As if we'd

v **Intefade**

Sensitivity is a little bit What of fun—their

Where you eluded the screaming journalists

ESSAY

Pulp and Circumstance



published for soldiers during World War II. The new paperbacks cost as little as a quarter and were readily available in drugstores and newsstands all over America. While many of the lesbian pulps were quick knock-offs intended to tantalize and intrigue male readers, the earliest books, in particular, were intelligent and thoughtful, written to illuminate rather than sensationalize.

Two of my favorites from the era, *Women's Herald* (1950) and *The Girls in 3-H* (1959), both of which are highlighted in *Lesbian Pulp Fiction*, exuberantly served up a smorgasbord of new options for women, as the characters have home and explore work, careers, living arrangements, and an impressive range of both heterosexual and lesbian relationships. While their covers were designed to appeal to prurient interest, I suspect that sales of these two books, to both women and men, were also driven by the sheer thrill of discovering new options and seeing them solidified in print. Both books were ultimately empowering even a reader who made the most traditional of marriage could choose and had made the best one for herself.

the lesbians in these books come out pretty heterosexual counterparts. When you weigh success against the straight women's, a little oak, disappointed don't seem so bad compared are cups, being piled by married men, or, in frequent deaths of boyfriends, friends, and

Id War II novel *Women's Herald*—published autobiography of a French Civil Soldier"—can her son's Division of the Free French Army. The

PHOTOGRAPHY

THE DOUBLE VISION OF KAREN DAVIS



Above: First and Last Picture of My Mother and Me.
Left: Karen Davis, self-portrait.

In "The McCann Family," Davis's powerful word-image piece on her childhood, she arranges dolls that her sister Cheryl played with long ago in a family portrait. In photograph and text, the child-dolls seem to be the main players, but the subject that gradually emerges in both, perhaps not unironically, is the parents' dominating presence. Davis, like her sister, has created a stand-in family through which the painful truths of the family dynamics are exposed. When you scratch the surface of Karen Davis' photographs, layers of meaning are exposed. They tease loose memory, the passage of time, and hidden associations.

—Ellen Feldman

Ellen Feldman is a photographer and writer with a Ph.D. in cinema studies from New York University. She is principal course developer at New Technology, Inc.

The McCann Family

When we were small, my younger sister Cheryl had a set of four mechanical dolls. She called them the McCann Family. There was a boy doll, girl doll, a man and woman doll. They were a fairly dignified version of the Davis family. Cheryl was "Tom McCann," the boy doll, because I think she liked the idea of being the spry and adventurous child. I was "Mary Ann McCann," the girl doll. Cheryl had Mother McCann tell Tom, "Mary Ann is wonderful," and "Why can't you be like your sister, Mary Ann?"

McCann would be would tell every-

body help. Later

se. Cheryl dis-

tingled him with

ars. Cheryl was

thought Mother

looked child. He

he left had about

fully sided with

them." One day

there a house, left

to as a preschool,

amphet. Father

about his son.

Featured In Future Issues

Art inspired by the feminist movement. Elissa Auther reviews *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution*, the catalogue from the exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, while Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw discusses *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art*.

Food writer Jan Zita Grover critiques the "locavore" (eating locally) movement in her review of *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*.

Are women soldiers any more or less likely to become torturers than men? Erika Munk looks at recent studies of the Abu-Ghraib scandal.

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Eva Hesse: Catalogue Raisonné (2 vols.)

edited by Renate Petzinger and Barry Rosen, with Annette Spohn
Yale University Press and Museum
Wiesbaden, 2006.

Eva Hesse: Datebooks, 1964/65 *A Facsimile Edition*

introduction by Sabine Folie,
transcription and annotation by
Georgia Holz and Eva Kernbauer
Yale University Press in association with
the Allen Memorial Art Museum,
Oberlin College, 2006.

Eva Hesse Drawing

edited by Catherine de Zegher
The Drawing Center / Yale University
Press, 2006.

Eva Hesse: Sculpture

edited by Elisabeth Sussman and
Fred Wasserman
The Jewish Museum / Yale University
Press, 2006.

Encountering Eva Hesse

edited by Griselda Pollock and
Vanessa Corby
Prestel, 2006.

Reviewed by Karen Kurczynski

We are witnessing the apotheosis of Eva Hesse. Hesse's work in sculpture as well as drawing and painting was long recognized by artists and critics. But until recently it was known primarily through a long interview by Cindy Nemser from 1970, and Lucy Lippard's 1976 monograph, which remains the single extant monograph of the artist (until Elisabeth Sussman completes her own volume in progress).¹ As the essays in the anthology *Encountering Eva Hesse* describe in detail, these early writings shaped for three decades our conception of Hesse as a particular kind of woman artist struggling to establish her autonomy—from her traumatic past, from her chauvinist husband, the sculptor Tom Doyle, and from the general structure of the 1960s New York art world,

avowedly male-dominated in both its established social hierarchies and an aggressively anti-humanist formal rigor, which left no room for personal concerns then labeled "feminine." Hesse's tragic early death from a brain tumor made her an art martyr in 1970.² The possibility that this illness might have been caused directly or indirectly by the experimental materials of her art—the toxicity of resin or fiberglass—makes her the ultimate martyr (beyond even Van Gogh) because she could have literally died for her art.

All five recent publications on Hesse make valuable contributions. The three anthologies (abbreviated in page references as DR for Drawing, SC for Sculpture, EN for Encountering) contribute insights into process and interpretation, and the Catalogue Raisonné (CR in page references) is an indispensable resource. Nevertheless, the facsimile datebooks (DB in page references) and the accounts of the problems of making Hesse's most well-known, now highly fragile works available for exhibition (described by several different authors) point to a historiographic situation of overt canonization in the most traditional, individualist terms.

Anne Wagner's 1994 account, "Another Hesse," provides the most sophisticated attempt thus far to separate the complex meanings embodied in Hesse's work from the overdetermined understanding of Hesse herself resulting from precisely this sort of art-historical hagiography, developed over the past thirty years in relation to an attractive, female, seemingly self-absorbed and traumatized artist, who died young, tragically and innocently.³ Unlike some contemporary scholars, I welcome the accounts of thorough and engaging writers like Anna Chave to explore the relationship of Hesse's long series of illnesses to a broader history of feminine identity in her controversial 1992 essay,⁴ or Griselda Pollock in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, to relate the tragedy of Hesse's family losses in the Holocaust and its aftermath to her work's iconology. Yet I remain acutely wary of the danger of further reifying Hesse as a special kind of saint—the singularly victimized persona which such texts still inescapably imply,

even those as mindful and deliberate as Pollock's—when the reason we care about Hesse in the first place is because of her creative work. Hesse would have been the first to laugh at such a prospect of heroization.⁵

As Pollock notes in *Encountering Eva Hesse*, the "sacralization" of Hesse began immediately with the articles published just after her death (EN32). Hesse's own extensive personal writings led critics to focus on her person, and thus narrow the possible readings of her art. Hesse herself asserted in the Nemser interview, for example, that "I have confidence in my understanding of the formal to the point that I don't play with it. [...] So it is inevitable that it is my life, my feelings, my thoughts...." (EN217). Such unambiguous assertions that Hesse's process related intimately to her personal subjectivity set in motion a particularly feminist tendency to conflate her life and art in the 1970s, despite the obvious problem that without Hesse to formulate what that subjectivity is or was, we are left only with our own interpretations arising inevitably from our own psychic dramas. Such interpretations hardly relate on the universal level, where her abstract sculpture speaks so eloquently. The notorious fragility and insistent decay of her deliberately experimental processes, moreover, have led collectors to an unusual degree of protectiveness over what Renate Petzinger refers to as their "fragile treasures" (EN162), compounding the fetishization which normally accrues to unique, non-functional objects.

The apotheosis of Eva Hesse in the academic and museological discourses of art history seems complete now that we can hold in our hands that foundational canonizing document, the Catalogue Raisonné, produced in a beautiful edition of glossy color pages encased in a silvery silk sheen; and even more deliciously, two facsimiles of her tiny personal datebooks. These records of her years with Tom Doyle in Kettwig-on-the-Ruhr, Germany, in 1964–65, are replete with notations in blue "pen" and script so ingeniously messy it needed decoding in a separate typed transcript, of all Hesse's daily meetings and impressions in these formative years. Hesse was a perfect candidate for sainthood, not only



Fig. 1. Eva Hesse, (No Title) (1961), oil on canvas. 66 3/4" x 86 1/2". Museum Wiesbaden. © The Estate of Eva Hesse. Hauser & Wirth Zurich London.

because she was an art martyr but also because, as a particularly fragile and characteristically feminine creature (according to her diaries and to readings by Nemser, Lippard, Chave, and Pollock), perhaps she perfectly evokes the absolute benevolence of the female saint. How can Hesse's life help us now? Could we be comforted in some way by flipping through her datebooks with our own all-too-human hands as she, herself, once did? Why we need this fetishistic facsimile of her daybooks is beyond me. They are replete with highly important details like a trip to see the movie *Marriage Italian Style* (March 14, 1964); "all day in Scarsdale" (September 29, 1964); references to her repeated cramps, anxiety, and other maladies; and cryptic observations like "on my birthday all the workers celebrated with us" (January 11, 1965). Actually, perhaps I do understand: a saint requires relics.

But art is, after all, a fetish in our society. I have never joined the camp of iconoclasts like Guy Debord who insist solely on decrying this situation; a bit of pleasure is always in order. The datebooks impart some of the excitement of original archival research worthy of the recent television series "History Detectives." They also have a particular relevance considering not only the historical tendency to pin Hesse's self to her work, but also contemporaneous observations by both Mel Bochner and Robert Smithson that, in Smithson's words, "She had no external

insights, providing real food for thought, for example in the fact that Hesse saw Kenneth Noland's work on June 9, 1964; or particularly liked Pierre Alechinsky, Asger Jorn, and Alain Davie at Documenta III on June 29; or began a work (now lost) in lead wire but changed to plaster when she ran out of metal on December 4. While the diaries of this period (now archived at the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, and microfilmed in the Archives of American Art) reveal a Hesse "inwardly torn up, bitterly rejecting and yet optimistically clinging to her problematic relationship with Doyle" (DB4), one is hard put to find any direct evidence of these or any feelings other than illnesses in Hesse's laconic notations of people who came to dinner, movies she saw, dates she got her period, and monuments studied on her travels.⁶ In fact, the entries become driest at the very nadir of her breakup with Doyle in August 1965. Anne Wagner observes that the diaries are not mirrors of Hesse's inner life but in fact profoundly performative, as noted by Sabine Folie (DB7).⁷ Folie takes pains to assert that the diaries "offer a self-presentation in fragmented form" (DB10) and that we must then resist the tendency to read into Hesse the very physically and psychologically tortured personality which manifests there. Such a consciousness is requisite in the historical researcher, but not necessarily present in the average museumgoer or book

collector. I, for one, find it not only beside the point but distinctly unpleasant to read Hesse's repeated notations of her doctor visits, colds, cramps, boils, and broken toes.

notion of a world outside hers. I saw her as a very interior person making psychic models" (DB1). After Hesse's psychoanalyst advised her to keep a diary in her teenage years, she developed what Lippard called a "near obsession with autobiography" (DB2). The juicy personal details have a problematic tendency to make us believe we know the artist or, worse, understand her as a person. Yet the datebooks also contain constructive art-historical

insights, providing real food for thought, for example in the fact that Hesse saw Kenneth Noland's work on June 9, 1964; or particularly liked Pierre Alechinsky, Asger Jorn, and Alain Davie at Documenta III on June 29; or began a work (now lost) in lead wire but changed to plaster when she ran out of metal on December 4. While the diaries of this period (now archived at the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, and microfilmed in the Archives of American Art) reveal a Hesse "inwardly torn up, bitterly rejecting and yet optimistically clinging to her problematic relationship with Doyle" (DB4), one is hard put to find any direct evidence of these or any feelings other than illnesses in Hesse's laconic notations of people who came to dinner, movies she saw, dates she got her period, and monuments studied on her travels.⁶ In fact, the entries become driest at the very nadir of her breakup with Doyle in August 1965. Anne Wagner observes that the diaries are not mirrors of Hesse's inner life but in fact profoundly performative, as noted by Sabine Folie (DB7).⁷ Folie takes pains to assert that the diaries "offer a self-presentation in fragmented form" (DB10) and that we must then resist the tendency to read into Hesse the very physically and psychologically tortured personality which manifests there. Such a consciousness is requisite in the historical researcher, but not necessarily present in the average museumgoer or book collector. I, for one, find it not only beside the point but distinctly unpleasant to read Hesse's repeated notations of her doctor visits, colds, cramps, boils, and broken toes.

Hesse's public statements often frankly contradicted her private ones regarding the relation of her emotional history to her work. In public texts such as the gallery statement for her landmark 1968 show, "Chain Polymers," Hesse did not describe any personal expressive intentions but rather the opposite, stating for example that her goal was a "non-logical self" and a sculpture that is "nothing" (SC9). This contradiction presents a compelling paradox for a woman artist whose public and private personas seemed so at odds, a traumatic personal history marked by Jewish and feminine identity publicly silenced by Hesse herself in the context of the explicitly masculine field of minimalist-inspired sculpture, with its absolute rejection of the personal, and only brought to light later as part of the feminist reaction against that culture. Benjamin Buchloh perhaps best expresses the social dimension of this problem, which it must be remembered faces any artist, male or female, in a mass-mediated society. In *Eva Hesse Drawing*, he refers to Hesse's "deeply seated epistemological skepticism (and her awareness of the necessity of resisting the instant spectacularization of all public declamations of subjective autonomy)" (DR150), thus portraying her as an active historical agent and not a victim of feminine circumstance. Given her deliberate choice to maintain this strict separation between her public and private personae in her lifetime, one wonders what Hesse herself would have made of this overt spectacularization of her personal effects by contemporary fans insistent on making public her entire persona as the stuff of genius.

The Catalogue Raisonné project has published the first two of four planned volumes. Volumes I and II cover painting and sculpture, respectively, while Volumes III and IV will focus on drawings. The catalogue is the result of a multi-year effort initiated by Renata Petzinger, as described in *Encountering*

Eva Hesse (EN162), to compile all the extant works, some 135 paintings, 176 sculptures, and more than 700 works on paper, and to expand the existing catalogue of her sculpture by Bill Barrette.⁸ A biographical chronology, detailed exhibition history, and bibliography accompany each volume in English and German. The Paintings volume provides a lush record of Hesse's student work, beginning at Pratt Institute in the early 1950s, demonstrating her facility with styles ranging from Abstract Expressionism to monochromes made under Josef Albers at Yale, to the distinctive, emphatically material and playful, bold, deliberately mechanical figural paintings she made in the 1960s. In *Encountering Eva Hesse*, Alison Rowley considers some of these works, in particular seeming one-offs like P 105 (No Title) (1961; Fig. 1). Rowley makes an excellent case for considering this work in relation to Pablo Picasso as well as Helen Frankenthaler, an artist equally concerned with problems of sentiment and intellect, materiality and conceptual structure, issues much closer than previously thought to Hesse's own concerns at the time. The Sculpture volume includes both test pieces and the more familiar canonized sculptures, plus several previously unknown works such as the diminutive, hybrid painted objects made in 1964 which open the sequence. The major perplexing aspect of the catalogue is the inexplicable substitution of old black-and-white photographs for several major works which appear nowhere in color. Obviously due to the extreme brittleness and fragility of pieces like *Vertiginous Detour* (1966) (S 29), or *Expanded Expansion* (1969) (S 148; Fig. 2), the owning institutions (in this case the Hirschhorn and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museums, respectively) refused to allow the works to be photographed in their current delicate state. Although the editors were able to at least find multiple images of the works from historic exhibitions, including a few in color, the result is a fetishization of the works in their "original" (or at least earlier) permutations, which goes directly against the wishes of the artist herself, according to contemporary colleagues like fabricator Doug Johns (EN92). In the case of works currently on view, such as *Vinculum II* (1969) (S 147), at the Museum

of Modern Art in New York, the substitution of a historical image seems perplexing.

Griselda Pollock's essay "A Very Long Engagement: Singularity and Difference in the Critical Writing on Eva Hesse" makes a strong case for the relevance of biographical detail and the possibilities of subjective interpretation in expanding the contemporary relevance of Eva Hesse's work. Taking direct issue with viewers who prefer to leave Hesse's female and Jewish identities "at the door," Pollock begins her essay with a careful recounting of what overtly feminist scholarship willing to investigate the relevance of the personal has illuminated about Hesse. Her account provides illuminating perspectives on the often unfairly maligned writings of Nemser, Lippard, and Chave, as well as the less controversial interpretations of Linda Norden, Briony Fer, and Anne Wagner. Pollock argues that January was a particularly bleak month for Hesse, particularly in 1966, when her mother had been dead for twenty years as of January 9, and by her birthday on January 11, she had been alive for thirty. This was precisely the month when Hesse made the sculpture *Hang Up*, consisting of a carefully wrapped frame shaded from grey to white, with a ca. 11-foot cord looping diagonally out into the viewer's space. *Hang Up* was a turning point in her work; Hesse referred to it in conversation with Nemser as "the most important sculpture I made" (EN38). Although, like Wagner before her, Pollock argues for the maximum openness and complexity in interpreting Hesse, she winds up policing the interpretive field in relation to *Hang Up* when she asserts that Wagner's reading of the sculpture as a window, recalling the one out of which Hesse's mother committed suicide, cannot be right, because *Hang Up* is horizontal, not vertical (39). Nevertheless, she builds on Wagner's conscientious interweaving of biography and formal analysis in relat-



Fig. 2. Eva Hesse, *Expanded Expansion* (1969), fiberglass, latex, cheesecloth. 3 units: 122" x 60" x 2"; 122" x 120" x 2"; 122" x 210" x 2". Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Photographed at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1969. © The Estate of Eva Hesse. Hauser & Wirth Zurich London.

ing not only *Hang Up* but also Hesse's series of late "window drawings" to the trauma of death conceived more broadly than merely the maternal loss. Pollock explores the Holocaust as a major personal and historical cause of that sense of loss, one which has been overlooked in feminist criticism. While this interpretation seems apt, her comparison of Hesse's window iconography to that of the overtly expressionist, insistently figurative Holocaust survivor and self-taught artist Charlotte Salomon pushes too far. The unnecessary and misleading comparison implies that Hesse's windows were nothing more than that, when in fact their material construction is much more open-ended, evocative, and iconographically complex, as Wagner herself demonstrated in the earlier essay. Pollock both argues for the availability of all possible readings of Hesse and develops her particular account focused on "the urgency of a single life lived in relation to loss" (EN52). In this way, the difficulty for even such a subtle scholar as Pollock—one of the most significant feminist art historians writing today—to maintain an open-minded tolerance for disagreement while advancing a specific reading becomes apparent. Pollock's essay ends by marginalizing the resilient and vital humor that defined both Hesse's personality and her art at least as much as her woundedness. Lippard's early monograph remains one of the texts which does most justice to the particular combination of

tragedy and comedy Hesse's work entails. This complementary disruption of social convention through a seeming excess of both trauma and humor allies it to the irreverent tradition of the grotesque.⁹ Perhaps Maurice Berger said it best in his own discussion of *Hang Up* in the 1992 Yale retrospective:

In its humor and optimism, the work alludes not only to the "hang-ups" associated with "mastering" the act of painting but to the broader cultural relationship between sexual and social hang-ups and the lack of personal freedom. [...] In the process of breaking these rules [of formalist painting], [Hesse] extended modern sculpture toward "what is yet not known"—an abstract field where humor, eroticism, and discovery were permitted and ultimately celebrated.¹⁰

Aside from Pollock's engaging introduction and essay, and the important interview with fabricator Doug Johns (which I address below), *Encountering Eva Hesse* appears in some respects self-indulgent. It opens with a lavish collection of photographs of Hesse herself, looking cute at openings and posing in her studio, where she appears alternately contemplative, distracted, forthright, or mysterious; such an opening immediately situates Hesse as important because she was young and attractive (a situation lamented by Wagner in "Another Hesse"). The images of Hesse's work in the volume, while lush and wide-ranging, are aggravating in their complete disregard to medium, chronology, relevance to the articles, or any other discernible order.¹¹ The rest of the texts are inconsistent in quality. Accounts by Vanessa Corby, Phyllida Barlow, and Joanna Greenhill of the authors' original encounters with Hesse's work in the 1970s illuminate the context of the authors' personal development more than they provide any real insight into Hesse's work. Greenhill's text, for one, provides significant insight into the gendered nature of British sculptural training in the 1970s. Corby, on the other hand, begins with a cringe-worthy account of her student assignment to study Hesse's drawings, punctuated by

irrelevant details. Corby decides halfway into the essay what she actually wants to say, eventually focusing on Hesse's identity as a Holocaust refugee. Although she makes some problematic assumptions about Hesse's personal response to surviving the Holocaust by examining unrelated accounts by other survivors in New York, her insight into both the likelihood of how the events of Hesse's childhood affected her as an artist and the methodological shifts affecting Hesse scholarship provides a significant corrective to the exclusive focus on gender—and the relative suppression of Jewish identity—established by Nemser and Lippard.

Eva Hesse: Sculpture catalogues a small show at the Jewish Museum, the first Hesse show in New York in thirty years. It brought together most of the work from Hesse's sole one-woman sculpture exhibition of 1968, "Chain Polymers" at Fischbach Gallery, plus supporting drawings and test pieces, a few later works, and a selection of archival documents from the Allen Memorial Art Museum, including diaries by both Hesse and her father. The documents were presented in a small separate room along with films of Hesse in her studio. At the exhibition, people tended to spend as much time in the cramped documents room as they did in the exhibition galleries, which indicates at once the relevance of Hesse's story to the audience of the Jewish museum, and the fact that Hesse's art would benefit from a much greater emphasis on the description of the works themselves, which in their singular materials and evocative abstraction require particularly adept explanation for the average museumgoer. The essays in *Eva Hesse: Sculpture* accomplish this delicate balance well, with Elisabeth Sussman, Yve-Alain Bois, and Mark Godfrey addressing the particularities of Hesse's sculpture, and Fred Wasserman examining in detail the diaries of Hesse and her father in a separate section following the color plates of the catalogue. Wasserman's text provides, for those interested in Hesse's family history, the most in-depth account thus far of Hesse's father's *Tagebücher*, recording her family origins in Hamburg, difficult emigration, and childhood in New York, where she lost her

mother. The catalogue closes with a biographical chronology, and photographs of the artist are thankfully confined to these latter two sections of the book.

The three articles addressing Hesse's sculpture are brief but to the point, supplementing the existing Hesse literature with specific insights. Sussman establishes the social context of Hesse's work around the time of her "Chain Polymers" exhibition and details the preparation and reception of the exhibition, which is the primary focus of the Jewish Museum show. Sussman's straightforward account ends with a useful discussion of the "aftermath" of the sculptures Hesse showed at Fischbach Gallery, including their subsequent whereabouts and their current physical condition. The Jewish Museum exhibition included some rarely seen latex works including *Aught* (1968), a landmark work consisting of four large, textured, roughly rectangular slabs hanging from metal grommets (whose history and unpredictable material volatility Sussman discusses in *Encountering Eva Hesse* [EN173]). Here she describes how Hesse was ambivalent about the inevitable deterioration of her sculpture, wondering whether she should "write [collectors] a letter and say it's not going to last" (SC15). Yet she refused to even consider using more traditional, permanent materials, asserting that "Life doesn't last; art doesn't last" (SC15). Perhaps because Sussman already faced this issue head on in 2002, arranging the roundtable discussion on the conservation of Hesse's sculpture which accompanied the San Francisco retrospective,¹² Sussman takes no position on the issue, leaving it up to collectors to decide what to do with their property. She again leaves unanswered the questions she had already raised in her essay for the 2002 catalogue.¹³ More illuminating on this point is the interview in *Encountering Eva Hesse* with Doug Johns, who fabricated many of Hesse's sculptures. Johns was not present at the 2002 roundtable, but ran a workshop in Leeds that year on working with latex and fiberglass which proved immensely illuminating to many of the volume's authors who were present. Although opinions will continue to

diverge on this matter, I cannot but agree with Johns when he laments that major works like *Contingent* (1969) will never be seen again because of their fragility. We should take seriously Johns's suggestion to mount an exhibition in which the original works in their varying states of decomposition would be paired with temporary newly-fabricated versions under the supervision of himself and Hesse's later assistants. Such a show would powerfully illuminate the material effects of texture and light that characterized the works when Hesse created them.

Mark Godfrey's essay on Hesse's hanging works takes a similar straightforward approach, combining the historical with a detailed formal analysis focusing on Hesse's two late hanging pieces: *Right After*, the delicate fiberglass piece of 1969, and *Untitled (Rope Piece)* of 1970. Godfrey considers Hesse's hanging sculpture in the context of other suspended works by both Hesse's contemporaries and later artists of the 1990s, in order to draw out its unique qualities of irregularity, delicacy, and implications of both protective covering and entrapment or netting. His detailed examination of *Right After* proves illuminating, considering the work's unique qualities: its unexpected material, fiberglass coated almost invisibly with resin; its deathlike refusal of movement; and its singular combination of the catenaries hanging gracefully from supporting S-hooks with the working over of the material by Hesse and Johns that resulted in frayed and messy ends disrupting its graceful sequence. Godfrey's account of 1960s hanging sculptures by artists like Robert Grosvenor, Robert Morris, Louise Bourgeois, and others provides a useful reminder that sculpture in that decade was not, in fact, all about horizontality and the floor, as overemphasized in the recent scholarship of Rosalind Krauss. Yet his litany of contemporary hanging pieces by Cornelia Parker, Eva Rothschild, and others seems superfluous. At the end of his essay, Godfrey mentions in passing a highly relevant work, *Reticulárea* by the Venezuelan artist Gego, shown in a New York gallery the same year as *Right After* and sharing its netlike quality and domination of a space through an arguably feminine, delicate and transparent,

expandable medium. He would have done better to eliminate some of the superfluous contemporary descriptions in favor of an in-depth exploration of the formal similarities and, perhaps, historical encounter of these two works by German refugee artists on different continents—how fascinating that both works appeared in openings in New York within days of each other! By passing over this opportunity, Godfrey maintains the unfortunately widespread institutional separation of contemporary European and American from Latin American art that has kept us from understanding such connections for too long.

Yve-Alain Bois's essay draws on art-historical accounts by Annette Michelson, Rosalind Krauss, Mignon Nixon, and Briony Fer relating Hesse's sculpture to the psychoanalytic theory of the part-object defined by the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein. The part-object is a form that belongs to a body but is read by the infant as a semi-separate entity (the prime example being the breast). The infant projects onto the part-object her boundless desire but also her rage and envy, so that it later comes to signify infantile subjectivity at a moment of traumatic lack of control and differentiation.¹⁴ Bois wants to contribute to this literature by suggesting that while the part-object theory aptly describes Hesse's early work until around 1966, her work of ca. 1966–70 constitutes a "late style" which rejects its earlier relationship to the organic, the sexual, and the anthropomorphic. The late sculpture moves beyond these qualities, according to Bois, by making use of serial structures and rejecting the internal relationalism of its earlier reliance on "appendages" such as the cords that dangle from her sculptural units or link separate parts (SC24). Thus, while the 1967 model for *Accretion* consists of cardboard and sculpmetal tubes on a pedestal with vinyl cords dangling down from the tubes to the floor, the final sculpture of 1968 (one of the most powerful elements of the Jewish Museum show, which did not include the model) eliminated the vinyl cords and moved the tubes, now enlarged in fiberglass and resin, to a vertical position set directly on the floor in a potentially

expandable accumulation. Bois's explicitly formalist model inscribes an explicitly artificial teleology onto an oeuvre Hesse herself repeatedly described as organic, non-linear, non-hierarchical, and absurd. I see little point in trying to shape Hesse's brief career into such a traditional art-historical category as the "late style." To do so, Bois depends on identifying "transitional" works such as *Schema* and *Sequel* of 1967–68, which de-locate the part-object by serializing it, and he is forced to sidestep works like *Vinculum I-II*, which distort this lineage with their inclusion of both serial parts and "appendages" hanging down. Bois's account also privileges the minimalist aspects of Hesse's "late" work—its large scale, direct relationship to the confines of the room, and seriality—while disregarding the very departures from minimalism that make it unique: its intuitive or random compositional arrangements, its symbolic bodily references so aptly described by the theory of the part-object even in the later phase, and its visceral relationship in texture, color, and form to the body of the viewer. Bois ends with an evocative comparison of *Accession III*, the large cubic metal piece pierced with holes in which Hesse inserted strips of fiberglass tubing, to the idea of "a nail that has just been cut, a bit glistening, but already destined to dust" (SC27). This overt bodily reference recalls if not the part-object itself, the disjecta identified by Julia Kristeva in her classic account of abjection, describing elements once part of the body but now made separate which destabilize our conscious distinction between self and other, thus uncannily recalling the pre-subjective oceanic state to which Klein's theory of the part-object also refers.¹⁵ Bois is an expert at the subtleties of evocative and precise visual description and iconology, but his reliance on linear chronology limits the usefulness of this formalist treatment of Hesse's sculpture.

The most valuable new contribution to the Hesse scholarship in depth and perspective is *Eva Hesse Drawing*, both for what it illuminates about her work and for what it reveals about the practice and iconology of contemporary drawing in

general. The project catalogues a 2006 exhibition co-organized by The Drawing Center, New York City, and the Menil Collection, Houston, and curated by Catherine de Zegher and Elisabeth Sussman. The bulk of the catalogue is devoted to significant new scholarly insights on Hesse's previously overlooked drawing practice by art historians and Hesse scholars, including de Zegher, Sussman, Wagner, Buchloh, Briony Fer, Mignon Nixon, Bracha Ettinger, and Kathryn Tuma. Hesse's drawing was intimately related to her sculpture—in fact, this volume makes clear that in many ways line and surface were driving forces for both and bound the two purportedly separate media intimately together in Hesse's artistic dialogue. As she herself stated in the Nemser interview, to translate her drawings into painting “was not natural and I thought to translate it in some other way. So I started working with relief and with line—using the cords and ropes that are now so commonly used. I literally translated the line” (DR145).

Catherine de Zegher perhaps best describes this intimate situation in her insightful comparison of Hesse's use of line and knotwork to the drawing, painting, and weaving practices of Anni Albers, whose husband, Josef Albers, was Hesse's teacher. The relationship between “Anni” and “Eva” becomes for de Zegher not a personal or historical one but a potential “matrilineal kinship within the Modernist legacy” (DR74). De Zegher makes the plausible case that while Hesse would have consciously suppressed any such maternal influences out of her personally traumatic separations, both literal and psychic, from her emotionally troubled mother, an evident retrospective dialogue links the two artists. The work of both artists emphasized operations of materiality and touch, as activated by sinuous linear form as well as overt connections to craft, which are marginalized even today in the discourse of modernism. De Zegher's elegant approach focuses on form without suppressing biography, and develops in the process new insights into the relationalist aspects of drawing. Reading about Hesse's approach to, as

the artist described in her working notes, line as a “link, that which binds; bond, tie, connecting medium” (93), I was struck by the profundity of this function in the sculpture *Hang Up*: how the long cord jutting out from the wrapped frame is a kind of lasso radically reaching into our literal space, as if trying to draw us into Hesse's world in an overt if abstract call (not a cry but a call) for psychic connection—whether we view that world as one of trauma and loss or of exuberant (and ambivalent) optimism embodied in the modernist legacy of abstraction.¹⁶ This relational aspect remains primary for me, even if the sculpture, with its closed loop, refuses as much as it solicits our approach—a typical Hesse paradox.¹⁷

“Drawing,” as de Zegher observes, “is a form of intimacy as much as of conversation” (DR99). She draws out the implications of this profoundly feminist knowledge without the alienating jargon typical of Bracha Ettinger, whose contribution, “Gaze-and-Touching the Not Enough Mother,” overtly addresses the desires for reconciliation with the maternal inherent in Hesse's work, but in such a way as to read more like a manifesto of Ettinger's matrixial theory than a detailed engagement with Hesse's art. Ettinger's theory, a feminist response to the Lacanian emphasis on the phallus as primary symbol of lack and thus a significant contribution to psychoanalytic discourse, is all-encompassing in its universalist approach and thus demands belief or total rejection from anyone not immersed in her disciplinary language.¹⁸ It is precisely the rigor of her psychoanalytic terms, though, that initially reads as jargon (although it is not) and I welcome the presence of such overtly non-art-historical readings for such a complex artist as Hesse. Ettinger's theory requires belief because, like many psychoanalytic approaches, it proposes universal structures impossible to “verify” or deny on any rational grounds because they are pre-conscious. Reading various texts by Ettinger over the years, I have come to believe that her inventive critical terminology, as off-putting as it first appears, contributes profound insight into the human condition as I experience it. Despite its totalizing tendency, I consider deeply illuminating her description of Hesse's

endless search for cording, perforating, and “nipping” as in part a kind of borderlinking to a combination of a Not Enough Mother psychic thread, a dead mother thread, a Dead Mother thread, and an “ideal mother” thread combined with strings of gaze-and-touching in repetition and strings of virtual not-enoughness that supply copoeietic energy for repetition-in-difference and for matrixial transference between the traumatic, the phantasmatic, and the virtual (DR206–8).

My reference to Ettinger's theory as a belief system does not negate its legitimacy in any way; it simply means that my own assertion of belief will not help the reader one way or another through the personal but necessary process of working through her complex and provocative psychoanalytic framework in order to comprehend it—alternately to accept it as possible, or to reject it.¹⁹

Another profound contribution which illuminates not only Hesse's work but our understanding of the meaning of drawing in the 1960s is Benjamin Buchloh's essay, “Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram.” As both the title and the author's past writing suggest, Buchloh's perspective is monolithic, teleological, and melancholic, but nevertheless contributes a critical new (actually, classic and modernist) interpretation of the relationship of drawing in Hesse's oeuvre to its function in a number of key modernist predecessors and colleagues, including Duchamp, Malevich, Oldenburg, LeWitt, and Johns. (The fact that all of his examples are male must not have seemed relevant to the author, but it glares). For Buchloh, Eva Hesse's drawing continues a “project” begun by the machine diagrams of Duchamp and Picabia, an all-encompassing attempt to place the body in relation to the preexisting structures (“matricial orders”) of contemporary liberal-capitalist society. Thus, Hesse's task is “to operate, on the one hand, within a system of bodily innervations that internalize the matrices of advanced forms of reification and, on the other, to pursue an articulation of subjectivity (of the artist as much as of the viewer) that insists on recording the residual

and resistant forms of bodily authenticity and psychic autonomy" (DR122). Buchloh dismisses the drawings before ca. 1964 and privileges the grid drawings from 1966 onwards as exemplifying Hesse's ultimate contribution to this problematic. In a teleology that at times echoes Bois's formalism, he identifies these grid drawings, the most minimalist works of Hesse's career, as her ultimate contribution: "Hesse had finally understood that the diagrammatic would have to become central to the future of her drawings" (DR135). As in his previous writings, Buchloh presents a substantial number of historical pairings which appear as a complete map of the historical and technical "possibilities" available to modern artists. Thus, Hesse's friends Claes Oldenburg and Sol LeWitt embody the twin poles of sculptural possibility: sculpture must either present bodily plenitude in the very form of the commodity which alienates it (Oldenburg), or withdraw all bodily reference in order to constitute the "final disembodiment and total deskilling" (LeWitt) which alone makes art able to register an ideological critique of the socially imposed alienation from the body in contemporary society that makes drawing in the traditional sense outmoded (140). Buchloh's description of Hesse's late grid drawings as her unique contribution to the necessary "resistance and remembrance" of drawing not only subsumes Hesse into a minimalism akin to the projects of LeWitt and Hanne Darboeven, but also completely discounts the symbolic associations overtly explored in her late "window" drawings of the same time.

Buchloh's account is valuable both for its rich insights, however schematic, into the history of drawing from Dada to Conceptualism, and for its refreshing positioning of Hesse's art as ideological critique—the trauma, for once, relates to contemporary social life rather than to femininity, the trauma of the Holocaust, or psychic lack. The most significant problem with Buchloh's account, however, is its tendency toward melancholy, which limits Hesse's art to a retrospective nostalgia for some lost bodily plenitude (one wonders in which historical period Buchloh would locate such an Eden, or if he would be forced to turn to psychoanalytic theories of a universal lack). Could

we not equally read Hesse's drawing as forward-looking rather than retrospective—evoking, for example, the liberating qualities of the contemporary cyborg as discussed by Donna Haraway in the polymechanomorphous perversity of her 1964–65 drawing experiments?²⁰ When Buchloh asserts that Hesse's "endgame" announces "drawing's decisive tendency towards historical disappearance" (DR146) we must ask in turn whether it remains productive to talk about the "disappearance" of a medium so obviously thriving in contemporary art—or whether the expressivity of drawing is only irrelevant to a select group of melancholic critics marked by the utter political cynicism and ultimate refusal of historical agency formulated by postwar writers like Theodor Adorno or Guy Debord in theories questionable in their applicability for contemporary life.

I doubt it was with deliberate irony that the editors of *Eva Hesse Drawing* placed Elisabeth Sussman's essay on Hesse's "Works on Paper/Works in the Paper" just after Buchloh's interpretation of Hesse's drawing project as a deliberate "resistance" to a totally administered world (DR145). Yet this placement underscores the problems inherent in Sussman's approach, despite the fact that she is perhaps our most knowledgeable contemporary Hesse scholar, with unmatched understanding of her subject's oeuvre and unequalled clarity in her verbal presentation of it. However, it is precisely this clarity that I find as much troubling as illuminating in Sussman's writing, because its objective tone masks an ideological investment (whether conscious or not) in certain reified aspects of the discipline of art history: namely its tendencies to elevate an individual artist as extraordinarily talented and to exhaustively organize in a compartmentalized linear trajectory every aspect of that individual's work—in other words, to administer it. The art historian in this traditional situation becomes a safekeeper of the information that bolsters the value both cultural (often national) and economic of an artist's body of work, and literally makes it marketable by organizing it. What bothers me about Sussman's essay here is that her normally laudatory attention to detail becomes overtly administrative and retrograde in the context of

separating for discussion a body of Hesse's drawings that belong to those traditional art-historical categories of the preparatory sketch and/or the artist's own administrative post-production records. Sussman's title is a coy way of avoiding the phrase "working drawings" in the context of Mel Bochner's famous conceptual art exhibition of 1966, "Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed As Art," precisely because that exhibition overtly challenged the traditional art-historical positioning of drawing which Sussman inadvertently restores. She does this through a series of close readings of diaristic and process-oriented drawings in which Hesse works out her (unique, unprecedented) artistic plans and perspectives for the (unique, implicitly more valuable) sculptures. In fact, Kathryn Tuma discusses in her text in the same volume that Hesse never really made direct sketches, but drew in an intuitive and explorative way, with an open-ended and experimental process that shifted not only between media, but also between objects and words (DR232). Sussman's essay distinctly contrasts with the other contributions to *Eva Hesse Drawings*, all of which break open the standard art-historical category of drawing in ways which hint at the reasons why drawing has in fact taken on such unprecedented importance in contemporary culture. Rejecting the art-historical tendency to mobilize drawing as a reification of the unique perspective of a privileged and fetishized artistic subjectivity, the other essays re-situate it as a critical inter-media practice in relation to various themes, whether in Mignon Nixon's exploration of the psychic drive toward pre-subjective emotional territory in Hesse's relationship to children's drawing, or in Buchloh's examination of Hesse's diagrammatic tendencies as critical of the loss of bodily plenitude in the overt antihumanism of a rationally organized and consumption-driven society. In this context, Sussman's perspective unfortunately reads as a clear manifestation of that tendency toward the total administration of art decried by Buchloh and others, which utterly separates each human subject from the creative potential within ourselves by reifying it in the carefully

guarded histories of a few select artists. I believe it is crucial for art historians and curators to maintain a critical perspective toward our discipline in order to avoid these inherent ideological pitfalls in the drive toward clarity. Otherwise, such accounts unwittingly support the fetishization of the individual artist inherent in projects such as the publication of Hesse's *Datebooks*.

All five of these books present some sort of insight, if at times flawed or fetishized, into the life and the artistic practice of what Griselda Pollock refers to as "Eva Hesse" in quotation marks (EN14), an acknowledgement that while we have inevitably lost the artist, we continue to engage in contemporary dialogues which shape the "space in culture" that represents her life and work. What becomes clear upon reading the wealth of perspectives opened up by these new contributions in dialogue with those of decades prior is that what appear to be two "camps" in the Hesse scholarship—those concerned above all with biography and thus identity, and those focused more or less exclusively on form—actually circle in their explorations around the same small number of (infinitely large) themes: the wound, loss, trauma, resistance, autonomy, humor, resilience, pleasure, pain, paradox, the absurd. While some writers foreground the biographical sources of these themes, others consider them universal psychic states, or inevitable responses to our particular contemporary society. Really only Buchloh addresses the latter at all adequately, and further scholarship would do well to explore the social and economic politics, in addition to the identity politics, of Hesse's art. We may have lost a valuable artist and an incredible potential cut short by the cruelty of illness, but what a richness of understanding and material engagement we continue to gain. •

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Notes

1. Cindy Nemser, "An Interview with Eva Hesse," *Artforum* 7, no. 9 (May 1970): 59–63, revised and expanded in Nemser, *Art Talk: Conversations with Twelve Women Artists* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1975); Lucy Lippard, "Eva Hesse: The Circle," *Art in America* 59, no. 3 (May–June 1971); and Lippard, *Eva Hesse* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1976). See also Nemser's account of the interview in "My Memories of Eva Hesse," *Woman's Art Journal*, vol. 28, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2007): 26–28.
2. Robert Storr says as much in "Do the Wrong Thing: Eva Hesse and the Abstract Grotesque," in *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*, ed. Helen A. Cooper (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1992), 87.
3. Anne Wagner, "Another Hesse [1994]," in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon, *October Files* 3 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).
4. Anna Chave, "Eva Hesse: A Girl Being a Sculpture," in Cooper, ed., *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*.
5. As Linda Norden observed, "One of the constants in virtually everything that she made was her insistence on a very matter-of-fact, non-mystical, non-heroic art that reveals her quest for what she usually referred to as honesty, her 'ick.'" Norden, "Getting to 'Ick': To Know What One is Not," in Cooper, ed., *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*, 69.
6. Extensive quotations from Hesse's diaries are published in both Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, and the "Chronology" in Cooper, ed., *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*, 19–50. They are best consulted in relation to the methodological discussion of how to interpret the artist's journals in Wagner, "Another Hesse," 117–31.
7. Anne Wagner, "Another Hesse," 98.
8. Bill Barrette, *Eva Hesse: Sculptures* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992).
9. Robert Storr highlighted what he called Hesse's "antic sensibility" and allied her work to the equally irreverent abstractions of other 1960s artists in his 1992 essay, "Do the Wrong Thing: Eva Hesse and the Abstract Grotesque," in Cooper, ed., *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*.
10. Maurice Berger, "Objects of Liberation: The Sculpture of Eva Hesse," in Cooper, ed., *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*, 131.
11. This impression of counterproductive chaos persists even given its relationship to a particular presentation style practiced by Pollock (and others). In public engagements, Pollock often reads a highly complex text while playing an independent slide presentation of relatively unrelated images and text, presumably in order to break the audience's identification with the speaker's authority, but which often in my experience results in a simple headache. An example was Pollock's presentation at the symposium "The Feminist Future," Museum of Modern Art, New York, January 26–27, 2007.
12. "Uncertain Mandate: A Roundtable Discussion on Conservation Issues," in Elisabeth Sussman, ed., *Eva Hesse* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art/Yale Univ. Press, 2002), 291–311.
13. Sussman, "Letting It Go as It Will: The Art of Eva Hesse," in Sussman, ed., *Eva Hesse*, 33–37.
14. On the part object in the art of the 1960s, see Mignon Nixon, "Femme Couteau (Knife Woman): Art Objects as Part Objects" in *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 209–65.
15. See Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1982).
16. Storr alludes to this function of *Hang Up* as "roping the viewer in and fencing him/her out of his/her habitual place," but does not quite capture the feminist tone of emotional relating discussed by de Zegher. Storr, "Do the Wrong Thing."
17. Wagner, "Another Hesse," 173–75.
18. De Zegher also included Ettinger's essay "The With-In-Visible Screen" in her landmark catalogue of art by women, *Inside the Visible* (Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art/MIT Press, 1996). See also the recent account of Ettinger's artwork in relation to her theory by Griselda Pollock, "Rethinking the Artist in the Woman, the Woman in the Artist, and that Old Chestnut, the Gaze" in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, ed. Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).
19. The fact that psychoanalysis as a whole is a belief system as much as shamanism is, and with as little detriment to its efficacy, was pointed out long ago by Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his "The Sorcerer and His Magic," in *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1967).
20. See Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

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Martha Rosler, 3 works

by Martha Rosler
The Press of The Nova Scotia
College of Art And Design, 2006.

Reviewed by Don Gill

Twenty-five years after it was first published, *Martha Rosler, 3 works* was reissued with a new afterword by Rosler. Produced by this committed and impassioned documentary artist, the book comprises three photo-text works: *The restoration of high culture in chile* (1977); *The bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* (1974-75); and *In, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)* (1981). Each documentary work simultaneously acts as a critique of liberal documentary practice.

The editorial director of the Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art, Susan McEachern, consulted extensively with the author to find and correct any errors that were present in the original edition. Besides some typographical corrections, new scans of Rosler's images have dramatically improved the reproductions and revitalized the book's visual impact. As *3 works* is primarily a book of and about photographs, the improvement in the reproductions alone is a good reason to look at the new edition. *3 works* is, after all, a monograph in which photographs and text carry equal weight.

Improvements in print technology enhance the reader's ability to read and appreciate the images. The new reproductions are softer, with less contrast and far more detail than in the 1981 edition. Shadows that were previously impenetrable now reveal details; an expanded grey scale is easier on the eyes; and highlights that were blank expanses of white now show texture. That author and editor worked together to improve the reproductions suggests that the previous high contrast in the images had more to do with the limitations of photomechanical reproduction twenty-five years ago than with the photographer's aesthetic or philosophical choice. This is an important distinction between the two editions. In her "afterword: a history," Rosler discusses the strategy of "deskilling" photography in the post-Pop era, stating that,

"some artists adopted photography as an amateur, demotic, "vernacular" practice—a culturally naturalized one—and as a convenient form of note taking" (98). In a footnote Rosler also points to this strategy of deskilling as being "one of the cheap 'anti-art' forms avant-garde artists chose to foil the commercial art world" (98). The author's decision to improve the quality of reproduction for the second edition implies that she does not believe photographs need to be technically clumsy in order to contain meaning beyond the aesthetic, or that the richness of the photographic image is detrimental to the conveyance of documentary information. Perhaps Rosler's attention to the quality of reproduction means that although she is not adverse to photographic beauty, aesthetics by itself is yet another inadequate descriptive system.

Also in her afterword, Rosler provides some of the history behind the production of the pieces, partly to respond to some questions and criticisms posed after the original publication. By adding historical and critical context, she is not so much re-evaluating her own work as reinforcing the continuing validity of a politically instrumental approach to documentary practice: documentary works that focus on specific events remain important and critically functional.

For example, Rosler originally produced *the restoration of high culture in chile* as a five-page handout for a small New York exhibition in honor of Orlando Letelier.¹ Over time, *the restoration of high culture in chile* was exhibited in the United States and Canada, still in the form of a handout but with the photographs (previously in the handout) now hung on the gallery wall. While the conflicting narratives of social ideologies that form the philosophical perspective of this work are valuable as a memory of the still unresolved tragedy of Chile, Rosler's work takes on new meaning as a document of history in light of current tragedies in Iraq and elsewhere in the American sphere of "interests."

Between 1974 and 1975, Rosler's primary mode of disseminating her visual and written work was on videotapes and via mail art distributed through the postal system in order to

"bypass art world means of exhibition and dissemination" (94). However, she purposefully produced *the bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* for galleries with the intent that it operates as a subversive element within the exhibition context. The photographs and text panels were installed side by side in a gridded format, both with equal weight (Fig. 1). When, in 1979 Benjamin Buchloh, the first editor of the NSCAD Press, invited Rosler to publish *the bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* and *the restoration of high culture in chile* in a single publication, the author re-conceived the two works with a page design integral to the monograph. When Buchloh requested an introduction to *the bowery...*, Rosler responded by writing *in, around and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)*. She used a split page design for this critical meditation on the practice of documentary amid the disintegration of documentary meaning in the milieu of the late 1970s, with the essay on one side and "an auxiliary track" on the other comprising a series of extended footnotes (98). For example, footnote one delivers a short history of the origins, and subsequent development, of social documentary practice (73). This page layout kept the footnote numbers in the text and "auxiliary track" directly opposite one another, thereby easing the movement of the eye across the page from text to reference. Also noteworthy in the new edition is the reappearance of Rosler's original introductory series of historical documentary images as they appeared in the 1981 edition of *3 Works* but which had disappeared in other published versions of *in around and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)*.

In "afterword: a history," Rosler reflects back to the original publication of her monograph and its critical reception (or non-reception): *3 works* "seemed to enter the slipstream of artistic discourse with barely a public notice" (99). She also refers to subsequent developments in critical views of social documentary. At the time many photographers, documentarians, critics, and teachers interpreted Rosler's work as dismissive of photography as a documentary process. In the intervening years, however, *the bowery...* and *in,*



the worse for liquor		
top heavy	moon-eyed	owl-eyed
pie-eyed	shit-faced	
snockered		
shicker		

Martha Rosler, page from *the bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* (1974-75).

around and afterthoughts...have been remarkably influential to photographic discourse and pedagogy. In fact, the essay has become a staple text in photographic and documentary education and is frequently quoted in critical writing. Rosler personalizes the experience of *the bowery*... in her new afterword by describing the experience of walking the Bowery with her young son, reinforcing the person behind the camera's engagement in an interaction with the world. The view of the street from a woman's experience, particularly a woman with a child, is much different from that of a male inhabitant of the street.

To cite a recent (local) example, during a criminal trial of a man accused of murdering up to fifty women who worked on the streets of Vancouver, British Columbia's downtown east-side (that city's version of the Bowery), citizens were

encouraged to revisit representations of the street as *inadequate descriptive systems*. The print and broadcast media's sensationalizing of images and stories of the accused over those of the victims gives Rosler's critique of liberal documentary practice a new urgency for documentary practitioners. How can images of sex trade workers on the street even approximate the depth of the tragedy of these women's daily existence in the face of violent acts by the consumers of their trade? And how can journalistic text in relationship to the images move beyond a designation of the photographs as prurient illustration? Can photographs (and film or video) avoid further victimization of the women as subjects?

Traditionally, photography as social documentary has been concerned with the exposure of negative social and economic processes to the broader public, express-

ing some visual empathy or sensitivity regarding the circumstances of the victims. Yet as the case above demonstrates, photography alone lacks the capability of representing the invisible (to the camera) economic and political processes that bring about abuses of capital, race, class, politics, education, religion, and culture. In "afterword: a history" Rosler revisits the questions about photographic documentary practices she raised in 1981, insisting that

these questions remain significant. Rosler once again critiques the use of the documentary image while simultaneously affirming the durability and importance of the practice, particularly as a politically instrumental activity and process. •

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Notes

1. Letelier, a Minister in Salvador Allende's Chilean government before the U.S.-supported coup on September 11, 1973, was subsequently assassinated in September 1976 by a car bomb in Washington, D.C.

Uninterrupted Flux: Hedda Sterne

by Sarah L. Eckhardt, with contributions
by Josef Helfenstein and Lawrence Rinder
Krannert Art Museum (Chicago), 2006.

Reviewed by Vittorio Colaizzi

This catalogue accompanies a traveling retrospective of the work of Hedda Sterne (b. 1916), the single woman in the "Trascibles" photograph documenting the Abstract Expressionists' protest

against the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Curator Sarah L. Eckhardt takes previous chroniclers of Abstract Expressionism to task for ignoring Sterne and attributing her presence to "chance." But her exclusion from canonical histories might be perversely appropriate, given her constantly shifting style, which amounted to career self-sabotage. She expressed her refusal to settle upon a marketable image parallel to that of Rothko or Pollock with the maxim, "I don't paint logos." Eckhardt presents this quality of restless exploration as the primary trait of Sterne's

work, the "uninterrupted flux" of the title, which comes from an artist's statement of 2004. Despite her own claim not to have been an Abstract Expressionist, Sterne seems to live out its ideal of unending exploration and eschewal of comfort.

Eckhardt has admirably compiled and categorized what must have been a daunting body of work, whose very essence is its lack of a singular thread. The catalogue is organized with multiple passes through Sterne's career: in a biographical essay, a list of extended

notes on separate named phases of work, the presentation of plates, and a closing essay by Lawrence Rinder. This leads to a great deal of flipping back and forth, allowing the reader/viewer some self-determination in encountering the work, which is appropriate to her unruly output.

Sterne, as Eckhardt demonstrates, was an active participant in the intellectual life of avant-garde artists and critics in New York, but her stylistic coincidence with Abstract Expressionism was fleeting. In the 1950s, she worked in large, bold strokes, often placing acid hues against an inky blue or black ground. Instead of the characteristic assertion of the hand as a surrogate self, Sterne worked at a literal remove through her prescient use of an industrial spray gun. Her work of the 1950s also violates Ab-Ex orthodoxy through its overt reference to the everyday: Some bear the name *New York*, while at least one is more specific; *Third Avenue El* (c. 1952-53). Others were made to connote traveling on a Midwestern highway. These ostensibly abstract works overlap with a series of even more specifically referential Machines (Fig.1), which obliquely picture industrial and farming equipment.

Eckhardt shows that due to Sterne's education in Bucharest, Vienna, and Paris, she was never swept up in any single ideology, but was able to observe modernism as a set of interchangeable options. Nevertheless, her earliest extant collages and drawings are markedly surrealistic, and while Sterne is no more a Surrealist than an Abstract Expressionist, Eckhardt makes it clear that this pivotal movement's openness to association and embrace of the irrational has been a major guiding principle. The crucial caveat is that, while many Surrealists plumbed their own depths, Sterne used its techniques to engage with unseen universal forces.

For example, Eckhardt calls attention to Sterne's maverick contribution on the problem of finish to the often-reprinted transcript of the 1950 Artists' Session at Studio 35. Unlike her male counterparts, Sterne was loathe to treat the work with mastery, as a register of her struggle to know herself, but instead described her

process as a dialogue, in which both artist and work were channels for subject matter. As Eckhardt puts it, "Sterne considered 'self-discovery' far too limiting and repetitive. Then, as now, she values the ideas she finds 'out there' more than those within her" (9). Citing Rosalind Krauss on photography and Surrealism, Eckhardt likens the constant and unintentional production of signifiers to Sterne's working method. Sterne herself has compared her process to that of taking dictation or behaving like a camera. This approach seems to prefigure challenges to the subjectivity of the artist-as-expresser and correspond to a later concept of the artist as a barometer of cultural forces instead of an autonomous genius. However, despite the apt citation of Krauss, it should be noted that the connection to the postmodern critique of the subject is put forward too subtly. Eckhardt's tact sometimes leads to a somewhat superficial and celebratory text. This is understandable given the nature of the project, but a deeper treatment of certain problems would have strengthened, not undercut Sterne's work.

The question of stylistic precedent regarding Sterne's Vertical-Horizontal series in relation to Rothko is the elephant in the room that, far from threatening to demolish Eckhardt's argument, would have bolstered it. Sterne's compositions of stacked horizontal rectangles differ significantly from Rothko's mature style by virtue of their exploration of minute gradations and definitive edges. Perhaps in order to avoid appearing defensive, Eckhardt avoids explicitly making this distinction. It might seem to be a contemptible critical knee-jerk to invoke Rothko, but only if he were used to dismiss Sterne. The historical fact of Rothko's precedent needs to be addressed, especially given the photo of the two in lively conversation, which helps to demonstrate Sterne's immersion in the culture of advanced painting. Perhaps an artist more concerned with



Fig. 1. Hedda Sterne, *Machine 5* (1950), oil on canvas, 51" x 38 1/8". Krannert Art Museum and Kinkead Pavilion, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Festival of Arts Purchase Fund.

asserting an authoritative self might have censored such a stylistic coincidence, but Sterne's refusal to do so is a powerful example of her anti-heroic outlook.

Eckhardt notes the professional sacrifice that Sterne had to make in order to remain true to her ideal of flux. Sterne's gallerist and friend Betty Parsons is quoted as condemning critics who thought that inconsistency of style amounted to a lack of commitment. Nevertheless, upon viewing her diverse life's work, a connection is evident in her virtuosic line. This line comes to full fruition in the late drawings, dating from 1999 to 2004. Despite their frequent placement on the center of the page, they tumble this way and that, fighting against symmetry, even though it is sometimes asserted with a dark vertical. A totemic vaginal image is apparent, but it does not foreclose other possible readings: they are also full of faces, trees, and in one, knuckles, perhaps an allusion to the artist's own experienced hand. These glimpses of recognizability constantly

emerge from and recede back into a tangle of tiny pencil lines. Given the artist's limited visual and kinesthetic reach (nearly blind, Sterne worked with the aid of a magnifying glass), the viewer realizes that, relatively speaking, these are large scale drawings that push the limits of bodily contact with the medium every bit as much as another artist's mural scale.

Lawrence Rinder's essay on Sterne's drawings is a somber yet joyful meditation on mortality and the compounded experience of Sterne's numerous friend-

ships with major artists and intellectuals. This essay supplements and reinforces Eckhardt's necessarily scholarly approach with a more personal account of Sterne as an ever-curious maker. Rinder and Eckhardt together demonstrate that Sterne's work has been motivated by a consistent hunger for experience and a desire to react to life on its own ever-changing terms. This is in contrast to the still-prevalent ideal of artistic style as a consistent and hard-won identity. Despite the issues noted above, the book serves

not only as a welcome introduction to an important artist, but as a stimulant to critical questions about the practice of art history, in particular the factors that condition the construction of "major" and "minor" figures. •

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Women Together / Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris

by Tirza True Latimer
Rutgers University Press, 2005.

Don't Kiss Me: The Art of Claude Cahun & Marcel Moore

edited by Louise Downie Tate,
Aperture (with Jersey Heritage Trust),
2006.

Reviewed by Christine Filippone

Drawing from queer theory, feminist theory and visual culture studies, Tirza True Latimer unveils the efforts of four lesbian women—painter Romaine Brooks, the writer/photographer team of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, and performer Suzy Solidor—to shape their identities and inscribe themselves into history through portraiture. In *Women Together/Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris*, Latimer analyzes the means by which these women manipulated cultural codes of gender and sexuality to forge new, lesbian (and/or gender ambiguous) identities. She also claims that these artists opened new conceptual spaces for all men and women to conceive and construct alternative visions of self.

Prior to World War I, women had little involvement in public life, and lesbian women were all but invisible. When the war robbed Paris of her sons, women,

lesbians among them, began to thrive in numerous professions in support of the war effort. "The war raised the profile of the lesbians whose work provides the focus of this book and others with whom they interacted" (20). Suzy Solidor, for instance, served in the ambulance corps as a mechanic and driver. Stepsisters Lucie Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe (aka Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore) were given oversight of the cultural sections of their family's newspaper and literary journal (though it is unclear whether this took place because of the war). American expatriate Romaine Brooks achieved great success in her fundraising efforts for the Red Cross. Indeed, the war provided the impetus for many women to develop some economic freedom and a taste for cultural power—after which they would be forced to wait decades for suffrage.

The newfound social purpose embraced by these women resulted in a stretching of conventional gender boundaries. Latimer evokes contemporary literature to support her contention that sexual and social relations were unstable during the interwar years and a matter of public debate. At this critical time, earlier insights into gender relations seemed to take on new significance. She refers, for example, to the impact of publications like Otto Weininger's 1903 book *Sex and Character*, which interpreted "the ascendance of women on the social, cultural, and political scenes of the new century as an effect of the masculinization of the feminine sector" (29).

Latimer discusses the ways newly empowered, active, women in uniform fueled new conceptions of womanhood in postwar England, France, and the United States. Using period photographs and paintings as well as cartoons and caricatures to illustrate her narrative, she proposes that lesbian autonomy, visually augmented by masculine fashion, became emblematic of modernity. Uniforms, she explains, were symbols of male authority that functioned differently for lesbians than for heterosexual women, making them identifiable to one another, and freeing them from feminine fashion codes. Less restrictive than conventional women's fashions, this type of clothing also challenged the political and social status quo. Of the four subjects targeted in this study, only Solidor seems to have actually worn a uniform, but Latimer's analysis of the uniform as complicit with the shaping of identity constitutes an interesting and informative cultural backdrop to her discussion.

Conventional social and fashion codes breached during the war remained in flux afterward, temporarily opening doors for lesbians. Latimer argues that her subjects' lesbianism freed them from restrictions imposed by traditional gender roles and enabled them to succeed in society. Lesbians were perceived (and perceived themselves) differently, and Latimer claims (after Monique Wittig) that by virtue of their lesbianism they refused patriarchally defined gender roles. Even detractors commented on their "exceptional intellectual prowess, independence,

strength, reliability, and qualities of leadership" (8). The author acknowledges that not all of the women discussed here would have considered themselves lesbian, which she loosely defines as "the female subject of homoerotic desire" (3).

Sexology, the study of human sexuality, which arose as a (pseudo-) scientific field in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, figures prominently as a framework for Latimer's analyses. Brooks, Cahun, and Moore were familiar with the work of major sexologists such as Havelock Ellis, the British doctor, who presented the most open and tolerant view of homosexuality, particularly lesbianism, which, he claimed was congenital and, therefore, out of the immediate control of the (still-inflicted) individual. Ellis's ideas were widely circulated within literate gay communities. Sexological works like his gave way to a popular understanding of terms and ideas related to human sexuality, ushering in the existence of commonly understood codes, including visual ones.

The author frames the social and professional milieu of Brooks, Cahun, and Moore, arguing that newly won access to higher education and the arts gave women the opportunity to form their own lesbian identities. The desegregation of private and state sponsored academies in France, beginning in the late-nineteenth century, attracted women from all over to Paris. "Lesbians engaged in activities from writing, journalism, and publishing to book illustration, book lending, and book selling weave in and out of the origin narrative that I am in the process of composing," Latimer writes (33). These fields, she asserts, were the augurs of women's liberation in Paris.

Photography also offered opportunities for women, and Latimer claims, the "new technology of photography" (34) was a useful means of undermining dominant visual representation. While certainly not "new" in the early decades of the twentieth century, photography was gaining increasing acceptance as a fine art. Heeding László Moholy Nagy's call to adopt unusual perspectives and experiment with new printing techniques, New Vision photographers like Berenice Abbott exploited the qualities of silver gelatin

printing to reveal the world in ways not visible to the unaided human eye. "Indeed," as Latimer writes, "seeing the world differently could make a world of difference" (34), and new approaches lent photography a certain cachet in the rendering of a progressive modernity, even as it continued to skirt the boundaries of "fine" art. For this reason, Latimer contends, photography offered an appropriate artistic outlet for Cahun and Moore, who saw themselves as both socially marginal (as lesbians) and artistically cutting-edge. While Cahun and Moore embraced their socially alienated status, others like Brooks chose to remain the observer, the flâneur.

Latimer uses Romaine Brooks's well-known 1923 self-portrait as testament to the artist's manipulation of visual codes toward her own transformative ends. She contends that this self-image marks Brooks's effort to link herself and her work to that of the dandy-aesthete of the late-nineteenth century. Countering interpretations of Brooks's work as imitative, Latimer suggests that the artist instead revitalized and reinterpreted the dandy aesthetic from a lesbian perspective. The dandy-aesthete used fashion to create a new, more progressive identity, breaking from conventions of masculine dullness and sobriety. Brooks portrays herself dressed in masculinized fashion—in an elegantly cut dark jacket, stylishly upturned white collar, and tall dark hat enigmatically shading her eyes—gazing confidently, perhaps confrontationally at the viewer. Tracing the life and milieu of Brooks and her long-time partner, writer Natalie Barney, the author forges connections between these women and the ideas and production of fin-de-siècle figureheads of the aesthetic movement, Oscar Wilde and James Abbott McNeill Whistler. Ultimately she suggests, somewhat convincingly, that Brooks transformed Whistler's visual cues, reserved for the gay male elite, into markers for the contemporary lesbian elite in Paris.

In her self-portrait, Latimer claims that Brooks intentionally sought to depict a different kind of woman: the lesbian woman whose self-command is evident in her gaze, the gaze of the flâneur. By intentionally conflating the flâneur with

the dandy, the artist represents a feminine subject with strength, intelligence, and independence. She also represents herself, the lesbian artist, as distinct and visionary. In the process, Latimer believes that Brooks successfully encapsulated the New Woman in the guise of the lesbian. By actively crafting her new, cosmopolitan identity, Brooks established her status as a visionary artist *different in kind* from her contemporaries and from her male dandy forebears. Latimer contends that Brooks believed that the homosexual was endowed with an enlightened view, due to her/his liminal status and was thus privileged with creative genius.

The most intriguing and successful of Latimer's case studies, backed by well-organized, visual analysis and ample primary documents, is that of Marcel Moore and Claude Cahun. Together, these artists penetrate the cracks within visual conventions to create new spaces for self-transformation. Latimer makes a strong case for their collaboration as the seed of the formation of their alternative identities. Shortly after 1915, the artists adopted their gender-neutral pseudonyms, a transgressive act that acknowledged the pragmatic strategy adopted by artistic woman precursors such as George Sand and George Eliot. It also effectively rejected the patriarchal convention of retaining the father's last name, as Latimer also contends that their alternative name choices are efforts at personal regeneration. "In the case of both Cahun and Moore, the alliterative initials C.C. and M.M. reproduce *themselves* (initiating self-generation, as it were) while investing each name with the character of a pair, a double pair—pair of lovers, pair of sisters" (74). (After they had been together for eight years, Cahun's divorced father married Moore's widowed mother making the two literal stepsisters, lending some social legitimacy to their companionship.)

Latimer presents their 1919 book, *Vue et Visions*, written by Cahun and illustrated by Moore, as an assertive "artistic coming-out" statement by the partners (80). Two images, one titled "La Nuit moderne" and the other titled "La Lumière antique" depict pairs of gender-ambiguous lovers. The latter, a classically rendered but somewhat feminized man



Fig. 1. Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, *Untitled* (Cahun with mirror image) (c. 1928), photograph. Courtesy of the Jersey Heritage Trust Foundation.

with a laurel wreath around close-cropped hair holds a young boy, apparently in a swoon. The reference to antiquity, the author suggests could be taken as an overt homosexual code, consistent with the contemporary fascination with Greek culture in homosexual circles, such as Natalie Barney's preoccupation with the poet Sappho, then as now a lesbian icon. Looking out over a bright, distant horizon, the accompanying verse that Latimer quotes indicates that the couple will go "toward the unknown... in the light and in joy" (79).

A decade later, Moore illustrated Cahun's autobiographical essay *Aveux non avenues* (1930) with photomontages comprising fragments of Moore's photographs of Cahun. Latimer constructs a thoughtful, well-organized argument against the consideration of this work as a traditional autobiography, first by translating the title as disowned or "disavowed confessions" (80). After pointing out that Cahun undermined the conventional purpose of a confession by using a pseudonym as the authorial voice, Latimer next makes the logical claim that the uniqueness and distinction

of the individual author is subverted by Cahun's choice to make the work collaboratively with Moore, using a process whereby the creative contributions of both are reflected and celebrated. *Aveux non avenues* is ultimately subversive of the authorial voice as male and unique, and instead functions as a critique of autobiography.

Latimer uses Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Les Confessions* (1767) as the canonical example of autobiography. She asserts that in their subversion, Cahun and Moore created a new liminal space in the form of an "anti-autobiography": as virtually invisible subjects, these lesbians criticize from outside, from a non-place and as non-subjects (84-86). Too, the fluidity and flexibility of the photomontage process, in which body parts are dismembered and reassembled by the artists, undermines conventional representations of the whole and complete self and serves instead as a reinvention of the self. In this work, Cahun and Moore resist patriarchal classification of the woman's body and invert the structural logic of Enlightenment thought. In this liminal space, the woman and the homosexual might forge her own identity. *Aveux non avenues*, Latimer writes "sets out to dismantle both a literary genre, autobiography, and its subject—the authoritative self whom the artist's signature authenticates" (81).

In a discussion of the self-portrait of Cahun and her mirror image (c. 1928; Fig.1), Latimer persuasively suggests that this too is a collaboration. Cahun, with close-cropped hair and boyish face, not only addresses the viewer, but also her lover who is taking the photo. The author presents this photograph as a pendant to one taken by Cahun of Moore (c. 1928; Fig. 2) whose mirror image gazes out at the viewer and at Cahun.

Latimer places these works in the context of early-twentieth century discourses on "narcissistic" feminine sexuality, in which the woman is obsessively engaged with her own image. In the photograph of Cahun, the concept of feminine self-absorption is undermined as Cahun turns away from the mirror. Instead, Latimer explains, the artists extended the metaphor of feminine narcissism to homoeroticism, in which the women behold each other, as evidenced in these lines

written by Cahun to Moore: "Our two heads...leaning over a photograph. Portrait of one or of the other, our two narcissisms drowning together there, it is the impossible realized in a magic mirror. Exchange, superimposition, the fusion of desires..." (92). By addressing her lover in this photograph, the author suggests, convincingly, that Cahun reinserts herself and her homosexual relationship into social discourse. Also in this work Cahun embraces both feminine narcissism and narcissistic homoeroticism as part of her identity and projects both back upon the lens, becoming both viewer and viewed, lover and beloved.

The visual self-representation of Suzy Solidor extends to more than 250 portraits of her made by various artists. Solidor, who had relationships with men as well as women, owned the nightclub in which she also performed, *La Vie Parisienne*. Here, she hung her portraits salon style, personally selecting their locations and configurations. These portraits, Latimer argues, formed a critical visual component of Solidor's performative, theatrical space. Solidor represented herself to her audience against the backdrop of these many portraits, and their eclecticism "reflected not only the nightclub performer's status... but also her desire to resist inscription within rigid categorical boundaries—whether sexual, social, political, or artistic" (107). Further, the sheer number of the portraits for which Solidor posed attests to her agency in cultivating her self-image.

Solidor was not part of the milieu in Paris that encompassed Brooks, Cahun, and Moore, ostensibly because she was of a different class. Born out of wedlock to a house cleaner, the performer changed her name (originally Rocher) and enlisted in the ambulance corps to avoid her mother's domestic servitude. After the war, she came under the tutelage of the lesbian socialite Yvonne Bremond d'Ars, who provided Solidor with lessons in drama and music as well as social contacts. With Bremond d'Ars in the *Pygmalion* role, Solidor learned the visual codes understood by well-to-do Parisian homosexuals and lesbians and appropriated these for her nightclub ensemble. While Solidor's club attracted "artists, aristocrats, celebri-

ties, high-ranking officers... and lesbian colleagues..." (112), as well as homosexual men and cross-dressers, it apparently never attracted the likes of Brooks, Cahun, Moore and others in their creative lesbian community then living in Paris.

Claiming that Solidor cultivated her image as a lesbian to enhance her erotic allure and ensure a steady stream of customers, Latimer states sweepingly that "Lesbianism sold well in 1930s Paris" (121). Solidor's seductive, charismatic and shifting stage persona was enhanced by her interaction with her portraits, whose poses she often sought to mimic during her performance—constituting herself, through the eyes of the artists, for her audience and for herself. Solidor thus represents a more worldly example of self-created and self-perpetuated marginality, having cultivated her lesbian identity for fame and for capital gain.

In different ways, Romaine Brooks, Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, and Suzy Solidor helped to create and disseminate the visual codes by which modern lesbians in Paris communicated to one another. They "willfully engaged in the process of defining new social, cultural, professional, and relational possibilities for all women" (6), writes Latimer, who, in her conclusion tells us that she attempted to resurrect the identity of these women that society sought to suppress. Indeed, as she reconstructs the lives of these women in inter-war Paris, Latimer demonstrates their efforts to resist that suppression and to carve out new spaces for imagination and emancipation.

Don't Kiss Me offers new analyses and a greater context for the work of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore with a particular focus on their time in Jersey. In 1938, the women moved from Paris to Jersey in the Channel Islands of Great Britain, where they carried out a five-year resistance campaign against the German occupation. Between 1995 and 2002, the Jersey Heritage Trust (JHT), acquired an archive, including prints, negatives, manuscripts, diaries and personal letters of Cahun and Moore, which forms the basis for this catalogue.

Comprehensive in breadth and well-organized, the catalogue includes

drawings, prints, and photographic portraits made by both women; bold, strident images of Cahun in 1920s experimental theater productions; photographs taken by Cahun of her own provocative, Surrealist-inspired objets d'art; snapshots of family and friends in the couple's artistic and literary coterie; and excerpts from letters, diaries and manuscripts. Also reproduced here are wonderfully adept, intricate drawings and woodcuts by Moore, the more reticent of the two. Unfortunately, most of the reproductions are a bit too small for aging eyes and they don't do justice to the complexity of the works. The same may be said for the notes and letters written by and to the women. Although readers are directed to the website, www.jerseyheritagetrust.org, to view larger, more satisfying versions, efforts to make sense of the few enticing, readable fragments in the catalogue lead only to frustration.

Louise Downie, Curator of Art at JHT contextualizes the collection in her Introduction, and with few exceptions, the essays by Kristine von Oehsen, Katharine Conley, Jennifer Shaw, James Stevenson, Tirza True Latimer, Gen Doy, and Claire Follain, provide insightful analyses of the women's lives and works. While most of the essays center on Cahun, they also argue in favor of Moore's often debated contribution to Cahun's photographic self-portraits, asserting that she was both a frequent collaborator and a talented artist in her own right. The exception, an essay by James Stevenson, Photographic Manager at the Victoria and Albert Museum, argues against their collaboration based on evidentiary examination of prints, negatives and instructions written by Cahun to the photo lab that processed her prints. Stevenson concludes that while Moore probably snapped the shutter, Cahun was in complete control of the composition, from pose to negative cropping.

The catalogue provides a thorough account of Cahun's and Moore's resistance activities, from July 1940 until their arrest four years later for their underground propaganda campaign. Contemporary historian Claire Follain's cogent and often riveting essay recounts the couple's efforts to undermine the



Fig. 2. Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, *Untitled* (Moore with mirror image) (c. 1928), photograph. Courtesy of the Jersey Heritage Trust Foundation.

German occupation of Jersey through disinformation. The women are revealed as intelligent, stealthy, courageous and effective propagandists fighting for important principles. Cahun wrote: "I continue to believe that, if fascism...had been beaten by everyone in their place and according to their means with an uncompromising heart, a spirit without back-doors...with a knowing conscience...all postwar imperialisms would have been impossible" (19). After their arrest, they continued to evade their captors' questions and attempted suicide rather than face solitary confinement, or worse, deportation to a concentration camp. In prison, Cahun and Moore eventually met soldiers who informed them that their tracts had instigated their desertion or insurrection, which vindicated their intended purpose.

Kristine von Oehsen, in her fact-filled essay centered on the artists' lives together, describes how Cahun and Moore created an illusion of a large, well-coordinated, international resistance organization by preparing multiple copies of propaganda tracts in which they continually varied the style of their text and illustrations. Writes von Oehsen, "From 1942,

they signed their texts as *Der Soldat ohne Namen* or *Der Soldat ohne Namen und siene Kameraden*, to reinforce the illusion of a group" (20). Barely escaping the death penalty, the women were imprisoned until the day before the Liberation of Jersey by Allied forces. After their release, they moved back to their house, which had been thoroughly ransacked by the Germans, where they remained until Cahun's death in 1954.

Drawing on letters, notes, and diaries from the JHT archive and secondary sources, Claire Follain offers a fascinating account of the couple's epic resistance in her essay, "Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe—Resistantes." Follain explains that the pair accessed the "real" BBC news broadcast via an illegal radio. Then Moore, who was fluent in German (a secret kept scrupulously hidden from Nazi authorities), translated the news for Cahun who transformed it into Surrealist-influenced rhyme, creating propaganda tracts (which Moore usually illustrated) meant to appeal to German soldiers not yet swayed by Nazi rhetoric.

The couple distributed the tracts at great risk to themselves. They lived next door to St. Brelade's cemetery, where German soldiers were buried during the occupation, and amidst soldiers' funerals, Cahun and Moore crept out of their house, sometimes violating curfew, to place leaflets on the parked cars of attendees.

After being hunted for years, Cahun and Moore were finally arrested by the Germans on July 25, 1944. Both endured failed suicide attempts in their cells shortly after capture and again while awaiting sentence. Follain postulates that, having been inseparable throughout their lives, they were desperate without each other. The author relies largely on François Leperlier's research, published in his 2002 monograph, *Claude Cahun: l'exotisme extérieur*, to describe the ingenious means by which the women continued their resistance activities in prison, even in solitary confinement. For example, they passed letters written with ill-gotten pens and pilfered toilet paper through ventilation ducts using string.

After they were sentenced to execution on November 16, 1944, the Germans encouraged Cahun and Moore to appeal

their death sentence, which they resolutely refused. Follain argues, "For Schwob and Malherbe, their death sentence represented an endorsement of the effective resistance" (94); she also points out that Nazi authorities, realizing that the end of the war was imminent, probably sought to avoid the retribution of Allied forces for executing two middle-aged women.

One may wonder how Cahun and Moore successfully avoided detection for four years for activities so subversive they warranted the death penalty. The fact that they were "middle-aged women," encumbered by age and gender stereotypes, prevented the Nazis from suspecting them of playing an important role; although to present-day observers, it seems that the German occupiers were blind to overlook their cleverness, resourcefulness, and the sheer extent of their loathing for the Nazis and their fascist oppression. Even after their capture, Cahun and Moore skillfully used the Germans' expectations against them, until, finally, on February 20, 1945, they were granted a reprieve from execution.

Katherine Conley's insightful and often hilarious analysis of Claude Cahun's *Héroïnes*, fifteen monologues written in the voices of famous women (such as Virgin Mary, Sappho, Cinderella, and Judith) reveals the acerbic potency of the artist's critique of contemporary culture and its mythologized gender norms. Cahun's characters are driven by motives so alien to those disseminated through the canons of Western culture that they seem utterly contemporary. In her essay, "Counter-Archival Héroïnes," Conley describes a few of the monologues, including "Eve, the Too Credulous," which showcases the artist's incisive wit. Cahun's first lady of Eden is tempted to eat the apple not by a serpent but by canny advertisements urging Eve-the-consumer to take advantage of a "unique opportunity" to "become stronger, to succeed at everything you do," to: "Demand the flavorful fruit. There is ONLY ONE" (25-26).

Apparently childless due to Adam's abysmal sex drive, Eve is further beguiled by commercial offers to "Make your sex life a joy – Quick results – Pep tabs" (26). As Conley tells us, though, the

first woman is regrettably forced to decline this fabulous offer because Adam has been too miserly in doling out her housewifely stipend. Finally, after millennia of uncertainty, Cahun's Eve reveals her attraction to *original* sin, gullibly explaining: "Me, I love everything that's new, original!" (26). Conley clearly has a gift for relating the artist's riotous sense of humor, which she adroitly links to her scathing political critique of advertising and consumption as well as to her inversion of the traditional "archival" Eve whose choice to transgress by taking the apple is now contextualized by Cahun within a society driven by self-interest. In the end, Eve transcends her cultural constraints deciding that the thing she wants most, that would make her happiest, is to become an artist.

In her essay, "Acting Out: Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore," Tirza True Latimer uses Roland Barthes's characterization of photography as theater in *Camera Lucida* to suggest that Cahun and Moore used photography to enact a life-long collaborative theatrical performance. As in *Women Together/Women Apart*, she argues for the recovery of Moore as artistic collaborator and equal and asserts, in effect, that the entire body of the couple's work, photographic, literary and theatrical, was performative, intended to challenge and reinterpret received notions of self and other and to affirm the couple's own lesbian union. Here she asks, "What social prejudices and artistic hierarchies does the erasure of Moore accommodate, and to what extent did the two artists foresee, forestall, foreclose (or, on the contrary, foreordain) this erasure?" (56).

Latimer traces examples of each medium used by the couple to reveal their theatrical reconstructions of gender and authorship. She discusses their involvement in the Theatre Esoterique, founded by Symbolist Berthe D'Yd and Paul Castan, and the theatre company Le Plateau, directed by typographer and poet Pierre Albert Birot, whose interest in the gestural rigor and economy of Japanese theater was translated into productions that rejected realism in favor of a participatory theater without sentiment or artifice. Latimer asserts that

Cahun and Moore shared Birot's rejection of realism and quotes him, "We challenge realism because the realism we are given is false.... Today, most actors reproduce reality from the outside, whereas to reconstitute reality from the inside is to create; it is the beginning of creation" (65).

Even the couple's resistance to Nazi occupation in Jersey was "theatrical," writes Latimer: they effectively created the illusion of a complex, multi-layered organization so that the Germans refused for months to believe that the two were the sole perpetrators. Arguably, politically motivated work meant to disrupt expectations so as to create room for alternative concepts of gender, authorship, etc., cannot fail to be performative.

Counter to James Stevenson's conclusion, that Cahun's photographic self-portraits are decidedly *self-portraits*, with little or no creative contribution by Moore, Latimer joins several essayists in arguing convincingly for Moore's creative complicity in a broad range of artistic endeavors. I think the differences may lie in a strict versus broad interpretation of collaboration. It is unlikely that a close examination of photographic prints in the JHT collection or elsewhere could reveal the intensity and depth of the intellectual exchange that these women shared for the many decades of their lives and work together.

In her essay, "Narcissus and the Magic Mirror," Jennifer Shaw expands on Latimer's inversion of 1920s-1930s understandings of Narcissism discussed in *Women Together/Women Apart*. Shaw interprets Cahun's and Moore's literary work *Aveux non avenus* as a subversion of the Symbolist notion of Narcissus. In the myth, the enraptured Echo can only mime the poetic words of the self-absorbed youth. Shaw claims that, through this work, Cahun and Moore reject the role of Echo as a mere female supplement to Narcissus. Rather both women actively engage in intellectual, cultural production, and co-opt the role of Narcissus for themselves. Thus Shaw buttresses the argument that these lesbian lovers are involved in a collaborative working process, in which they reject the Symbolist reading of the mythological



Fig. 3. Claude Cahun, *Self-Portrait* (c. 1928), Courtesy of the Jersey Heritage Trust Collection.

figure as thoroughly self-absorbed. Instead, the artists are absorbed by each other, and together in the process of making. Shaw situates *Aveux non avenus* in the context of c. 1920s anxieties over the "egoism" of newly empowered postwar New Women and homosexuals seeking to upset gender norms that, it was feared, would inevitably lead to the permanent usurpation of men's jobs and to further depopulation.

Shaw's discussion of "Narcissus the Androgyne" is perhaps her most provocative. Here, she cleverly interprets several photographs of Cahun, partially bound, nude and almost completely submerged in water (Fig. 3). Only the artist's face breaks the surface, thus reflecting Cahun's effort to invert the Narcissus myth—the "reflected" face stares up from the water, rather than down into it. In these photographs, Cahun rejects gendered characteristics in favor of an inner self that is contingent and free of boundaries.

Taking a stance similar to Latimer's in *Women Together/Women Apart*, Shaw argues that photography is the couple's

vehicle for self-examination and repositioning. Photography and photomontage offer a mirror of self that can be manipulated and re-imagined in new contexts—a morphing of the absorbed male consciousness into a female one, or more appropriately, into two self and other-focused lesbian lovers and collaborative artists.

Don't Kiss Me: The Art of Claude Cahun & Marcel Moore is an important contribution to the literature on Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, artists, lovers and political activists. It documents the largest collection of their work in the world, and this is the first time it has been catalogued. •

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Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture

by Maria Elena Buszek
Duke University Press, 2006.

Reviewed by Rachel Epp Buller

In common cultural parlance, pin-up girls are actresses or models whose photographs have received wide circulation, their glamorous images taken from magazines or calendars and then “pinned up” by fans and admirers. While pin-up girls are popularly associated with GIs, perhaps epitomized by Alberto Vargas’s *Esquire* centerfolds of the 1940s, the phenomenon is much older. Maria Buszek’s in-depth analysis provides a comprehensive history of the pin-up genre over the course of 150 years. Based in large part on her doctoral dissertation, *Pin-Up Grrrls* disputes the idea that sexualized representations of women are necessarily oppressive icons produced by men for a male viewing audience. Rather, Buszek argues, women themselves have long produced (and consumed) such imagery as a form of empowerment. The nineteenth-century burlesque performer Adah Isaacs Menken and the postmodern-era sex worker-turned-artist Annie Sprinkle book-end a history in which women have constructed and controlled their own sexualized representations in order to present themselves as “self-aware, assertive, strong, and independent” (8).

Buszek credits theatrical stage performers of the mid-nineteenth century as the originators of what she deems “feminist pin-ups.” While some feminists would consider this phrase oxymoronic, Buszek argues convincingly that actresses like Menken and Lydia Thompson constructed and employed pin-up imagery as they negotiated a transgressive space for women outside of society’s typical binary of male-public/female-private spheres. In this way, burlesque performers capitalized upon both the new technology of photography and the popularity of collecting cartes-de-visite, a “shrewd promotional device” (43) that, more importantly, subverted conventions regarding women’s behavior in the public sphere.



Fig. 1. Clara Bow (c. 1928), Paramount Studios promotional photograph. (Collection of Maria Buszek).

At the fin-de-siècle, burlesque pin-ups gave way to a proliferation of “Gibson girl” imagery in *Life* magazine. Although modest in comparison to some burlesque images, Buszek argues that Charles Dana Gibson’s popular romantic and adventurous illustrations nonetheless celebrated the cultural strides made by the era’s “New Woman” (in stark contrast to other publications that ridiculed the modern woman). Simultaneously, photographs by Frances Benjamin Johnston and pin-ups featuring such New Women as Sarah Bernhardt played with and subverted gender conventions in ways that attested to greater freedoms in women’s sexual and public lives. In the early twentieth century, political activists recognized the efficacy of these actresses’ performative constructions; as a result, “suffragists actively forged alliances with them for the good of the [women’s] movement” (131).

Although burlesque pin-ups were collected enthusiastically in their day, their twentieth-century counterparts reached a new level of popularity in celebrity fan culture (Fig. 1). Pin-ups adorned all manner of memorabilia, from sheet music to

powder tins, culminating in the popular film fan magazines such as *Photoplay*. The pin-ups in *Photoplay*, like the movies it discussed, addressed the “breadth of modern womanhood” (148), continually portraying the actresses featured—and, by extension, their female fans—as complex, contradictory women. From working girls to vamps, *Photoplay* pin-ups signaled “the period’s growing acceptance of not just the sexual woman and the thinking woman, but the notion that one might acceptably be both” (182).

In its subsequent manifestation, the pin-up skyrocketed in popularity due to the fantasy creations of Alberto Vargas for *Esquire* magazine. The pin-up genre earned its appellation at this time, during World War II, as U.S. soldiers overseas “pinned up” the Vargas Girls in their barracks. The *Esquire* pin-ups were popular with both men and women, however, perhaps because Vargas’s images made reference to the continuing expansion of what was socially acceptable for women, both sexually and professionally. As wartime society sanctioned new roles for women in the public sphere, the assertive and sexually aware stance of many pin-ups that had previously appeared transgressive now became an apparently wholesome ideal for its female viewers.

In the post-war era, however, women’s opportunities—for self-expression, sexuality, and labor—took several steps backward. With the return of American GIs, women who patriotically had joined the workforce during the war now found it their patriotic duty to return to the home. Popular-culture representations of women paralleled this return to conventional gender expectations, as the 1950s ushered in the “era of the ‘eternal virgin’ and ‘dizzy blonde bombshell’” (285), a binary perhaps best represented by Doris Day and Marilyn Monroe. In addition to a severely limited range of roles for women to play, women now were also pointedly excluded from the audience for these types of pin-ups, as envisioned by Hugh Hefner in his new magazine for men, *Playboy*. While Hefner’s publication and others like it ruled the pin-up scene of the 1960s, Buszek delineates concurrent trends in countercultural, sexually aggressive pin-up publications as well as the political intersections of race and sexual

representation seen in *Ebony* magazine.

As women reacted against the constrictions of the 1950s (think Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*), the pin-up genre of later decades returned to women's hands, representing a "growing desire to celebrate and politicize their own sexuality" (271). The rise of the second wave witnessed the appropriation and politicization of pin-up imagery by feminist artists from Eleanor Antin to Hannah Wilke. While the 1980s beheld some bitter debates among feminists regarding pornography and women's sexual representation, women and artists of the third wave

increasingly have embraced the pin-up as a language of self-expression.

Throughout the text, Buszek's greatest strength is her ability to interweave historical and art historical elements fluidly. In each chapter, she situates a period in pin-up history within a much larger cultural context in order to argue effectively for women's use of these images. Pin-up history unfolds within and alongside of the history of the women's movement, allowing Buszek to articulate why and how such images can be read as empowering to women. Even so, she respectfully acknowledges the position of feminists who disagree with

such a reading, paying particular attention to the intergenerational tensions between second- and third-wave feminists. While Buszek's clause-filled style can at times seem weighty, in her selection of words she is a gifted writer. With *Pin-Up Grrrls*, Buszek provides a unique blend of art, cultural, and women's histories that will engage a wide and diverse audience. •

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Gabriele Münter: The Search for Expression 1906 – 1917

by Annegret Hoberg, Shulamith Behr
and Barnaby Wright
Paul Holberton Publishing, 2005.

Reviewed by Evelyn M. Kain

According to the authors of *Gabriele Münter: The Search for Expression 1906–1917*, Münter was a major contributor to the German Expressionist movement and no mere shadow of Wassily Kandinsky. Originally published to accompany the painter's début exhibition in Great Britain at the Courtauld Institute Gallery in 2005, this catalogue discusses fifty of Münter's key works painted between 1906 and 1917, the most transformative years of her artistic development.

An illustrated chronology of her life (1877–1962) and a list of principal solo and group exhibitions are followed by two essays, "The Life and Work of Gabriele Münter," by Annegret Hoberg, Senior Curator of the Blaue Reiter collection of the Municipal Gallery of Lenbachhaus in Munich, and "Beyond the Muse: Gabriele Münter as Expressionist," by Shulamith Behr of the Courtauld Institute. Finally, the catalogue section consists of individual essays by

Barnaby Wright, also of the Courtauld Institute, for each of the twenty-one paintings included in the exhibition.

Hoberg's essay addresses the major stages of the artist's life before and beyond the perimeters of the exhibited paintings. In 1898, Münter embarked with her older sister on a two-year trip to the United States, where their parents, by then deceased, had lived before reverse-immigrating to Germany. The money that the sisters inherited—their father was an "American" dentist—granted them independence, and their sojourn, visiting with relatives in Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri, gave them firsthand experience of frontier living.

Münter's artistic life began in earnest in 1901, after returning to Munich, when she enrolled at the progressive Phalanx art school, founded by Kandinsky, who proved to be a supportive and encouraging teacher. They fell in love, and although Kandinsky's married status prohibited them from openly sharing quarters in Munich, it did not stop them from traveling together. From 1904 to 1908, they painted their way through Germany, Holland, North Africa, Belgium, France, and Italy, their artistic styles still largely indebted to Impressionism. The catalogue reproductions begin with a bold, confident oil on canvas of a receding avenue in a French garden that Münter painted plein-air with a palette-knife in 1906.

The breakthrough to a modern style for Münter and Kandinsky took place during August and September of 1908, in Murnau, a village in southern Germany, where the couple retreated with Kandinsky's compatriots, Alexej Jawlensky and Marianne Werefkin. Together with other artists they co-founded the *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (Munich New Artists' Association) in 1909, and participated in its three major exhibitions before resigning to form a new group, the *Blaue Reiter*, in 1911.

These years mark a turning point in artistic thinking for all four painters. Still relying on direct observation but back to using brushes, they worked toward extracting the essence of the seen world around them, toward a "synthesis," to use Jawlensky's word. What resulted was the simplification of form and liberation of color now taken for granted as hallmarks of early modern abstraction. Referring to this period as her "great leap," Münter was intensely productive, painting up to five oils a day and exhibiting regularly. In 1909 she bought the house in Murnau where they lived and worked, known to this day as "the Russians' House."

After 1912, interpersonal tensions developed in the group, especially between Münter and Kandinsky, which Hoberg sees reflected in Münter's



Fig. 1. Gabriele Münter, *Portrait of Anna Roslund* (1917), Oil on canvas, 37" x 26 3/4", Leicestershire Museum and Art Gallery.

painting. The outbreak of war in 1914 forced Kandinsky back to Moscow. The following year, Münter moved to Sweden to meet him on neutral territory. They exhibited and lived together a few months, but by March of 1916, Kandinsky had returned to Russia, and Münter never saw him again. During the final dissolution of their relationship in Scandinavia, Münter's production peaked again, and in spring of 1918, she had her largest exhibition to date.

Münter spent the last three decades of her life with the art historian Johannes Eichner. They eventually returned to live in Murnau, in "the Russians' House," where Münter resumed painting and Eichner devoted his time to supporting her career. The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, established in 1966, has become a valuable research center for her art as well as for the wider Blaue Reiter circle.

Shulamith Behr's essay, "Beyond the Muse: Gabriele Münter as *Expressionist*," focuses more pointedly on the issues of Münter's agency as an artist and her artistic independence from Kandinsky. Behr argues that even in pre-Kandinsky days,

Münter already was driven: she kept a journal, quoted Nietzsche, and, at twenty-two, amassed 400 photos of her journey to the U.S. using a state-of-the-art camera. A photograph taken by Münter of her studio during the early years in Munich in 1903-04, shows her consciously engaged in constructing an artistic persona.

While in France, Münter's personal notes show that she actively sought to learn from avant-garde art and was well acquainted with the works of major artists before her "great leap" in Murnau. To judge by her output alone, she was no tag-along: by mid-1907, she had filled ten sketchbooks—over 450 pages—at the same time that she was painting and cutting dozens of linoleum prints in the wake of a major retrospective of Gauguin's work.

Even at Murnau, Münter developed her art independently of Kandinsky; for it is expressly to Jawlensky that she gave credit for her epiphany. He was the artist in their circle most acquainted with contemporary French art, and the one who first adopted the term "synthesis" to describe their ground-breaking process of eliminating "anecdote" and reducing form and color to simple shapes bound by lines. Kandinsky adopted the word in his writings soon thereafter.

Moreover, Münter never followed Kandinsky into the world of non-objective painting. She continued to explore subjects ignored by both men in the circle: still life and especially portraiture, which Behr takes up at length. Münter was a proactive "woman expressionist," or *Expressionistin*, central to the movement, in the sense first used by Anton Lindner in a review of Paula Modersohn-Becker's painting in 1914, when, Behr points out, it was "new coinage," a fusion of two words—"woman" and "artist"—that, at the time, were mutually exclusive.

Behr argues just as persuasively against the notion that Münter was a "modern primitive," not an easy task, considering that the artist willingly cast

herself into this role and actively fed the myth that she was a "natural," citing Kandinsky's early pronouncements that she was a "hopeless student...impossible to teach." Eichner also liked to stress Münter's "naïve temperament" in contrast to Kandinsky's intellectuality. Even her extensive collection of folk art seemed proof of fierce identification with the untutored art.

Larger cultural assumptions made it easy for women's artistic activities to be dismissed as intuitive and spontaneous. The bourgeois feminist movement saw women as natural "bearers of culture," at the opposite end of the spectrum from masculinist science and technology. Specifically in regard to Expressionism, Behr cites Hermann Bahr, who wrote one of the earliest surveys of the movement in 1916. He considered the ideal expressionist artist to be a generic female from the countryside, who painted solely from womanly intuition completely untainted by the art world. Was this not a perfect description of Münter?

No, Behr adamantly replies. Münter was playing the role that society expected, assuming that it would be to her advantage, just as she, ill-advised by Eichner, contributed two paintings to a Nazi venue in the hopes of making her life easier in the Third Reich. Otherwise, the burden of evidence shows that Münter consciously and consistently sought the skills, education, experiences, influences and ideas that it took to be a modern artist. Further research will confirm this, Behr predicts, not only because the practice of art history has abandoned an exclusively male norm, but also because the ban imposed by Münter on the publication of her writing until fifty years after her death (1962) will soon be lifted and the underpinnings of her thinking revealed.

To conclude, Behr focuses on Münter's portraits, from the breakthrough in Murnau to the series of women in interiors of her Scandinavian period, when, the author believes, the artist achieved a "new synthesis" in which the abstracting processes—low viewing point, proximity, facture—direct the spectator to an unexpected assertion of womanhood" (63). *Portrait of Anna*

Roslund (1917; Fig 1), painted in Copenhagen, under the influence of the Swedish Expressionist Sigrid Hjerten, is a good example. Seated in a curving wicker chair, the young woman contemplatively smokes a pipe, locked in thought and refusing to return the viewer's gaze.

Roslund, a Danish author and poet, represents the quintessential "New Woman" of the early twentieth century, though Münter might have referred to her with the term "Überfrau," invented by the feminist philosopher Theodor Lessing in his 1910 tract *Weib, Frau, Dame* (Female, Woman, Lady), which Münter read the year it was published. "Überfrau" denoted a progressive woman, totally integrated into social and economic life. Lessing urged a "new synthesis" of language, which included developing words with more positive connotations for women.

Münter's self-assured portrait of Roslund shows no trace of the artist's

bitter personal disappointments of 1917, when contact with Kandinsky came to an end after their fifteen-year relationship. Münter assumed he went missing in the war when, in fact, he willfully ceased corresponding, having married a teenager the same year. The final proof for Behr of Münter's agency as an artist and artistic independence from Kandinsky was her major exhibition in the Copenhagen Konsthall in March 1918 of more than a hundred oil paintings, paintings on glass, intaglio prints, and woodcuts. "Fortunately," writes Behr, "the private trauma caused by the termination of her relationship with Kandinsky neither affected Münter's prolific production nor her participation in the art world" (67).

Posthumous credit must go to Münter for making the exhibition possible. During and after World War II, she risked her life to hide from Third Reich and Allied seizure more than one

hundred paintings by the Blaue Reiter circle—some of which Kandinsky had litigated to repossess—in the cellar of her house in Murnau. In 1957, on her eightieth birthday, she donated the works to the Municipal Gallery of the Lenbachhaus in Munich, where they became the core of one of the most valued collections of Expressionist art. Eighteen of the twenty-one paintings in the Courtauld exhibition are on loan from Lenbachhaus.

Besides shedding light on the art and legacy of Gabriele Münter, this slender volume brings together invaluable information and nuanced insight into a complex moment of modern art history from women's perspectives. •

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Hatshepsut from Queen to Pharaoh

edited by Catharine H. Roehrig, with
Renee Dreyfus and Cathleen A. Keller
Metropolitan Museum of Art & Yale
University Press, 2005.

Reviewed by Christine Havice

For those in whom the name Hatshepsut conjures only vague notions of a woman who once ruled Egypt, this catalogue serves as a most useful and accessible means of going beyond the cliché. It is also a valuable update and research tool for specialists. It plunges immediately into the context of the life and reign (ca. 1479-1458 BCE) of a woman who, from what we can tell, understood the limits of male-defined power structures and conventions, and yet managed to operate as wife, widow, and regent for her stepson while innovating considerably. The "King's Daughter" of Thutmose I (reg. ca.1504-1492), then "The God's Wife" as spouse to her short-lived half-brother Thutmose

II (reg.ca.1492-1479), Hatshepsut assumed the regency (ca.1479-1473) for the young son of a secondary wife. During that regency Hatshepsut began to assert certain kingly—as opposed to queenly—prerogatives. For example, she claimed direct descent from the pantheon of Egyptian gods rather than the more conventional female status, mediated through relationships to father, husband, or stepson-nephew.

The book was prepared as a catalogue to accompany the eponymous exhibition that opened in the fall of 2005 at San Francisco's Fine Arts Museums, then at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in the first half of 2006, and finally at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth. To a large extent, the catalogue mirrors the organization of the exhibition, at least at the Met, which I visited in the early summer. It provides concise texts, useful maps and genealogical outlines, and definitions of the highly specialized vocabulary used in explicating this art and culture. In other words, this catalogue provides valuable tools and is itself an accessible introduction to what

might strike the casual reader as an ancient and enigmatic culture. Significant obstacles to interpretation of culture that far distant in time, of course, remain. In the case of Hatshepsut, we face an additional problem, in that many works of art (and architecture) were deliberately destroyed by her stepson-nephew Thutmose III or were otherwise obscured over time. As with most historical figures from the deep past, one never really expects to gain much sense of personality. However, in this exhibition—and to a large extent also in the catalogue—the actions and activities of some individuals emerge unmediated from the visual material (portrait statues, grave goods, and reliefs). These are complemented in the catalogue by concise, detailed essays written in clear language, free of jargon, which delineate the historical forces, dynastic pressures, and social and political conventions bearing on such action and activity. The art is captured in excellent black-and-white and color reproductions, often a full page in height, and the fully documented entries include provenance and bibliography for

further reading. These entries, like the essays introducing each of the catalogue's six sections, come from noted scholars, including its editors and the chief curators of the exhibition. And, since almost every work of art cited is accompanied by inscription (in Egyptian hieroglyphics), some quite extensive, it is particularly gratifying that almost all of these have been translated in full. These texts reward even the non-specialist with insights complementing the other visual material: With a little patience, one learns to recognize the hieroglyph—upraised arms bearing the image of the sun—for Hatshepsut's prenomen Maatkare, which translates as "the proper manifestation of the sun's life force" (88). This name, combining the Egyptian reverence for order and convention (*maat*), the life force *ka*, and the sun-god Re, was the name she took early in the period of regency as she began the process of asserting her kingly authority.

The catalogue readily accommodates discursions that complement the major themes and which were more difficult to follow in the exhibition. For example, in the first section, "Setting the Scene," the ideology and forms of power in the early Eighteenth Dynasty are explored in several ways. Few works of art are invoked, but consideration of the roles for royal women, and, in particular, of the context for "women who ruled as king" before Hatshepsut (there were, in fact, three), provides a foundation for everything that follows. This section leads to a sort of sidebar, an essay which describes and analyzes briefly the contents of a royal female burial from the late Seventeenth Dynasty (slightly before Hatshepsut's time), discovered at Thebes by Flinders Petrie in 1908 and represented by several of the oldest objects in the exhibition. The juxtaposition of general contexts with specific archaeological data affords the reader the chance to see how the Egyptologist reasons from the latter, which in this case are less spectacular than the stuff of the blockbuster exhibitions but beautiful and compelling in their intimacy. This digression works better in the catalogue than in the exhibition, where the visitor may miss the interpretive material that explains the burial's relevance.



Fig. 1: Hatshepsut as Female King (ca.1473-58 BCE), red granite, h. 65 1/2". Head and lower parts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1929, 29.3.3; torso in the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden F 1928/9. Photo: Peter Jan Bomhof and Anneke de Kemp. Reproduced with permission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This initial establishment of context requires a full quarter of the catalogue text, but it is effective and, for the non-specialist, particularly important. Edna R. Russmann's careful stylistic analysis of the features of the "Thutmoside Style" in early Eighteenth Dynasty art relies on both large-scale works, most of which did not make the exhibition (but are, helpfully, reproduced in the catalogue), and on smaller pieces such as funerary figurines (*shawabti*) and relief fragments that were on view, along with some smaller statues of queens. Confronting these, or studying them in the catalogue,

produces a sense of a well-defined (if only subtly varied) style, at a specific time and place, which counters the general assumption that Egyptian art is changeless over millennia. Then, after a brief essay on painting in the same period, the catalogue goes on to delineate Egyptian exchange with and influence upon its neighbors to the south (Nubia), east (Syria, the Levant), and north (the Aegean) during this period. In the exhibition, where scale and material can affect the beholder more directly than in the more homogenous, and aesthetically distant, format of photographic reproduction, even the casual visitor would recognize at once the qualities of translation that distinguish these neighborly emulations from the art of Egypt. In them, proportions, attention to detail, finish (lack of attention to all surfaces of three-dimensional objects) and other formal features vary from Egyptian works in telling ways, and yet they do clearly owe their main inspiration to Egypt. Thus the breadth of Egypt's impact emerges more dramatically in the exhibition, where the works speak directly for themselves, and the museum visitor senses this more intuitively, while the catalogue reader benefits from the cogent stylistic analysis that directs attention more systematically. The reverse relations—Asiatic influence seen in details of Egyptian costume, hairstyle, and jewelry, for example—are better understood through the text of the catalogue, as these were integrated far more subtly into Egyptian works.

The catalogue also overcomes the major drawback of this exhibition, the relative paucity of surviving materials available for loan. The deliberate effacement of Hatshepsut's statuary by Thutmose III still lacks for a decisive explanation, although three essays in section V, "The Destruction of Hatshepsut's Memory," offer archaeological grounds for suggesting that return to conventional conformity, rather than personal hatred, motivated the obliteration, which occurred more than twenty years after Hatshepsut's death. Such destruction, for whatever motive, means that relatively few works have survived and of those that have, most are now extensively restored from fragments recovered in the 1920s and 1930s by expe-

ditions sponsored and carried out by the Met (which accounts for the museum's ownership of so many of the works associated with this pharaoh). The extent of the restoration is more readily apparent in the exhibition—although it reveals itself fully only at close hand—but the high quality of the catalogue's reproductions, those in color in particular, convey at least some of this enormous project (Fig.1). However, it must be noted, effacements to all sides of some statuary, including the back, can only be appreciated in the exhibition, as the catalogue seldom reproduces a work in multiple views; the pillar side (back) often bore important inscriptions or images, the effacement of which also constitutes an important part of the archaeological record as well as loss of archaeological information. And the angle from which each work has been photographed often fails to reveal important information, a real limitation in dealing with Egyptian art, which, while stereometric, regularly makes good use of all available surfaces for carrying signifiers. And finally, of course, a sense of scale comes through only with effort from reproductions, a great limitation to appreciating the ambition, and impact, of much Egyptian art: The face of a re-cut courtyard block (cat. no. 38) is reproduced to focus on the original relief of Hatshepsut's husband, but what the exhibition visitor realizes by moving just a few inches to one side is that the block itself is at least five feet deep and probably weighs close to a ton.

And, of course, works on a yet larger scale—the many repetitive colossal statues and architecture—could not be imported for the exhibition, although they were included via photographic reproductions of varying format and detail. The best-known piece in this category would be Hatshepsut's Temple at Deir el-Bahri, familiar to anyone who enrolls in the survey of the history of early art. It occupies the primary position in the catalogue section on Hatshepsut's building projects, with five expert essays on: its planning; the objects discovered in its foundation deposits; the political messages Hatshepsut intended in re-burying her father near the site (also the location of her own second tomb, pre-empting the queen's tomb planned for her prior to her

accession to regent); the statuary here and at related sites of her building activity; and her appropriation of the cult of Hathor as another indicator of her right to rule. While differential interpretations of some works emerge in these essays, the cumulative effect is to deepen our sense of the subtlety and multivalence of the messages planned for both figurative art and architecture. We become aware of the great care with which these statements were shaped, by Hatshepsut and court officials under her direction, and an often astonishing willingness to innovate. Underlying all, we find the planners asserting continuity with the past, through invocation of particular historical figures and traditions, even as the iconography for doing this, given a female pharaoh, is necessarily unconventional.

The temple complex itself at Deir el-Bahri represents a first: Its scale allies it with the Old Kingdom pyramids, and its incorporation of architectural, sculptural, and painted elements to mark a journey are familiar from earlier Egyptian ceremonial contexts. However, this is not a pharaonic funerary monument but a temple, and it serves as the destination of the portable barque of the god Amun, the climax of the annual Beautiful Festival, which began on the east side of the Nile. The receiving temple, the part of the complex most familiar to us today, integrates with the landscape in a manner totally different than did the pyramids, of course, and while there are royal burials in the vicinity, the king (Hatshepsut) here discreetly steps to one side, as it were, to maintain the focus on Amun. (At this point it is useful to recall that Hatshepsut's expanded personal name was "Hatshepsut united with Amun" and the name she adopted upon assuming male kingly attributes was "Maatkare, beloved of Amun.") The designer of the temple building—whether Senenmut or the High Priest Hapuseneb, or perhaps even Hatshepsut herself—made formal and typological references in the architecture to the adjacent Eleventh Dynasty temple of Mentuhotep II, who reunited Egypt at the end of the first Intermediate period and who, according to Ann Macy Roth, may have already by Hatshepsut's time been

revered as the founder of Egypt's second golden age (147). These are details not usually conveyed in a basic art history course. Even without them, the striking chiaroscuro of the pillars across the façade, the two platforms that lead into the face of the living rock, are unforgettable, and this level of formal appreciation is possible with the reproductions in the catalogue, while less well integrated in the exhibition, where the monument was represented by large-format photographs and plans on a lateral wall and by the allusion to a portion of those facades via a constructed relief covering the far side of the exhibition space.

Perhaps the greatest degree of innovation during Hatshepsut's lifetime can be found in the works associated with the non-royal "Great Steward of the God's Wife," Senenmut. Tutor to Hatshepsut's daughter Neferure, Overseer of All Works of the King, Chief Spokesman of [Hatshepsut's] Household, Senenmut occupied a singular position which the works selected for this exhibition make abundantly clear. Objects from the tomb of his parents reveal his modest origins, yet by the time of his mother's burial, Senenmut had already risen in status and so provided for her on a more lavish scale than had been the case for his father (who was reburied with her in a somewhat pre-emptory manner). A series of splendid sculptures, first of Senenmut as tutor to the young princess, and then in kneeling postures to present such attributes as the surveyor's cord, a shrine, the Hathor-headed *sistrum* (rattle), or the cryptogram of Uraeus (cobraform goddess of the harvest combined with Maatkare) encapsulate not only his official responsibilities in the royal household but also the iconographic innovations in the art of the early Eighteenth Dynasty. Repeatedly the catalogue informs us that these are the first of their kind in the history of Egyptian art. That Senenmut was the sponsor, or even recipient by gift, of so many works of sculpture attests to his distinction in the courts of Thutmose I and Hatshepsut (it is not known when Senenmut died, so the length of his service, if at all, to Thutmose III cannot be determined). Since statuary representing either a member of the royal household or a non-royal was unknown

before this time (and Catharine H. Roehrig points out, in her essay introducing this section of the catalogue, that the titles for royal tutors were adopted only with the early Eighteenth Dynasty), it becomes even more breathtaking to realize that no fewer than ten images of Senenmut with the princess Neferure are known: The catalogue (and exhibition) includes one seated version of this pair, one standing, and reference to the multiple so-called block statues, which feature the tiny princess enclosed within the cube formed by the seated tutor's drawn-up knees with forearms resting across them. Such works, in addition to several small limestone scraps (*ostraca*) bearing what seem to be hasty sketch portraits of Senenmut—one gridded as though for enlargement, perhaps as a tomb painting, and the other a double, overlapping image—bring this historical figure, even more than his king, most vividly to life. Positioned in both exhibition and catalogue before we encounter images of Hatshepsut herself, the art of, by, and for the royal steward Senenmut emphasizes how effective the visual arts can be in suggesting an individual presence, an immediacy that is more fully rounded than that one might gain through other means. (I think, for example, of Jocelyn Tyldesley's excellent, closely argued *Hatshepsut: the Female Pharaoh* [1996], which largely relies upon other kinds of primary source material such as tomb texts, in which Senenmut appears but not nearly so forcefully as in the works included here.)

And of course, upon reflection, the reader of the catalogue, as the visitor to the exhibition, realizes that the unchanging nature of Egyptian art and culture is, to some extent, a generalization to which this period provided one among several vivid exceptions. There is still considerable debate about what led Thutmose III to order the systematic destruction of works associated with his regent (although those representing her as a mere queen were spared)—or in some cases the overwriting of her name with his. However current scholarship interprets much of this as the rejection of the innovations and conventional ambivalences, not to say irregularities, that necessarily followed from protocols required for a female king. The seated figure in Figure 1, reconstructed from pieces now at the Met and at the Rijksmuseum in Leiden, can help us to appreciate this more clearly: It presents a breasted female in feminine costume and jewelry (note the inscribed bracelets on arms and ankles) but wearing the *nemes* headcloth and *uraeus* of pharaonic kingship. The extensive hieroglyphs on the throne and pillar back refer to Hatshepsut in the feminine (most of her other inscriptions used the masculine) and contain images of the hippo goddess Taweret, protector of childbirth, suggesting that the work had been located within the Deir el-Bahri temple in those precincts consecrated to a female ruler and serving functions no male ruler could have offered within his own

complex. Even more striking, the features of the statue's face are highly individualized, suggesting more strongly than most of the images bearing her name that this is a portrait of Hatshepsut herself. More than the "kingly" style images created during her co-regency with Thutmose III, in which Hatshepsut had herself represented wearing the male kilt and ceremonial false beard as well as striding forward (as in an adjacent catalogue image), this particular work represents a more nuanced statement of Hatshepsut's remarkable achievements which was, for me, the great insight here: An extensive, yet subtle, artistic program, calibrated to invoke tradition and history, yet daring to innovate at every step in order to express the paradoxes of the court at a particular time and place. One is immensely moved to encounter this constellation of actors on the stage of ancient history and to recognize the bold creativity of their thought (even though it was, apparently, too bold for the next generation). •

Christine Havice is Director of the School of Art at Kent State University, former Associate Dean of Fine Arts at the University of Kentucky, and a long-time contributor to *WAJ*. Her research focuses on images of women in medieval art, in manuscripts in particular, and on the ways in which art under the sponsorship of, or destined for, women distinguishes itself.

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Pl. 1. Lee Krasner, *Imperative* (1976), oil, charcoal, and paper on canvas, 50" x 50". National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Victor Thaw in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art.

Pl. 2. Lee Krasner, *Crisis Moment* (c. 1972-80), oil and paper collage on canvas, 69" x 54 1/4". Private collection. Photo courtesy Robert Miller Gallery.



Pl. 3. Lee Krasner,
*Between Two
Appearances* (1981),
oil and paper
collage on canvas,
47" x 57 1/4".
Pollock-Krasner
Foundation.
Photo courtesy
Robert Miller Gallery.



Pl. 4. Lee Krasner,
Night Life (1947)
oil on linen,
20 1/2" x 24".
Private collection.
Photo courtesy
Robert Miller Gallery.



Pl. 5. Lee Krasner, *Noon*, (1947) oil on linen, 24"x 30". Private collection. Photo courtesy Robert Miller Gallery.



Pl. 6. Elaine de Kooning, *Black Mountain #5* (1948), oil on paper on canvas, 13 1/4" x 16 1/4". Collection of Edward Shufro.



Pl. 7. Joan Mitchell,
Rose Cottage (1953),
oil on canvas, 71 3/4" x 68 1/4".
Collection of W. Stephen Croddy.



Pl. 8. Lee Krasner, *Image on Green (Jungle)* (1955),
oil and collage on canvas, 82 3/4" x 39".
Private collection.



Pl. 9. Lee Krasner, *Milkweed* (1955) oil and paper collage on
canvas, 82 1/2" x 57 3/4". Albright-Knox Art Gallery.



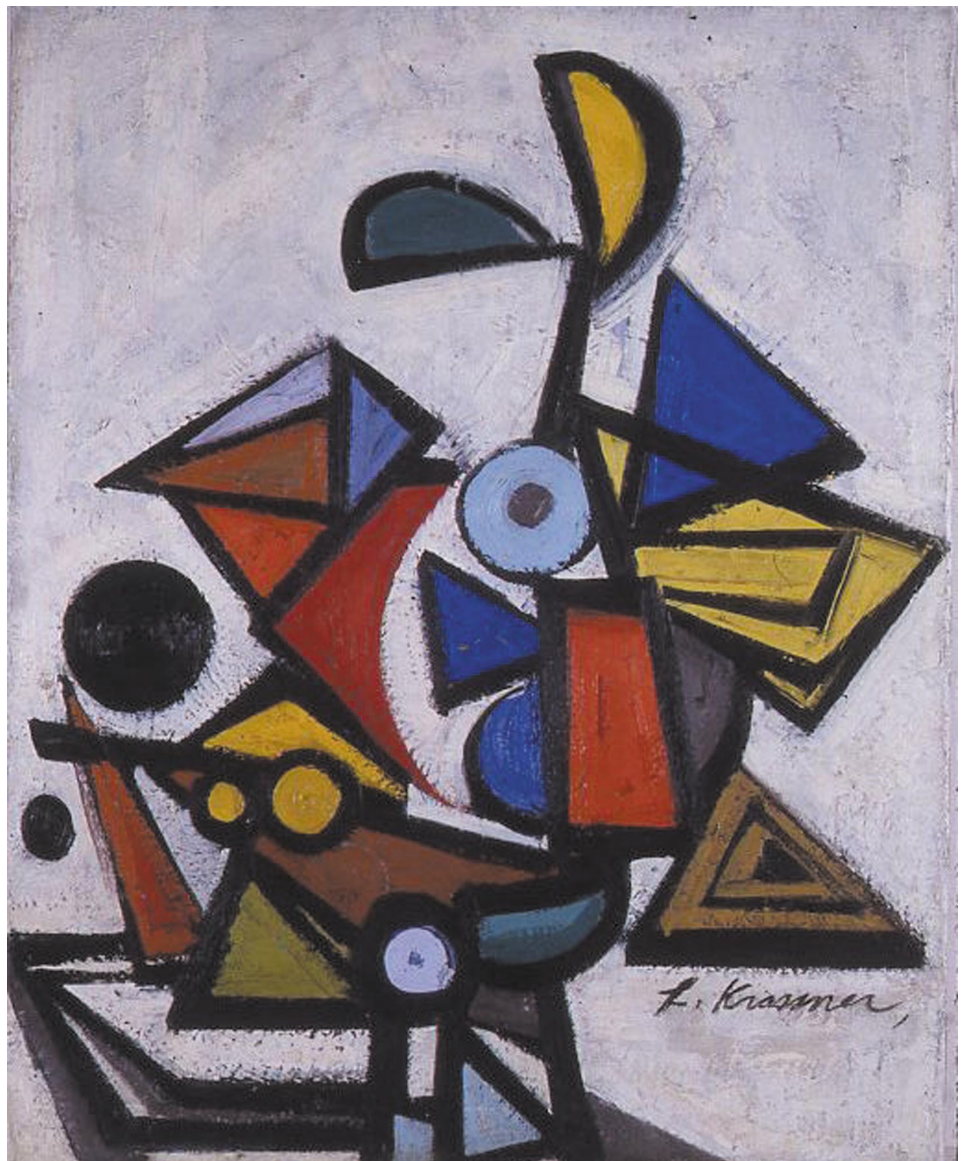
Pl. 10. Lee Krasner, *Untitled (Still Life)* (1938) oil on paper, 19" x 24 3/4". The Whitney Museum of American Art.



Pl. 11. Mercedes Matter, *Tabletop Still Life no. 5* (1937-38), oil on canvas, 30" x 36". Private collection. Photo courtesy Mark Borghi Gallery.



Pl. 12. Mercedes Carles (Matter)
 Untitled (1934-35),
 oil on canvas board, 16" x 20",
 Private collection.
 Photo courtesy Mark Borghi Gallery.



Pl. 13. Lee Krasner,
Composition (c. 1939)
 oil on linen, 30" x 24".
 Smithsonian Museum of
 American Art, Washington, D. C.
 Photo courtesy Robert Miller Gallery.



"Light on the Subject", 30x36", Acrylic

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