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(on the cover):
Alice Aycock, *Ghost Ballet for the East Bank Machineworks*, (Nashville, Tennessee) (2005-07) aluminum, neon, thermoformed acrylic shapes, c. L.100' x H.100' x D. 60'. Courtesy of the artist.

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In this issue we present two articles on public projects that give form to big ideas. Alice Aycock creates enlightened and energetic responses to celestial discovery and our technological world in works like *Star Sifter*, a large project completed in 1998 for Terminal One at New York's JFK Airport. Mary Tinti writes: "Like a shuttle poised to reenter the earth's atmosphere, *Star Sifter* inspires fanciful connections between earth and cosmic travel." Aycock calls her fascination with flight a "natural obsession," and here focuses "on the essence of flight, physics, astronomy, and celestial discovery." Three more projects completed in 2007, including *Ghost Ballet for the East Bank Machineworks* (Nashville, Tennessee), pictured on our cover, display Aycock's continuing quest to stay "fiercely true to herself and her ever-expanding intellectual and cosmic queries."

Sacrifices of War, created in 1926 by Boston sculptor Bashka Paeff for the Maine World War I Sailors and Soldier's Memorial, at Kittery, honors mothers as advocates of peace. Jennifer Wingate claims that "Rather than celebrating the more conventional notions of patriotic motherhood promoted in popular media, Paeff's design echoed the position of Jane Addams and the Woman's Peace Party, which held that women, as mothers, had a special responsibility and authority as advocates of peace." The subject of women protecting their young from the violence of battle appears only rarely in American World War I imagery, and Wingate compares Paeff's memorial with contemporary works such as Käthe Kollwitz's group of mothers shielding young children from the ravages of war, inspired by the death of her son Peter.

Tatiana Flores introduces a number of women artists who not only helped bring modernism to Mexican painting, photography, and other art forms in the 1920s, but also sought to bring social value to their country's art. Besides presenting an early work by Frida Kahlo, Flores examines how Lola Cueto, Tina Modotti, Rosario Cabrera, Chabela Villaseñor, and Nahui Olin "rejected academic traditions and pondered through visual means what should be the purpose of Mexican art in the post-revolutionary moment."

The life and art of Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler reflect the spirit of liberation for bohemian women in Weimar Germany during the 1920s and 1930s. While her colleague Otto Dix created grim, harshly sexualized portrayals of women, Lohse-Wächtler's approach to street subjects such as the bold, brash *Lissy* "demonstrates the artist's sympathetic relationship with her disenfranchised subjects, and ultimately suggests a more empowering discourse for Weimar prostitution," writes Britany Salsbury. Lohse-Wächtler cleverly navigated the male-dominated professional art world, and as a young artist gained critical acclaim for her strong, garishly colored watercolors until her career was cut short by madness, and she was annihilated during the Third Reich.

Scenes of late Roman and early Byzantine women and their possessions, including their female slaves, may have had "positive associations for both the slave and the elite female viewers," claims Marice Rose. She argues that such images "were intended to reinforce domestic order and construct female behavior," and "that the impact of such "visual language was powerful, and that female viewership of such language was neither neutral nor passive."

Three of the books reviewed in this issue offer historical approaches to the "Feminist Revolution" from the multiple perspectives of their numerous essayists. The exhibition catalogue *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, reviewed by Karen Kurczynski,presents a broad spectrum of "what has become canonical second-wave feminist art," including an international selection of more than 120 women artists who made feminist work between 1965 and 1980. Reviewer Janet Marquardt questions the selection of just a dozen artists who are the subjects of *After the Revolution: Women Who Transformed Contemporary Art*, which "draws out the question of whether 'genius' and 'greatness' [as defined in 1971 by Linda Nochlin] are still at issue or whether the revolution has changed the paradigm." Reviewer Pamela Simpson notes a lively "spirit of dialogue between young feminists and the pioneers" found among the thirty-two essays in *Blaze, Discourse on Art, Women and Feminism*.

All but one of the monographs reviewed here concern artists still working today. The exception is *Russian Modernism Between East and West: Natal'ia Goncharova and the Russian Avant-Garde*. Reviewer Cheryl Kramer says of this first book on the artist in English since 1979, that author Jane Ashton Sharp "expertly conveys the complexity of Goncharova's work" by exploring her dialogue with Eastern and Western sources.

Lengthy conversations with May Stevens on her life and art became the basis for Patricia Hills's monograph. Reviewer Gylbert Coker comments on how Stevens's relationships with her parents played into the development of her Ordinary/Extraordinary and Big Daddy series. Reviewer Mary Ball Howkins finds that Joanna Inglot's volume on Magdalena Abakanowicz not only grounds this sculptor's oeuvre "in the unique evolution of the twentieth century Polish landscape," but also "reveals the degree to which Abakanowicz deftly shaped her public artistic identity in international circles, effectively mythologizing it and her art." Michelle Meagher reviews two books on Cindy Sherman: a "comprehensive" catalogue that accompanied a 2007 retrospective at the Galerie Jeu de Paume in Paris, with two (of three) essays that "fall into the convention of discussing Sherman's work in a gender-blind manner"; and a compilation of scholarly essays, "which traces the critical discourses that have been inspired by" this American photographer. Reviewer Patricia Briggs describes *Kiki Smith: A Gathering, 1980-2005* as "itself a beautiful object that mirrors the aesthetic of the artist," with essays by Linda Nochlin and others that explore the dark side of Smith's "tortured" figures while "highlighting the artist's "sensitivity to the poetic and conceptual resonances of her materials."

We continue to receive new submissions and encourage scholars to send their articles for consideration. *WAJ* guidelines for contributors and subscription information can be found on our website, womansartjournal@womansartjournal.org.

Joan Marter and Margaret Barlow, editors

Celebrating the Public Art of Alice Aycock

By Mary M. Tinti



Fig. 1. Alice Aycock, *Star Sifter* (Rotunda Project for Terminal One, JFK International Airport) (1998), stainless steel, aluminum, motorized parts, H. 40' x W. 60', with suspended elements of varying heights. Courtesy of the artist.

Since 1998 Alice Aycock's *Star Sifter* has occupied a prominent place within the Terminal One rotunda of New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport. A stellar complement to the terminal's critically acclaimed architecture, Aycock's installation was an ingenious response to the one-of-a-kind culture, form, and purpose of this site. After a decade, *Star Sifter* is as it always was: a sculptural commentary upon all that the airport has become and all it was once hoped to be.

Star Sifter (1998; Fig. 1 and Pl. 1) remains an invitation to the public to become aware of the power and possibilities inherent in their surroundings, to experience the airport as both an architectural space and a point of origin for travels to far off places—be they immediate and real or in the private recesses of the mind. Much has changed at the airport since *Star Sifter*'s initial unveiling. Today, in a transportation venue where the public is still dealing with the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks; still grappling with unprecedented regulations, fees,

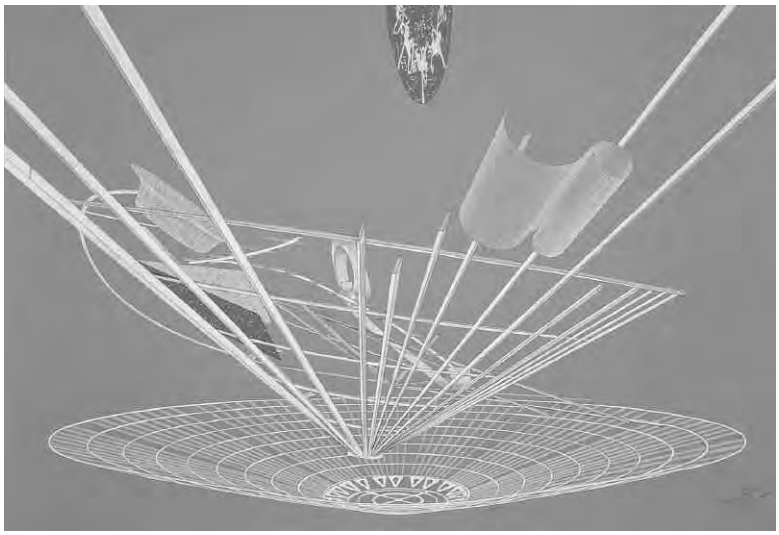


Fig 2. Alice Aycock, proposal for *Star Sifter* (1998). Ink and colored pencil on gray paper, 48" x 66". Private collection. Courtesy of the artist.

delays, and ever-changing travel advisories; and still trying to establish a new normal, Aycock's invitation seems more relevant than ever. *Star Sifter* is not just a work of public sculpture; it is a personal legacy that can aid in our understanding of the later projects of its prolific maker.

A successful artist whose sculpture and drawings are in numerous collections, Alice Aycock (b.1946) values the creation of art for public places. She understands the strange polemics of the public art genre and thrives on the dialogue which concurrently challenges and justifies its necessity. Despite her work as a public artist (beginning in the 1970s) and her no-holds-barred candor in being a true voice in the field, her public artworks have not garnered much scholarly attention.

My interest in this curious deficiency began after reading Brooke Kamin Rapaport's 2003 *Sculpture Magazine* interview, entitled "Alice Aycock: Public Artist." After rhetorically questioning the critical silence regarding the artist's recent works, Rapaport wisely suggested that "the role of public art itself at the present time" might be to blame.[1] Elaborating, Aycock's interviewer cites several handicaps with which public art—as a genre—often has to contend, including an amorphous definition, a stereotypical susceptibility to "disneyfication," a constant questioning of its artistic and social value, a secondary relationship to architecture, and a penchant for controversial receptions. Together, these strikes seem to have contributed to a moratorium on serious discussions of public art, Aycock's included.

In 2005, the silence was perhaps unintentionally perpetuated by Robert Hobbs, whose brilliant analysis of Aycock's oeuvre acknowledged her public projects as a crucial part of her artistic contribution, but went on to explain his reasoning for leaving these works for a subsequent study. Hobbs passed on the opportunity to address these commissions at length, saying they "open a new and different chapter deserving its own publication" and understandably so.[2] Today, in the spirit of opening this chapter, this celebration of *Star Sifter* and three later works can provide an interpretive framework for understanding and fully appreciating Aycock's endeavors in the world of public art.

Unlike most public art commissions, which often begin with an open call for artists and the promise of a juried competition, the story of *Star Sifter* was distinctive from the start. The sculpture owes its existence to the vision of public art consultant Joyce Pomeroy Schwartz, who was hired by the terminal's tenant airlines to commission artworks for their new building.[3] Schwartz's plan called for a series of visually stunning, site-specific installations to be scattered throughout the terminal. Unfortunately, as construction progressed, the priorities of both the architect and the airlines shifted, and the budget and initial enthusiasm for a series of high profile art commissions began to wane. The only project realized, *Star Sifter* endured not only because it is, to quote Rapaport, "an optimistic vision of what air travel might lead to," but also because it doubled as a security barrier and could compensate for an intrinsic flaw in the mezzanine's design.[4]

Original plans for the mezzanine called for a large opening in the center of the atrium so that people on the second floor could look down upon passengers making their way through the security checkpoint directly below. However, soon after construction began, the architect saw that a person on the mezzanine could easily slip an unscreened item down to a previously screened passenger. Aycock's added challenge then was to find a way to prevent such security breaches. The end result is nothing short of a visionary sculptural machine.

Like a shuttle poised to reenter the earth's atmosphere, *Star Sifter* hovers between the first and second levels of the rotunda, inspiring fanciful connections between earth and cosmic travel (Fig. 2). Within the central opening, Aycock wove a transparent web of metal that affords entertaining views between floors but is tight enough to prevent the passing of objects. Mirrors, curlicues, a painted disk, an open book, a fuselage, and various curved trellis-like floating forms suspended above this sunken web are just a few of the abstract metallic objects caught in the sifter's vortex. Some viewers might recognize A-frames and architectural scaffolding; others might see the makings of airplane parts or various fabrications of an aviation engineer.

On the surface, the installation may appear to pay tribute to more traditional themes of air and space flight. But Aycock, a self-proclaimed "sucker for the stars," imbues this focus on the essence of flight, physics, astronomy, and celestial discovery with a conceptual profundity absent in most artworks of this genre.[5] Such theoretical saturation and attention to site specificity solidifies her place among those artists creating innovative, strikingly relevant sculptural commissions for public spaces.

To stand before an Aycock sculpture is to surround oneself with the product of an encyclopedic artistic mind, a mind that is unafraid to tap centuries of thought, faith, science, and mystery or to relish the inevitable layers of interpretation each

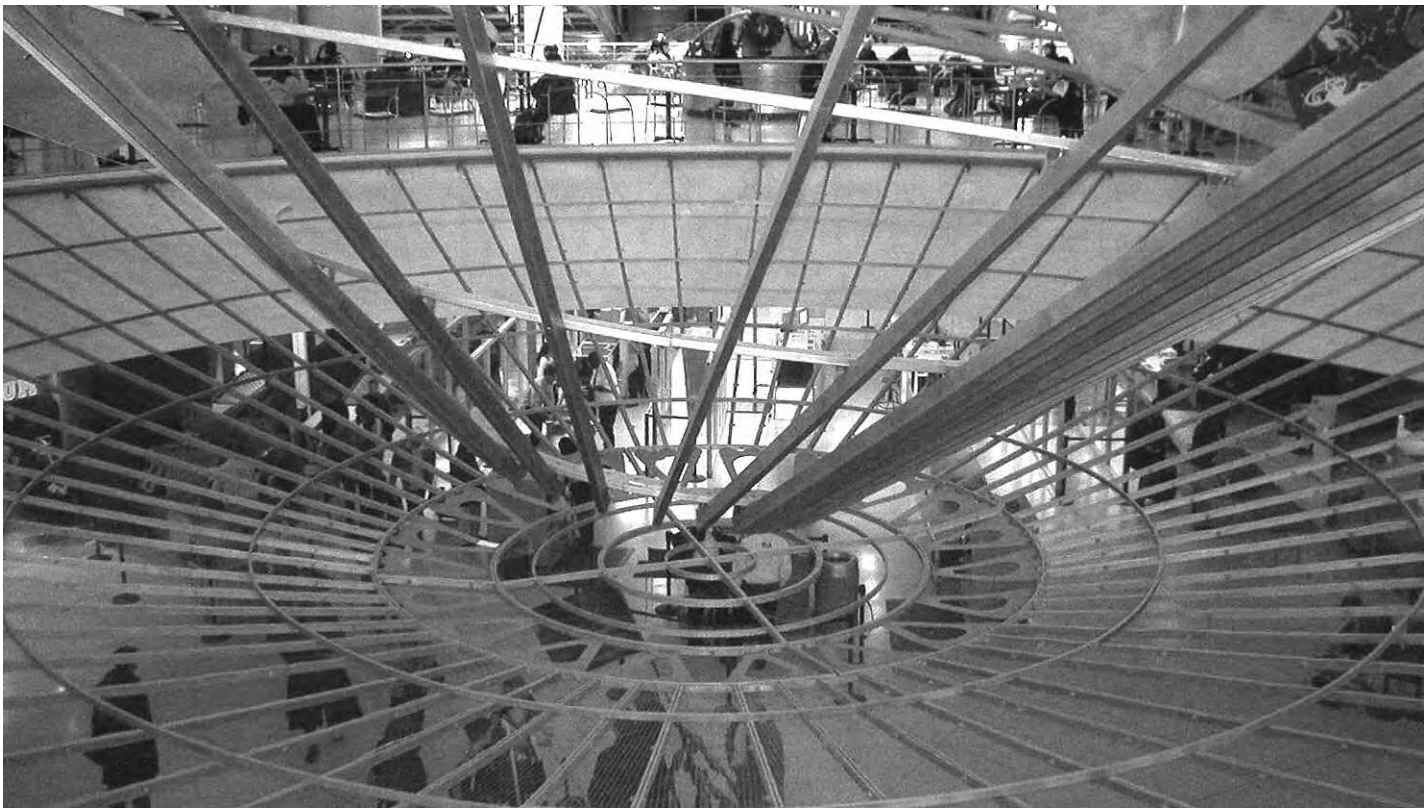


Fig. 3. Alice Aycock, *Star Sifter* (Rotunda Project for Terminal One, JFK International Airport) (1998), stainless steel, aluminum, motorized parts, H. 40′ x W. 60′, with suspended elements of varying heights. View from the mezzanine. Photo: Mary Tinti.

can provide. Aycock's fascination with space, flight, time, and the ability of the past to affect the present takes many forms. They range from the literal to the imaginary, the metaphorical to the prophetic. They are often autobiographical, revealing an acute sensitivity to dreams, ghosts, subconscious musings, or childhood fears. They also demonstrate a desire to read across disparate texts and images in pursuit of new ways to reconcile scientific fact and miraculous fiction.

Over the course of her career, Aycock has talked about her fascination with flight, calling it a "natural obsession."[6] Even though twentieth-century aeronautical advancements enabled humans to realize the dream of flight, to Aycock "flying and airplanes are still magic," a bewitching notion at the core of much of her artistic philosophy.[7] For her, flight is bound with desire; it is not a strictly physical or technological phenomenon. Because her version of flight encompasses the mind and spirit, it is neither a straightforward progression from point A to point B, nor an evolution from past to present or present to future. Her idea of flight is simultaneously backward and forward; it is undirected and knows no bounds.

Expanding upon notions of flight, the artist uses the slipping memory of her grandmother as an initial metaphor for viewing traversals of time and space less literally. Likewise, the plight of schizophrenics, whose scopic associations with speed, time travel, and free fall—all facets of a mind grappling with the pervasive nature of real life and hallucination—fit well into Aycock's own interests in "flights of the imagination."[8] Such notions also solidify her wish to create



Fig. 4. Alice Aycock, Star Sifter (1998), detail. Photo: Mary Tinti

works that derive from unconventional schools of science and philosophy and may prompt viewers to embrace, in the words of Hobbs, "new ways of thinking about themselves and the world around them."[9] *Star Sifter* perfectly encapsulates all of these desires, bringing them to life at this airport site—where a traveler's experience of flight is as wonderfully confused, jumbled, and broadly defined as the artist's.

Star Sifter is exactly what its title suggests: a giant steel sieve that captures and attempts to siphon everything in its

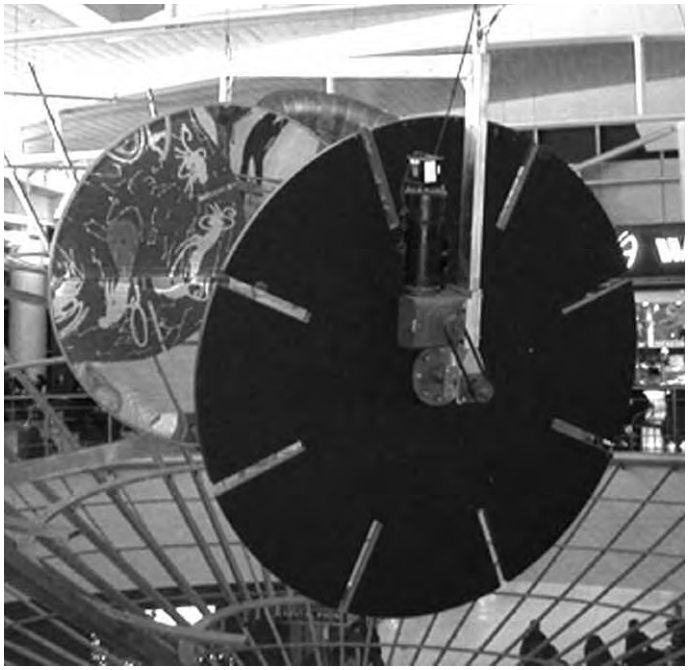


Fig. 5. Alice Aycock, Star Sifter (1998), detail of zoetrope. Photo: Mary Tinti.

stratosphere (Pl. 2). Taking the sculpture at face value, one might picture viewers on the mezzanine peering down through its mesh, imagining they are the next to be lured in, to be sifted (Fig. 3). Indeed, for many, that sorting is exactly what lay in store. While the mezzanine and ticketing areas are accessible to the general public, the area directly below the sculpture is restricted to ticketed passengers—those who have been scanned and "sifted" by airport security.

As with most of her sculptures, Aycock purposefully stacked *Star Sifter* with details. Though the objects caught in the sifter's snare may be abstractions, there are several whose unique derivations are discernable, or debatable. Examining these abstract forms compounds the ways in which *Star Sifter* can be interpreted as both extrapolating from and solidifying its place within the structure and psychology of this singular public space.

First, there is the shape which is equally reminiscent of an open book, passport, or laptop (Fig 4). While this form may reference this triad of essential travel and time-killing tools, it also can be interpreted as reflecting the artist's love of reading, a habit instilled by her father at a young age. Recalling her childhood enthusiasm and naïvete, Aycock confesses, "I thought that if I read enough books, I could know everything without having to experience it all for real. I could do everything in my imagination and stay safe. For me, even now, my safety net is books."[10] With *Star Sifter*, that theoretical safety net seems to have found a sculptural form, also becoming a metaphorical parachute for the traveler. The sifter becomes a subtle, almost prophetic protector, literally catching anyone or anything security deems unfit for travel, or anyone not imaginative enough to give in to the hidden power of fantasy, faith, or mysterious, improbable connections. Extending the metaphor, *Star Sifter* may suggest that inquiry and the pursuit of knowledge itself are perhaps the most important safety nets. The sculpture's location in a building whose purpose is to facilitate one of the twentieth century's most influential dreams-turned-reality-via-technology certainly strengthens this claim.

Viewers should not forget, however, that Aycock is a quick-witted artist with a sharp sense of humor. On the other side of the sifter, across from the book, a mirror and a blue disk painted with a circle of white monkeys "jumping through hoops through a constellation" offer a unique splash of color within an otherwise industrial web of steel (Fig. 5, and Pl. 3).[11] Inspired by nineteenth-century zoetropes (about which Aycock was then reading), the disk is a play on motion, animation and optical illusion. It also references the unfortunate, but inevitable, monotony of our airport experiences. Were the zoetrope activated—spun, and viewed from the correct angle—its monkey would appear to move forward, hurdling his hoop again and again. This allusion is particularly befitting the airport: a non-place between departure and destination where travelers can feel they have been robbed of the excitement of the journey, finding themselves on a conveyor belt of sorts, jumping through the hoops of airline regulations and airport security, inevitably feeling as though they are "traveling but going nowhere."[12]

Aycock's artistic allusions to some of the more unflattering characteristics of contemporary commercial flight find their complement in the observations of author and *New York Times* contributor Walter Kirn, who writes:

> For thousands of years human beings dreamed of flying, but it took us less than a century to get sick of it. The crowds. The delays. The seatmates. Something went wrong. How did the miracle become a hassle? How did a form of transportation that seemed to promise unprecedented freedom end up delivering, in such short order, a sense of debilitating entrapment?[13]

Kirn's point is well taken. Today, flying is far busier, more quotidian, more cramped, more stressful and certainly less elegant than it once was. Similarly, the spaces which make contemporary flight possible are contested zones fraught with strange tensions, ersatz experiences, and complicated comings and goings. For Aycock, too, the airport is an uninhabitable "cyberspace made real," where conceptions of public-ness and community are evasive, if not indeterminable.[14]

Aycock's impressions of the airport also echo those of travel writer Pico Iyer, who similarly observes:

> What makes the airport special…is that it is a gift store with culture shock: the product, in its video arcades, its hotels, and its cocktail lounges, of a mixed marriage between a border crossing and a shopping mall. And the confusions of any shop where people are surrounded by signs they can't read and people they can't follow are amplified in this place where so many customers are from somewhere far away, and so many of the shopkeepers are recent arrivals with a shaky hold on English.[15]

As though picking up where Iyer leaves off, Aycock believes the airport is a place where "the sense of being local is left to the postcards and souvenirs, but it is a nowhere zone," replete with neon signage and kitschy décor. "If anything is 1984…it's [the airport]!"[16]

When tapped to create a work of art for these vast "nowhere zones," Aycock confesses that the traveler or audience she has in mind is herself. Because for her the entire airport experience is such an ordeal, she likes to create installations which can be appreciated by a traveler who is constantly on the move, someone who wants to get in and get out without lingering unnecessarily. Thus, the sculpture must hold up to a "walk by experience," for travelers who "just happen to turn around for a quick second" as they grab a hot dog or a coffee. In that moment, the viewer can experience what Aycock calls a "quick hit" or "a little spectacle," a glimpse of a magic element that in her words is "a little scary and a little delicious."[17] In the case of *Star Sifter,* the entire piece is full of rich elements, all both scary and delicious, conducive to quick hits and contemplation alike.

While Aycock's clichéd airport is a place of annoyance, inconvenience, and eerie ennui, her sculpture initiates another way to think about what happens in this space: to take a step back from the tedium and recognize that the ability to fly is still amazing. This sentiment is shared by Iyer, who, in his contribution to the *New York Times* December 2007 blog, "Jet Lagged: Navigating the Unfriendly Skies," analogously acknowledges the negative characteristics of commercial flight, but sees past them to something more romantic. Iyer's diplomatic insights about the contemporary travel-by-air experience serve to re-affirm the continued relevancy of *Star Sifter*. "I wonder if it isn't really the democracy of travel that many of us are objecting to these days when we speak of more crowded planes and long lines at the airport….What is it, exactly, that makes us think that we should complain about sitting in a seat and being taken around the world?" he muses.[18] Indeed, in ways both "slightly humorous and a little cynical" (Aycock's language), *Star Sifter* ironically hints at the banalities inherent in the contemporary flight experience but does so while offering a more imaginative alternative to the monotony.[19]

When the overall curvature of Star Sifter is considered, the work's optimism truly begins to reveal itself. Aycock has confirmed that "metaphorically speaking, the curved elements are a celestial deconstruction…loosely taken…from the computer diagrams of outer space."[20] Even without such clues from Aycock (or the title), science fiction aficionados and space history enthusiasts might well associate the form of Aycock's sculpture, as I do, with the "cosmic shortcut" known as a wormhole.[21] The astronomer David Darling has described a wormhole, a phenomenon of physics, as "a hypothetical 'tunnel' connecting two different points in spacetime."[22] Hovering as it does between the mezzanine rotunda and the floor below, *Star Sifter* could be mistaken for just such a space age conduit. Its shape, silhouette, and physical relation to its site all further this association. This corollary is profound, for it suggests the extent to which *Star Sifter* is in tune with its site. Not only is it in synch with the literal happenings that occur in this space, it is prescient in the possibilities and consequences it suggests the viewer contemplate.

Unproven vehicles of time travel, wormholes successfully connect with Aycock's interest in schizophrenia, her grandmother's failing mind, and her fascination with the writings of Jorge Luis Borges. While wormholes may be "one of the most menacing and mysterious things in space," their potential existence keeps the hope of time travel alive.[23] "Popping through a wormhole could bring distant galaxies to your doorstep" and allow those who pass through and safely return "to travel into the future," assuming they live to tell the tale."[24] Like the imaginary travels of those who dreamed of flying long before it was possible, wormholes offer a back door into the mysteries of flight, time travel, and heretofore inexplicable universal forces. They also relate to Borges's "tear in the universe," a concept with which Aycock is particularly enraptured.

Among the authors and philosophers whose literary works Aycock often conjures, Borges is a favorite. In a 1990 interview, Aycock told Grace Glueck, "I keep remembering the Borges story 'The Aleph,' in which the narrator finds a tear in the universe that allowed him to see everything that was and is and will be. He is thus able to pull himself away from the 'now' by understanding what came before him, living in the world that is, and envisioning another one."[25] Aycock then added, "I'd be happy if I could just find a tiny rip."[26] After reading this statement, one can easily equate the way *Star Sifter* collapses the first and second floors of the rotunda with Aycock's attempt at finding (or creating) "a tiny rip." Like a wormhole or universal tear, *Star Sifter* simultaneously predicts and provides the journey—whatever that may be. Whether seen as an odyssey through the creative mind of an artist, through the airport, or through all the imaginings of flight this unique site affords, *Star Sifter* is at once a work of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Associating *Star Sifter* with the look and practicability of a wormhole or a "tear in the universe" builds on questions inherent in the air travel experience and the unpredictable journeys that begin and end at the airport. Such routine queries as: Will my flight get in on time? Will my luggage get lost? Will the person in front of me keep her seatback in the upright position? All find their counterpart in Aycock's construction and the more profound what ifs it prompts.

Star Sifter is a seductive work by a calculating artist and intellect, an exceptionally inquisitive scholar on a never-ending quest to discover new ways to stimulate herself and her audience. The myriad associations nurtured by *Star Sifter* (only a few of which are touched upon here) is a testament to the complexities she continues to court. *Star Sifter,* which may be Aycock's safety net, wormhole, tear in the universe, and optimistic receptacle of inquiry is a call for viewers to value asking intelligent, probing questions and to understand how everything in our lives may be more connected than we realize. Through this sculptural spectacle, Aycock jolts the traveling public out of their humdrum daze, gives them a challenging dose of reality, and invites them to see the world around them, including their immediate spaces, both for what they are and what they could be.



Fig 6. Alice Aycock, *Strange Attractor for Kansas City* (Long Term Parking Facility, Kansas City [Missouri] International Airport) (2007), aluminum, neon, halogen lights, H. 42' x L. 26' x W. 30'6". Courtesy of the artist.

Because of the wonderful mess of order and chaos it embodies, *Star Sifter* is a brilliant example of art for the airport and the twenty-first-century culture that has emerged around it. "As airspace is more and more controlled," writes historian Robert Wohl, "as airports become increasingly congested, as security concerns constrict the air traveler and undermine the equation of airplanes with speed, the idea of flight as liberation seems remote, the utopia of a distant past."[27] Aycock has tried to carry this notion into our present and future. Despite the inconveniences and fears built into the contemporary air travel experience, we can fly. Aycock revels in this ability, and through *Star Sifter* reinforces that it is still a miraculous event. As though tapping into the very utopian fervor that historian Joseph Corn asserts was a pivotal part of the culture of aviation in pre-World War II America, this work is the sculptural equivalent of the transitions that happen in this airport space and the promise that can still exist in the minds of all who dare to reassess how far we have come and where future flight might lead us.[28]

Star Sifter remains relevant not only for its appropriation of the architecture or the psychology of its airport site, but for its lasting power. Its spirit and significance hold strong because its meaning is multifaceted, malleable, anticipatory, and therefore enduring. Because it relates uniquely to its site and to flight-related phenomena, and is an honest, exciting, inventive sculptural expression of "what air travel might lead to," *Star Sifter* will continue to elicit new meaning as an integral part of Terminal One.

Like *Star Sifter* several of the artist's subsequent public projects are similarly site-responsive. *Strange Attractor for Kansas City* (Pl. 4), *Ghost Ballet for the East Bank Machineworks* (Nashville, Tennessee) (front cover, Pl. 5), and *The Uncertainty of Ground State Fluctuations (for Clayton, Missouri)* (Pl. 6)—three very different commissions from 2007—evidence the recycling and renewal of the themes that preoccupy Aycock, her keen ability to extrapolate from a specific site, and the pragmatics and pitfalls of working in the world of public art. Any public art commission is a gamble, as the works often are met with a mix of popular acclaim and contentious debate. But like *Star Sifter*, these works, too, will likely become indelible parts of the public places for which they were created.

Aycock's installation for Kansas City International Airport, despite its controversial reception and seeming thematic incongruity, evidences a very different approach to the unique happenings of an airport site (Fig. 6). Located outside the terminal walls, *Strange Attractor for Kansas City* is sited in a roundabout adjacent to the highway connector and several parking lots.[29] Fabricated from aluminum, the sculpture takes the form of two gigantic trumpet bells which have been severed from their instruments and fused together at their narrowest points. Best viewed at night, each bell is illuminated from the inside by "metal halide lights" that give off a bright white beam "surrounded by a ring of blue or neon."[30] An odd, otherworldly glow envelops the entire piece, which is only enhanced by the phosphorescence of 35-foot tall, bright orange zigzags standing like antennae on the earth around it. Those driving by no doubt fight the urge to stare, or possibly to stop to investigate the light source, or wonder what strange object or creature might crawl out.

For Aycock, the work "has a little bit of the quality of 'the alien has landed.'"[31] As revealed in a 2005 Pratt Institute lecture, this sculpture fits with Aycock's attraction to "the idea of flying saucers, aliens, and space travel, 'or, rather, people's fantasies about these things.'"[32] It is abstract, visually loud, and seemingly out of place.

Judging from the opinions expressed in the Kansas City local press, the City Council members there felt an alien presence, too. Their comments ranged from "This looks like something a kid put together," and "I don't know why we have to have art that everybody has to guess what it means," to "Art is in the eye of the beholder," and "When I first saw this, I didn't quite get it, but it grew on me."[33] Perhaps the Council members' confusion over *Strange Attractor* was because its site specificity was not as obvious, innocuous, or innocent as they were expecting.

Aycock chose to exploit the automobile- and highway-restricted monotony of life—equating the banality of strip malls, parking lots, and style-less suburban sprawl with the unfortunate prosaicism of contemporary air travel. This installation supported her declaration that "the more the world becomes just a franchise, the more imperative it is to go against the grain; to be idiosyncratic and independent."[34] She



Fig. 7. Alice Aycock, *Ghost Ballet for the East Bank Machineworks*, (Nashville, Tennessee) (2005-07) aluminum, neon, thermoformed acrylic shapes, c. L.100′ x H.100′ x D. 60′. Courtesy of the artist.

envisioned this work for the vacation set: a family that has been off on holiday and is returning to their regular lives and routines. The plane has landed; the adventure has ended; and they must trade their wings for wheels. Aycock imagined what would jolt tired, bleary-eyed travelers as they made their way in the darkness from the airport to the long term parking lot to collect their car. For the artist, this site presented an opportunity to give them "the alien." This strange, ugly stretch of land between the terminals, tarmac, and economy parking "needs the alien. It needs a flying saucer that is not trying to prettify it," says Aycock, because so much of America is about bad design.[35] Given the opportunity, Aycock wants "to provoke you to think about your American landscape," not just from above in an airplane, disconnectedly viewing the land, but when you are in the midst of it, a part of it.[36] Reiterating ideas she expressed to Rapaport, Aycock told Alice Thorson of the *Kansas City Star*: "I'm an artist. I'm not in business to tell you what you already know. I'm in business to shake you up, make you think about something you haven't thought about, to look at the world differently than you normally do. That's my job."[37]

Aycock accomplishes these goals in Kansas City. But the shakeups she inspires are not limited to sites in and around an airport landscape. Other works for other sites similarly connect to one another while individually intensifying the spirit of the space for which they are conceived.

Ghost Ballet for the East Bank Machineworks again blends the best of Aycock's longtime creative urges and the characteristics that define an existing location (Fig. 7). Tapping into features of a site that are both objective and imagined, Aycock has given the citizens of Nashville a historically minded, percent-for-art sculpture that—in ways not so different from *Star Sifter* or *Strange Attractor*—is firmly rooted in the present and yet open to impending possibilities.

Ghost Ballet strikes a bold silhouette on the eastern edge of the Cumberland River, on the greenway just across from the city. With its swooping, spinning, shiny red-painted aluminum and stainless steel components, the sculpture engages in parallel conversations with the architecture and skyline of downtown Nashville as well as with the neighboring bridges and athletic stadium. Aycock's *Ghost Ballet* is in animated dialogue with much more than just its physical surroundings; it is in dialogue with time, and conscious of that which has come before it. This area was the site of Nashville's industrial past, with large manufacturing machines, relics of which still remain.

The siting of the work, a decision that involved suggestions from the public, was determined before Aycock was selected for the commission. So too were other parameters: utilizing "existing salvaged industrial objects," creating a civic "gateway," highlighting the uniqueness of the east bank, generating a point of visual interest for both sides of the river,



Fig. 8. Alice Aycock, *The Uncertainty of Ground State Fluctuations (for Clayton, Missouri)* (2007), structural and spun aluminum, fiberglass, thermo-formed acrylic, c. H. 19′ x W. 20′ x D. 20′. Courtesy of the artist.

and enticing passersby on foot and by car to appreciate the piece by both sun- and moonlight—no small order for a single work of public art.[38] Aycock has proven herself to be a particularly site sensitive public artist, and her proposal was selected to be realized.

Rising to the challenges set for her, Aycock fixed her attention on creating a work that, in her own words, could serve to "emphasize the historical significance of this place as well as to operate as a memory trace of the past industrial activities there."[39] The entire installation became a "new metaphorical construction;" one that not only symbolizes the past "activity and energy…generated on the site," but "also refers to the energy and excitement that still exists" in Nashville today.[40] While the references to actual and fanciful turbines, ladders, overhead cranes, trusses, and dynamos celebrate an industrial past and a dynamic future, as with all Aycock works, there is another layer of meaning—one that injects a bit of cynicism into the wonder.

A sculpture that borrows from various familiar architectural forms and was designed to withstand, "hurricane strength winds, snow and human loads," might also be seen as a reverse symbol of our nation's decaying infrastructure.[41] Aycock's frustration with homogenous design and rampant urban sprawl seen across America may have found another outlet here with *Ghost Ballet*. With so many of our roads, bridges, and tunnels in desperate need of repair, projects like this put the wonder and excitement back in physics and engineering and inject a bit of good, imaginative structure back into our environment.

The same can be said for *The Uncertainty of Ground State Fluctuations (for Clayton, Missouri),* another commission that allowed Aycock to do what she does best: appear to bend time and plumb her fascination with aliens, ghosts, histories of the universe and technology, and our precarious relationship to the natural world around us (Fig. 8). With Aycock's signature fanciful geometric abstractions, including "a cone and a pinwheel and a frozen flutter of metallic drapery," *Uncertainty* is more visually contained than the other works. Situated on a grassy rotary in front of a popular Clayton community center, *Uncertainty* is a pyramid-like volume topped with its own light filled horn. "The horn is trying to listen," says Aycock. "It is also a vessel, waiting to be filled. It seems to have landed, plopped down in place." The artist told Robert Duffy, of *St. Louis Magazine,* that it can be interpreted as anything: "a large musical instrument. Or a spacecraft straight from a 1950s Saturday movie matinee. Or a flowering bush. It's the viewer's choice." As with any Aycock work, competing interpretive threads generate an exciting tension for any single idea, and here Aycock notes how the sculpture "has to do with feelings of unrest or unease. Yet it is also optimistic, directed outward."[42]

Uncertainty serves to add a little flash to what Duffy calls Clayton's swath "of largely consequence-free buildings."[43] Additionally, because the piece is so open to interpretation and has a largely whimsical feel, it is well placed outside a center devoted to recreation and community activities, even though this location may not be the most prominent, or glamorous, in town.[44] "What you do is take what you're given," Aycock notes. "This is a piece I have always wanted to do, and after all these years I want to see it next."[45] Finally, because Aycock is an artist so in tune with and suited to a contemporary ethos, her works resonate wherever they land.

As this brief examination of a trio of Aycock's 2007 commissions demonstrates, the legacy of *Star Sifter* extends beyond Terminal One. She is an artist who stays fiercely true to herself and her ever-expanding intellectual and cosmic queries, and does so in a way that empowers the general public—be they parked at the airport, looking across the riverbank from a downtown high rise, or wandering in for some community bonding—to do the same. Understanding the depth and range of interpretation possible in a single sculpture paves the way for more meaningful connections with any Aycock work, and by extension, our experience of public art more generally.

Although Alice Thorson's comments are directed specifically towards *Strange Attractor for Kansas City*, they get at the essence of Aycock's public works. She observed how, "so much about this piece feels familiar: The flaring tubalike forms hark to old Victrolas, but their welded and riveted aluminum strips reference aircraft construction. The zigzags of red neon have a counterpart in American Indian pictographs, but the cables and poles that support them come from modern-day communications engineering."[46] Thorson goes on to ask, "So is this device meant for broadcasting or inputting, transport or surveillance? Is it malignant or benign? It all makes for a

thought-provoking encounter in a place where one might least expect it, with art fulfilling its time-honored role as beacon."[47]

Aycock's sculptural commissions are at once uncannily familiar semaphores and eccentric, otherworldly constructions. It is this tension, combined with their often subtly sensitive relationship to their site that makes them so richly thought-provoking. In its own way, each of these commissions, made over a decade that touches down in two millennia, addresses the importance of curiosity, the power of the imagination, the dangers of intellectual laziness, the connectivity of history, the anxieties bound to feelings of alienation, and the proclivity of suburban sprawl. •

Mary M. Tinti recently joined the staff of WaterFire, Providence. Her 2008 dissertation focused on the airport installations of the Acconci Studio, Alice Aycock, Keith Sonnier, and Diller + Scofidio.

NOTES

1. Brooke Kamin Rapaport, "Alice Aycock: Public Artist" *Sculpture Magazine* 22, no. 10 (December 2003): 33.
2. Robert Hobbs, *Alice Aycock: Sculpture and Projects*. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005), 4.
3. Completed in 1998, construction on Terminal One evidenced the first new building project at JFK in over twenty years. Improvements to the terminal, which then facilitated air transport for Air France, Japan Airlines, Korean Air and Lufthansa German Airlines, were financed and regulated by the airlines themselves. In the words of the Port Authority's Executive Director, while the governance of JFK had "always been a joint effort" between the New York/New Jersey Port Authority and its "tenant airlines," the refurbishment of Terminal One was a "benchmark product of this kind of public/private partnership." Billed as "A Private Enterprise Project to Enhance New York's Gateway Status" Terminal One was expected to "offer travelers a gateway to the world as well as the coming century." All quotes and information can be found in the Terminal One Promotional Material located in the Air Transport Files of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives.
4. See Joyce Pomeroy Schwartz, "Unrealized Public Art" *Public Art Review* 16, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2005): 33-35, 37.
5. Alice Aycock, conversation with the author, November 4, 2005.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Hobbs, , *Alice Aycock: Sculpture and Projects,* 70.
9. Ibid.
10. As quoted in Hobbs, *Alice Aycock: Sculpture and Projects*, 32.
11. Carol Vogel, "Visions of the Heavens," *New York Times,* May 22, 1998.
12. Alice Aycock, phone conversation with the author, October 17, 2006.
13. Walter Kirn, "Flying Alone," *New York Times Magazine*, July 23, 2006.
14. Aycock, conversation with the author, November 4, 2005.
15. Pico Iyer, *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls and the Search for Home* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 49-50.
16. Aycock, conversation with the author, November 4, 2005.
17. Ibid.
18. http://jetlagged.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/12/05/first-post-headline/#more-8.
19. Aycock, conversation with the author, November 4, 2005.
20. As quoted in Vogel, "Visions of the Heavens."
21. Paul Rincon, "Wormhole 'no use' for time travel," BBC NEWS online published on 23 May 2005. http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/sci/tech/4564477.stm
22. David Darling, "Wormhole," from The Encyclopedia of Astrobiology, Astronomy and Spaceflight, a resource of The Worlds of David Darling. http://www.daviddarling.info/encyclopedia/W/wormhole.html
23. Unauthored link related to Rincon's article entitled "Space—Wormholes" http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/space/deepspace/wormholes/index.shtml
24. Ibid.
25. As quoted in Grace Glueck, "A Sculptor Whose Imagery is Encyclopedic," *New York Times*, August 15, 1990.
26. Ibid.
27. Robert Wohl, "Messengers of a Vaster Life" in Huston Paschal and Linda Johnson Dougherty, co-curators, *Defying Gravity: Contemporary Art and Flight*. (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 2003), 28.
28. Joseph Corn, *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation*, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983).
29. The work was financed by funds from the $90 million allocated for the consolidation of the airport's rental car facilities. Rather than site this percent-for-art work directly outside the rental car building, "the selection panel that chose Aycock proposed the economy parking lot…because more people will use the parking facility" and therefore a broader spectrum of the public would get to view it. Mike Rice, "KC gets a peak at future KCI art." *Kansas City Star*, April 8, 2005.
30. Ibid.
31. As quoted in "About the Artist," *The Kansas City Star*, August 7, 2005.
32. "Sculptor Alice Aycock Lectures," *Gateway: The Community Newsletter of Pratt Institute* 15, no. 16, (April 21, 2005).
33. All quotes excerpted from Rice, "KC gets a peek at future KCI art."
34. Rapaport, "Alice Aycock: Public Artist," 34.
35. Aycock, conversation with the author, November 4, 2005.
36. From "About the Artist," *Kansas City Star.*
37. Alice Thorson, "It's Kansas City's next public artwork, and it won't add a penny to your tax bill," *Kansas City Star*, August 7, 2005.
38. From http://www.civicdesigncenter.org/exhibits-publicart.html Narrative of the Public Art Process.
39. From http://www.civicdesigncenter.org/exhibits-publicart.html Artist's Statement: "Ghost Ballet of the East Bank Machineworks."
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. All quotes in this paragraph come from Robert Duffy, "Outside Art," *St. Louis Magazine*, September 2007. http://www.stlmag.com/media/St-Louis-Magazine/September-2007/Outside-Art/
43. Ibid.
44. Renee Stovsky, "Sculpture adds new Clayton traffic-stopper," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 2, 2005.
45. Duffy, "Outside Art," *St. Louis Magazine*.
46. Alice Thorson, "Alice Aycock artwork lands at KCI," The Kansas City Star, July 1, 2007.
47. Ibid.

Strategic Modernists

Women Artists in Post-Revolutionary Mexico

By Tatiana Flores

In a 1921 review of the exhibition of the School of Fine Arts in Mexico City, the artist Carmen Foncerrada wrote: "The destiny of a work of art should not be a museum, either small or large, public or private. Museums seem like cemeteries of illustrious men. Works of art should be in contact with the daily life of people."[1] Foncerrada's remarks included a pointed argument against the prices of the art objects; they were so expensive that they could only end up back in the artist's studio. This was regrettable, for "[t]he way to create in the public an interest in art and to educate its taste is to put art within its reach."[2] She concluded with a call for all artists, including herself, "to create an atmosphere for art in Mexico."[3]

The cultural discourse of post-revolutionary Mexico emphasized the urgency of creating a national art and the obligation of reaching a wider public, observations made by Foncerrada.[4] Her attack on museums, unexpected because at the time there were hardly any in Mexico City, constitutes a radical critique that acknowledged the distance between these institutions and their public, and exposed social inequalities in Mexico. Museums, and art itself, for that matter, were wholly removed from the lives of ordinary people. According to Foncerrada, the role of the artist in post-revolutionary Mexico was to educate the masses so that they too might become consumers of art. Her gender gives added weight to certain statements. The description of museums as "cemeteries of illustrious men," perhaps trivial if written by a man, in the hands of a woman writer became a critique of masculine cultural domination and patriarchal values. Foncerrada's review implicitly carried the hope that profound social changes in class and gender relations could be effected under the new social order.

The decade of the 1920s is typically regarded as a renaissance in Mexican art because it witnessed the rise of the mural movement, important innovations in the graphic arts, the consolidation of photography as a fine arts medium, and dramatic advances in art education.[5] More often than not, however, the extraordinary developments of this decade are attributed to a narrow group of male artists, in particular *los tres grandes*: the muralist trio of Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Furthermore, the artistic visual languages that arose tend to be grouped under the generalizing rubric of "Mexican School," giving the false impression of a premeditated uniformity unlike the heterogeneity and extensive formal experimentation that actually characterized the art of this decade. Only when one takes as a point of departure a broader vision of avant-garde art in Mexico do artists typically regarded as minor gain greater recognition. Thus a comparative analysis of selected works from the 1920s by a group of women artists serves not only to enrich existing narratives but also to expand the narrowly circumscribed canon of Mexican art, and challenges commonly held stereotypes relating to Mexico, art, and gender.[6]

Among the women avant-garde artists of post-revolutionary Mexico who engaged with modernist thought and prevailing modes of visual production were Frida Kahlo, Lola Cueto, Tina Modotti, Rosario Cabrera, Chabela Villaseñor, and Nahui Olin. All rejected academic traditions and pondered through visual means what should be the purpose of Mexican art in the post-revolutionary moment. Their strategies included critiquing dominant avant-garde models, experimenting with diverse media that challenged the parameters of high art, employing pedagogy and activism as a means to effect social and cultural changes, and asserting the relevance of art that engaged personal experience. Stylistically heterogeneous, their work redefines the role of art and the artist in the post-revolutionary period.

A few months after the publication of Foncerrada's review, the poet Manuel Maples Arce similarly called for a renewal of Mexican literature. In December 1921, Maples Arce posted his belligerent manifesto, *Actual No. 1*, on walls in the central districts of Mexico City.[7] His battle-cry for the modernization of the Mexican arts was inspired by Futurist manifestos and other writings of the European avant-garde. He sought to overturn jaded artistic conventions, such as lyric poetry and academic art, and called for an embrace of modernity by celebrating the city and technology. Irreverent and disruptive, the manifesto sent Chopin to the electric chair and profaned the heroes of Mexican Independence.

While Foncerrada's review and Maples Arce's manifesto are very different in tone and intent, both can be considered avant-garde gestures, as described by Peter Bürger in his landmark study *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Bürger posits that the avant-garde artist, waging a war against the institutionalization of art by bourgeois society, seeks to merge art into life.[8] Though Bürger limits his discussion to European models, his theory is readily applicable to post-revolutionary Mexico, which had the economic and social conditions to harbor such a phenomenon. The nineteenth-century feudal economy had been demolished as a result of the Mexican Revolution (1910-20), and the country was undergoing a process of technological, economic, and social modernization. The mood was optimistic, as politicians, artists, and intellectuals attempted to construct a new society based on shared revolutionary values.

Foncerrada, for one, makes numerous references to the Revolution, though she does not explicitly identify herself with an



Fig. 1. (left). Students of the Escuela de Pintura al Aire Libre, Coyoacán (1926), vintage photograph.

Fig. 2. (below). Carolina Treviño as published in *Monografía de las Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre* (1926).



avant-garde. Her call for art to approach daily life fits within Bürger's definition, and her commentary on class makes clear that in contemporary Mexican society, art belongs to the upper strata, analogous to Bürger's "bourgeois values." Furthermore, her comparison of museums to cemeteries appears to be a direct reference to the First Futurist Manifesto, in which Marinetti wrote:

> For too long has Italy been a dealer in second-hand clothes. We mean to free her from the numberless museums that cover her like so many graveyards.
>
> Museums: cemeteries!... Identical, surely, in the sinister promiscuity of so many bodies unknown to one another.[9]

Although her language and tone are more muted, like Marinetti, Foncerrada attacks the most hallowed institution for the exhibition of art. Her text also resonates with the First Futurist Manifesto in terms of a similar nationalist objective: both writers explicitly seek to propel their respective countries into the twentieth century.

Though not directly concerned with gender or class, Maples Arce is the more self-conscious avant-gardist. He gave *Actual No. 1* the subtitle "Avant-Garde Sheet," and at the end included a "Directory of the Avant-Garde," listing more than two hundred names of artists, writers, and intellectuals from Europe, the United States, and Latin America. By posting his manifesto conspicuously in urban spaces, Maples Arce adopted a strategy of mass dissemination similar to Marinetti's placement of the First Futurist Manifesto on the front page of *Le Figaro* in 1909. Maples Arce's manifesto shared the wall with popular advertisements, seeking the unity with "daily experience" described by Bürger. With its attack on the Mexican literary establishment, *Actual No. 1* denounced the bourgeois values of the past.

Foncerrada and Maples Arce both hoped to impel the transformation of Mexican culture. Their proposals reflect the two axes that framed Mexican avant-garde art and discourse of the 1920s: a profound sense of responsibility to make art socially relevant (Foncerrada), and the search for new, expressive languages inspired by European models (Maples Arce).[10] What is striking is that while Maples Arce "succeeded"—his manifesto would launch *Estridentismo* (Stridentism), credited with being the first formal Mexican avant-garde movement, Foncerrada remains shrouded in obscurity, her writings buried in old magazines and her art completely unknown. The revolutionary nature of Foncerrada's proposal made her no less of an avant-gardist, yet her writings and art work failed to bring her the transcendence that Maples Arce's (and those of other male artists and writers) would garner.

Estridentismo, which encompassed literature and art, is in many ways emblematic of Mexican avant-garde culture of the 1920s.[11] Since the visual arts were integral to its development, it is a useful paradigm against which to read modernist visual production.[12] Whereas muralism—the far better known artistic manifestation of this decade—exhibited a clearly articulated avant-garde position, it was subject to government sponsorship and, as such, lacked complete freedom of expression.[13] Independent avant-garde works, such as those produced in relation to *Estridentismo* and those discussed here, were wholly autonomous and not subject to the criteria of anyone besides the artist.

Perhaps contrary to expectation, many women were active participants in the cultural milieu of 1920s Mexico. Numerous female students were enrolled in the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes (National School of Fine Arts), particularly in the affiliated Open Air School of Painting headed by the Mexican impressionist Alfredo Ramos Martínez.[14] First founded in 1913 and then again in 1920, this alternative center for art education fostered an intuitive approach to painting.[15] Rejecting the academic methods of the National School of Fine Arts (formerly the Academy of San Carlos) such as copying the Old Masters or using detailed line drawings as the basis for painterly compositions, the Open Air School favored a direct rapport with the subject achieved through careful observation. By 1925, several branches of the Open Air School had opened in Mexico City, drawing many upper-class female students as well as children from indigenous communities (1926; Fig. 1).[16] A 1926 publication highlighted the schools' accomplishments and reproduced paintings by the students, including Carolina Treviño, one of the young women seen in the photograph (Fig. 2).[17] That same year,

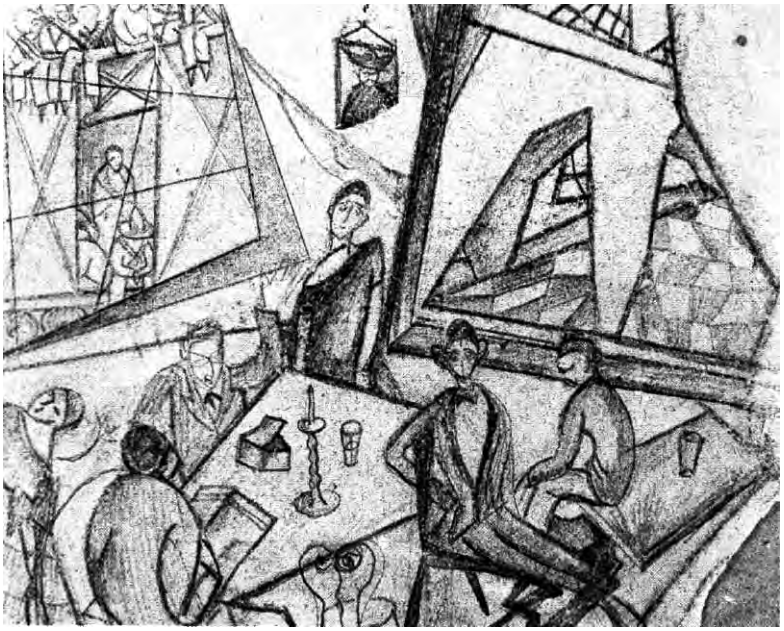


Fig. 3. Frida Kahlo, sketch for *Self-Portrait with Pancho Villa and La Adelita* (c. 1927), pencil on paper, 8 1/4" x 113/8".

exhibitions of the work created in the Open Air Schools were held in New York, Paris, Madrid, and Berlin to great acclaim. Despite extensive documentation of the schools' activities, however, the work of its students is largely unknown today.

Female artists were well represented in the schools' student exhibitions and received critical recognition in the press. Although they were conspicuously absent from the major cultural manifestation of the 1920s, muralism, they did forge close ties with the male avant-gardists and created works that reflected the concerns expressed by Maples Arce and Foncerrada. Still, few of these women are known today.

To determine why, Jean Franco might signal the pervasive master narrative structuring Mexican history. Her 1989 book, *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico*, examines the literary and artistic production of notable Mexican women. "Women have long recognized the imaginary nature of the master narrative," she writes. "Without the power to change the story or to enter into dialogue, they have resorted to subterfuge, digression, disguise, or deathly interruption."[18] She discusses the work of two women of post-revolutionary Mexico, the painter Frida Kahlo and the writer Antonieta Rivas Mercado, concluding that "both came up against the fact that there could be no liberation within the symbolic order in which woman always represented the fictional Other."[19] Although Franco considers that the Mexican Revolution caused profound social transformations, she still regards the post-revolutionary period as "pre-feminist" because "feminism presupposes that women are already participants in the public sphere of debate."[20] Franco's assessment notwithstanding, for some women artists, like Foncerrada, the 1920s brought a sense of hope and optimism by offering a space for dialogue previously absent. For most of these women, the realization that they were still in "pre-feminist" times would only come later, as the revolutionary fervor faded, and it became increasingly clear that the Revolution would fall far short of impelling the radical social and political changes artists and intellectuals had hoped for.

One of Frida Kahlo's early paintings, *Self-Portrait with Pancho Villa and La Adelita* (c. 1927; Pl. 7) is among her only works to treat a subject of the Mexican Revolution, and, as such, one of a few to contain explicit social content. The artist portrays herself behind a table in raked perspective between two faceless men. Behind them are three paintings in angular frames: a picture of a trapezoidal modernist building; a portrait of Pancho Villa, the infamous revolutionary leader from Northern Mexico;[21] and "La Adelita," the image of the group of revolutionaries and *soldaderas*––the women who accompanied them—aboard a train.[22] "La Adelita" is the title of a famous Mexican *corrido*, or folk ballad in rhyming verses, about the love of a soldier for a *soldadera* during the Revolution. The three paintings provide an intriguing contrast to the foreground scene and to each other, particularly in the juxtaposition created by the nationalist image of the Revolution and the internationalist modernist aesthetic suggested by the building in the adjacent picture. Kahlo's painting also evokes two different social worlds, that of the politically organized Mexican peasantry and that of the intelligentsia/bourgeoisie, represented by Kahlo and her two companions. Adding to the structural complexity, Kahlo employs diverse modes of visual representation: a modernist visual language, evinced through the strong diagonals rendering the picture frames, the distorted angular architecture of the painting within the painting, the table in raked perspective, and the unfinished quality of her two male companions; a more mimetic approach to the portrait faces (her own and Villa's); and a simplified figurative style reminiscent of folk painting to describe the revolutionaries aboard the train and their environment.

In juxtaposing a scene of the Revolution with that of contemporary figures in a social setting who perhaps muse on the revolutionary subject but are far removed from that reality, and by refusing to settle on a single representational mode, Kahlo speaks to the dichotomy between formalism and social consciousness that framed Mexican avant-garde art of the 1920s. The revolutionary subject matter and local references call attention, not only to the political reality of the country, but also to the incongruent and arbitrary nature of modernism in the face of such a reality, and to the remoteness of the intellectual elite from the Mexican peasantry. While acknowledging the structural contradictions inherent in Mexican avant-garde art, Kahlo's painting also problematizes class and gender, commenting on the role of women in post-revolutionary Mexico.[23] The artist appears in the center of the painting, isolated and passive, in contrast to the *soldaderas* in the background who mingle with the soldiers.

A preparatory drawing (c. 1927; Fig. 3) further dramatizes the gender differences. Here, a male central figure argues vehemently, while the women in the foreground appear extraneous to the conversation and are rendered tilted sideways, as if to highlight their lack of engagement. The

figures in the drawing have been identified as members of Kahlo's circle of friends, who called themselves los Cachuchas and adopted a rebellious attitude to counter their school's conservative values. According to Salomon Grimberg, Kahlo's inclusion of la Adelita in the painting refers to the artist's similar position as the lone female accepted into this otherwise all-male group.[24] A related composition of watercolor and collage known only through reproduction, *Los Cachuchas* (c. 1927), features the group somewhat more cohesively and also relies on a number of modernist visual devices, such as spatial compression, fragmentation, and a simultaneity.[25] In his 2007 article, James Oles offers a contextual and biographical reading of these three related works. While he does not problematize the gender differences within them, he proposes that they represent "a bold if unresolved attempt to situate Kahlo's clique within broader literary and artistic traditions." Further, given the painting's unfinished status and that no title is known to have been given it by the artist, he suggests that it be called "Café de los Cachuchas."[26]

Like the painting, the lost *Los Cachuchas* also refers to the *corrido* "La Adelita." It includes in the upper right-hand corner the opening words of the ballad: "Si Adelita," a detail related to the figure underneath identified as Antonio Bustamante, author of a poem based on the *corrido*.[27] (The lost work also juxtaposes popular Mexican music with contemporary rhythms, evinced by a set of concentric circles featuring the word "JAZZ" immediately above the reference to "La Adelita.") *In Self Portrait with Pancho Villa and La Adelita*, Kahlo references the *corrido* more obliquely, through the image of the *soldaderas* on the train. (This image is almost identical to one used in the Estridentista journal *Horizonte* to illustrate a musical supplement with the music and lyrics to *La Adelita*.[28]) Furthermore, both Kahlo's preparatory drawing for *Self Portrait with Pancho Villa and La Adelita* and her lost *Los Cachuchas* are closely related to Ramón Alva de la Canal's *Estridentista* painting *El Café de Nadie* (*Nobody's Café*) (1930, based on lost 1926 original; Fig. 4).[29] Here, the artist adopts a cubist style to depict a group of male artists and writers identified with *Estridentismo* gathered around a table at their favorite haunt. The work is comparable to Kahlo's compositions in both form and subject, though it obviously excludes women and therefore exemplifies the gender dynamics typical of the 1920s Mexican avant-garde.[30] By inserting a commentary on gender and class in *Self-Portrait with Pancho Villa and La Adelita*, Kahlo astutely reflects on the Eurocentrist and masculinist character of the art of her contemporaries. Through her use of modernist forms and pointed social content, she exposes the inherent contradictions facing the Mexican avant-garde. Though herself an artist and writer,[31] as a woman she acknowledges her outsider status in the cultural debates of the post-revolutionary period.

Mexico City in the 1920s was a center for philosophical debates, strategic friendships, and myriad forms of artistic activity. Muralism asserted its presence in the capital as a major aesthetic force, as did *Estridentismo*. Though both of these artistic movements were heavily sexist, a few women participated in the activities of the *Estridentista*s, in particular, Lola Cueto and Tina Modotti. *Estridentismo* was characterized by its cult of technology, and in their employment of



Fig. 4. Ramón Alva de la Canal, *El Café de Nadie* (1930; first version, 1926), oil on canvas, 30 3/4" x 25 1/4".



Fig. 5. Lola Cueto, Untitled trapestry (c. 1925), medium and dimensions unknown.

mechanical media—for Cueto the sewing machine, and for Modotti the camera—these women made both significant contributions to and pointed critiques of its aesthetics.

Dolores Velásquez Cueto (1897-1978), known as Lola, was a committed teacher and an accomplished artist, who, along with her husband the *Estridentista* sculptor Germán Cueto, provided a locus for the artistic community in their home at

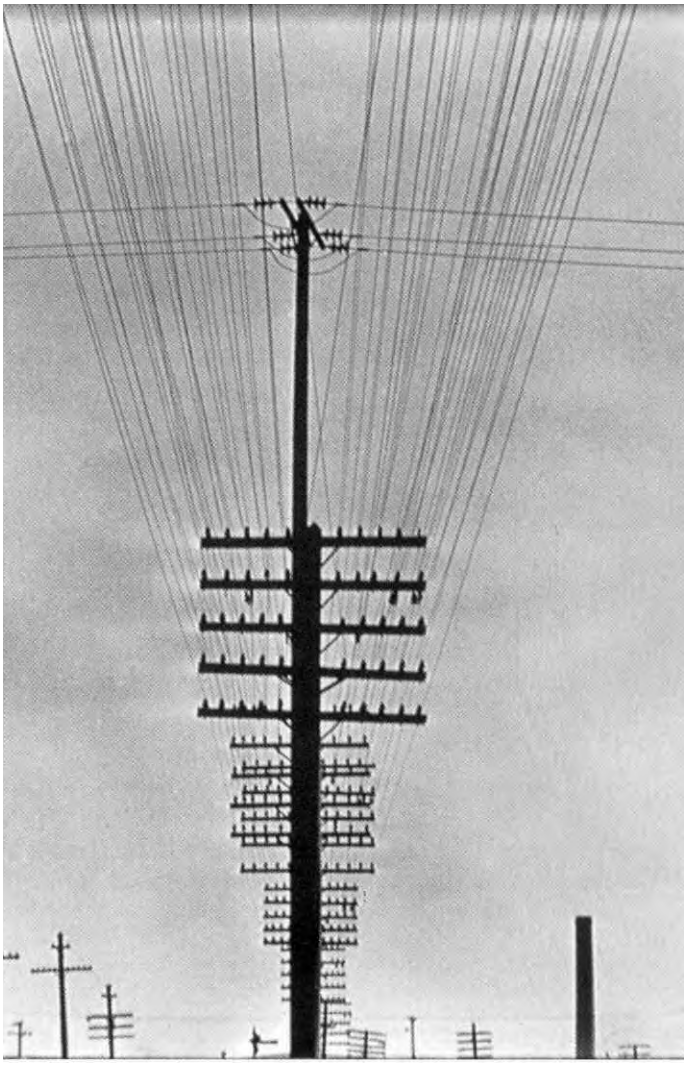


Fig. 6. Tina Modotti, *Telegraph Wires* (c. 1925), platinum print, 10" x 8".

Mixcalco no. 12.[32] The Cuetos rented rooms to artists, including the recently arrived French émigré Jean Charlot. Diego Rivera was their next-door neighbor. Lola Cueto was as gifted as she was unconventional. The only woman enrolled in the art academy in the teens, she studied decorative painting and sculpture, demonstrating her early interest in European-style painting and Mexican crafts. In the 1920s, however, she abandoned painting altogether and immersed herself in the gendered medium of textile production, creating tapestries—which she baptized *Tapices D.V.C.* (D.V.C. Tapestries) after her initials—using a special technique that she herself developed. Cueto modernized the labor-intensive process of tapestry weaving by utilizing a Cornelli embroidery machine to elaborate her intricate designs.[33] Her exuberant textiles explored abstraction in relation to the decorative and to Pre-Columbian motifs. These unique works reconciled contemporary technology with the folkloric. Through their medium and subject matter, the *Tapices D.V.C.* proposed a new form of avant-garde art, grounded in centuries of craft traditions yet employing modern technologies. They also presented abstraction as an autochthonous element of Mexican art.



Fig. 7. Tina Modotti, *Workers' Parade* (1926), platinum print, 8 1/2 x 7 1/2".

The *Estridentista* poet Germán List Arzubide extolled Lola Cueto's new medium for reconsidering the decorative arts and opposing easel painting, which, he wrote, "did not satisfy more than a select few."[34] Her tapestries, on the other hand, could permit a wider populace to be in constant contact with beauty, thereby enriching their lives. Her designs, such as *Fuente (Fountain)* (c. 1925; Pl. 8), were regularly featured in the journal he edited, *Horizonte*.[35] Edward Weston, a friend of the Cuetos, also lavished praised on Cueto's tapestries in a diary entry from January 1924:

> Last night to visit Señor y Señora Cueto,—chocolate as usual. On the walls were many paintings—her older work. They were—well, not very good, but her present work—how much more vital and important! Brilliantly executed rugs, painted gourds, experiments in other crafts, all very Mexican, very personal. One carpet of an intense green and red vibrated so violently as to actually dizzy me. I could hardly look at it.[36]

Both these descriptions of the tapestries reflect how Cueto's unique creations became integrated within the two axes of the Mexican avant-garde. Whereas the poet extolled the tapestries' populist appeal and social consciousness, Weston's account of their dizzying effects emphasizes their formalist modernism, which signaled a sensory dynamism related to the experience of the modern city, as described by *Estridentista* discourse, more so than the associations of a "timeless" craft medium. An untitled piece by Cueto (c. 1925; Fig. 5) demonstrates formal affinities with Weston's *Mexican Toys* (1925), which features three fish gourds of a very similar nature. While Weston has arranged the gourds to highlight their volume in space, Cueto flattens the

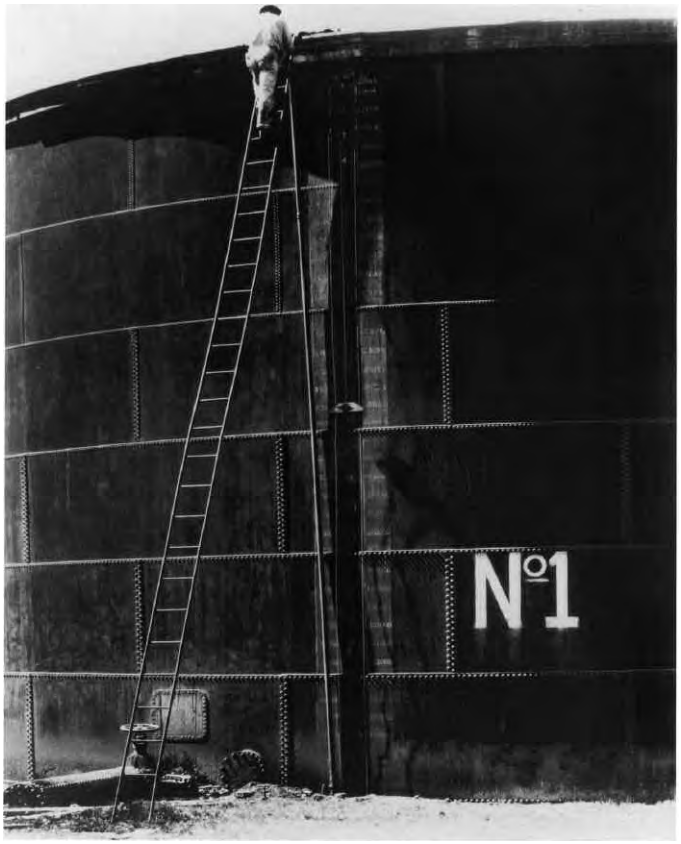


Fig. 8. Tina Modotti, *Tank No. 1* (1927), gelatin silver print, 9 5/8" x 8 5/8".

fish forms, emphasizing their abstract and decorative qualities.[37]

The *Tapices D.V.C.* were presented with great success in Paris, where the Cuetos moved in 1926. The following year, Lola Cueto held a major exhibition at the Galerie Renaissance, in which a small selection of painted ceramic masks by her husband was eclipsed by her intricate and arresting designs.[38] Her success in Paris led to exhibitions in Barcelona and in Holland, as well as special attention in the French art journal *L'Art Vivant*, which published an article on the Mexican Renaissance in 1928. Here, Lola Cueto was featured more prominently than any other Mexican artist.[39] With such recognition during her lifetime, and though she remained involved in activities that kept challenging high art's elitism, Lola Cueto's role in the history of Mexican art has been seriously neglected.[40] She eventually became a highly regarded puppeteer, who used puppet theatre as a pedagogical tool and as a means of reaching the masses.[41]

Cueto's close friend Tina Modotti (1896-1942) also participated in the activities of the *Estridentistas*.[42] She acted in the *Teatro Mexicano del Murciélago* (Mexican Theater of the Bat), written by Luis Quintanilla, a poet closely associated with the movement; contributed photographs to their publications; and collaborated on a book project. *Telegraph Wires* (c. 1925; Fig. 6) is commonly seen as Modotti's quintessential *Estridentista* image for the way that it melds modernist form and content. Curiously, however, when it appeared in the May 1926 issue of the *Estridentista* journal *Horizonte*, the photograph illustrated an article on the eight-hour workday.[43] Written in honor of May



Fig. 9. Rosario Cabrera, *Portrait of a Boy*, (c. 1921), oil on canvas, 12 3/4" x 10 5/8".

Day, it was meant to incite workers to read books that would address their plight and honor their efforts. The context hints at Modotti's social concerns and provides another level of meaning for the image: the telegraph wires as markers of progress, which promised to connect the points in the vast geography of Mexico. In this respect, it is not too far removed from her *Workers' Parade* (1926; Fig. 7), published in *Horizonte* later that year, which depicts a mass of men metonymically, through their sombreros.[44] The repeating circular shapes and raked perspective demonstrated the artist's interest in modernist formal devices, uniting the two axes of Mexican avant-garde art.

Much of Modotti's work of the late 1920s melds modernist forms with more explicit social commentary, such as the images intended for Germán List Arzubide's *El Canto de los Hombres* (The Song of Men), which, unfortunately, could not be published because of extenuating circumstances.[45] List Arzubide described his intentions to Modotti:

> I told her…that [the book] consisted of what men have said, or thought, or felt. For example, a miner at the bottom of a mine who was thinking that out there, the sun was shining and people were enjoying themselves, and there he was in that terrible night of a mine. Or the thoughts of a bricklayer who was making those cathedrals, especially those gigantic buildings in New York or Chicago. She really liked all of those things written in a bit of a poetic kind of prose, and she said, "we can do this book with my photographs."[46]

Tank No. 1 (1927; Fig. 8) offers intriguing affinities with *Actual No. 1*, though it is unknown whether the similarities are intentional. In the manifesto, a photograph of its author, Maples Arce, appears under a large "No. 1." Similarly, the photograph depicts a manual laborer who is dwarfed by a huge tank with a giant "No. 1" painted on its surface. Maples Arce's text serves to create a cult of personality around himself, whereas Modotti's image emphasizes the anonymous worker, thereby implicitly



Fig. 10. Rosario Cabrera with art students in Tonantzintla, Mexico (c. 1930), vintage photograph.

critiquing the poet's individualism. Indeed, the contributions of Cueto and Modotti to the *Estridentista* movement served as significant commentaries on modernity in contemporary Mexican art. Although both artists used technology, as championed by *Estridentismo*, Cueto fused modernity and tradition, employing a traditionally gendered medium, while Modotti acknowledged the importance of class in articulating an avant-garde visual language.

Other strategies used by women to forge a space in the cultural discourse of the 1920s were pedagogy and activism, as practiced, for example, by Rosario Cabrera (1901-75) and Isabel (Chabela) Villaseñor (1909-53). These artists sought to balance the development of individual artistic languages with their commitment to art as a collective and socially conscious activity.

One of the rising stars of the School of Fine Arts in the early 1920s, Rosario Cabrera held her first solo show in Mexico City in 1921, simultaneous with the student group exhibition discussed by Foncerrada above.[47] While it was unusual for an artist so young (and female, at that) to have an individual exhibition, she was prodigiously talented and her paintings did not much resemble the work of her contemporaries. Her classmates focused on landscape and the representation of national types and their work developed formal similarities, while Cabrera experimented with the genre of portraiture through an array of styles. Although her *Portrait of a Boy* (c. 1921; Fig. 9) reveals her roots in Impressionism, a style championed by her teacher Alfredo Ramos Martínez, the work shows dramatic departures from this French visual language. With forms rendered through broad brushstrokes, significant portions of the canvas left blank, and her use of non-naturalistic colors to describe the contours of the boy's face, it is more akin to Post-Impressionism and Fauvism. Other portraits of the period evince striking stylistic variations, ranging from dramatic expressionistic lines to more static impastos. *Portrait of Nahui Olin* (c.1921; Pl. 9) (an artist discussed below) conveys a sense of inner turmoil similarly found in a well-known photograph of the subject by Edward Weston. In the painting, the sitter's features emerge through what seems to be excessive make-up, challenging conventions of female beauty, while the eyes hint at her complex personality. Discussing this work, Cabrera noted, "I stylized her in my manner, wanting to convey the character and spirit of the model more than the exactness of the line."[48]

The artist's formal experimentation continued, leading to her refusal to develop a single style. In a review of a 1926 exhibition at the Bernheim gallery in Paris, Marcelle Auclair wrote, "Critics and visitors to the exhibition will be disconcerted….Each one of Rosario Cabrera's paintings sets forth a new problem that is resolved in an unexpected manner. Each time, the conclusions that we had formed about her personality have to be reconstructed."[49] Five years earlier, in her Mexican exhibition, her free style was associated with a rebellious nature: "In Rosario Cabrera, everything is strong and virile, the style, the technique, the color scheme, and above all, her concept of art."[50] The artist herself noted that she "often incurred the disapproval of her teachers for her lack of discipline and for her insistence on doing things '[her] way.'"[51] The indomitable spirit Cabrera demonstrated in paint spilled over into her life through her activities as a teacher and activist.

In *Portrait of Fernando Leal* (c. 1922; Pl. 10), Cabrera mordantly depicts a fellow painter in an expressionistic manner. Leal would become one of the first artists to participate in the Mexican mural movement and a founding member of the avant-garde ¡30-30! group (named after a rifle employed during the Mexican Revolution), which Cabrera joined in 1928.[52] Formed to protest the appointment of a new director at the National School of Fine Arts, which would threaten the future of the Open Air Schools of Painting and other centers of alternative art instruction, the members of ¡30-30! distributed a number of belligerent manifestos against the avatars of official culture, championed the art of the broadsheet, and experimented with new venues (such as a circus tent) for exhibiting their work. They also strongly supported the work of women artists, going so far as to offer an explanation for "female superiority" among the students of the Open Air Schools.[53] Like Cabrera, most of these artists were teachers in the alternative art schools in and around Mexico City. With the shared goal of taking art to rural communities throughout Mexico, their avant-garde strategies came not only from their art making but from their pedagogical activities. As director of two Open Air Schools, Cabrera exhibited a deep social commitment to making art accessible to all sectors of the population (c. 1930; Fig. 10). In 1928, she stopped painting altogether, though she remained an active teacher. One may speculate that it was the impossibility of reconciling the search for stylistic individuality to her commitment for collective action that led her to choose the more socially conscious path.

Chabela Villaseñor, who also participated in the activities of ¡30-30!, was heavily invested in alternative forms of art education, having learned techniques of printmaking at a center for popular instruction directed by her future husband and ¡30-30! leader Gabriel Fernández Ledesma.[54] Her woodcuts, rendered in a naïve manner, tended to portray female subjects in intimate settings, large, solid women often associated with camaraderie or maternity (c. 1928; Fig. 11) and domestic

activities. One of her most intriguing images, a still-life of irons (c. 1928; Fig. 12), contrasts household appliances with a woven straw mat in the background, thereby juxtaposing imported manufactured products with something typically Mexican and handmade. By its choice of theme and the "low" associations of the medium, the print would seem to relate to Carmen Foncerrada's call for artists to make work to which the public could relate. In fact, this and other woodcuts by Villaseñor were included in a widely distributed civic calendar from 1930 that illustrated each day with a print by a different artist.



Fig. 11. Chabela Villaseñor, *Mother and Child* (c. 1928), woodcut, 7 1/2" x 6 1/2".



Fig. 12. Chabela Villaseñor, *Irons* (c. 1928), woodcut, 8" x 6 1/4".

Villaseñor's *La muerte de la güera Chabela* (*The Death of Chabela the Blonde*) (1929) comments on gender relations in Mexico.[55] The print shows a reclining woman with a group of people behind her looking on and one man covering his face. In the artist's own hand are the lines, "Chabela the blonde said/ while she agonized/ "Be careful girls/ don't cuckold them,"[56] words belonging to the tradition of the *corrido*. The print is interesting for the objectification of its main subject, who is splayed in the foreground, breasts and hips accentuated. The song lyrics tell the story of Chabela's murder at the hands of her jealous boyfriend Jesús Cadena, presumably the man in the foreground. The popular tone of the image as well as the theme of violence recall the prints of José Guadalupe Posada and evince Villaseñor's desire to blur the boundaries between popular and high art; the subject constitutes a critique, not only of violence against women bur also their objectification. This particular image also surpassed the boundaries of the printed page. In 1931, Villaseñor presented it in a performance in which she sang the lyrics and held out the print while three actors played out the dramatic story. Indeed, she maintained a lifelong interest in Mexican musical traditions, compiling and illustrating over one hundred popular songs (c. 1928; Fig. 13).[57]



Fig. 13. Chabela Villaseñor, *Guitarrist* (c. 1928), woodcut, 12 1/2" x 9 1/2".

Villaseñor also experimented with painting, and in 1929, she collaborated with Alfredo Zalce in executing a mural in colored cement on the outside of a school building in the town of Ayotla, Tlaxcala, where both taught art. The mural, praised by Diego Rivera, was one of the first in Mexico painted by a woman.[58] No longer extant, it portrayed peasants involved in daily activities, such as women washing and men tending sheep.[59] Such a work belongs to an untold history of muralism, which integrates artistic collaborations, destroyed murals, and the role of gender and class into the larger, more familiar masculinist narrative.[60]

One of the most daring women of 1920s Mexico was Nahui Olin (1893-1978), born Carmen Mondragón.[61] Flouting social convention and freely exhibiting her body, she used transgression, as described by Franco, as an avant-garde tactic to call attention to herself and her art. Her striking looks—blonde hair and light green eyes—inspired many artists, among them Dr. Atl (her lover during the early 1920s) and Diego Rivera. Nahui Olin experimented with different strategies of representation, ranging from a hermetic avant-garde visual and verbal language to naïvely rendered caricatures to various forms of self-portraiture. Her work of the early 1920s shares affinities with the poems and illustrated books of the *Estridentistas*. *Metaphysical Landscape* (1922; Fig. 14), a woodcut, for example, juxtaposes several angular planes and courts pure abstraction in a composition that anticipates Jean Charlot's modernist prints for *URBE* (1924), a book of poetry by Manuel Maples Arce.[62] Nahui Olin herself wrote several books of avant-garde poetry, including *Óptica Cerebral, poemas dinámicos* (*Cerebral Optics, Dynamic Poems*) (1922) and *Calinement, je suis dedans* (*Tenderly, I*

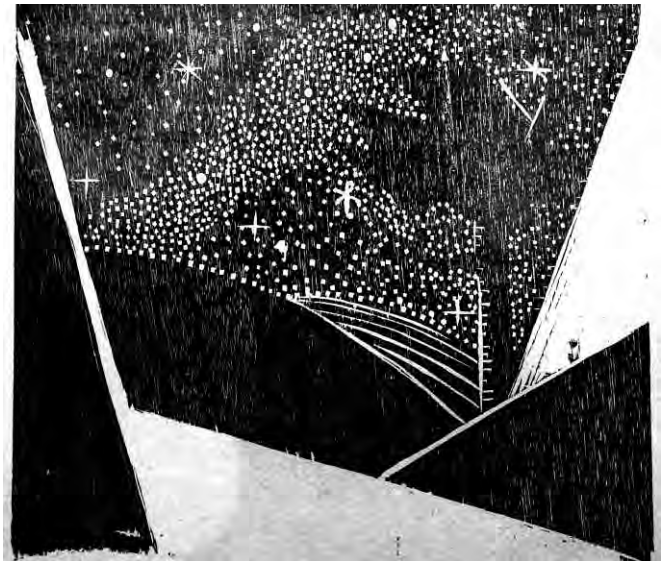


Fig. 14. Nahui Olin, *Metaphysical Landscape* (1922), woodcut, 7 1/4" x 8".



Fig. 15. Nahui Olin, *Self-Portrait* (c. 1922), woodcut, 8" x 6".

Am Inside) (1923), written in French. Illustrated by Dr. Atl, like other *Estridentista* books, these featured modernist covers and experimental typography.

Nahui Olin's simultaneous adoption of a naïve style more reminiscent of folk art than European modernism, seen in an undated painted self-portrait (c. 1920s; Pl. 11), is indicative of the disconcerting juxtapositions evinced in Mexican avant-garde art. The extravagant eyes belie the innocence of the unschooled forms. Both this and a small woodcut self-portrait (c. 1922; Fig. 15), perhaps her most radical work of the early 1920s, transgress accepted notions of beauty. Here, the artist uses harsh lines that scar her neck and half her face, while leaving the other half blank. Given her famously striking eyes, an absent eye becomes the print's most disturbing aspect.

While it might be tempting to attribute a biographical reading to this image, connecting it to Nahui Olin's turbulent relationship to Dr. Atl, other similarly "ugly" portraits of the artist would negate such an interpretation. The photograph of her by Edward Weston and a portrait by Jean Charlot (both 1924) are decidedly unattractive, portraying traits similar to those found in Cabrera's portrait of the artist discussed earlier. Except for her trademark green eyes, she is virtually unrecognizable in Charlot's drawing. Little is known about the conditions under which these specific images were created, but their mutual resonances indicate a sophisticated dialogue on beauty among these artists.[63] Nahui Olin's constructed persona, oscillating between the femme fatale and the misunderstood, alienated woman, along with her deeply personal artistic language paved the way for women artists of the next generation, such as Frida Kahlo and María Izquierdo, who did not always feel compelled to integrate the social or the political into their work.

In their lives and their work these artists demonstrated strategies that women used to distinguish themselves in post-revolutionary Mexico and to contribute to its inherently contradictory though endlessly fascinating avant-garde. Fostering formal experimentation while attempting to make their art inclusive to a wide audience, they adopted similar goals to those of their male counterparts. While working either in collaboration or in critical dialogue with them, however, these women showed that gender was an integral and often overlooked aspect in achieving such objectives. Lacking a unifying style or medium, their work illustrates their diversity and plurality and counters stereotypes about the uniformity of the so-called "Mexican School" and simplistic interpretations of Mexican art in general. Their works reveal the richness and vibrancy of Mexican culture in the 1920s and demonstrate the need to amend the limited masculinist narrative of post-revolutionary Mexican art to give credit to the numerous overlooked artists—female and male—who contributed to its complexity. •

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NOTES

1. Carmen Foncerrada, "La exposición de la Academia juzgada por una artista que no expuso." *Revista de Revistas* (October 16, 1921): 42. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Spanish are the author's.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. The literature on the Mexican Revolution (1910-20) is vast. Two comprehensive texts are John Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1987) and Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1986).
5. See Francisco Reyes Palma, "Vanguardia Año Cero," *Modernidad y modernización en el arte mexicano, 1920-1960* (Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Arte, 1990), 43-51.
6. For a deconstruction of the pervasive stereotypes relating to Mexican identity, see Roger Bartra, *The Cage of Melancholy: Identity and Metamorphosis in the Mexican Character* Trans. Christopher J. Hall (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1992).
7. For an expanded discussion of this text, see Tatiana Flores, "Clamoring for Attention in Mexico City: Manuel Maples Arce's Avant-Garde Manifesto *Actual N°1*," *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 69 (Fall 2004): 208-20.
8. See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984).
9. F.T. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" in Umbro Apollonio, ed. *Futurist Manifestos*. Trans. R. W. Flint (New York: Viking, 1973), 22. Ellipses in the original.
10. This theorization of the nature of Mexican avant-gardism is expanded upon in my doctoral dissertation. See Tatiana Flores, "Estridentismo in Mexico City: Dialogues Between Mexican Avant-Garde Art and

Literature, 1921-1924" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2003).

11. The most comprehensive history of Estridentismo is Luis Mario Schneider, *El estridentismo o una literatura de la estrategia* (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1997).

12. On the relationship of Estridentismo to the visual arts, see Flores, "Estridentismo in Mexico City," 2003.

13. Though the artists were not subjected to censorship, there was the tacit understanding that, as official commissions, their murals would address issues relevant to the post-revolutionary government.

14. In 1922, for example, of the 44 students enrolled in his course, 20 were women. See Archivo de la Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1922, Box #3, Folder #79 Bis.

15. On the Open Air Schools of Painting, see Laura González Matute, *Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre y Centros Populares de Pintura* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1987).

16. The demographic of the students depended on the school's location. The school located in Coyoacán had a high enrollment of wealthier women, whereas those in Tlalpam, Guadalupe Hidalgo, and Xochimilco catered to the peasant communities nearby. See correspondence in Archivo de la Academia de San Carlos, 1925, Box #3, Folder #73.

17. *Monografía de las Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre* (Mexico City: Editorial Cultura, 1926).

18. Jean Franco, *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1989), xxiii.

19. Ibid, 105.

20. Ibid, xxiii.

21. For an illustrated biography of Villa that collects photographic sources that may have been familiar to Kahlo, see Friedrich Katz, *The Face of Pancho Villa* (El Paso: Cinco Puntos, 2007). James Oles proposes a new reading of this painting, based on an analysis of Kahlo's early works, including a drawing and lost work directly related to this painting. See James Oles, "At the Café de los Cachuchas: Frida Kahlo in the 1920s," *Hispanic Research Journal* 8.5 (December 2007): 467-89.

22. For a history of the role of the *soldaderas* in the Mexican Revolution, see Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military: Myth and History* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1990). A more poetic evocation accompanied by numerous photographs may be found in Elena Poniatowska, *Las Soldaderas: Women of the Mexican Revolution* (El Paso: Cinco Puntos, 1999).

23. On the development of feminist thought in Mexico, see Anna Macías, *Against All Odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940* (Westport and London: Greenwood, 1982). Another relevant text is Gabriela Cano, "Las mujeres en el México del siglo XX. Una cronología mínima," in Marta Lamas, ed. *Miradas feministas sobre las mexicanas del siglo XX* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007), 21-75.

24. Oles, "At the Café de los Cachuchas," 469, 476. See also *Frida Kahlo: Das Gesamtwerk*, ed. Helga Prignitz-Poda, Salomon Grimberg, and Andrea Kettenmann (Frankfurt am Main: Neue Kritik, 1988), 195, 268. Dr. Grimberg made this comment in a phone conversation with the editor, August 18, 2008.

25. See Prignitz-Poda et al, *Frida Kahlo: Das Gesamtwerk*, 87, 232; and Salomon Grimberg, *Frida Kahlo: Song of Herself* (London: Merrell, 2008), 92. The drawing is illustrated with detailed identifications of group members.

26. Oles, "At the Café de los Cachuchas," 474.

27. Prignitz-Poda et al, *Frida Kahlo: Das Gesamtwerk*, 87, 232; and Grimberg, *Frida Kahlo: Song of Herself*, 92..

28. Musical supplement of *Horizonte* 8 (Nov. 1926). Curiously, another musical supplement featured a jazz band.

29. The painting reproduced here is after a version,which is only known through its reproduction in German List Arzubide's *El movimiento estridentista* (1926). This version is signed and dated to 1924 but features typography from the journal *Horizonte*, which did not begin publication until 1926. Also cited in reference to Kahlo in Oles, "At the Café de los Cachuchas," 478.

30. James Oles also makes a comparison between *Self-Portrait with Pancho Villa and La Adelita* to Estridentismo, as does Luis-Martín Lozano. See Oles, "At the Café de los Cachuchas," 478-81, and Luis-Martín Lozano, "Frida Kahlo: Una relectura para conocer el universo estético de la pintora" in *Frida Kahlo* (Mexico City: BITAL, 2000), 50. In the same volume Antonio Saborit discusses the social and cultural life of post-revolutionary Mexico in relation to Estridentismo. See Antonio Saborit, "El Iztaccíhuatl en el Valle de Anáhuac," in Lozano *Frida Kahlo*, 174-78.

31. Kahlo published the short poem "Recuerdo" in the November 30, 1922, issue of the cultural weekly *Universal Ilustrado*.

32. To date, there is no monograph on the artistic work of Lola Cueto. I am grateful to Mireya Cueto for welcoming me into her home and sharing with me her mother's work.

33. I am grateful to Lance Aaron for this information.

34. Germán List Arzubide, "ARTES Plásticas, Los Tapices D.V.C," *Horizonte* 2 (May 1926), 42. List Arzubide also dedicated to Lola Cueto a copy of his 1926 book *El movimiento estridentista*, where he named her as the only woman that he associated with the movement.

35. See *Horizonte* (May 1926), 44.

36. Nancy Newhall, ed., *The Daybooks of Edward Weston* (New York: Aperture, 1990), 43. Since Cueto's early paintings are unknown, it is hard to gauge the validity of Weston's opinion.

37. The image reproduced here is a vintage photograph, so it is not possible to know the color scheme of the actual tapestry.

38. As seen in the vintage photographs in the archive of Mireya Cueto.

39. Clipping located in the archives of Mireya Cueto. Curiously, this article on the Mexican Renaissance emphasized the artists Agustin Lazo and Lola Cueto as being foremost among their contemporaries. It reveals that the larger narrative giving precedence to the "Big Three" muralists, Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros, as being at the forefront of artistic activity in Mexico was not in place during the 1920s.

40. Recently, Cueto, along with most of the other artists discussed here, was featured in the exhibition *Women Artists of Modern Mexico: Frida's Contemporaries*, held at the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago (2007) and at the Museo Mural Diego Rivera in Mexico City (2008) and *Historia de mujeres artistas en México del siglo XX* at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey (2008). See also Dina Comisarenco Mirkin, "To Paint the Unspeakable: Mexican Female Artists' Iconography of the 1930s and Early 1940s," *WAJ* vol. 29, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2008): 21, 22.

41. For a history of puppet theater in Mexico, see Germán List Arzubide, *Teatro Guiñol* (Mexico City: Univ. Nacional Autónoma de México, 1997).

42. A major monograph on Modotti is Sarah M. Lowe, *Tina Modotti: Photographs* (New York: H.N. Abrams in assoc. with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1995).

43. See List Arzubide, "ARTES Plásticas, Los Tapices D.V.C," 25.

44. *Horizonte* 8 (Nov. 1926): 12.

45. The assassination in 1929 of Julio Antonio Mella, the Cuban communist leader and Modotti's lover, caused her to be investigated by the police. According to List Arzubide, the completed manuscript was lost after they searched and ransacked her house. See Jesús Nieto Sotelo and Elisa Lozano Alvarez, *Tina Modotti, una nueva mirada* (Mexico City: CNCA/Centro de la Imagen, 2000), 148.

46. Nieto Sotelo and Lozano Alvarez, *Tina Modotti, una nueva Mirada,* 148.

47. For the exhibition review, see "La última exposición en la Academia

de Bellas Artes," *Universal Ilustrado* (Dec. 22, 1921): 12. For a monograph of Cabrera's work, see Tomás Zurián, *Rosario Cabrera: La creación entre la impaciencia y el olvido* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1998).

48. "La última exposición," 12.
49. Quoted in El Abate de Mendoza, "México Chez Bernheim," *Universal Ilustrado* (Feb. 11, 1926): 44.
50. "La última exposición," 12.
51. Ibid.
52. For a comprehensive history of the ¡30-30! movement, see Laura González Matute, ed. *¡30-30! Contra la academia de pintura, 1928* (Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Arte, 1993).
53. Martí Casanovas, "Las Escuelas Libres de Pintura," *¡30-30!*, no., 1 (July 1928), 7. Casanovas attributes female superiority to a more impulsive, vehement, and affectionate nature. Despite these essentializing comments, he stands apart in favoring the work of women artists.
54. For a biography and catalogue of the work of Villaseñor, see Judith Alanís Figueroa, *Chabela Villaseñor* (Guadalajara: Instituto Cultural Cabañas, 1998).
55. This print is reproduced and discussed in Comisarenco Mirkin, "To Paint the Unspeakable," 28.
56. In Spanish: "Dijo la guera Chabela/cuando estaba agonizando/ 'Pongan cuidado muchachas/ no los anden mancornando.'"
57. See Gabriel Fernández Ledesma, "Isabel Villaseñor: Notas al margen de su exposición de dibujos en el vestíbulo de la Biblioteca Nacional" (*El Universal Ilustrado*, 1930), Clipping located in Reel 1, Fondo Documental Isabel Villaseñor, Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de Artes Plásticas, Mexico City. It does not appear as though this collection was ever published.
58. See Diego Rivera, "Los valores nuevos de la pintura mexicana." (*El Universal Ilustrado*). The article is dated August 1930, but it is not clear when it was published. Clipping located in Reel 1, Fondo Documental Isabel Villaseñor, Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de Artes Plásticas, Mexico City.
59. The mural is reproduced in Alanís Figueroa, *Chabela Villaseñor,* 140. Though this author dates the mural to 1929, scholars of Alfredo Zalce date it to 1930. See Miguel Ángel Echegaray, "Los géneros de Alfredo Zalce," in *Alfredo Zalce* (Mexico City: Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, 2005), 204, and Teresa del Conde, *Alfredo Zalce. Artista michoacano* (Mexico City: Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, 1997), 24. All three scholars agree on the collaborative nature of this project.
60. In sundry documents and publications, there are references to murals painted by the women students in the Open Air Schools of Painting. See, for example, Archivos de la Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1928, Box #5, Folder 106 and Martí Casanovas, 6-7.
61. Her pseudonym refers to a date on the Aztec calendar. On Nahui Olin's art, see *Nahui Olin: Una mujer de los tiempos modernos* (Mexico City: Museo Estudio Diego Rivera, 1992) and *Nahui Olin: Ópera varia* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2000). For a biographic text, see Adriana Malvido, *Nahui Olin, la mujer del sol* (Mexico City: Editorial Diana, 1993).
62. It was probably from Charlot himself that she learned this technique, as he is credited for reviving the woodcut medium in Mexican art of the twentieth century.
63. According to Tomás Zurián, Nahui Olin hated Weston's photograph of her and retained the negatives.



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Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler

A Feminist View of Weimar Culture

By Britany L. Salsbury

"What happened?"[1] asked critic Anna Banaschewski, referring to the artist Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler in the leftist German art journal *Der Kreis* (The Circle) in 1929, the year that the thirty-year-old artist first landed in a mental hospital. Banaschewski asserted that the painter "showed such varied talent early on…[although] weighed down with as many artistic as personal problems," and ultimately concluded that "what was only hinted at in her earlier work has been liberated."[2] Although marked by her great personal turmoil, this period was the most critically acclaimed of Lohse-Wächtler's career.

Even as other female painters in expressionist circles have risen to relative prominence in recent decades, Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler (1899-1940) has received little attention in the scholarly writing surrounding Weimar Germany's artistic output. Socially and stylistically she was associated with canonical male artists of the early twentieth century such as Otto Dix, and the male-dominated avant-garde artistic milieu of Hamburg and Dresden. Yet her prolific body of work has been largely absorbed into the academic narratives of her peers, emerging only in anecdotes and footnotes.[3]

The historical dismissal of Lohse-Wächtler's oeuvre is unfortunate, given its contrast to those of her male contemporaries. Much of the art and popular iconography of the period is notable for its inherent misogyny: Rudolf Schlichter and George Grosz, for example, are known for their grimly imaginative representations of *Lustmord*, or sexual murder; films such as *Die Freudlose Gasse* (Joyless Streets) (1925) and *Vom Leben Getötet* (Life in Death) (1927) reflected the popular perception that prostitution naturally befell women who displayed too great a sense of independence; and sexologist Otto Weininger's magnum opus, *Geschlecht und Charakter* (Sex and Character) (1903), proposed that all women inherently fell into the dichotomous categories of "mothers" or "whores."[4]

Given the propensity of such degrading images in Weimar culture, it seems unlikely that a woman artist would choose to represent superficially similar subject matter. Like Grosz and Dix, however, Lohse-Wächtler displayed a marked interest in the representation of prostitutes during her brief but influential career. Her 1931 painting, *Lissy* (1931; Pl. 12) in particular has been described as contrasting with the purported antifeminism that characterizes images of female sex workers by her male contemporaries.[5] Appropriating the direct gaze, which typically implicates the viewer as client, Lohse-Wächtler deliberately subverts the misogyny inherent to most pictures of prostitution created in the Weimar years. Apart from the autobiographical significance I believe this painting held for the artist, its formal aspects imbue it with unique feminist significance. *Lissy* demonstrates the artist's sympathetic relationship with her disenfranchised subjects, and ultimately suggests a more empowering discourse for Weimar prostitution.

Lohse-Wächtler painted *Lissy* near the end of her career but at the height of her most prolific period of production. In this watercolor, a female prostitute dominates the composition, staring boldly at the viewer. Heavily made-up, perhaps in an attempt to hide her visible wrinkles, and wearing a form-fitting red dress, one hand rests assertively on her hip and the other holds a cigarette, typically a sign of the New Woman. She seems oblivious to the men sitting behind her; their disregard for her presence is mutual, and they exhibit neither desire nor disgust. As has been noted, Lohse-Wächtler at this time consistently used a tensely contrasting color scheme—here deep blues and garish reds—to evoke unease.[6] The review of a 1929 exhibition of the artist's new watercolors and oil paintings at the *Stadtbundclub Hamburger Frauenvereine* (Hamburg Women's Club), for example, described a connection between the formal and spiritual facets of her work, asserting that "the great interior tension, the clear optical impression, the composition and [coloring] make these works of quality and leave us with much to hope for from this young artist."[7] The bright hues in which the subject of *Lissy* is represented further differentiate the sex worker from her male companions, who are painted in dark blues, violets, and shades of black to the point that they are barely recognizable as human. Her mere presence in their company is striking in an era during which women were expected to avoid such places of ill repute, and her blatant lack of shame in dismissing such conventions creates a powerful statement. The independence Lissy displays resonated with Lohse-Wächtler because of her experiences as a female artist in a predominately male, often misogynist milieu.

Born in 1899, Elfriede Wächtler was the oldest child of a comfortably middle-class family in Dresden.[8] She displayed artistic ability as a child, and was encouraged by her parents to pursue a career in costume design, a lucrative field at the time. In 1915, at the age of sixteen, she entered the Dresden School of Applied Art to begin her education. However, she soon shifted to painting, her real interest. Eager for control over her life, she moved into her own apartment at age seventeen. Afterward, she reconciled with her parents and brother but would continue to experience conflict with her father throughout her life.[9]

In Dresden, Lohse-Wächtler lived alone for several years—

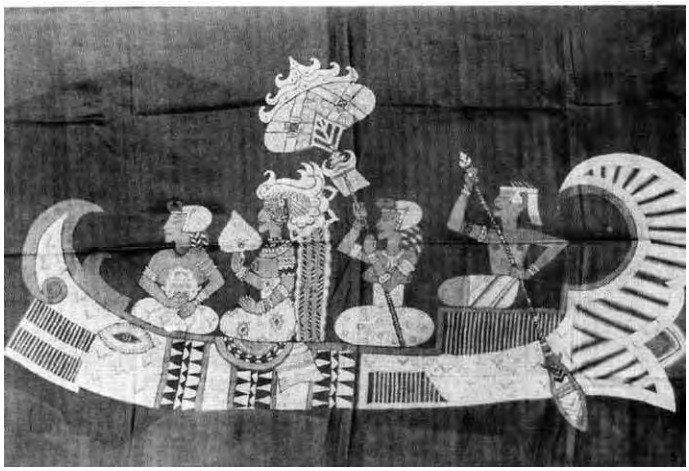


Fig. 1. Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, Princess with her Following in a Ship on the Nile (c. 1920), batik. Courtesy Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler Foundation, Hamburg.



Fig. 2. Anonymous, Elfriede Wächtler on a chaise lounge at 7 Rietschel Street (1919), photograph. Courtesy Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler Foundation, Hamburg.

an unusual decision for a young, unmarried woman—devoting herself to artistic practice and struggling to gain professional recognition. Soon after meeting the expressionist painter Conrad Felixmüller, they began sharing an apartment.[10] He published a woodcut portrait of her, as he had done for other colleagues and friends, in a 1917 issue of *Die*



Fig. 3 Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, Maria (Bohemian Madonna) (1918), lithographic drawing and watercolor, 5 7/8" x 3 7/8". Courtesy Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler Foundation, Hamburg.

Aktion (Action), the weekly journal of radical politics.[11] Felixmüller encouraged Lohse-Wächtler to produce work in the style of the newly-formed *Dresdener Neuen Sezession Gruppe 1919* (New Dresden Secession Group 1919), which he developed to discuss and promote both socialist ideals and artistic experimentation. For two years the two artists shared what fellow Secession member Otto Griebel described as a great living and working space, where the words "Art is Absolution" written largely on one of their walls, aptly summarized Lohse-Wächtler's political and artistic ideology.[12] Griebel was equally supportive of her art, and several decades later he completed an unpublished manuscript on the artist and her work, entitled *Erinnerungen an Laus (Frieda Wächtler)* (Memories of Laus). In it he praised the quantity and quality of her work, reminiscing that also "on the walls [of the apartment shared with Felixmüller] hung all kinds of works by Lohse-Wächtler…which were very beautiful and representative of her main areas of concentration."[13]

In 1918, Felixmüller and Griebel introduced Lohse-Wächtler to the Dresden-based *Spartakusbund* (Spartakus Group), which then was central to the leftist movement in Germany, and included such members as Otto Dix. Exposure to the radical group perhaps encouraged Lohse-Wächtler's own nonconformist lifestyle. Further alienating her father, who despised her social circle, she cut her hair into a short bob, dressed in Russian blouses, and smoked a pipe. With the encouragement of her male associates, she started to produce batiks (1920; Fig. 1) and other craft-based works to sell in order to support her painting.[14] It is interesting to consider her production of such works, which would have had overt connotations with femininity, in light of the fact that the male artists in her circle supported their artistic careers by other means.

The particular social strategies Lohse-Wächtler adopted enabled her to self-identify as a member of an artistic, bohemian circle, thus providing a clear public signifier of her aspirations. Adopting gestures such as dressing in men's clothing, smoking, and socializing exclusively with men, she separated herself from her identity as a woman, and, perhaps, enabled herself to be taken more seriously in an artistic circle occupied entirely by men. As her relationship with the Dresden art scene developed, she adopted the name "Nikolaus," which—coupled with her tendency to sign works with only her initials or last name—would have obscured her gender to those who purchased her artworks.[15]

These gestures may be interpreted in a number of ways: as a complete rejection of femininity or, alternately, as the sort of move a contemporary reader might characterize as queering, in which traditional socio-cultural boundaries and assumptions regarding gender are challenged and, ultimately, subverted. The latter interpretation is supported by a 1919 photograph of the artist lying on a chaise lounge (1919; Fig. 2). Lohse-Wächtler reclines naked on a couch in the apartment she shared with Felixmüller. Her hair is bobbed, and she is smoking a cigarette, like her later subject in *Lissy*. Also similarly, the pose is seductive in a way that seems intentional, and the way she holds a cigarette with her mouth alone seems an almost phallic positioning. Surrounding her in the photograph is art of her own creation; in particular, an expressionist painting hanging behind her evokes the work of her male friends. Situating herself in a feminine pose among works that were considered masculine in genre may have served as a subtle means for Wächtler to assert and satirize her position as a woman within the artistic circle to which she belonged.[16]

In the same year this photograph of Wächtler was taken, her work began to receive significant critical attention. A lithograph from 1918 entitled *Maria (Bohemian Madonna)* (Fig. 3) was published in the journal *Konstanz 1920* (Constancy 1920), with Griebel's assistance. Other works of these years drew inspiration from the symbolist movement of prior decades, such as *Death and the Sinner* (1918; Fig. 4), in which a curvaceous nude reclining on a luxurious bed is embraced by the skeletal figure of Death. The image evokes the late-nineteenth century revival of historically Northern associations between woman and Original Sin found in works such as Franz von Stuck's *Sin* (1893), which was reprinted widely in the first decades of the twentieth century, and Max



Fig. 4. Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, Death and the Sinner (1918), lithographic drawing and watercolor, 7 3/8" x 5 1/4". Courtesy Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler Foundation, Hamburg.

Klinger's Eve and the Future (1879–80) cycle of prints depicting the Original Sin narrative.[17] Subjects with similar overtones of sexuality or chastity, including Salome and the Virgin Mary (1916; Fig. 5), recur in Lohse-Wächtler's oeuvre and may be interpreted as an exploration of both the implications and consequences of female sexuality. The heavily allegorical associations often implicit in such subjects created by well-known contemporary German artists clearly had an impact on the young artist's production and made a residual contribution to her own later images of women. *Lissy* may be seen as an attempt to refute the narrow, moralizing interpretation of womanhood which characterized such popular images by presenting a multifarious and complex vision of feminine sexuality.

In 1919, Dix introduced Lohse-Wächtler to Kurt Lohse, an occasional artist and singer. The two quickly became entrenched in a relationship that was intimate yet stormy. Lohse-Wächtler moved into Lohse's apartment on Zeughaus Street, and in 1920, they married. Although at the time most husbands provided financially for their wives, Lohse's acting and singing jobs were never quite enough to make ends meet, and his wife was forced to provide a majority of the couple's income through the sale of her portraits and other paintings. Their relationship, which was troubled from the start, became



Fig. 5. Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, Virgin and Child (1916), lithographic drawing and watercolor, 5 7/8" x 3 1/2". Courtesy Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler Foundation, Hamburg.

increasingly tumultuous and they began to live apart, "to allow greater freedoms for each."[18]

In 1927, Lohse began what became a long-lasting affair with another woman (which eventually produced three children), giving as his reason a desire for what he described as a "total woman."[19] While initially he was drawn to his wife because of her nontraditional, bohemian appearance and behavior, Lohse later found himself searching for a woman who was more feminine. Additionally, Lohse-Wächtler was finding increasing success as an artist; in 1927, Hamburg's Museum for Art and Craft purchased a lithograph and she participated in a number of exhibitions.[20] This success perhaps fueled Lohse's search for a more passive partner, and most of the couple's artist friends took his side, essentially abandoning Lohse-Wächtler.

A comparison of two depictions of the same subject illuminates ways in which her marital turmoil may have influenced Lohse-Wächtler's creation of *Lissy*. A watercolor, *Lovers* (1922-23; Pl. 13), created shortly after her marriage, depicts an apathetic woman passively accepting the advances of a male lover. Autobiographical references such as the figure's bobbed hair and the canvas and paintbrushes depicted on the table may relate to artist's discomfort with the conventions of marriage.[21] A later painting of the same title (1930; Pl. 14) demonstrates the notably assertive tone which came to characterize her later works, as an androgynous nude woman dominates the canvas while being groped by a lover. This man, grotesquely exaggerated, with abject blue and purple features, is reminiscent of the male figures in *Lissy*. In contrast with the benign displeasure of the earlier scene, the later image, in which the woman turns away and the man stares blankly, is more evocative of an assault or rape than the embrace of two lovers.

The resonance of these two paintings with the events in Lohse-Wächtler's own marriage demonstrates how the dissolution of her personal life impacted her shifting representations of sexuality and gendered relationships. Her repetition of this subject also allows for consideration of *Lissy* in terms of Lohse-Wächtler's biography and emotional state at the time, as it has, in fact, been suggested that that the painting may be a self-portrait.[22] This interpretation clearly insinuates some interaction with the prostitutes who frequented the streets of Dresden and Hamburg during these years, as well as some degree of identification with these troubled female victims.

In early 1929, Lohse-Wächtler suffered a nervous breakdown and spent approximately two months in a mental institution, where it was suggested that she might suffer from schizophrenia. After returning to Hamburg, her mental health continued to decline, so that in describing behavior he witnessed at the opening of an exhibition of her works with the Hamburg Secession, Lohse-Wächtler's younger brother, Herbert, asserted that "[s]he couldn't speak reasonably to people and her mind was no longer clear."[23]

As economic conditions in Germany declined and Lohse-Wächtler experienced increasing difficulty selling her works, she began to frequent Hamburg's red light district. Although she lived in poverty, on streets and in train stations, she continued to produce numerous watercolors and drawings. The figures she encountered became her exclusive subjects: prostitutes, the homeless, and the mentally ill, all of whom would easily have elicited her sympathy and empathy (1930; Fig. 6 and Pl. 15) Her brother and friends such as Dada artist Johannes Baader likely assisted in the marketing and sale of her work at this time.[24] These pictures are considered among her best and most mature, and she was invited to exhibit them widely.[25]

Lissy, created during this time of critical acclaim and personal turmoil, demonstrates the direction her work had taken. The subject combined Lohse-Wächtler's interest in representing the urban environment with her growing sympathy for disenfranchised women, the result of her encounters in Hamburg's many impoverished neighborhoods. The body of the prostitute is turned away though her head is turned toward the viewer and she gazes directly out. She smokes a cigarette, a practice which had become both

fashionable and indicative of women's liberation in the years since the 1919 photograph of the artist. Lissy unapologetically asserts her female sexuality through her dress, makeup, dyed hair, and provocative pose. In contrast, her facial features are characterized by the arresting, garish androgyny also found in her autobiographical 1930s *Lovers* painting. Although much of the image deals overtly with sexuality as commodity, the work itself is not discernibly erotic due to such ambiguity as well as a palpable attitude of indifference among the figures. Such elements differentiate *Lissy* from the popular tendency toward objectification and symbolization of prostitutes evident in the works of Dix, Schlichter, and others, as well as in Weimar popular culture. Her heavy makeup and wary look instead evoke compassion, reminding the viewer that sex is a means of survival rather than a source of pleasure for such women, often less a choice than a last resort.

The sensitivity of this representation seems closely related to Lohse-Wächtler's personal situation. Having endured the same living conditions as women like Lissy decidedly would have blurred the degree of separation which characterizes other contemporary representations of prostitutes. Additionally, the prostitute would have served as an especially rich subject for the interrogation of femininity and sexuality in which Lohse-Wächtler had expressed interest in previous works, such as *Death and the Sinner*. Both images demonstrate troubled relationships with womanhood, as the sexualized female in the earlier work is confronted with death, and the later one with the grotesque male subjects behind her. The two women, as well, remain impervious to situations meant to castigate femininity. These bold representations of gender would have resonated for Lohse-Wächtler, who had, herself, repeatedly encountered and defied the consequences of dissenting from conventional womanhood.

Perhaps most notably, by meeting the viewer's gaze directly, *Lissy* represents prostitution while avoiding the abjection and misogyny characteristic of works by canonical male expressionist and *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters. Although the image of a sex worker directly engaging the viewer, or, implicitly, the client, has considerable historical precedent—Manet's iconic *Olympia*, for example, or the work which inspired it, Titian's *Venus of Urbino*—Lohse-Wächtler dramatically shifts the power relations implicit in the act of viewing through the homosocial relationship between artist and subject.

Although Lissy is portrayed in a public setting, there is some indication that she has been caught in a private moment. Sex clearly is her occupation, yet she does not address the viewer as a client, instead turning as if she has just become aware of an outside presence. This dynamic may connect to Lohse-Wächtler's encounters with the disenfranchised women who lived and worked on the streets of Hamburg, and, as Weimar crime writers Ernst Engelbrecht and Leo Heller asserted, consistently gathered "either alone or in herds…on one or another corner."[26] Such a reaction easily could have been similar to that with which such women greeted a female artist — characterized by identification and guardedness rather than sexual exchange or self-presentation. Unaccustomed to interacting with women other than fellow sex workers, the



Fig. 6. Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, Café Scene (1930), watercolor, 28 3/4" x 20 1/8". Courtesy Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler Foundation, Hamburg.

prostitutes Lohse-Wächtler encountered may have been uncertain of her intentions, of how to interpret her benign presence in their seedy milieu. Additionally, the disjuncture between the act of portraiture—historically connected with reverence and respectability—and the low regard prostitutes encountered in Weimar culture likely would have aroused suspicion about an artist interested in painting them. Such unique nuances enabled Lohse-Wächtler to create works such as *Lissy*, which countered the popular perception of prostitutes.

Otto Dix, in works like *Three Women* (1926), clearly demonstrated the objectification implicit in widely circulated Weimar iconography. Dix is quoted as having stated of his practice that "all art is mastery."[27] This inflammatory yet apt summation describes Dix's painting, in which three prostitutes are objectified through a Nietzschean equation between creation and maternity, destruction and female sexuality. Only one meets the viewer's gaze, appearing to do so in an awkward, deliberate attempt at provocation implicating the viewer as the potential customer in this sexual exchange. As well, Rudolf Schlichter's *Margot* portrays a prostitute facing the viewer while smoking, represented in a way that is neither idealized nor abject. Although the work lacks the overt misogyny of the graphic images of rape and murder for which Schlichter is noted, signifiers of an "emancipated" woman, including a tailored shirtwaist blouse and closely cropped hair reflect the popular notion that prostitution was the natural fate of independent women and associate such figures with promiscuity.[28] Taken together, these contextual factors problematize a potentially



Fig. 7. Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, Sick (1932), pencil drawing and red watercolor, 13 3/8" x 11 7/8". Courtesy Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler Foundation, Hamburg.

feminist interpretation. How might the sort of subject-viewer relationship found in *Three Women* and *Margot* function if sexuality were not its primary function? Much has been written in past decades on the implicit objectification of the gaze as a theoretical construction and formal device; could it, instead, evoke empathy rather than denigrate?[29]

The writing of Vienna School theorist Alois Riegl may be useful in interpreting *Lissy* and differentiating it from similar works by Lohse-Wächtler's contemporaries. Although it is improbable that the artist would have read the theorist's writings in depth, there are compelling reasons to believe that she may have encountered his work. Riegl's early career, for instance, focused on the burgeoning study of arts and crafts in Northern Europe, a movement in which Lohse-Wächtler's teacher at the Dresden School of Applied Arts, Margarete Junge, was actively involved at the time of the young artist's studies.[30] Additionally, a pedagogical shift in German educational institutions resulted in an emphasis on the study of art history in many German schools, especially girls' high schools.[31] These factors, as well as the relative popularity of his writings in Weimar culture, give suggestive credence to the possibility that Lohse-Wächtler could have been exposed to Riegl's ideas.

In his 1902 text on group portraiture in seventeenth-century Holland, Riegl described a functional gaze which used a direct acknowledgment of the viewer to communicate a sense of personal connection and ethical responsiveness. He defined this concept, which he termed "attentiveness," as the way in which subjects of works of art demonstrate awareness of their condition through acknowledging a viewer and, he asserted, could be traced to the early stages of the Roman Empire. Such a phenomenon developed as "[t]he individual [became] open to the outside world, not in order to subjugate it, *to unite with it in pleasure* or to recoil from it in displeasure, but in pure, selfless interest."[32] Although Riegl almost certainly did not imply sexual pleasure in this instance, it is plausible to apply his statements to such context. Such an interpretation implies an artistic lineage in which the gaze may function as an ethical imperative rather than an objectifying device.

One of Riegl's primary tenets was the idea that "a single work of art, if read properly, would reveal the deep structure of the world that produced it."[33] What sort of structures, then, would have informed images of prostitution created by women in Weimar Germany? In the early decades of the twentieth century, in Germany as elsewhere, a women's movement was fighting for issues such as suffrage, equal rights and education for women, and, broadly, for an end to discrimination.[34] Those affiliated with this movement often conflicted quite strongly with the larger, less progressive portion of the German population. Female artists formed their own groups, including the Berlin Society of Woman Artists and GEDOK (Community of German and Austrian Woman Artists), which encouraged women artists by providing some financial support and organizing exhibitions.[35] Lohse-Wächtler was affiliated with both groups, and her association with these rising feminist organizations and their members undoubtedly informed her artistic practice.

Because of her interest in feminist causes, it seems plausible to interpret the gaze found in *Lissy* as the manifestation of an "ethical responsiveness" between two women rather than one between a prostitute and client. Such interaction would relate to the implicit sense of respect in the relationship between subject and viewer proposed by Riegl.[36] Art historian Margaret Olin has analyzed the ethical implications of Riegl's writing in light of empathy theory, such as Wilhelm Wundt's *Ethics: An Investigation of the Facts and Laws of the Moral Life*, concluding that, ultimately, such a gaze "ask[s] the beholder to extrapolate from his knowledge of himself."[37] According to her analysis of Riegl regarding the relationship between subject and spectator, there is an ethical imperative implicit to the act of viewing which obliges the viewer to see the subject as *like* him- or herself rather than as object. Such an interpretation may be particularly applicable when viewing an image such as *Lissy*, which represents a disenfranchised subject.

That both the artist and subject of *Lissy* are women additionally complicates the functioning of such an attentive gaze. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's writing on homosexuality posits same sex relationships between men as exclusionary devices meant to shut women out of social structures.[38] Applying this interpretation of relationships between two women to the work of art—specifically the power dynamics implicit to representation—is it possible to posit a homosocial gaze that *empathetically* excludes? Accordingly, exclusion, such

as that found in the relationship between Lissy and the viewer, might be seen as a subversive act.

Based on Lohse-Wächtler's interest in feminism, liberal politics, and inclusion, Lissy's gaze may serve to exclude the male gaze that has traditionally objectified such subjects. As Riegl suggests, this gaze could ultimately indicate a mutual respect between Lohse-Wächtler and her subject—whether an actual sex worker the artist encountered or a composite of prostitutes she met on the streets of Hamburg—indicating the artist's sympathy for the plight of such women. Undoubtedly, Lohse-Wächtler would have recognized the difficulty such subjects continuously faced by virtue of their womanhood, as she had struggled for much of her own life with the discontinuity between the independence necessary to realize her potential as an artist and the expectations of gendered norms.

In 1931, the year she created *Lissy*, Lohse-Wächtler—homeless and destitute at the age of 32—returned to her parents' home in Dresden. The relationship with her father remained strained, and the following year he had her committed to a mental institution in Arnsdorf. As the power of the Third Reich increased, in 1935, Lohse-Wächtler was forcefully sterilized under Hitler's "Law for the Prevention of Genetically Defective Offspring." Also that year her estranged husband successfully filed for divorce. During her institutionalization Lohse-Wächtler continued to work in watercolor, creating portraits of other patients (1932: Fig. 7) that were similar to her earlier works in their sympathy and intense realism and that some consider the culmination of her artistic career.[39] In 1940 she was murdered when the Nazis exterminated patients in mental institutions.

Despite the brevity of her career, Lohse-Wächtler played a significant role in the artistic milieus of interwar Dresden and Hamburg. Her images are invaluable in establishing an alternative vision of Weimar prostitutes that is both realistic and sympathetic to the plight of these women. *Lissy*, in particular, effectively appropriates a subject with intrinsic ties to masculinity, domination, and objectification, ultimately using it to empower a long disenfranchised theme and formulate a feminist statement in the midst of a male-dominated artistic circle noted for misogyny.

Hannah Arendt stated, "Freedom in a positive sense is possible only among equals."[40] While in Weimar culture, few figures were publicly degraded more than the female sex worker, Lohse-Wächtler's *Lissy* assertively subverted this ideology by presenting its subject as equal rather than objectified, and imbuing her with both sympathy and power. In doing so, the work acknowledges the duality of feminist production: while the harshness of the subject's life must be acknowledged in order to establish an ethical means of viewing, it is simultaneously imperative to avoid a victimized sort of representation. Ultimately, *Lissy* allows recognition of its subject's reality, creating an accurate portrayal of both her strengths and trials. Through working within the dominant artistic milieu and popular discourse in such a way, Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler's painting acknowledges and invites new interpretations of the complicated reality of the intersections between sexuality and discourse surrounding Weimar culture. ●

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NOTES

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1. A[nna]. Banaschewski, "Friedrichsberger Köpfe: Zeichnungen von Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler," *Der Kreis, Zeitschrift für künstlerische Kultur*. May 1929. Review also reprinted in Georg Reinhardt, ed. *Im Malstrom Des Lebens Versunken: Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, 1899 – 1940, Leben und Werk*. (Cologne: Druck- and Verlagshaus, 1996), 275 (hereafter, catalogue raisonné).
2. Ibid.
3. For an in depth analysis of the predominant avant-garde movements in these cities at this time, see Sergiusz Michalski, *New Objectivity: Neue Sachlichkeit – Painting in Germany in the 1920s*. (Cologne: Taschen, 2003).
4. See Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles*. Ladislaus Löb, trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). For a detailed analysis of the macabre phenomenon of *Lustmord* in Weimar culture, see Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 97.
5. See Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 43.
6. Reinhold Heller, *Art in Germany, 1906-1936: From Expressionism to Resistance*. (Munich: Prestel, 1990), 198.
7. Dr. A[nna]. B[aneschewski], "Neue Arbeiten von Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler," *Hamburgischer Correspondent*. August 7, 1929. I am grateful to Jay A. Clarke for assistance with this translation.
8. Christiane Hertel, "Review: *Im Malstrom des Lebens versunken: Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, 1899-1940, Leben und Werk*." *Woman's Art Journal* 21, 2 (F 2000/W2001): 50. For biographical details, see also: Regine Sondermann, *Kunst ohne Kompromiss: Das Leben der Malerin Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler 1899-1940*. (Dresden: Die Scheune, 2006).
9. In addition to providing a useful resource on the artist's life, Georg Reinhardt's catalogue raisonné contains many recollections from Lohse-Wächtler's younger brother, Herbert. The correspondence between brother and sister is particularly revelatory of their close relationship. After the artist's death, Herbert published her letters and worked to draw posthumous attention to her work.
10. It is unclear whether a romantic relationship existed between the two; the existence of such sentiment is never explicitly acknowledged yet seems quite possible. For further information on Felixmüller, see Ulrich Krempel, ed., *Conrad Felixmüller: Die Dresdener Jahre 1910-1934*. (Cologne: Druck- & Verlagshaus Wienand, 1997).
11. Conrad Felixmüller, "Original-Holzschnitt," *Die Aktion*. June 30, 1917.
12. Otto Griebel, *Ich war ein Mann der Straße: Lebenserinnerungen eines Dresdener Malers*. (Frankfurt: Röderberg, 1986), 87.
13. Otto Griebel as quoted in Reinhardt, catalogue raisonné, 21.
14. For a succinct summary of Lohse-Wächtler's early artistic development, see Galerie St. Etienne, *George Grosz/Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler: Art & Gender in Weimar Germany*. (New York: Galerie St. Etienne, 1998).
15. Although Lohse-Wächtler's adoption of an unquestionably

masculine name was a bold gesture, the practice of adopting an ambiguous alias was not unheard of in early twentieth-century avant-garde circles; Abstract Expressionist painter Lee Krasner, for example, adopted the pseudonym "LK" to be taken more seriously by critics, dealers, and other artists. See Anne Wagner, "Krasner's Fictions," in *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keefe*. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996), 105–90.

16. This act may also, perhaps, be tied to the practice of montage, which had become popular in Weimar Germany because of the work of artists such as Hannah Höch. In this case, Lohse-Wächtler combines—or collages—gender to create a unique hybrid entirely of her own. See Maud Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).
17. See Jay A. Clarke, "Neo-Idealism, Expressionism, and the Writing of Art History," Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies 28 (2002): 24-37 for further information on the relationship between artists such as Klinger and an early Northern sensibility. For details on reproductions, editions, and copies of von Stuck's *Sin*, see the artist's *catalogue raisonné*: Heinrich Voss, *Franz von Stuck, 1863-1928: Werkkatalog der Gemälde mit einer Einführung in seinen Symbolismus*. (Munich: Prestel, 1973).
18. Reinhardt, catalogue raisonné, 24.
19. See Galerie St. Etienne, *George Grosz/Elfreide Lohse-Wächtler*.
20. The works purchased by the Hamburg Museum for Art and Craft were designated as "degenerate art" and, along with works by artists such as Dix and Amadeo Modigliani, were placed in the Archive for Degenerate Art in 1938. See David Klemm, *Das Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, Band 1: Von den Anfängen bis 1945*. (Hamburg: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, 2004), 367-72.
21. See Reinhardt, catalogue raisonné, 64.
22. *The Marvin & Janet Fishman Collection: German Art from Expressionism to Resistance,* Exh. Cat. (London: Sotheby's, October 18, 2000), 18-19. Such an interpretation may stem from the work's title, which could have been a nickname for "Elfriede." My thanks to the staff of Galerie Michael Hasenclever, Munich for this insight.
23. Herbert Wächtler as quoted in Reinhardt, catalogue raisonné, 26.
24. Ibid, 34.
25. Scholar Hildegard Reinhardt, for example, describes Lohse-Wächtler's Hamburg works as "the main body of her work." See Hildegard Reinhardt, "Lohse-Wächtler, Elfriede," in Delia Gaze, ed. *Dictionary of Women Artists*. (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997), 862-64.
26. Ernst Engelbrecht and Leo Heller, "Night Figures of the City," in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, eds. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 725.
27. Otto Dix as quoted in Maria Tatar. *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany,* 97. As art historian Dieter Scholz notes, Dix was, like many artists of his circle, an avid reader of Nietzsche, particularly the philosopher's discourse on nihilism. See Dieter Scholz, "The Triptych Metropolis by Otto Dix," in *Otto Dix: Bestandskatalog*. (Stuttgart: Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart, 1989), 76.
28. Günter Metken, "Margot," in Götz Adriani, ed., *Rudolf Schlichter: Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen* (Tübingen: Kunsthalle Tübingen, 1997), 146. See also Sabine Rewald, "Margot," in *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), 66.
29. See, for instance, the most formative essay on the subject: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Visual and Other Pleasures*. (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1989).
30. See Despina Stratigakos, "Women and the Werkbund: Gender Politics and German Design Reform, 1907-14," in *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. 62 (2003): 490-511. As Stratigakos asserts, Junge was among the most vocal proponents of design and craft reform in Germany during the early twentieth century.
31. J.A. Soika, "German Art Education," in *Studies in Art Education*. 5 (1964): 69-70.
32. Alois Riegl, *The Group Portraiture of Holland*. Evelyn M. Kain and David Britt, trans. (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), 75. My emphasis.
33. Christopher S. Wood, ed. *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*. (New York: Zone Books, 2000), 9.
34. See Barbara D. Wright, "'New Man,' Eternal Woman: Expressionist Responses to German Feminism," in *The German Quarterly* 60 (1987): 582-99 for an analysis of the aims of the German feminist movement of the early twentieth century as well as contemporary responses.
35. For further information on the Berlin Society of Woman Artists, see Dietmar Fuhrmann, et al. *Profession ohne Tradition: 125 Jahre Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen: ein Forschungs- und Ausstellungsprojekt der Berlinischen Galerie in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen*. (Berlin: Kupfergraben, 1992).
36. Riegl, *Group Portraiture of Holland*, 75.
37. Margaret Olin, "Forms of Respect: Alois Riegl's Concept of Attentiveness," in *The Art Bulletin* 71 (1989): 294.
38. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985), 47. It seems significant to note that Sedgwick additionally discusses the continuum of homosocial desire in female relationships in this work, asserting that blurring the boundaries between desire and friendship is more acceptable between women. However, I feel that the definition which she constructs of male homosociality—ultimately the focus of her work—is most useful for my purposes.
39. For images of and further information on these works, see Hildegard Reinhardt, *Das oft aufsteigende Gefühl des Verlassenseins : Arbeiten der Malerin Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler in den Psychiatren von Hamburg-Friedrichsberg (1929) und Arnsdorf (1932-1940)* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2000).
40. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, (New York: Viking, 1966), 279.



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Motherhood, Memorials, and Anti-Militarism

Bashka Paeff's *Sacrifices of War*

By Jennifer Wingate

Images of mothers occupied a prominent place in the visual culture of the First World War. The patriotic mother stood by stoically while her sons marched off to war, and in depictions ranging from memorial sculptures to sheet music cover illustrations, the bereaved mother mourned the country's fallen heroes. By contrast, the fiercely protective mother, sheltering her young from the ravages of battle, or physically interceding on her children's behalf, rarely appeared in the popular imagery of World War I in the United States. Her presence was limited to images distributed by peace organizations and reproduced in radical publications. Both maternalist wartime definitions of women's citizenship and the anti-radical culture of the 1920s ensured the unpopularity of such imagery in mainstream venues, especially in the conservative arena of public commemorative art.[1] It is in this context that Bashka Paeff's sculpture for Maine's World War I memorial in Kittery, *Sacrifices of War* (1924-26; Fig. 1), must be considered and appreciated.[2]



Fig. 1. Bashka Paeff, The Maine Sailors and Soldiers Memorial (Kittery) (dedicated 1926). Approximately 160" x 204". Photograph, Jennifer Wingate.

Paeff's sculpture for Maine's Sailors and Soldiers Memorial stands out in the context of World War I memorial imagery particularly because of its depiction of motherhood. While there were precedents for her design in the graphic art and studio sculpture of the early twentieth century, this striking anti-war statement would never have been realized as a public monument if not for the fortuitous collaboration between two individuals with compatible attitudes toward the commemoration of war. Paeff's sculpture for Kittery expressed her firmly held opinion that war memorials should not glorify war, a view shared by the governor of Maine, Percival Baxter, who initiated and oversaw the commission.[3] Rather than celebrating the more conventional notions of patriotic motherhood promoted in popular media, Paeff's design echoed the position of Jane Addams and the Woman's Peace Party, which held that women, as mothers, had a special responsibility and authority as advocates of peace.[4]

Bashka Paeff (1893-1979) was one of several American women sculptors who exhibited work dealing with war themes in the teens and twenties. She also successfully navigated the challenges of public sculpture commissions to realize three of her war pieces on a monumental scale, including the earlier Chaplains' Memorial (1922) in Boston, and the later Lexington Minute Man Marker (1948) in Lexington, Massachusetts. Even though women had long participated in commemorative activities and memorial committees in the United States, women sculptors had only recently begun to gain acceptance in the male dominated field of military sculpture. Their contributions to the field were remarkably diverse, considering the pressures involved in public commemorative projects. Memorials by Paeff, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875-1942), Anna Coleman Ladd (1878-1939), and Sally James Farnham (1869-1943) reflected in different ways the personal war experiences and professional ambitions of their makers.[5]

After studying with Bela Pratt at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, in 1916 Paeff became a member of the Guild of



Fig. 2. Bashka Paeff, The Maine Sailors and Soldiers Memorial (Kittery) (dedicated 1926), *Sacrifices of War,* bronze relief, c. 102" x 132". Photo: Jennifer Wingate.

Boston Artists. Founded in 1914, the Guild's mission was to promote Boston artists, many of whom, like Paeff, trained at the Museum School and persisted in working in naturalistic rather than modernist styles well into the interwar period. Nearly 40 percent of the Guild's founding members were women, who, like Paeff, benefited from regular solo exhibitions and generous press coverage of Guild events.[6] Paeff is best known today for her lighthearted *Boy and Bird Fountain* (1934) in the Boston Public Garden, and perhaps less so for her portrait busts and other works in museum collections.

The number of professionally active women sculptors had risen considerably since the previous century, even though success in the field remained closely allied with masculine strength and virility.[7] As the writer Ada Rainey remarked in *Century Magazine* in 1917, "Sculpture has never been thought a medium particularly feminine, that so many women should recently have chosen it for their own is significant."[8] The changes that Rainey heralded , however, did not happen overnight. Numerous women sculptors had paved the way.[9] In the field of commemorative military sculpture, for example, in 1906 Theodora Alice Ruggles Kitson (1871-1932) had produced the successful Spanish American War Memorial (The Hiker) and the Mother Bickerdyke Memorial commemorating a Civil War nurse. Those projects served as important precedents for World War I memorials realized in the 1920s by Paeff, Whitney, Ladd, Farnham, Nancy Coonsman Hahn (1887-1976), and others.



Fig. 3. Alonzo Earl Foringer, *The Greatest Mother in the World* (1917). Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

While Paeff's achievements were part of a larger trend, in other ways the Russian-born Paeff stood apart from many of the successful women sculptors of the period. A few "rags to riches" stories can be found among the biographies of Paeff's peers, but several prominent sculptors of the day, like Whitney, Ladd, and Anna Hyatt Huntington (1876-1973) shared a distinct advantage.[10] They not only enjoyed the financial comfort that facilitated access to art instruction and travel, but also had the financial means to enable them to undertake poorly compensated and time consuming public commissions. The strong nativist sentiment that still permeated the art world in the 1920s, moreover, nurtured skepticism toward immigrant artists.

That Paeff was neither wealthy nor of Anglo-Saxon "native stock" was commented on with regularity in reviews of her work, contributing an air of novelty to newspaper coverage of her career. Her parents immigrated to the United States from Russia when Bashka was a year old. They settled in the North End of Boston, where Paeff attended the Girls' High School and, upon graduating in 1907, the Massachusetts Normal Art School, where she trained to be a drawing instructor.[11] Her artistic proclivity was supported by her parents, who also encouraged Paeff's sisters in their musical pursuits. As one *Boston Globe* article observed, "art appreciation, repressed in Russia, was intensified…when Mr. and Mrs. Paeff moved to America" and where they enthusiastically supported the artistic talents of their children.[12]

After her modeling teacher at the Normal School, Cyrus Dallin, encouraged Paeff to focus her studies on sculpture, she enrolled in 1911 at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts.[13] According to one newspaper account, she won more awards for her work in her first three years than any other student.[14] To support herself, she worked as a subway token taker, often modeling clay in her spare moments, which earned her the moniker the "subway sculptress."[15] As late as 1921, in a Guild of Boston Artists exhibition review, one of her most vocal advocates, art critic Anthony J. Philpott, remembered Paeff's "early struggles for an art education in this city," and expressed his admiration for the versatility of her work and the high quality of her modeling.[16]

For the Boston mainstream press and its readership, Bessie Paeff (as she was known as a young woman) embodied the progressivist ideals of assimilation and productivity. After enumerating a list of her works at her 1923 Guild exhibition, Frederick William Coburn, the art critic for the *Boston Herald*, praised her ambition and output as an American expression of her innate Eastern European artistic temperament. A young

Russian Jewish woman sculptor was a curiosity to the art critics. Paeff's background and the attention it drew also serve to highlight the professional risks that she took with her *Sacrifices of War* memorial for Maine, easily her most controversial project. Especially in the immediate aftermath of World War I, overt displays of pacifist sentiment were often viewed as politically dangerous and un-American. In 1926, when Paeff's memorial was dedicated, critics of women's reform continued to link women's organizations and peace activities to the threat of Bolshevism.[17]

Contemporary reviewers, however, regarded Paeff more as an example of an immigrant success story than as someone who might be harboring dangerous radical views.[18] As art historian Erica Hirshler has noted in her study of women artists in Boston, Paeff "was just the sort of woman at whom social improvement programs…had been aimed." Hirshler contrasts Paeff's ability to "inject herself into the midst" of Boston's artistic community with that of the African-American artist Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller (1877-1968), who "remained on the outskirts" of that community.[19] Paeff's acceptance in Boston's art circles and positive press, together with Governor Baxter's stated preference for a monument with a pacifist message, gave her the confidence she needed to submit her bold design for the Maine memorial.[20]

While relishing the opportunities of her blossoming career as a sculptor, Paeff still faced the problem of making a livelihood with her art, and she accepted some commissions that her male peers would have considered beneath their professional standards.[21] As art historian Michele Bogart demonstrates in her essay on American garden sculpture, "male sculptors who hoped to establish or maintain reputations as major monument-creators could not long afford to have their work characterized in [the] lighthearted terms" that were reserved for describing the frivolous themes of sculpted fountains and other garden statuary.[22] Though Paeff's *Sacrifices of War* memorial certainly includes her among the ranks of sculptors aspiring to be "major monument creators," she did not have the luxury of turning down other types of projects: garden statuary, portrait busts of society children, and even sculptures of show dogs owned by Boston's best families.[23] Such projects were her bread and butter while she sought out and gained a reputation for modeling and carving more prominent subjects, including relief portraits of Jane Addams (1915) and Oliver Wendell Holmes (1917). (She later made a marble bust of Louis Brandeis in 1953 and a relief portrait of Martin Luther King in 1970.)

Paeff's deep interest in war themes would last throughout her career. She was one of several artists to create studio works inspired by the First World War. Anna Coleman Ladd submitted a sculpture entitled *Peace Victorious* to the annual exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1916; Paeff exhibited several war themes at the Guild in 1917 and 1919; and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney exhibited her Impressions of War sculptures at her Eighth Street studio in 1919. By eventually realizing at least one of their studio pieces on a monumental scale, Ladd, Paeff, and Whitney each built on the achievements of Theodora Kitson, who had helped prove women's ability to compete in the male-dominated field of military sculpture. They also surpassed Kitson by challenging the chauvinistic ideals



Fig. 4. Bashka Paeff, sketch for *Sacrifices of War* (orig. *Horrors of War*) (1924), clay, dimensions unknown (smaller than life-size). Courtesy the Ralph Owen Brewster Papers, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

embodied in the most popular memorials to the First World War. Paeff's Maine Sailors and Soldiers Memorial, in particular, went the furthest toward subverting conventional notions of memorial art by critiquing the equation of women's wartime citizenship with patriotic motherhood. Paeff, moreover, continued to exhibit her most stridently anti-war studio work, *Demon of War* (modeled in 1916), well into the 1950s, expressing her continued wish to realize the work as an anti-war monument as late as 1976.[24]

Some of Paeff's early war pieces were characteristic of the optimism of wartime depictions of U.S. soldiers and World War I memorials, though she was not as emotionally invested in these as she was in her pacifist works. Philpott aptly described her *Spirit of 1918*, exhibited at the Guild in 1919, as "a Yankee sailor lad, alert and full of energy."[25] Another reviewer wrote more bluntly that the *Spirit of 1918* had the "stereotyped" feel of "recruiting posters."[26] Paeff herself felt a much stronger attachment to *Demon of War*, which she modeled during her first fellowship in 1916 at the MacDowell Colony, an artists' residency founded in New Hampshire in 1907.

Although *Demon of War* is lost (possibly destroyed by her husband after Paeff's death),[27] the force of its anti-war imagery emerges from a number of descriptions. Philpott wrote admiringly of the work when it was exhibited in 1919:

> That the war stirred [Paeff] deeply is evident from several works in the exhibition—one a fiercely creative and symbolic group entitled 'Demon,' although it might be more appropriately entitled 'War,' for war is typified in a brutal looking figure that enfolds with one arm a struggling female while he crouches and glides darkly along with destroying torch and hideous face. It is a finely modeled group.[28]

Paeff described the central figure in the sculpture as a "satanic" personification of War who holds a struggling



Fig. 5. Bashka Paeff, sketch for *Glories of Peace* (1924), clay, dimensions unknown (smaller than life-size). Courtesy the Ralph Owen Brewster Papers, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

mutilated woman while he crushes the body of another.[29] Perhaps in a defensive effort to deny responsibility for making such a gruesome sculpture, the artist explained in an interview in 1921 how the design emerged spontaneously from the clay from which it was modeled: "I happened to look up and see, all waiting for me to let it out, 'The Demon of War,'… I made it just as I found it in the clay. Then it seemed to me so dreadful that I didn't know whether I ought to let it stand. But the people at the [MacDowell] colony…thought it was fine, and so I completed it."[30] Although this anecdote downplays the artist's intentionality in creating such an uncharacteristically "dreadful" sculpture, Paeff's decision to include the work in numerous Guild exhibitions—in January 1917 (a few months before the United States declared war on Germany), in the celebratory aftermath of the war in 1919, twice in the 1920s, and again in 1952—reveals her strong feelings for the work and her unwavering anti-militarism.[31]

Paeff's comments also suggest that she may have started thinking of *Demon of War* as a potential war memorial not long after she modeled it. In the interview cited above, Paeff describes the work immediately after sharing her opinions about memorials:

> After it is all done we are likely to make statues of soldier boys and sailor boys, in a kind of parade spirit, and set them up as if war were a fine thing. So we forget what suffering and horror it brought. …we should set up memorials that would make us loathe war instead of admire it.[32]

Toward the end of her life, she expressed that her greatest wish was to see the sculpture commissioned as "a Design for Anti-War" monument.[33] While her hope for this controversial sculpture was never realized, fifty years earlier she did get to express a very different anti-war vision on a monumental scale.

The Maine Sailors and Soldiers Memorial has received more attention in recent years as scholarly interest in work by women and public interest in war memorials have risen.[34] Located on the Maine side of the Memorial Bridge (dedicated in 1923) linking Kittery and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the granite memorial stele with bronze relief occupies a park which doubles as a traffic circle, not far from a lobster house that lures travelers off the highway as they enter or exit Maine. Difficult to view properly from the road, the imagery of Paeff's sculpture comes into better focus from within the confines of the grassy common.[35]

The approximately eight by eleven foot bronze panel (Fig. 2) features a mother shielding a child from the menacing tumult of war and the limp bodies of two dead men who lay at her feet. A deeply modeled background, suggestive of smoke, flames, or waves, animates the surface, casting a dark shadow behind the mother's head that accentuates the intensity of her gaze. The textured surface, which is more active at the panel's border, helps create a restless movement between the central group and the periphery of the composition. Similarly, the fluid lines, triangular arrangement, and high relief of the central group lead the viewer's eye back and forth between the lifeless bodies of the two men and the fiercely protective maternal figure. The whole sculpture is thus infused with a nervous energy.

Even though most World War I memorial sculpture dedicated up through the early 1920s depicted fighting and vigilant soldiers, Paeff's relief for Kittery was not the first sign of change in memorial art.[36] Whitney's *Washington Heights-Inwood Memorial* (dedicated in New York City in 1922), featuring two wounded soldiers, was an early example of the new focus on sacrifice in World War I memorials. Ladd's memorial sculptures were equally striking for their emphasis on death and, in the artist's words, "Victory as a worn and tragic figure."[37] Both women's commemorative visions spoke to their personal war experiences.[38]

Paeff's memorial stood apart from these examples because of the centrality it accorded the image of the mother and her role in protecting civilization from war. It was also distinct from World War I memorials that featured the mourning mother, like Augustus Lukeman's sculpture for the Masonic Fraternity of Pennsylvania in Elizabethtown (dedicated a year after Paeff's memorial in 1927). Lukeman's mourning allegory of motherhood, somewhat evocative of the pensive figure in Augustus Saint-Gaudens' *Adams Memorial* (1891) in Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., openly grieves for her lost

sons. Her downcast eyes contemplate the helmet and rifle on her lap as she gently adorns them with a laurel wreath. Like an increasing number of memorials dedicated by the mid-twenties, including those by Whitney and Ladd, Lukeman's memorial acknowledges death and loss. Paeff's design, however, was different. Rather than focus on grief and regret, her mother figure takes an active stand against war. There are no laurel wreaths or palms of glory for the dead men at her feet. Many viewers at the time of the dedication would have perceived Paeff's image of a distraught mother fiercely clutching a child to her breast not only as pacifist, but more specifically as a critique of patriotic motherhood.

Patriotic motherhood was "the only acceptable definition of the relationships among motherhood, internationalism, and women's citizenship" during World War I.[39] In wartime propaganda, as images of the victimized family set upon by brutal Germans entreated United States citizens to enlist and fight, those such as "The Greatest Mother," (1917; Fig 3) cradling a wounded soldier in her arms, became emblematic of the homeland they were defending. The nurturing Red Cross nurse, along with images of proud mothers sending their sons to war, in stark contrast with Paeff's memorial, embodied patriotic motherhood in the visual culture of World War I. In her study of women charged under the Wartime Emergency Laws for their anti-war pro-labor activism, historian Kathleen Kennedy shows how women's opposition to the war was seen as evidence of their failure as patriotic mothers. Patriotic motherhood, moreover, was conflated with anti-Bolshevism in the heated antiradical rhetoric of these women's wartime trials. Although the interwar period in which Paeff designed and dedicated her memorial was marked by renewed peace activism, pacifist activities were still tempered by right-wing groups who persisted in associating anti-militarism with communism.[40] Thus the response to Paeff's memorial—embraced by some, and called inappropriate by others—reflected the transitional politics of the period.

In 1924, Maine's governor, Percival Baxter, with the approval of a memorial committee that he appointed, selected Paeff's design from approximately twenty proposals. The following year, when the memorial came under attack as "pacifist," Baxter would stress the input of the committee, which included military men and veterans. Initially, however, he emphasized his own significant role in guiding the project, and in a letter interred in the time capsule at the memorial's cornerstone laying on Armistice Day of 1924, Baxter wrote:

> After consulting with sculptors and artists and conveying to them my ideas as to what I wanted, I selected the granite and bronze that today is to be formally dedicated. This entire memorial was conceived and carried out by me, the Smith Granite Co. of Westerly, Rhode Island, and Miss Bashka Paeff of Boston, Mass… The Governor's Council and Soldiers' Memorial Committee merely ratified my plans.[41]

In the same letter, Baxter underscored some of the themes that he also spoke about at the ceremony, including the selfishness and greed that fuels war and the importance of



Fig. 6. Abastenia St. Leger Eberle, *You Dare Touch My Child* (c. 1914-16) bronze, 13" x 7 1/2" x 11 1/2". Courtesy of Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Museum Purchase, Special Authority of the Director.

memorials that teach the lessons of war's devastation. In fact, Baxter selected the relief from two sketches originally proposed by Paeff, which may have been intended as companion sculptures, one for either side of the memorial stele. The more overtly anti-war design that Baxter chose was originally called *Horrors of War* (1924; Fig. 4); the other was titled *Glories of Peace* (1924: Fig. 5).[42] An article in the *Portland (Maine) Press Herald* described the unrealized sketch as featuring a "winged Spirit of Peace hovering over the kneeling figure of a man, protectingly embracing a woman and child" with "peaceful figures of the tiller of the soil" in the background.[43]

When Paeff presented the enlarged model of the selected sketch the next year to Baxter's successor, Governor Ralph Owen Brewster, he expressed concern that Paeff's design was "more a glorification of pacifism than of [Maine's] part in the global conflict." The *Portsmouth (New Hampshire) Herald* reported that Brewster noted "with disarming mildness" that "he doubted whether such a design would be entirely satisfactory to the people of Maine, who expected an appropriate memorial."[44] "I agree with other members of the [Governor's] Council," he was quoted as saying in the *Christian Science Monitor*, "that the 'Horrors of War' does not appeal to me as the sort of a memorial to ascribe to our soldier boys."[45] Art critic Anthony Philpott interpreted the governor's position for the *Boston Globe*: "The real fear in Gov. Brewster's mind is that this memorial, as it stands, leans too much toward the pacifist ideas that are current among women."[46]

Although Paeff's full-size clay model of *Horrors of War* was already complete, Brewster decided that he preferred Paeff's



Fig. 7. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, *Peace Halting the Ruthlessness of War* (1917) bronze, 14" x 16" x 9 1/2". Collection of West Virginia State University. Photo: Todd Griffith. (Note: No extant version includes the allegorical Peace figure.)

other design, *Glories of Peace*.[47] He temporarily withheld the sculptor's payments until a compromise could be reached, but both Baxter and Paeff vigorously defended the finished sculpture, arguing that the design had been selected according to proper procedures, a contract had been entered, and funds allocated.[48] In a lengthy defense of the memorial printed in the *Portland Press Herald*, Baxter wrote:

> The Memorial is striking and teaches a lesson. …it portrays the sacrifices made by women and children as well as by men. It is a great and original conception and Miss Paeff devoted a year and a half of her life to create it. It would have been easy to have selected the usual form of a memorial with soldiers in uniform carrying guns, making the usual appeal to the martial spirit. The present memorial, however, depicts what war really is. It is a message from this generation to those that follow.[49]

Baxter also added in a letter to Brewster that *Glories of Peace*, the new governor's preferred design, "is beautiful but it is not a War Memorial. It does not portray either sacrifice or service and in no way can be construed as a tribute to the men and women of 1917-1919."[50] Brewster ultimately had little choice but to honor Paeff's contract, though some minor alterations were agreed upon. The original sketch had featured, to the left and right of the mother, child, and two men, a low relief of soldiers emerging from shell holes and dragging wounded comrades to safety.[51] When Paeff enlarged the sketch, she removed the soldiers in the background, with Baxter's approval, because she found them to be distracting from the central group. However, to address Brewster's concerns about the pacifist content of the design, she once again added a low relief to the background of the memorial. Instead of wounded soldiers, Paeff sculpted a file of valiantly marching and fighting soldiers, imagery better accepted as an "appropriate" tribute in the interwar years.[52] While helping avert a potentially volatile public outcry against the monument, the changes did little to detract from Baxter and Paeff's original vision. The background figures are modeled in such low relief as to be virtually invisible in the shadow of the central mother, child, and two dead bodies.

At the second dedication ceremony of the Maine Sailors and Soldiers Memorial in 1926, marking the installation of Paeff's completed bronze, Major General Clarence R. Edwards, former commanding officer of the 26th Infantry Division (known as the "Yankee Division"), nonetheless interpreted Paeff's imagery as a plea for military preparedness, thus suiting the new governor's politics and dispelling further charges of pacifism. Rather than an appeal for universal peace, Paeff's frightened mother, he explained in his dedicatory address, represented an appeal "to the soldiery to save her babe from harm."[53] In the context of public war commemoration, it was politically more acceptable to interpret Paeff's mother as a defenseless victim of war rather than as a protester interceding on her child's behalf.

As unusual as the anti-war message promoted by Baxter and Paeff might have been, there was a broader context for the memorial's vision of protective motherhood. Taking advantage of the growing market for small scale bronzes of maternal subjects, some early twentieth-century women sculptors also challenged the bourgeois ideal that those groups typified. Abastenia St. Leger Eberle's (1878-1942) *You Dare Touch My Child* (c. 1914-16; Fig. 6), for example, was in marked contrast to the sweetness of popular works by Bessie Potter Vonnoh (1872-1955). Though not overtly political, Eberle's sculpted mother and child displayed a force and vitality that presented a strong and fiercely protective image of motherhood.

An activist dedicated to women's social issues and children's welfare, Eberle enlisted her art in her progressive reformist agenda, even though such works were not always marketable. In 1914, the sculptor rented a studio under the Manhattan Bridge on the Lower East Side where she invited neighborhood children to observe them playing. These children were the subjects of some of her most popular sculptures. Eberle also ventured out to Market Street to watch the Jewish and Italian women shopping and peddling their goods. A 1921 *New York World Magazine* article reported on the artist's fascination with the "street fights" she witnessed there. "How well she loves them," the writer noted, "you can see from her sketch called 'You Touch My Child and I'll—!'" Also called *The Termagant*, the piece shows a woman in a roughly modeled dress, holding a crying baby with one arm while the other reaches out , hand clenched in a threatening fist. The woman's chin is thrust forward defiantly, and the rolled up sleeve of her outstretched arm reveals straining tendons. Her fist echoes the small tightly balled hands of her unhappy charge. In his survey of American Art, Wayne Craven writes that the sculpture, "[r]ich in modeling and highly expressive of a deep social consciousness … is today judged a success—but in 1915 there was no market for art that was also a social indictment."[54] Regardless of whether Paeff knew this particular work by Eberle, she was no doubt familiar with this

New York-based artist whose exhibitions were reviewed in the Boston press.[55]

Art by women more directly related to anti-war themes also may have played a role in inspiring the fervent protectiveness of Paeff's central maternal figure in *Sacrifices of War* and its strong political statement. In 1917 Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller created a sculpture for the Woman's Peace Party that not only broke with the pro-war stance of the elite African-American community to which Fuller belonged, but also used motherhood as a "radical site of agency." *Peace Halting the Ruthlessness of War* (1917; Fig 7) presents an allegory of Death on horseback charging through a field of women and children. One woman clutching a dead child reaches up desperately to push against the side of the horse.[56] While the sculpture powerfully reveals "the violence done to women's physical bodies," it also shows "their physical protestation of the cruelty and barbarity of war."[57] Fuller's women are not the passive victims depicted in U.S. war propaganda. Their actions reflected the political voice of the Woman's Peace Party itself, an organization founded in 1915 by Carrie Chapman Cott and Jane Addams "to enlist all American women in arousing the nations to respect the sacredness of human life and to abolish war."[58]

Paeff, who in 1915 had sculpted a relief portrait of Addams, may well have known Fuller's sculpture for the peace organization Addams headed.[59] Before helping found the Woman's Peace Party, Addams was well known as a women's rights and social welfare advocate and the co-founder of Hull House in Chicago in 1889. Paeff's commission to sculpt the portrait of such a prominent national figure was a significant professional accomplishment for the Boston-area sculptor. At the same time, the project held deeper meaning for Paeff because of her high regard for Addams and her work. The *Boston Globe* reported that Paeff "accomplished one of the ambitions of her life" by "making this portrait of a woman who has for years been one of her ideals."[60] Addams's belief in the unique contribution of women to the peace movement, in particular, her conviction that women's roles as mothers and as "custodians of life" gave them special authority as advocates for peace, helped shape the Peace Party's platform and rhetoric.

Another precedent for the protective maternal figure in Paeff's *Sacrifices of War* sculpture can be found in the graphic work of the German artist Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945), in particular her War series of woodcuts, completed in 1923 (Fig. 8). Focusing on the devastation of war from the perspective of mothers and children, these moving studies of sacrifice were influenced by Kollwitz's loss of her own son in World War I in 1914. They express the senselessness rather than the valor of sacrifice, a sentiment that reflected the artist's changed attitude toward war.[61] Kollwitz's stark black and white, naturalistic depictions of her anguished subjects accentuate their universality and accessibility.[62] Her theme of sacrifice and emphasis on the powerful sheltering form of the maternal figure resonate strongly with Paeff's *Sacrifices of War* design.

Though the woodcuts were issued in 1924 in three editions, it is not clear whether Paeff would have been familiar with Kollwitz's War prints. Before the war Kollwitz had been



Fig. 8. Käthe Kollwitz, *The Mothers*, from the War Series (1923) woodcut, 13 3/8" x 15 3/4".

relatively well known in the United States, but she fell out of favor during the period of intense anti-German sentiment in the aftermath of the war. Though the occasional Kollwitz illustration was reproduced in the radical periodical *The Liberator,* her work did not gain widespread popularity in this country until the 1930s.[63] As a female artist interested in anti-war subject matter, however, Paeff may have known of Kollwitz's exhibition at New York's Civic Club in 1925, or may have encountered the German artist's work during her European "tour" of 1922.[64]

A few isolated examples to the contrary, the subjects of public memorial sculpture in the United States after World War I were unlikely to invoke the suffering of maternal sacrifice. The most popular memorials commemorated heroic soldiers and lost lives while also serving as antidotes to radicalism as well as reminders of vigilance and loyalty and reassuring visions of American fitness and manhood.[65] When memorial sculpture did include portrayals of mothers, they sent similarly reassuring and steadying messages, echoing the imagery of motherhood in wartime propaganda and mainstream periodicals. The mourning mother and the sheltering female allegory tending to a wounded soldier (a variation on the Red Cross's "Greatest Mother" trope) were the most common types.[66]

The patriotic, mourning mother was given pride of place at Memorial and Armistice Day services and during Mother's Day observances after World War I. In 1923, the *American Legion Weekly* published Augustus Lukeman's North Carolina Monument to Confederate Women on its May 11 cover. The sculpture depicts a woman reading to her grandson, who kneels beside her holding his dead father's sword, reaffirming notions of patriotic motherhood by showing a mother figure instilling the virtues of patriotism and loyalty in the young. Although the work was intended for a Southern audience, the

larger meaning of this Confederate memorial was equally relevant for an interwar generation of fatherless children and Gold Star Mothers.

Ultimately, it is the context of public commemorative art in which Paeff's protective mother in her *Sacrifices of War* relief for the Maine Sailors and Soldiers Memorial must be appreciated. Numerous sources may have influenced her anti-war vision of a mother sheltering her child from the violence of war, but few if any examples existed in the politically fraught landscape of commemorative art, due in part to the anti-radical climate of 1920s America and the conservative nature of public sculpture. Further, gendered attitudes toward women's roles in the civic sphere dictated that "male figures reigned outside" in public statuary, while "females dominated inside" in murals and small sculptures.[67] Paeff's memorial placed a strong female figure, an allegory of Civilization but also a symbol of all mothers, in a highly visible politicized space. Those few memorials that did approach the anti-war sentiment of Paeff's vision, or at least those that acknowledged loss, were typically of a local nature and were dedicated and paid for by neighborhood groups.[68] Paeff's memorial was not only one of the first state memorials dedicated to honor those who fought and died in World War I, but also, thanks to the collaboration between Paeff and Baxter, it stands as an unwavering expression of anti-militarism and women's protest against the violence of war.●

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NOTES

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1. See Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 108-09, for an overview of how lingering anti-radicalism in the 1920s hurt women's reform efforts and how critics of reform linked women's organizations and peace activism to the Bolshevik threat.
2. There were two dedications: in 1924 when the cornerstone was laid, and in 1926, when the bronze plaque was installed. Governor Percival Baxter of Maine gave the dedicatory address at the 1924 event, during which a time capsule, including an autobiographical note written by Paeff, was buried at the memorial site. See "A Message to the People of Maine Delivered by Percival P. Baxter Governor at the Dedication of the State Memorial to the Sailors and Soldiers of Maine at Kittery Armistice Day, November 11, 1924." I thank Sheila McDonald for copies of these materials which are located in Baxter's scrapbooks at the Maine State Library.
3. For Paeff's views on war memorials, see M. J. Curl, "Boston Artists and Sculptors Talk of their Work and Ideals: IX—Bashka Paeff," unidentified newspaper clipping labeled 6 February 1921, Boston Public Library, Fine Arts Dept., Bashka Paeff file.
4. Robert H. Zeiger, *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experience* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 138-39.
5. Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein, *American Women Sculptors: A History of Women Working in Two Dimensions* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990) provides numerous examples. See also Jennifer Wingate, "Monumental Visions: Women Sculptors and World War I," in *Women and Things: Gendered Material Strategies, 1750-1950*, eds. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Aldershot, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, forthcoming).
6. Jean G. Leightman, Paul Ingbretson and Ellen Roberts, "A Women's Perspective at the Guild of Boston Artists," *American Art Review*, vol. 13, no. 5 (2001): 118-27.
7. Kirsten Swinth, *Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2001), 131-162.
8. Ada Rainey, "American Women in Sculpture," *Century Magazine* 93 (January 1917): 432. This line from Rainey's article is also the title of an essay about women sculptors by Marlene Park in Ilene Susan Fort, *The Figure in American Sculpture: A Question of Modernity* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1995), 54-73.
9. See for examples, Rubinstein, *American Women Sculptors,* also Melissa Dabakis, "Sculpting Lincoln: Vinnie Ream, Sarah Fisher Ames, and the Equal Rights Movement," *American Art*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 78-101.
10. See for these and other examples, Rubinstein, *American Women Sculptors.*
11. Erica E. Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own: Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1940* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 88-89. Schools founded in Boston in the last quarter of the 19th century, including the Normal Art School, had programs designed "to meet the new demand for art teachers caused by the 1870 passage of the Massachusetts Drawing Act," which "required that mechanical drawing be taught in the commonwealth's public schools in an effort to improve the quality of local manufacture."
12. "Bashka Paeff Designed First Tablet for New Hall of Fame," *Boston Daily Globe*, 6 August 1922, 57.
13. For biographical information on Paeff, see Kathryn Greenthal, "Bashka Paeff" in Greenthal, Paula M. Kozol and Jan Seidler Ramirez, *American Figurative Sculpture in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston: The Museum of Fine Arts, distributed by Northeastern Univ. Press, c. 1986), 431-32; Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own*, 132-33; Ellen E. Roberts, "Bashka Paeff," in *A Studio of Her Own*, 187; and Rubinstein, *American Women Sculptors,*, 199-200.
14. "First Prize for Sculpture," unidentified newspaper clipping labeled 4 June 1914, Boston Public Library, Fine Arts Dept., Bashka Paeff file. See also the autobiographical note from the the Maine Memorial time capsule in which Paeff wrote that she "was awarded each year a scholarship, and was winner of the Helen Hamblin scholarship, the only pupil ever to receive it in the modelling class." From the Baxter scrapbooks, Maine State Library, courtesy Sheila McDonald.
15. Anthony J. Philpott, "Sculpture Shown by Miss Bashka Paeff. Striking Exhibition by the Subway Ticket Seller," *Boston Sunday Globe*, 7 January 1917, 11; "A Russian Sculptor's Tribute to Americans," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 28 June 1922, sec. 3, 2.
16. Anthony J. Philpott, "Notable Exhibit of Bashka Paeff's Art," *Boston Daily Globe*, 12 April 1921, 9.
17. Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 109. See also the following headlines from the *Boston Daily Globe*: "Attacks Bolshevism Among the Women," *Boston Daily Globe*, 17 May 1922, 2; and "Declares Pacifism a Tool of Bolshevism," *Boston Daily Globe*, 16 June 1923, 6.
18. The *Boston Evening Transcript* reported that "Earnestness, intense love

of her work and indomitable courage are the artist's outstanding characteristics, plus a generous appreciation of what America has given her." "A Russian Sculptor's Tribute to Americans."

19. Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own*, 132.
20. Correspondence and records regarding the details of the original commission have not yet been unearthed, but numerous documents and newspaper articles refer to the major role that Baxter played in soliciting and choosing submissions. In a letter included in the 1924 Maine Memorial time capsule, Baxter admitted to "consulting with sculptors and artists and conveying to them my ideas as to what I wanted…" Percival Baxter, "A Message to the People of Maine in the Years to Come," Nov. 11, 1924. From the Baxter scrapbooks, Maine State Library, courtesy Sheila McDonald.
21. Just as the press romanticized Paeff's success, critics savored anecdotes about her family life that often revealed the sculptor's effusive sentiments about sculpting. See for example "Paeff Designed First Tablet for New Hall of Fame," *Boston Daily Globe*, 6 August 1922, 57, which was published on the occasion of the dedication of Paeff's memorial plaque to World War I chaplains in the Massachusetts State House.
22. Michele Bogart, "American Garden Sculpture: A New Perspective," in *Fauns and Fountains: American Garden Statuary, 1890-1930* (Southampton, N.Y.: Parrish Art Museum, 1985), n.p.
23. In 1923, she sculpted a likeness of former President Warren G. Harding's dog, Laddie Boy. See also Anthony J. Philpott, "Young Boston Sculptress Bashka Paeff Has Dog Show All Her Own," *Boston Daily Globe*, 11 March 1923, magazine sec., 12.
24. Jane Appleton, "The Best is Yet to Be," *Pictorial Living Coloroto Magazine* (11 April 1976): 12.
25. A. J. Philpott, "Genius of Bahska Paeff Shown by Guild of Artists," *Boston Globe*, 9 March 1919, 4. An image of this sculpture is located with the Bashka Paeff papers in the collection of Don Lipsitt, Brookline, Massachusetts. Other titles for this sculpture are the *Spirit of America*, the *Naval Drummer Boy*, and *the Battle Ship Drummer Boy*.
26. "Miss Paeff at the Guild of Boston Artists," unidentified newspaper clipping labeled March 1919, Boston Public Library, Fine Arts Dept., W. G. Ball Collection, Bashka Paeff file.
27. In 1981, after Paeff's death in 1979, her husband, Samuel Waxman, auctioned off the contents of their Cambridge home, including the contents of her studio and a storage warehouse. In a conversation with the author on June 12, 2008, Paeff's nephew Don Lipsitt speculated that Waxman may have destroyed the sculpture which may never have been cast in bronze
28. Philpott, "Genius of Bahska Paeff Shown by Guild of Artists."
29. Paeff is cited in M. J. Curl, "Boston Artists and Sculptors Talk of their Work and Ideals: IX—Bashka Paeff."
30. M. J. Curl, "Boston Artists and Sculptors Talk of their Work and Ideals: IX—Bashka Paeff."
31. See also Philpott, "Sculpture Shown by Miss Bashka Paeff," *Boston Globe*, 7 January 1917, 11; Frederick William Coburn, "In the World of Art," *Boston Sunday Herald*, 4 November 1923, sec. D, p. 11; and the checklists for three exhibitions of Bashka Paeff's sculpture at the Guild of Boston Artists: October 29 to November 10, 1923, February 6 to 18, 1928, and April 21 to May 10, 1952, Boston Public Library, Fine Arts Dept., Bashka Paeff file.
32. M. J. Curl, "Boston Artists and Sculptors Talk of their Work and Ideals: IX—Bashka Paeff".
33. Appleton, "The Best is Yet to Be."
34. The memorial was restored and a rededication ceremony was held on May 31, 2001, attracting some attention to Paeff's relief.
35. Governor Baxter conceived of the park "as an integral part of the memorial itself" which was not to be used for commercial or advertising purposes but to be preserved "sacred and intact" for the veterans and their descendents. "A Message to the People of Maine Delivered by Percival P. Baxter Governor at the Dedication of the State Memorial," n.p.
36. For a discussion of the popularity of fighting soldier memorials after World War I, see Wingate "Over the Top: The Doughboy in World War I Memorial Sculpture and Visual Culture, *American Art*, vol. 19, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 26-47.
37. Untitled typed manuscript [with the notation, "copy of one of Mrs. Ladd's talks"], no date, pp. 2-3, Anna Coleman Ladd Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
38. Wingate, "Monumental Visions: Women Sculptors and World War I."
39. Kathleen Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens: Women and Subversion During World War I* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana Univ. Press, 1999), 3.
40. John Whiteclay Chambers II, *The Eagle and the Dove: The American Peace Movement and United States Foreign Policy, 1900-1922* (NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1991), lxxiii; Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1993), 109-12.
41. "A Message to the People of Maine in the Years to Come," Nov. 11, 1924. See also "Ex-Governor Baxter's History of Maine State War Memorial," *Portland (Maine) Press Herald*, 1 June 1926, 17.
42. The unrealized sketch was also called *Victory and Peace*. "Maine Debates War Memorial," *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 August 1925, 7; "Victory and Peace May Get Honors Instead of Horrors of War," *Portland (Maine) Press Herald*, 1 September 1925, Baxter scrapbooks, Maine State Library, courtesy Sheila McDonald. Paeff may have intended the two sketches as companion sculptures or perhaps submitted two designs to increase the chances that one of them would meet with approval.
43. Ibid.
44. "Maine Governor Rejects Tablet for New Bridge," *The Portsmouth (N.H.) Herald*, 26 August 1925, 8.
45. "Maine Debates War Memorial," *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 August 1925, 7.
46. Anthony J. Philpott, "Boston Sculptor Disturbed by Clash over Maine War Memorial," *Boston Globe*, 25 August 1925, clipping from Ralph Owen Brewster Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine, courtesy Sheila McDonald.
47. "Maine Debates War Memorial." Brewster may have preferred the more conservative pacifist message of "peace through victory" promoted by this sketch. See also "Maine Faces Great Issue on the Kittery Memorial," *Lewiston (Maine) Evening Journal*, August 1925, clipping from the Ralph Owen Brewster Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine, courtesy Sheila McDonald. According to this article, Brewster and the Governor's Council found Paeff's *Glories of Peace* design to be "less condemnatory of the sacrifices and services of the soldier" than *Horrors of War*.
48. See also a series of letters that Paeff wrote to Brewster between June and September 1925 defending her memorial and the process by which it had been selected. In one letter dated Sept 1, 1925, she urged Brewster to make a decision about the memorial as soon as possible because "the clay of the Memorial is cracking, and there is danger of its falling if it is not put into plaster very soon. Also there is tied up in the Memorial over one thousand pounds of clay which I badly need for other work." Ralph Owen Brewster Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine, courtesy Sheila McDonald.
49. "Denying He is Pacifist Some Term Him Baxter Takes Issue with Brewster on Fitness of Kittery State Memorial," *Portland (Maine) Press Herald*, 29 August 1925, 2. See also "Maine War Memorial Controversy is Settled," *Lewiston (Maine) Evening Journal*, 8 January 1926, 1.

50. Percival Baxter to Ralph O. Brewster. 1 September 1925, Ralph Owen Brewster Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine, courtesy Sheila McDonald.

51. For descriptions of the original relief, see "Victory and Peace May Get Honors Instead of Horrors of War." See also "Ex-Governor Baxter's History of Maine State War Memorial."

52. Paeff to Brewster, 17 September 1925, Ralph Owen Brewster Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine, courtesy Sheila McDonald. See also Paeff to Albert Greenlaw, Chairman of the Kittery Memorial Commission, 2 July 1926, Ralph Owen Brewster Papers. In the letter to Greenlaw, Paeff asks to be compensated for the work and time required to make the requested changes.

53. "Maine Dedicates her War Memorial at Kittery to her Sons in World War," *Portland (Maine) Press Herald*, 1 June 1926, 1. See also "Kittery Tablet is Dedicated," *Kennebec (Augusta, Maine) Journal*, 1 June 1926, 1.

54. Wayne Craven, *American Art: History and Culture* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 486. The sculpture was exhibited in 1946 as part of a "continuous sales show" at the Corcoran Gallery of Art and was subsequently acquired by special authority of the director.

55. A catalogue of Eberle's sculpture is included among the vast archive of the artist's keepsakes in the collection of Don Lipsitt, Brookline, Mass. Paeff likely also knew Eberle's equally forceful and more explicitly consciousness raising *White Slave*, which had been exhibited at the 1913 Armory Show in New York and published on the cover of *The Survey* in May of that year. Its anti-prostitution message was a far cry from the sweet mother and child subjects or frolicking dancers by other early twentieth-century women sculptors.

56. See Chapter 4, "Peace Halting the Ruthlessness of War" in Renée Ater, "Race, Gender, and Nation: Rethinking the Sculpture of Meta Warrick Fuller," (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Maryland College Park, 2000), 88, 109. The work originally included an allegorical figure of Peace standing before Death, commanding him to stop; however, none of the extant versions of the sculpture include the allegorical Peace figure. One cast, now titled *The Ravages of War*, is in the collection of West Virginia State University.

57. Ibid, 89.

58. From the Woman's Peace Party Preamble and Platform Adopted at Washington, 10 January 1915, cited in Ibid, 96.

59. The Woman's Peace Party contest prize winners (Fuller's sculpture won second prize) were announced in the Boston Evening Transcript on May 25, 1917. It is also possible that Fuller's sculpture was in turn inspired by Paeff's *Demon of War,* which was exhibited at the Guild of Boston artists in January 1917. The Woman's Peace Party art contest was announced in February of that same year, and Fuller submitted her sculpture to the competition in May.

60. A. J. Philpott, "Fine Portrait of Jane Addams," *Boston Daily Globe*, 24 November 1915, 2. The clay or plaster model was exhibited at the Women's City Club in Boston in January 1916. "Among the Women's Clubs," *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 June 1916, 13.

61. Angela Moorjani, "Käthe Kollwitz on Sacrifice, Mourning, and Reparation: An Essay in Psychoaesthetics," *MLN*, vol. 101 (December 1986): 1122-24.

62. Elizabeth Prelinger, "Kollwitz Reconsidered," in Prelinger, ed., *Käthe Kollwitz* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1992), 57-58.

63. Hildegard Bachert, "Collecting the Art of Käthe Kollwitz: A Survey of Collections, Collectors, and Public Response in Germany and the United States," in Prelinger, ed., *Käthe Kollwitz*, 126; Jean Owens Schaefer, "Kollwitz in America: A Study of Reception, 1900-1960," *Woman's Art Journal*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1994): 29-30. See the Kollwitz illustration, *Bread!*, in *The Liberator*, vol. 7, no. 8 (August 1924): 8.

64. For Paeff's European travels, see "Calls Men of Florence and Rome Finest Looking. Bashka Paeff Talks on her Impressions During Tour of Europe," *Boston Daily Globe*, 3 December 1922, 17.

65. Wingate, "Over the Top," 28.

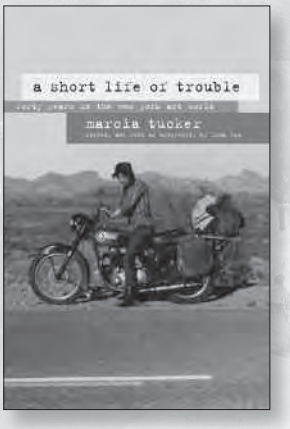
66. See for example George Julian Zolnay's *Gold Star Monument to World War I Veterans* in Nashville, Tennessee (1922).

67. Marlene Park, "'Sculpture Has Never Been Thought a Medium Particularly Feminine'," in Ilene Susan Fort, *The Figure in American Sculpture: A Question of Modernity*, 59.

68. Examples include Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's *Washington-Heights and Inwood Memorial* (1922) and Anna Coleman Ladd's memorial for the Frank B. Amaral American Legion Post in Rosedale Cemetery, Manchester, Massachusetts (1924).

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The Construction of Mistress and Slave Relationships in Late Antique Art

By Marice E. Rose

Although late Roman and early Byzantine slave women's voices are scarce in the historical record, their images appear prominently in art, where they are portrayed serving elite women. A number of well-known examples of late antique domestic art depict female slaves aiding women in their toilet. These monuments include the fourth-century silver Projecta Casket, the late-fourth–early-fifth-century Sevso Casket, the fifth-century mosaic from the baths of the villa at Sidi Ghrib in Carthage, and the late-fourth-century Dominus Julius mosaic from Carthage.[1] The thematic and visual continuity of these scenes indicates the probable existence of many more such depictions, in both monumental and portable art, that no longer survive.[2] These images of women served by women are significant because they make visible two classes of people who were not full participants in public life by commemorating them engaged in a private activity.[3] Scholars have approached the imagery as visual proof of the served woman's elite status through inclusion of luxurious possessions, including precious toilet articles, jewelry, and the slaves themselves. Depictions of adornment within the context of Early Christian prescriptions against the practice have been studied as well.[4] These images, however, convey a multiplicity of messages, and raise the question of their reception by the different classes at opposite ends of the social spectrum—elite and slave viewers. I propose that these illustrated relationships might have had positive associations for both the slave and elite female viewers, yet they also were intended to reinforce domestic order and construct female behavior by showing the slaves obediently assisting their mistress engaged in the unthreatening activity of maintaining her beauty. Central to my argument are two premises: that the impact of visual language in the Roman world on the social order was powerful, and that female viewership of such language was neither neutral nor passive.[5]

During the past thirty years, a debated tenet of feminist art history has been the notion of the male gaze, which is said to use objectified images of women to define gender difference and contribute to a patriarchal social order.[6] The images of adornment in question can be used in a paradigm of this approach, since they affirm the objectification of women within the undeniably patriarchal Roman social structure.[7] It is accepted that late Romans were aware and took full advantage of the power of images to manipulate opinion, both in public and in private. A fundamental criticism of the male gaze theory, however, posits that there are multiple viewing positions for every image. The consideration of the nature and multiplicity of possible responses to late antique art is an important contribution to the understanding of both the intentions and the effects of these manipulations. One must acknowledge the female—both elite and slave—viewer's agency and question her responses and associations.[8] In 1989, David Freedberg declared that art history had failed to examine how people of different classes and cultures respond to images.[9] Such an approach is still rare in studies of ancient and medieval art.[10] Both Natalie Kampen and John Clarke have recently called for further inquiry into viewership of images of the non-elite in the Roman Empire.[11] Owing to the oft-cited silence of ancient women, there is no written record of any Roman woman's reactions to the imagery.[12] Studying the domestic experiences of elite and non-elite women as reflected and constructed through images that depict them together can uncover valuable intersections of their lives and their representations.

Classicists suggest considering ancient women's experiences by studying the nature of their place and degree of power in the home, the site to which women were limited, yet had the most control.[13] Such an investigation is particularly difficult, however, in the late Roman period, where in addition to a meager domestic archaeological record, detailed accounts of daily life do not survive.[14] Late Roman texts that can be used as evidence of everyday family life include funerary epigraphy and legal records. Most surviving evidence of the roles of domestic slave women comes from the first and second centuries C.E., when funerary inscriptions named individual slaves who were assigned to the caretaking of wardrobe and of specific objects, such as mirrors and jewelry.[15] These slaves would have been charged with the upkeep and storage of these items, presenting their mistress with them when needed. Although the epigraphic evidence predates the images in question, the roles of domestic slaves would not have changed in late antiquity.[16] In recent years, knowledge of the familial roles of late antique and early Byzantine women has increased significantly through examinations of laws pertaining to women, which predominantly concern marriage and property.[17] Judith Herrin recommends that in order to study early Byzantine women,

one should examine, in addition to legal records, references to women in the writings of men, and the impact of Christianity in women's lives.[18] The phenomenon of the Early Christian female ascetic eschewing all adornment has been well documented.[19] Also well documented are the mentions of non-ascetic women in the tenets of patristic writers, including Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and John Chrysostom, condemning perfumes, cosmetics, hair dyes, excessive jewelry, and expensive clothes by stressing that attending to the body's appearance is wasteful, vain, and a precursor to unchastity.[20]

The emphasis on jewelry and clothes in late Roman portraits shows, however, that female ascetics and the elite male Church Fathers did not have much influence on fashion.[21] A similar contradiction between image and text occurs in first- and second-century Rome, where images of sexual intercourse that depict acts specifically condemned by male authors appear on pottery, silver, and wall painting. Clarke has demonstrated that they show a more democratic nature than one sees in literature written by and for elite men. The images of adornment, like those of sex, were not created for righteous male writers; they served a wider audience.[22] Similarly, adornment was an activity that, according to literature, should have taken place in private but was not infrequently illustrated in domestic decoration. A study of the images alongside the legal texts, saints' lives, and patristic literature reveals the representations of mistresses and slaves to be both a reflection of late antique social reality as well as a construction of ideal behavior.

The Projecta Casket (4th c.; Pl. 16), found on the Esquiline Hill in Rome, is the best preserved and most studied example of secular late antique metalwork and includes the most images of slaves of any surviving late antique object.[23] On the casket lid's front edge, an inscription, from which the modern name of the casket is derived, exhorts *SECUNDE ET PROIECTA VIVITAS IN CHRI*[STO]. The inscription, which echoes a formula found on wedding rings, led to the identification of the chest as a marriage casket that was given to a woman named Projecta on the occasion of her wedding to Secundus. A clipeate (round) portrait of, presumably, the couple is held by putti on the top of the lid. Repoussé decoration on the front of the silver casket includes an arcade that encloses, on the front center, a seated female figure, also identified as Projecta, who places a pin in her hair with one hand and takes an object from a pyxis with the other. Two standing female slaves flank her, one holding a mirror and the other a rectangular box. Alternating with columns of the arcade on the sides and back of the chest stand eleven slaves, nine females and two males, holding various objects including boxes and candlesticks. On the front and two sides of the casket's lid is a marine thiasos, with Venus directly above Projecta and echoing her pose, aided in her toilet by two centaurotritons. In the center of the back of the lid is a multi-domed building to which Projecta is led from the left by two more attendants, while three others on the right hold vessels and a candlestick. The attendant second from the left is of a scale comparable to Projecta and holds a rectangular casket. On both the top of the lid and front, Projecta wears a wide collar necklace, bracelets on both wrists, and a colobium with gilded tunic that bears her arms. In the scene on the back she wears a long garment and mantle, with no jewelry. Her dress is longer and sleeves fuller than the similarly scaled female slave. The female slaves have long-sleeved tunics with gold clavi (stripes) that are girdled under the chest, and no jewelry. The male slaves wear tunics.

The imagery on the Projecta Casket has been extensively discussed, especially the juxtaposition of the pagan goddess Venus with the Christian inscription and the identification of the building as either Secundus's home or a bathhouse.[24] The most recent studies have been published by Katherine Dunbabin, Jaś Elsner, and Maria Wyke. Dunbabin places the casket within a tradition of late antique images with servants that are intended to convey status. She discusses the casket as visually comparing Projecta to Venus in a complimentary fashion.[25] Elsner takes a feminist approach in considering Projecta, who parallels the nude Venus in gesture and pose, as an object of male desire that will lead to seduction and children. He compellingly argues that Projecta acts as her own agent in fashioning herself as a beautiful and seductive woman.[26] In Wyke's analysis, Projecta herself is an object for display, like the casket itself and the precious objects depicted on it.[27] The emphasis on items owned by the household, both material and human, is undeniable. The slaves outnumber the non-slaves by ten, and appear on five surfaces of the casket. Emphasizing the privileging of the viewer in witnessing the private, intimate act of slaves adorning their mistress are the curtains drawn between the columns in order to reveal the scene. Projecta is significantly larger in scale than the standing figures on either side of her, making clear the lower status of the slaves as well as the childlike conception the freeborn had of them, which is reflected in their often being given silly and juvenile names.[28]

Yet the multiple meanings—of status, seduction, display—given by the large gilded silver casket would not have been intended solely for the eyes of Projecta, but would have been seen by her family, peers, and slaves, probably in a section of the house used for her personal care or entertainment, as well if the casket were carried to the baths.[29] Late antique silver was meant to be displayed. For example, several silver platters that would have decorated dining rooms survive. Such plates were too large to function as serving platters, and some have holes for suspension; others were probably mounted on brackets.[30] Silver caskets probably would have been put on shelves or in freestanding cupboards, although no such furniture survives from Rome; in Egypt, houses had small niches in the walls for storage and display.[31] The Projecta Casket's function as a container for personal belongings suggests that it would have been located in a *cubiculum* (bedroom), and it must have been intended to be displayed against a wall because its back side is the only side with no gilding. Although men's business meetings were no longer held in *cubicula* in late antiquity,[32] it is possible that women socialized there. Roman houses did not have separate women's quarters, and the functions of Roman rooms were not permanently fixed; however, areas in Roman homes have been identified as being appropriate for women.[33]

The cylindrical silver Sevso Casket (late-4th – early-5th c.), of unknown provenance, also includes a scene that depicts female attendants holding toilet articles and waiting on a seated woman.[34] The Sevso Casket would have been carried to the

baths and displayed in a similar location as the Projecta Casket when home. The composition of the scene is similar to that on the front of the Projecta Casket. A woman sits in a high backed chair, and the girl to her right holds an oval casket into which the woman reaches. Behind the girl, another holds a large mirror. The women behind her carry, from left to right, a situla and a large lidded casket. To the seated woman's left, a girl holds a small cylindrical box in the shape of the Sevso Casket itself. The slave behind her carries a bowl, and on the ground behind her is a tall ewer-like vessel without a handle. Behind this vessel is a woman carrying another vessel with a round mouth and pointed end, possibly an unguentarium. The woman behind this one carries a large basket or chest, and at her feet is a footed bowl. The adult slaves are also smaller than their mistress, but the shift in scale is not as pronounced as on the Projecta Casket. All of the slaves wear long garments with clavi. Like on the Projecta Casket, curtains are drawn aside to reveal the private moment. On the other side of the casket are two scenes of a pair of nude women in the bath. The nudity underscores the intimate nature of slaves whose jobs centered on adornment as well as the erotic nature of the act. The Sevso Casket therefore echoes the themes of status, expensive possessions, and seduction, albeit on a smaller scale and with a less complex program than the Projecta Casket.



Fig. 1. *Woman at her Toilet* (5th century), Mosaic, 9'4" x 5'6". Bardo Museum, Tunis.

A pavement mosaic from the vestibule on the west side of the Sidi Ghrib villa's bath complex in Carthage (5th c.; Fig. 1) features a symmetrical composition remarkably close to the scenes of women and slaves on the Projecta and Sevso Caskets. In the center of the panel a woman sits on a high-backed chair. She adjusts a lock of hair, or possibly puts a pin into her hair, as Projecta does. She is heavily bejeweled, wearing a wide collar necklace like Projecta's, five bracelets on her left hand, and one on her right. A slave to her right holds a mirror that reflects her face. At the slave's feet is a silver situla, and to her right, in a vertical row at the edge of the mosaic are a silver ewer, a gold situla, and a silver domed hexagonal casket with a chain. To the viewer standing on the pavement, the vessels would appear as if they were arranged on the floor. The slave to the left of the mistress holds a silver basin, whose contents can not be determined because of damage to the mosaic. Next to this figure, arranged vertically, are a pair of sandals (a common decorative motif in baths), a large rectangular copper-colored casket holding a towel or garment, and a hemispherical fluted silver bowl. Both attendants wear a gold tunic with purple clavi, a silver bracelet, and drop earrings. The attendant on the right also wears a silver necklace, but damage to the mosaic obscures the other's neck where a necklace might be. More elaborately dressed is the mistress, with a tiara, collar necklace, and several bracelets. The slaves' costumes did not mark them as slaves. Rather, they are visually differentiated from their mistress only by their poses and their more modest jewelry, which would have belonged to their owner.[35] Slaves in the Roman Empire did not wear uniforms or have a distinctive costume.[36] Their clothing depended on their duties and their master's wealth. Domestic slaves, who were seen by guests and other household members, wore better quality garments than rural laborers. This is echoed in literature, in Petronius's *Satyricon*, for example, where Trimalchio adorns his slaves in bright colors and ornate dress at banquets.[37]

The mosaic opposes, in location and theme, a mosaic of the same size in the vestibule on the villa's east side, which depicts a man going to the baths, accompanied by slaves carrying wood and coals to heat the water.[38] The man and woman are understood to be the master and the mistress of the villa. These two bathing scenes are the only genre scenes in the bath complex, the decoration of which consists of marine motifs, including Venus aided in her adornment by an eros holding an open jewel box in the frigidarium's main apse. As the grandeur of their villa proves, the patrons of these mosaics were clearly in the upper echelon of society and depicted themselves enjoying the luxuries offered by the villa, as well as inviting a comparison between the mistress and Venus. Both the mirror and jewel box held by the slaves, besides being items of luxury, could be recognized as referring to Venus, although a jewel box is not always used as an attribute of Venus. One symbolizing the wealth and social status of the woman to whom it is offered appears in a mosaic panel in the nave in Santa Maria Maggiore (c. 432-440; Pl. 17). The scene depicts Pharaoh's daughter when the boy Moses is presented to her after being nursed by one of her maids (Exodus 2:10). Pharaoh's daughter sits on a throne with a pedimented canopy and a footstool. She wears a jeweled headdress and pendant earrings, and her ornately patterned gown is decorated with a jeweled neckline. The woman standing to her right holds an open jewel box. The two attendants on the right side of the frame present Moses to the princess, who gestures toward him. None of the women look at the jewel box. This section of the panel is not a

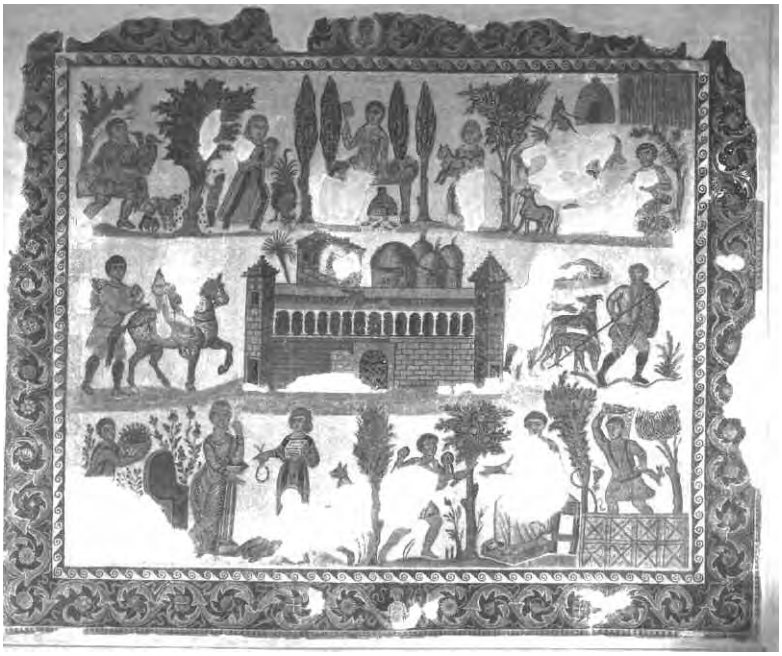


Fig. 2. *Dominus Julius Mosaic* (4th-5th century), 18'6" x 14'9". Bardo Museum, Tunis.

component of the textual or the visual narrative, but serves as an iconographic device that demonstrates that the owner of the jewel box is a member of the elite.

A fourth well-known representation of a woman being aided in her adornment, also depicted with a jewel box and mirror, is found on the late-fourth–early-fifth-century pavement Dominus Julius mosaic from Carthage, today at the Bardo Museum (Fig. 2). The mosaic is monumental scale and originally decorated an apsed room.[39] Apsed rooms were often used for entertaining in late antiquity; most tricilinia contained apses in order to accommodate curved couches.[40] Apsed rooms were also used for receptions. The mosaic therefore would have been viewed by a varied audience of household members, guests, clients, and slaves—those with cleaning responsibilities as well as those who served food and drink if the room was used for dining. The mosaic is composed of three registers. In the middle of the top register, a woman sits fanning herself. Most scholars agree that she represents the matron of the villa.[41] She wears bracelets on each arm, and her plain dress slips from her shoulder. On either side, male and female figures bring her olives, a duck, and a lamb. Smaller-scale figures are shown picking olives from a tree. In the second register, on the left, a man on horseback, the *dominus*, rides toward a house with four domes surrounded by a turreted wall. He is accompanied by a man on foot. To the right of the villa two figures (one greatly damaged) and two dogs depart for a hunt. In the bottom register, the woman stands on the left, leaning on a column. Next to her is the chair from which she has risen. She holds a mirror (the mosaic has suffered damage here) in her left hand and wears a fillet, pendant earrings, and a dress with a jeweled neckline. A male figure to her left carries a basket of roses. To her right, a (damaged) kneeling figure offers her fish while a female attendant holding a rectangular box offers a necklace, which the standing woman extends her hand to take. On the right side of the register, the master of the house sits on a backless chair. One man brings him a basket of grapes and a rabbit, while another offers a scroll inscribed '*IU*[LIO] *DOM*[INO].' The subject of the mosaic may be a conflation of seasonal ceremonies in which clients paid homage to their landlord by giving him gifts from the estate's land, thus affirming his status.[42] It is significant that the inscription includes the title "Dominus." The four meanings of the word, as analyzed by Shaw, were god, property owner/slave master, patron, and father. The title was inextricably linked to the *domus* as well as to the patriarch's control over the household.[43]

It is not immediately obvious how the images of the woman and her slave fit into this program. It has been suggested that the woman's leisurely activities are juxtaposed with the man's more active power and occupation as landowner, or, on the other hand, that she is included because she may have helped to manage the estate, or that she is considered a product of the estate like the plants and animals.[44] There is no single answer; it is a multivalent image for which elements of each interpretation could have been seen by different viewers who projected their own identities and cultures onto the monument. Another reference, the woman's explicit emulation of Venus, is similar to the image of Projecta on the casket. In the scene in the upper register, the garment slipping off her shoulder identifies her with Venus Genitrix, goddess of marriage and family.[45] In the lower register, her gestures of looking in a mirror while reaching for a necklace from a casket associate her with mosaic images of Venus in her marine triumph, and the pose of leaning on a pillar echoes contemporaneous images of muses. Schneider suggests that the Venus or muse identification would have been recognized by an educated viewer, who would then associate the mistress of the house with poetry and literature.[46] The Venus evocation also presented her as an ideal wife, mother, and beauty. The image of the wife in the process of adorning herself, and her seductive pose with dress slipping off her shoulder, emphasize her fertility and role in the household. Other viewers who did not perceive the reference would have seen her precious objects such as mirrors and jewelry as the accoutrements of the aristocratic occupant of the villa. Her place in relationship to the *dominus* is clear, as an object of beauty and household success set amongst the fruits of the land.

Of the works of art in question, only the Dominus Julius mosaic and the Projecta Casket include inscriptions, but all must have been understood as referring to the members of the household for which they were commissioned. Although the figures depicted do not appear to be individualized, this is not uncommon for the period. In late antiquity, portrait features generally lacked specificity because portraits were used instead to convey virtues or social values.[47] The emphasis on possessions and fine dress and the depiction of villas on the Projecta Casket and Dominus Julius mosaics are typical of the late empire, where the culture of display was prevalent among the status-conscious aristocracy.[48] This period is characterized by a breakdown in the centralized authority of the government and by the growth of a

patronage system wherein the local elites adhered carefully to prescribed codes of conduct. Thus, the aristocracy relied on one another for recognition. It was important for the elites to make clear their places in the hierarchy,[49] and attention to one's physical appearance was a way to do so. Jewelry was large and showy in late antiquity, as seen in the bracelets, earrings, and wide collar necklace of the seated woman in the Sidi Ghrib mosaic and by the similar necklace Projecta wears.[50] Jewelry was also valuable as a form of highly concentrated property, as were the portable objects such as the gold and silver vessels depicted on the Projecta and Sevso Caskets and the Sidi Ghrib mosaic.[51] Mirrors, too, were a luxury, particularly the horizontal-handled variety seen held by slaves on the caskets and Sidi Ghrib mosaic.[52] It is natural that the elite would want to visually celebrate and commemorate such wealth.

Including images of slaves certainly would have been part of the late antique interest in displaying possessions. Servants were often depicted within dining scenes, along with food and serving implements, in late antique mosaics and wall paintings. Dunbabin concludes that images of slaves within a dining context were intended for the occupants of the room, who would have seen the slaves serving their food, echoing the decoration.[53] The importance of slaves being seen was explained by Athenaeus (ca. 200 C.E.), who quotes a guest at a dinner party as saying, "In contrast [to the Greeks] every single Roman…buys himself the greatest number of slaves he can….most Romans have the greatest possible number so that they can accompany them on excursions."[54] Most domestic slaves performed no real labor in terms of manufacture or economic production but instead served as evidence of owners' wealth.[55] In the images under discussion, the slaves all appear young, healthy, and well-treated. In fact, household slaves were subject to physical examination when they were purchased. Those more attractive were chosen, it seems, to be domestic slaves because they would be seen and appreciated by the family and their guests, and they were well-dressed as we see in the art.[56] Along with the furniture and decoration of the house, what the slaves wore also was an indication of their master's status.[57]

It seems that the images reflect the reality of the time in terms of the focus on attractiveness of portable objects, personal adornments, and slaves. Are the relationships between the mistress of the house and her slaves accurately depicted, however? The images seem to idealize slaves' relationship with their mistresses, where such a calm working environment was not a given. Dehumanization and violence are defining qualities of the institution of slavery, yet the slaves appear content.[58] An essential element of the institution is slaves' being kept in a constant state of fear—of physical abuse or sale to another owner—as a means of control, as was the case in the Roman Empire in late antiquity.[59] Corporal punishment, usually by the whip, was commonplace.[60] According to a Constantinian decree of ca. 319, a slave owner would not be guilty of murder if he or she beat a slave to death while administering discipline.[61] Punishment through mutilation, such as cutting ears and slitting noses, was common, although some Christian writers such as Clement of Alexandria criticized corporal punishment of slaves.[62] In John D'Arms's discussion of slaves who worked as food and wine servers, he asserts that, despite the gratifications such slaves would have of wearing nicer clothes or of eating higher-quality food than fieldhands, their proximity to the master also meant they were watched more closely and were more readily abused.[63] Macrobius writes in the early-fifth century in his *Saturnalia*, that "we make [slaves] our enemies by the inordinate pride, insolence, and cruelty that we show toward them, when luxurious living makes us so prone to anger that to be crossed in anything leads to an outburst of violent rage."[64] The shared housebound situation of female slaves and the mistress of the house, as emphasized in the silver caskets where scenes are revealed behind curtains, could have created stress among them. A common trope in Roman literature is the out-of-control woman beating her slaves. Saint Augustine in *Confessions* describes a domestic life of constant tension between his mother and her slaves because of their similarly constricted circumstances.[65]

Both free wives and slaves were outsiders whose incorporation into the patriarchal household was essential to its success.[66] One of the most important roles of the paterfamilias was the disciplining of wife, children, and slaves, and the appearance of such discipline to outsiders was even more important during the late empire.[67] Thus the master's power over his property, his slaves, and his wife and mother of his children are implicitly present in the mosaics and caskets, although the man himself is never depicted within the same space as the women. The images construct ideal behavior on the parts of the slaves and the wives. The master's successful management of the slaves would have been evident in their obedience as well as in their knowledge of their place within the household, as the art reveals. One need for such imagery showing slaves working may have resulted from a social phenomenon identified by Evans Grubbs, who finds that by the beginning of the fourth century, social distinctions between slaves and the free had become blurred in many instances.[68] The status of the slaves is made clear through position and size in the images. They stand while their mistresses remain seated (with the exception of the bottom register of the Dominus Julius mosaic, where the mistress stands next to her recently vacated seat). On the caskets, a smaller scale is used to show the low rank of the slaves, and on the Projecta Casket, the slaves are separated from Projecta by columns. Bradley discusses the importance of constant coercion in keeping slaves in their appropriate places within the household,[69] and such visual reminders could have played a significant role.

The behavior of the elite man's slaves and wife was part of his own self-fashioning of power within his household and in society.[70] Augustine actually uses the language of slavery in considering the relationship between husband and wife: "a man whom she served as her lord."[71] The women are not depicted with any active role in the running of the household, although many may have played a role in home management. As Kampen notes, the need to show women as passive objects of others' attention and wealth was paramount among the elite.[72] The need for control of wives may have been especially important in the fourth century, when women were declared legally independent upon the death of their fathers, even if they were married.[73] They were no longer transferred to the control of their husbands upon

marriage, nor did they have a guardian.[74] A Roman girl brought to her married household her own property, including slaves and portable objects, and kept legal ownership, if not control, of the property.[75] It is a bringing of property to Projecta's husband's house that Schneider sees depicted on the back lid of the Projecta Casket.[76] The slaves depicted in all of the images, therefore, could have technically belonged to either the master or the mistress. Despite these increasing degrees of power, weakness was considered to be the key characteristic of women's natures and the basis of all legislation concerning women.[77] Such perceived weakness would require the command of a man, and constant reminders of one's place.

The master of the house's choice of depicting his wife at her toilet was deliberate. Unlike the scenes of slaves serving guests within a dining context, in imitation of what those dining in the home were actually seeing, guests would not have witnessed the woman of the house dressing.[78] Adornment in the home did not take place before the eyes of others. Clement of Alexandria confirms: "By day [vain women] stay closeted up, devoting themselves to their toilet…."[79] By depicting the women adorning themselves, the images permanently commemorate them in the act of making themselves beautiful for the view of others. Wyke writes that women's bodies themselves are like toilet articles, ultimately for possession and pleasure.[80] This concept is evidenced literally in the funerary inscription for a woman named Anica Faltonia Proba, which calls her "the adornment of the Amnii, Pincii, and Anicii" (Roman family names).[81] Bartky notes that throughout history, the beautification routine itself has been an act through which women have internalized patriarchal oppression.[82] While the adornment constructs the woman, the image itself is a construction of ideal womanhood. It is an idealized image as well as a disparaging one; the perceived narcissistic weakness of women is revealed in the monuments. What is common to all of the images is the mirror held up to the woman's face.[83] In contrast, in late antique art there is a lack of depiction of the act of spinning wool, which is extolled in literature and numerous funerary inscriptions as a virtuous activity for women; no images of non-mythological women spinning survive.[84]

Adornment can not only be a symbol of patriarchal control, but in late antiquity it was also considered a powerfully seductive act, as the Church Fathers' prescriptions against it attest.[85] The vita of the fifth-sixth century Saint Matrona of Perge shows the link between caring for the body and sex, through her avoidance of bathing and intercourse with her husband as examples of her ascetism.[86] The emphasis on vessels on the caskets and Sidi Ghrib mosaic underscores the seductive aspect of adornment; traditionally in Greco-Roman antiquity the presentation of vessels to a woman before her wedding day referred to her fertility.[87] On the Projecta Casket and Sidi Ghrib mosaic, the mistresses appear to pin up or take down their hair, an act which had seductive connotations as well. The hair was charged with sexual power, and its control was important. Roman hairpins were often decorated with finials in the form of Venus or Eros.[88] Tertullian, in his treatise *De virginibus velandis,* explains that Paul's injunction in 1 Corinthians 11 that women's heads be veiled was to prevent angels from being sexually tempted.[89] An adult woman's loose hair was also associated with unrestrained emotion; a dramatic moment in the early-third-century martyrdom of Perpetua occurs when, after she is thrown into the arena, she first covers her thighs with her garment, "more mindful of her modesty than of her suffering," and then calls for a hairpin to control her hair, "lest she should seem to mourn in her hour of glory."[90] The male gaze would have seen both the mistress and the slaves assisting her as objects of desire.[91] As depicted on the monuments, both the wives and female slaves are young and attractive. Because female slaves were often the objects of sexual abuse by their male masters, there are a number of laws concerning *ancillae* who gave birth to their master's children.[92] According to Salvian, writing in fifth-century Gaul, "slave women were forced to obey their immoral owners against their will; the lust of those in a position of authority left those subjected to them with no alternative… women were not permitted by their shameless owners to be chaste, even if they had wanted to."[93]

Salvian also wrote, "When the head of the household behaves like the husband of the slave girls, his wife is not far removed from the status of a slave…"[94] Yet free wives did have varying degrees of agency, and might have taken a positive message from the imagery. Although men would have gained pleasure from the submissive and erotic connotations of the imagery, women even might have helped to choose or approve it. The perception of one's honor was paramount in the late Roman Empire, and a free woman's honor may have been strengthened by visually differentiating her from slaves in household decoration. Elsner wrote about the emphasis on Projecta's beauty and seductiveness in addition to her comparison to Venus.[95] The women in all the images are depicted with precious belongings, and they could have derived pride from both their ownership of these as well as their being depicted as beautiful

What would these personal slaves, privileged in some respects above others yet as dehumanized and exploited as any, have seen in these artworks? The images could have reflected the positive aspects of their relationship with their mistress. A female domestic slave serving a mistress in such a personal capacity would have had knowledge that contradicted her status.[96] The housebound situation could create not only stress but also a degree of intimacy with the mistress.[97] The intimacy was brought about as well by the nature of the work, as it was considered improper for men to attend to female bodies in the bath or in medical matters.[98] Such closeness would breed loyalty. There is evidence that in the earlier empire, female domestic slaves had higher manumission rates than male slaves, and Treggiari proposes it was because of this loyalty between women.[99] Proof of such loyalty is seen in the eastern empire, where there are several recorded instances of freed female slaves following their mistresses into ascetic Christian communities and the former slave owners having to learn domestic work.[100] In terms of the artworks, loyalty is rewarded by the slaves' being permanently commemorated, and plays a part in their owners' coercion and control of them. They also may have gained status by being permanently depicted. According to literary, epigraphic, and sociological evidence, in a large household with numerous staff,

the status of a domestic slave working for the head of the household was higher than that of the slaves who cleaned or worked in the kitchen, and especially higher than those who worked outdoors. Labor roles were clearly delineated, which helped both staff morale and the status of the owner.[101] Such slaves' names sometimes appear in depictions of them, showing their importance over other slaves.[102] Close relationships are revealed on slaves' funerary inscriptions where masters are sometimes referred to as "parens."[103] Slaves took their master or mistress's *praenomen* and *nomen* when freed.[104]

In conclusion, seeing themselves in these pictures enhanced the slaves' sense of superiority within the household staff and fostered their loyalty, while reinforcing their subservient position in relation to the family. The women would have seen themselves as seductively attractive and in the highest echelon of society, yet engaged in an unproductive and narcissistic task. While visually constructing the wives and slaves as part of the household along with property such as jewelry and precious portable objects, the portraits emphasize the wives' and slaves' beauty, dependence on the paterfamilias, their removal from their own extended families, and their status and roles within the household. •

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NOTES

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1. Kathleen Shelton, *The Esquiline Treasure* (London: British Museum Publications, 1981), 72-75; Maria Mundell Mango and Anna Bennett, *The Sevso Treasure. Part One: Art Historical Description and Inscriptions. Journal of Roman Archaeology Suppl. 12* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1994), 445-73; Liliane Ennabli, "Les thermes du Thiase Marin de Sidi Ghrib," *MonMemEuPiot* 68 (1986): 1-59; Wulf Raeck, "Publica non despiciens. Ergänzungen zur Interpretation des Dominus-Julius-Mosaiks aus Karthago." *MDAI(R)*, vol. 94 (1987): 295-308. Examples from the funerary realm include the grave reliefs at Neumagen, but are beyond the scope of this study. See Wilhelm von Massow, *Die Grabmäler von Neumagen* (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1932), cat. nos. 184, 185, 314, 462.
2. Marice E. Rose, *The Iconography of Female Adornment in Late Antiquity* (PhD Diss., Rutgers University, 2001).
3. *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations*, ed. Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan (London: Routledge, 1998).
4. Lambert Schneider, *Die Domäne als Weltbild. Wirkungsstrukturen der spätantike Bildersprache* (Weisbaden: Franz Steiner, 1983), 32-37, examines the Projecta Casket and Dominus Julius mosaic within his overarching theme of the depiction of villas serving as a microcosm of empire for the elite. For discussions of images of slaves as symbols of status, see Katherine M.D. Dunbabin, "The Waiting Servant in Later Roman Art," *American Journal of Philology* 124 (2003): 458-62; Henry Maguire, "The Good Life," *Late Antiquity, A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. Glen W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, Oleg Grabar (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999), 241-42. Alicia Walker,"Enhancing the Body, Neglecting the Soul" in the exhibition catalogue *Byzantine Women and Their World*, ed. Ioli Kalavrezou (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2003), 233-39, considers adornment within the context of negative Christian associations; and Maria Wyke "Woman in the Mirror: The Rhetoric of Adornment in the Roman World," *Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of the Night,* ed. Léonie Archer, Susan Fischler, et al. (London: Macmillan,1994), 134-51, considers the act of adornment in terms of literary tropes. For earlier imperial images of adornment, see Ria Berg, "Wearing Wealth: Mundus Muliebris and Ornatus as Status Markers for Women in Imperial Rome," *Women, Wealth, and Power in the Roman Empire, Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae* 25 (2002): 16-73.
5. Andrew Gregory, "'Powerful Images': Responses to Portraits and the Political Uses of Images in Rome," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 7 (1994): 80-99; Jaś Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998); Mary Devereaux, "Oppressive Texts, Resisting Readers and the Gendered Spectator: The New Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48 (1990): 342.
6. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16 (1975): 6-18.
7. Devereaux, "Oppressive Texts," 342.
8. Shelby Brown, "'Ways of Seeing' Women in Antiquity: An introduction to feminism in classical art and archaeology," *Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality, and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology*, ed. Ann O. Koloski-Ostrow and Claire L. Lyons (London: Routledge, 1997), 13.
9. David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989).
10. Jaś Elsner, "Visualising Women in Late Antique Rome: The Projecta Casket," in *Through a Glass Brightly: Studies in Byzantine and Medieval Art and Archaeology Presented to David Buckton,* ed. Chris Entwistle (Oxford: Oxbow, 2003), 22-36.
11. John R. Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans: Visual Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 315*. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2003), Natalie Boymel Kampen, "On Writing Histories of Roman Art," *Art Bulletin* 85 (2003): 383. Keith Bradley wrote: "[W]e will never know exactly, to be sure, what [Roman slaves] thought or felt; but to try to find out is, I believe, something that really matters." In "Regular Daily Traffic in Slaves," *Classical Journal* 87 (1992): 138.
12. Kampen's 1981 study, *Image and Status: Roman Working Women in Ostia* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann) is the benchmark for art-historical study of Roman women. Eve D'Ambra's *Roman Women* offers contextual discussion of images about Roman women, including a chapter on women's work (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 93-140. Clarke in *Art in the Lives* and the Yale University exhibition and the catalogue *I Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome*, ed. Diana E.E. Kleiner and Susan Matheson (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1996) treat images of women from the earlier Roman Empire. The catalogue for the Arthur M. Sackler Museum at Harvard University's exhibition and catalogue *Byzantine Women and Their World* (2003) provides a valuable introduction to the art and material culture related to Byzantine women, from the 3rd to the 16th centuries.
13. Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, "Introduction," in *Feminist Theory and the Classics*, ed. Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Amy Richlin (New York: Routledge, 1990), 9; Julia M.H. Smith, "Did Women Have a Transformation of the Roman World," *Gendering the Middle Ages*, ed. Pauline Stafford and A.B. Mulder-Bakker (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 28-29.
14. Michele George, "Repopulating the Roman House," *The Roman Family in Italy: Status, Sentiment, Space*, ed. Beryl Rawson and Paul Weaver (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 299; Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 94; Joelle Beaucamp, *La statut de la femme à Byzance (4e-7e siècle)*, vol. 2, (Paris: de Boccard, 1992).
15. Sandra Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome: A Study of the Occupational Inscriptions* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 146; Brent Shaw, "Latin Funerary Epigraphy and Family Life in the Later Roman Empire," *Historia* 33 (1984): 457-97.
16. Most personal attendant workers were slaves. In this study I identify the working women as slaves,although they may have been difficult to

differentiate from one another—slaves did not wear a uniform costume because they were denied a group identity as a means of preventing rebellion; Michele George, "Slave Disguise in Ancient Rome," *Slavery and Abolition* 23 (2002): 44. Berg, "Wearing Wealth," 66, cites Ovid as saying that freeborn should not hold mirrors, and offers a possible reason in Plautus, according to whom one's hands smelled after holding silver mirrors. According to Joshel in *Work, Identity,* 146, few freedmen were attached to elite households. Clement of Alexandria, in his critique of vain women who waste valuable time at their toilet, wrote: "[T]hey spend the entire day with their slaves, who incidentally were bought at a handsome sum." *Paed.* 3.2.5-6. *The Fathers of the Church*, trans. Simon Wood (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1954).

17. Joelle Beaucamp, *Le statut des femmes*; Antti Arjava, *Women and Law in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996); Judith Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity: the Emperor Constantine's Marriage Legislation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).
18. Judith Herrin, "In Search of Byzantine Women: Three Avenues of Approach," in ed. Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt, *Images of Women in Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1983), 168. Brent Shaw, "The Family in Late Antiquity: The Experience of Augustine," *Past and Present* 115 (1987): 3-51.
19. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Late Antiquity* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988); Gillian Cloke, *"This Female Man of God": Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, 350-400 A.D.* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1996); Jan Willem Drijvers, "Virginity and Asceticism in Late Roman Western Elites," in *Sexual Asymmetry: Studies in Ancient Societies*, ed. Josine B. Blok and Peter Mason (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1987), 241-73; Kathryn Smith, "Inventing Marital Chastity: The Iconography of Susanna and the Elders in Early Christian Art," *Oxford Art Journal* 16 (1993): 3-24.
20. Clement of Alexandria wrote: "[Adornment] is the way they undermine their own reputation as noble women, break up homes, destroy marriages, and bring into the world illegitimate children." *Paed.* 3.2.7. See also Averil Cameron, "Early Christianity and the Discourse of Female Desire," *Women in Ancient Societies*, ed. Leonie Archer, Susan Fischler, et al. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 156; Amy Richlin, "Making Up a Woman: The Face of Roman Gender," *Off with her Head: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995), 185-214.
21. For elite Church Fathers not being a good source for evidence of social reality, see Brent Shaw, "The Family," 4-6 and Alicia Walker, "Enhancing the Body."
22. John Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking: Construction of Sexuality in Roman Art 100 B.C.-A.D. 250* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998), 239-40, 277.
23. R. Ridley, "The Finding of the Esquiline Silver Treasure: An Unpublished Letter," *Antiquaries Journal* 76 (1996): 215-22, confirmed Shelton's identification of the treasure's findspot.
24. For discussion of the pagan/Christian dichotomy, see Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 251-58; Edmond Barbier, "La signification du coffret de 'Projecta'," *Cahiers archéologiques* 12 (1962), 7-33; Schneider, *Die Domäne*, 16-24.
25. Dunbabin, "The Waiting Servant," 458-61.
26. Elsner, "Visualizing Women," 31-2; Schneider, *Die Domäne*, 37, analyzed the other decorative motifs, such as the baskets of fruit, peacocks, and doves, and found them in contemporaneous love poems.
27. Wyke, "Rhetoric of Adornment," 134-51.
28. Richard Saller, "The Hierarchical Household in Roman Society: A Study of Domestic Slavery," in *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage*, ed. Michael Bush (London: Longman, 1996), 114.
29. As criticized by Clement of Alexandria. *Paed.* 3.5.31.1-2.
30. The Sevso hunting plate, for example, is 27 3/4" in diameter. Jocelyn Toynbee and Kenneth Painter, "Silver Picture Plates of Late Antiquity: A.D. 300-700," *Archaeologia* 108 (1986): 15.
31. Maguire and Maguire, *Art and Holy Powers*, 85.
32. Simon Ellis, "The End of the Roman House," *American Journal of Archaeology* 92 (1988): 569.
33. George, "Repopulating," 307.
34. For images, see Mango, figs. 14:1-3. Leo V. Gagion, Harvey Kurzweil and Ludovic de Walden,"The Trial of the Sevso Treasure: What a Nation Will Do in the Name of Its Heritage" in *Who Owns the Past?...and the Law*, ed. Kate Fitzgibbon (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2005), 83-96.
35. According to Gaius, *Digest*, 41.1.10.
36. George, "Slave Disguise," 44.
37. See Lauren Petersen for danger in over-reliance on the Satyricon as evidence of reality. *The Freedman in Roman Art and Art History* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006).
38. Dunbabin, "Baiurum Grata Voluptas: Pleasures and Dangers of the Bath," *Papers of the British School in Rome* 57 (1989): 28 n. 155.
39. Michèl Blanchard-Lemée, et al, *Sols de l'Afrique romaine: Mosaïques de Tunisie* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale Editions, 1995), 167-72.
40. Jeremy Rossiter, "Convivium and Villa in Late Antiquity," *Dining in a Classical Context*, ed. William J. Slater (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1991), 202.
41. Raeck, "Publica non despiciens," 308, concludes that the mosaic is an idealized image of the country life of the family.
42. Schneider, *Die Domäne*, 68-84; Paul Veyne, "Les cadeaux des colons à leur propriètaire," *Révue Archéologique* 2 (1981): 245-52. They may be bringing the master the first fruits of the seasons from the villa's grounds. Yves Thébert, "Private and Public Spaces: The Components of the Domus," *Roman Art in Context: An Anthology*, ed. D'Ambra (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1993), 232, argues that the scene symbolizes the clients' economic dependence on their patron.
43. Shaw, "The Family," 48.
44. Veyne, "Les cadeaux," 249; Thébert, "Public and Private"; Raeck, "Publica non despiciens," 304.
45. This motif also appears in 2nd-century funerary reliefs that depict couples; Kleiner and Matheson, *I, Claudia*, 189.
46. Schneider, *Die Domäne*, 72.
47. Even in imperial portraiture, the evocations of characteristics such as status or virtue were more important than individualized portrait features. Archer St. Clair, "Imperial Virtue: Questions of Form and Function in the Case of Four Late Antique Statuettes," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 50 (1996): 147-62. For non-imperial art, the mosaicists could have relied on pattern books. The portable objects were most likely workshop-produced, possibly made from molds. Elsner, "Visualizing Women," 24.
48. Maguire, "The Good Life," discusses domestic furnishings, precious vessels, clothing and jewelry.
49. Guy Halsall, "Gender and the End of Empire," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34 (2004): 23-25.
50. Jutta-Annette Bruhn, *Coins and Costume in Late Antiquity* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1993); Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women*, 240-55.
51. Michele Renee Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002), 47; Shaw, "The Family," 48.
52. Judith Lerner, "Horizontal Handled Mirrors: East and West," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 31 (1996): 11-40.

53. Dunbabin, "The Waiting Servant," 446.

54. Athenaeus, *The Banqueting Sophists* 6.272e, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, ed. and trans. Thomas Wiedemann (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1981), 90.

55. William D. Philips, "Continuity and Change in Western Slavery," in *Slavery and Serfdom: Studies in Legal Bondage*, ed. M.L. Bush (London: Longman, 1996), 72.

56. Bradley, "Regular Daily Traffic," 129.

57. George, "Slave Disguise," 44.

58. Orlando Patterson examines the psychological ramifications of the institution of slavery in *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982).

59. K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987).

60. Richard Saller, *Patriarchy, Property, and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 133-53.

61. *Cod. Th.* 9.12.1; Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 174.

62. R. Samson "Slavery: The Roman Legacy," in *Fifth Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* ed. John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), 221.

63. John H. D'Arms, "Slaves at Roman Convivia," Slater, ed. *Dining*; also see Samson, "Rural Slavery," and Bradley, *Slaves and Masters*.

64. *Saturnalia*, trans. Percival Vaughan Davies (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1969), 1.11.13.

65. Patricia Clark, "Women, Slaves, and the Hierarchies of Domestic Violence: The Family of St. Augustine," in Joshel and Murnaghan, *Women and Slaves*, 105.

66. Joshel and Murnaghan, "Introduction," *Women and Slaves*, 3.

67. Guy Halsall, "Gender and the End of Empire," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34 (2004): 23.

68. Evans Grubbs, "'Marriage More Shameful than Adultery': Slave-Mistress Relationships, 'Mixed Marriages,' and Late Roman Law," *Phoenix* 47 (1993): 125-54, bases her argument on legal documents which show increasing confusion over status, in most cases regarding marriages and children's legitimacy, resulting in legislation by Constantine and later 4th- and 5th-century legislation prohibiting marriages of people of different social status.

69 Bradley, *Slaves and Masters*, 139-43.

70. Salzman, *Christian Aristocracy*, 56; and Kathleen Cooper, "Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy," *JRS* 82 (1992): 150-64.

71. *Confessions* 9.9.19, trans. Clark, ed. Joshel and Murnaghan, *Women and Slaves*, 113-14.

72. Kampen, *Image and Status*, 131. This is in contrast to the working class's patronage of monuments which often depicted women working. See also Susan Dixon, *Reading Roman Women: Sources, Genres, and Real Life* (London: Duckworth, 2001), 126.

73. G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 15.

74. Ibid.; Dixon, *Reading*, 348.

75. Arjava, *Women and Law*, 124, 134; Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family*, 143; Susan Treggiari, "Questions on Women Domestics in the Roman West," in *Schiavitu, manumissione, e classi dipenti nel modo antico* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1979), 190.

76. Schneider, *Die Domäne*, 18-22.

77. Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family*, 328; and Beaucamp, *Le statut*, 11-12.

78. Visiting others' houses was an important part of a late antique aristocrat's activities. Salzman, *Christian Aristocracy*, 46.

79. *Paed* 7.2.5-6.

80. Wyke, "Rhetoric," 144.

81. Salzman, *Christian Aristocracy*, 56.

82. Sandra Bartky, *Femininity and Domination* (New York: Routledge, 1990): 66-71.

83. Melissa Hyde, "The Makeup of the Marquise: Boucher's Portrait of Pompadour at Her Toilette," *Art Bulletin* 82 (2000): 455; Diana Tietjens Meyers, *Gender in the Mirror: Cultural Imagery and Women's Agency* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 100.

84. Dixon, *Reading*, 117-25. Weaving implements appear on tombstones: see Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women*, cat. no. 73. For the weaving frieze on the Forum Transitorium, see D'Ambra, *Private Lives, Imperial Virtues: The Frieze of the Forum Transitorium in Rome* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993). A late antique Homeric weaving image is found in the Mausoleum of the Aurelii. See Alison Poe, "The Third-Century Mausoleum ("Hypogaeum") of the Aurelii in Rome: Pagan or Mixed-Religion Collegium Tomb," (Ph.D. Diss., Rutgers University, 2007).

85. Walker, "Enchancing the Body," 233-39.

86. From the 11th-century vita of St. Matrona of Perge. Jeffrey Featherstone, trans. *Holy Women of Byzantium*, ed. Alice Mary Talbot (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993), 19.

87. Ellen Reeder, "Women as Containers," in *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, ed. Ellen Reeder (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1995), 198.

88. Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women*, cat. no. 150.

89. Mary D'Angelo, "Veils, Virgins, and the Tongues of Men and Angels: Women's Heads in Early Christianity," in Eilberg-Schwartz and Doniger, *Off with their Heads*, 143-52.

90. Herbert Musurillo, trans. "The Passion of Ss. Perpetua and Felicitas," *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Petroff (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 76.

91. Domestic male slaves were often forced to look feminine by wearing colorful clothing and female hairstyles, as revealed in satires of ostentatious owners. George, *Slave Disguise*, 47.

92. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters*, 116-18.

93. Salvian, The Governance of God, 7.4.20. Wiedemann, trans., *Greek and Roman*, 179.

94. Ibid.

95. Elsner, "Visualising Women," 30-32.

96. William Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 17.

97. Kampen, *Image and Status*, 92.

98. As reflected by doctors who attend women being female, and the use of midwives. Herrin, *Byzantine Women*, 169.

99. Treggiari, "Questions on Women Domestics in the Roman West," 92.

100. P. Clark, *Women Slaves, and the Hierarchies of Domestic Violence*, 102-03; According to Macrobius in the *Saturnalia* 1.11.15, Davies, trans., "But those who were free to speak not only in their masters' presence but also with him, whose mouths were not, so to speak, sewn up, they were found ready to lie down their lives for their master…"

101. Treggiari "Jobs for Women," *American Journal of Ancient History* 1 (1976): 93.

102. For example, in the unctorium of Piazza Armerina, two slaves, labeled "Tito" and "Cassi," hold bath accessories. Carandini and Ricci, *Filosofiana*, 360, and on a 3rd-century mosaic in Oudna, slaves inscribed "Victor" and "Myro" serve food and drinks to their master, in Dunbabin *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 123.

103. Eva Marie Lassen, "The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor," *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxne (New York: Routledge, 1997), 109.

104. Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), 164.



Fig. 1. *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, installation view. In the foreground, Lorraine O'Grady, *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire* (1980). Photo by Matthew Septimus. Courtesy P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center.

Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution

edited by Cornelia Butler and
Lisa Gabrielle Mark
Museum of Contemporary Art,
Los Angeles and MIT Press, 2007

Reviewed by Karen Kurczynski

A landmark exhibition, "Wack!" was the first of its kind to present not just the spectrum of what has become canonical second-wave feminist art—itself never comprehensively presented in a single exhibition before—but also to update that history by including an international selection of women artists who made more or less explicitly feminist work starting in the late 1960s. The exhibition spanned the period of 1965 to 1980 and included artists and groups from the United States, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. It was not a truly global show, lacking a significant number of contributions from Africa and Asia, and in that sense it maintained the Western definition of feminism as an explicitly Euro-American movement. This conception of feminism remains extremely fraught in non-Western societies, and to give substantial weight to those areas would have made it a different show.[1] Along with *Global Feminisms*, the 2007 Brooklyn Museum exhibition curated by Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin, and the "Feminist Futures" symposium at MoMA in January of the same year, "Wack!" ushered in what has been referred to as a landmark "year of institutional consciousness-raising."[2] The excitement it generated was justified overall, as it included an astonishing array of groundbreaking works never before seen by many younger feminists, but it ran into minor snags in marketing (the odd title and controversial cover image choice for the catalogue).

The range of media was truly astounding. It conveyed a clear message that this women's work laid the groundwork for a broad spectrum of contemporary art, as curator and catalogue editor Cornelia Butler productively argues in her text (17). Equally important, it proved that deliberately reaching beyond the bounds of mainstream art to work that is overtly experimental and directly challenging to the social precepts of high art, in this case attacking not only the gender hierarchy, but all sorts of other exclusions based on social identity, proves that in an art world increasingly dominated by the capitalist market, authentically critical content can still be monumentally celebrated. This is work that would once have been called "avant-garde," a specter that these women rebelled overtly against when they realized that its group structures, purportedly so critical of the mainstream society, profoundly internalized everyday sexism. I raise this specter of the revolutionary avant-gardes of the early twentieth century to observe that, as the exhibition's title signals, this work belongs in that canon, even if or perhaps *because* the classic avant-garde Oedipal drama of the young artist symbolically killing her artistic and political fathers might be a fresh and productive way to acknowledge the profound radicality of this impulse, and raise new questions about where it has led us today.

In the catalogue, Butler lays out the main goal of the exhibition, to foreground the central role of feminist art in pioneering techniques and media fundamental to the work of contemporary artists: those explicitly drawing on feminist art history, like Janine Antoni and Andrea Zittel, and those more spectacularly "successful" ones whose debt to it has gone unacknowledged, like Matthew Barney. The catalogue opens with hundreds of color plates, grouped thematically and documenting works by more than 120 artists. A biographical section in the center of the catalogue, with entries on each artist, makes a strong feminist statement in itself, insisting literally on the centrality of personal stories in a professional context. The texts provide detailed information and references on many artists for whom little is available in English. The final catalogue essay, "The Feminist Nomad: The All-Woman Group Show," by Jenni Sorkin, provides a critical overview of the all-women exhibitions and periodicals produced worldwide as organs of feminist activism, and a useful discussion of the cultural/radical split within feminism. The catalogue closes with an equally valuable chronology of all-women group exhibitions from 1943–83, a sort of art-activist checklist preceding the exhibition checklist itself.

Ten more catalogue essays investigate particular aspects of feminist art in a

broad range of perspectives. Marsha Meskimmon's "Chronology Through Cartography: Mapping 1970s Feminist Art Globally" makes an admirable attempt at a "conceptual decolonization" (325) of the standard imperialist story of feminism as an Anglo-American initiative only subsequently taken up or waiting to be taken up in non-western contexts. Meskimmon's arguments are sound for examining feminist interventions spatially in the context of global cultures rather than in a temporal framework maintaining the old center-periphery or pioneer/influence models. Her examples, however, require greater detail to flesh out these observations. The juxtaposition of Anglophone feminist projects from the U.S., Britain, and Australia—Martha Rosler's Bringing the War Back Home collage series (1967–72) placed in relation to Rita Donagh's *Evening Papers (Ulster 1974)* (1974) and Joan Brassil's *Can It Be that the Everlasting Is Everchanging* (1978)—does not explain the works in any depth or their necessary connections. The Brassil piece, which refers to indigenous Australian cosmological beliefs in a gallery installation, also operates in primitivist terms, seemingly within the very colonialist paradigm that Meskimmon argues so powerfully against. Her discussion of works dealing with sexuality and the body connects the more explicitly conceptually related work of Sonja Ivekovic, Yoko Ono, Carolee Schneemann, Rebecca Horn, and Senga Nengudi, all key artists with work prominently displayed in the exhibition. Yet the new terms she mobilizes to frame these works, "an embodied female sexuality and an 'enworlded' sexed subjectivity" (331) seem unchanged except in theoretical jargon from the very Anglo-American concepts of sexuality and the body which she aims to decenter. The essay struggles to fully incorporate the artistic implications of such necessary rewritings of the relationship between feminism and colonialism.

Abigail Solomon Godeau writes of early feminist artists and photographic self-portraiture in "The Woman Who Never Was: Self-Representation, Photography, and First-Wave Feminist Art." She provides a valuable reminder of the real complexity of feminist practices in the 1970s, arguing that women artists like Hannah Wilke and Friedl Kubelka who investigated their own image by means of conceptual and body art practices conducted systematic interrogations of the complex operations of identification, rather than re-playing the essentialist notion of identity subsequently attributed to them. Peggy Phelan provides a concise but substantial account of feminist performance art and the politics of touch in "The Returns of Touch: Feminist Performances, 1960–80," which highlights work by primarily non-American artists, from Atsuko Tanaka's *Electric Dress* (1956) to Valie Export's *Tapp und Tastkino* (1968). Richard Meyer's essay, "Hard Targets: Male Bodies, Feminist Art, and the Force of Censorship in the 1970s," expands the definition of feminist art by addressing artists and issues not foregrounded in the exhibition, all relating to depictions of the male body by a gaze that is female, heterosexual, and feminist. Artists like Joan Semmel, Linda Nochlin, Eunice Golden, Sylvia Sleigh, Hannah Wilke, and Anita Steckel, herself founder in 1973 of the Fight Censorship group of women activist-artists, established the feminist view of the explicit male body as sexual and political object, a subject censored and marginalized in both mainstream art and accounts of feminism. Meyer's article revisits a little-known chapter in the history of early 1970s feminist art. His eloquent account of the censorship of artworks actively reclaiming phallic imagery for feminist desire and critique provides a much-needed counter to the dominance of central-core imagery during those years.

Catalogue contributors Judith Russi Kirshner, Valerie Smith, and Nelly Richard also expand the discourse of feminism toward greater cosmopolitanism, writing about feminism in Italy, in African-American culture, and in the struggle against Chilean dictatorship, respectively. All three essays examine issues broader than the exhibition of historical women artists' work. Kirshner's text, "Voices and Images of Italian Feminism," focuses on the work of three critics with varying relationships to feminist activism: Lea Vergine, Annemarie Sauzeau Boetti, and Carla Lonzi. Her essay raises significant questions about the role of female critics as advocates of feminist artists, the general shifts in the role of the art critic in the 1960s and 1970s, and the complex political identifications of feminists and women who sympathized with feminism in Italy. It identifies the restricted critical landscape developed as a result of male critics like Germano Celant and Achille Bonito Oliva marketing exclusive groups of male artists internationally as the greatest contributions of Italian contemporary art. Although the writing of the essay shares a certain lack of structural clarity with some of the writers which are its subjects, it makes significant steps toward piecing together international historical threads such as the parallels between Vergine's groundbreaking retrospective catalogue of women artists in the European avant-garde and the efforts of critics like Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris in the U.S.,[3] or the impact of French feminist theory on understudied women artists like Carla Accardi or Gina Pane. In her brief essay "Abundant Evidence: Black Women Artists of the 1960s and '70s," Valerie Smith situates the stories of prominent black women artists like Faith Ringgold and Howardena Pindell within the broader context of black feminist organizing. Nelly Richard's article, "Fugitive Identities and Dissenting Code-Systems: Women Artists During the Military Dictatorship in Chile," provides a similar account of several Chilean artists' practices, from Virginia Errázuriz's dispersed installations of everyday objects to Catalina Parra's use of stitching and embroidery to signify the gaps and subtexts concealed by the pro-dictatorship jargon of the daily paper *El Mercurio*.

Helen Molesworth contributes a valuable discussion of the fraught possibilities of signifying feminist content in contemporary painting in "Painting with Ambivalence." The essay is notable for its insights into the ways abstraction and feminism as apparently exclusive categories have occluded our understanding of these works, but also for the way it examines two white and one African-American artist in terms of comparative aspects of their work, rather than addressing the biographical commonalities of the artists' social identities, as in the previous

three essays. Catherine Lord's "Their Memory is Playing Tricks on Her: Notes Toward a Calligraphy of Rage" discusses Louise Fishman's series, the Angry Paintings (1973), reunited for the first time in the exhibition. Lord's powerful prose opens the essay by declaring Carolee Schneemann's *Interior Scroll* (1975) "expansively and stubbornly queer" (441) for its specifically vaginal rawness. The essay examines the impossibility of visualizing lesbianism in the public sphere, and describes Fishman's radical exteriorization of volatile emotion in sloppily scribbled painted words, a profound epiphany and turning point in her work. When I saw them hanging in a room with Senga Nengudi's stocking sculptures, paintings by Joan Snyder and Mary Heilmann, and a large Lynda Benglis latex floor piece from 1969, they looked less artistic than painfully literal in their violent emotional registerings, although Paula Cooper noted of the series in 1973, "They're art, but I don't know what else they are" (448). It was Lord's eloquent text that enabled me to understand them as art (even if they were immediately contextualizable in visual terms as feminist foreshadowings of contemporary gallery-friendly bad-boy painting by artists like Josh Smith). Yet their challenge to my own aesthetic assumptions in the end was much more valuable than the canonization of safely pioneering works of "quality" feminist art—a problematic also directly addressed in Molesworth's essay. The resistance of the Angry Paintings to art historical categorization and their radical heterogeneity from all the other objects in the show summarizes the historic and aesthetic contributions of the exhibition as a whole. As an erratic archive of lesbian personal and cultural connections driven equally by politics and desire, their presence was the revenge of a repressed subculture, one of many at last given their due in *Wack!*, from a twenty-first-century point of view at once experimental and retrospective.

For a show that has been accused of being both didactic and chaotic, the exhibition foregrounded the visceral impact of the works to an extraordinary degree. With such an extensive catalogue at hand, I welcomed the lack of heavily didactic wall text that characterizes the exhibitions of P.S.1's Manhattan branch. The installation allowed works to hang partially in one room and partially in another, for example displaying Mierle Laderman Ukeles's famous "Maintenance Art" manifesto in a white-box gallery while the photos of her doing the performances remained in the hall, thus connecting convoluted spaces to each other in a way that seemed overtly social. The sprawling exhibition, with its various sections flowing into each other across the network of rooms and hallways of the schoolhouse-museum, evoked a genuine space of experimentation and collective exploration, even learning, that characterized the work of these artists, some of whom were only marginally connected to the mainstream art world.

Feelings of invigoration and inspiration marked my experience of old favorites that I had never before seen in person. Joan Semmel's bodily distortions were delightfully vivid, Audrey Flack's iconic still-life *Marilyn (Vanitas)* of 1977 was powerful in its unexpected scale, and the two examples of Miriam Schapiro's "Ox" paintings produced a graphic impact. Lorraine O'Grady's glove dress for *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire* (1980; Fig. 1) was intriguing, shown in combination with the series of photos of the performance (usually represented by only one shot taken out of context). I was engrossed by Harmony Hammond's pillowy sculpture *Hunkertime* (1979–80), fascinated by Rebecca Horn's projected videos of herself performing in sculptural prosthetics (1970–73), and amazed by Judy Baca's iconic mural *Uprising of the Mujeres* (1979). The show did an excellent job of juxtaposing well-known feminist works with works by those notoriously excluded from mainstream discourses at the time, like the black women's collective "Where We At," represented by a series of historical posters (c. 1980), and artists working outside the U.S. whose work is little known here, like Maria Lassnig, Kirsten Justesen, and Sanja Ivekovic. The "Where We At" posters hung on the wall between Judy Baca's mural and a set of mixed-media documents of Bonnie Sherk's *The Farm* (1974–80), a multipurpose community garden and art space making use of several bits of unused land beneath a freeway overpass. Such juxtapositions effectively made visible the radical heterogeneity of approaches and media at the time. The exhibition also highlighted feminism's conjunction of art and activism, giving weight to manifestos and documentation of work developed out of collective organizing, such as Suzanne Lacy's *Prostitution Notes* (1974), alongside more monumental artworks.

The lack of consideration for film and video was a real loss in what was otherwise such a rich exhibition. Just a few moving image pieces were singled out for full-screen projection, and the rest were shown on small monitors throughout the gallery. It was difficult to see so many of these works in one visit. Including a DVD with a selection of these works in the catalogue could have improved the chances not only of seeing but also teaching this work.

"Wack!" had many puzzlements, some of which have been noted elsewhere. It included artists who were opposed or indifferent to feminism like, respectively, Jay DeFeo and Lygia Clark, and works that had no clear relationship to feminism such as Ketty La Rocca's text piece *Verbum, Parola, Mot, Word* (1967). The exhibition also deliberately sidelined or reworked major themes of 1970s feminist art, namely Goddess imagery, femmage, and the ongoing question of eco-feminism. While I welcomed the redefinition of Goddess imagery to include works that were more critical and secular than mystical and celebratory, such as O'Grady's *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire* performance artifacts and Ulrika Rosenbach's video *Don't Believe I'm an Amazon* (1975), the almost total omission of works related to the Pattern and Decoration movement of the late 1970s and Miriam Schapiro's "femmage" seems like an oversight, particularly in a contemporary context rife with returns to decoration and craft. The absence of a deliberate investigation of eco-feminism,[4] a term with critical implications today whose various definitions usually invoke the work of Ana Mendieta and Bonnie Sherk, both included in the show, seems equally unfortunate.

The title was also notoriously anomalous. "Wack!" implies a nonexistent acronym, which makes an ambiguous statement about the wealth of feminist organizations formed in the 1970s and 1980s and their relative dearth today. Its

male sexual connotations are provocative in conjunction with the cover image of Martha Rosler's 1966–72 collage *Hot House, or Harem,* from the Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain series, a paper collage of variously tanned and artificially posed 1960s *Playboy* models multiplied to a grotesque and ridiculously synthetic profusion of female bodies.[5] More puzzling, the title appropriates a negative slang term (if I said "'Wack!' wasn't wack!" would you roll your eyes?). The controversy over the catalogue cover art was warranted. A catalogue cover inevitably becomes iconic. To choose such an overt pastiche—a notoriously elusive, deliberately imitative but satirical poetic form—for this significant role becomes a confusing statement precisely because of the sophisticated subtext of the artwork. A work that depicts the female body as an active agent or as grotesque, a video still by Lynda Benglis or Anna Maria Maiolino, for example, would have made an unequivocal cover statement, rejecting the female body as spectacle. Rosler's collage, while part of a critical series of early works by the artist, is less effective as an advertisement for the show than many other works in the exhibition. Mary Beth Edelson's response, a second version of the collage with the faces of famous women artists (including Rosler) plastered onto the Playboy bodies, was a droll souvenir available in the P.S.1 giftshop, but could not make up for a missed opportunity.

Overall, the *Wack!* exhibition was a landmark event and the catalogue an invaluable resource for its scholarly examinations, biographical information, and wealth of visual material. It allows for a broader and more complex understanding of the relationship between feminism and art than previously possible. Its critical perspectives provide a welcome complement to the first-person artist perspectives often foregrounded in discussions of feminism. Perhaps most importantly, the catalogue firmly situates feminism in the plural, as a cross-cultural debate entwined with parallel struggles for the rights of lesbians, minorities, children, sex workers, mothers, immigrants, and other marginalized identities, which may or may not include artists. The rich range of feminist material production appears as alternately exciting and challenging today as it did thirty years ago. It is a sign of renewed engagement with the ongoing feminist struggles to which this art continues to speak. ●

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NOTES

1. See, for example, the Joan Kee's article "What Is Feminist About Contemporary Asian Women's Art?" in *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art*, ed. Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin (New York: Brooklyn Museum/Merrell, 2007).
2. Phoebe Hoban, "We're Finally Infiltrating, *ArtNews* (February, 2007), available online at http://artnews.com/issues/article.asp?art_id=2215. Accessed July 17, 2008.
3. Lea Virgine, *L'altra metà dell'avanguardia, 1910–1940: Pittrici e scultrici nei movimenti delle avanguardie storiche* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2005), originally published 1980; Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists 1550–1950* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Knopf, 1977).
4. The French term *écofeminisme* was coined in 1974 by Françoise d'Eaubonne in *Le féminisme ou la mort* (Paris: Pierre Horay, 1974), but it was popularized in the U.S. by Mary Daly in her book *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).
5. See the discussion of the title and cover art by Richard Meyer, "Feminism Uncovered," *Artforum* 45, no. 10 (Summer 2007): 211–12.

Blaze, Discourse on Art, Women and Feminism

edited by Karen Frostig and Kathy A. Halamka
Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007

Reviewed by Pamela H. Simpson

This impressive collection of thirty-two essays, first presented as part of the Women's Caucus for Art (WCA) national meeting in Boston in 2006, is an excellent introduction to contemporary second- and third-wave feminist artists', critics', and historians' points of view. The hardbound, 417 page book, edited by two of the meeting co-chairs, includes an index, biographies of contributors, and eighteen black and white illustrations. Its wide-ranging topics and perspectives are divided into four sections: Leadership, Criticism, Collaboration, and The Work. Each includes essays on the subject history and on practices and issues currently being debated among feminists.

The first section, Leadership, includes several fascinating essays on the history of the WCA (founded 1972), on the recipients of its Lifetime Achievement Awards (with a useful list in the appendix), and even a history of feminist art journals that includes the *WAJ* (the only survivor) written by current co-editor Joan Marter. The essays in Criticism, the second section, critique such things as the institutional exclusion of Latina and Chicana artists, the appearance and disappearance of the nude, public art, and blogs as sites for feminist activities. Next, Collaboration offers discussions of the various ways women have collaborated on art projects, how they have mentored each other, and even mother-daughter art making. The final section deals with specific works of art from both the artists' and the critics' perspective.

The editors invited all of the writers to think about where their evolving work fits into the history of feminism. This is an issue most clearly stated in two essays—Dena Muller's "The Burden of Inclusivity: Second-Wave Feminism and the Third-Wave Era," and Maria Elena Buszek's "Perma-Wave: Bridging Feminism's Generation Gap." The "discourse" in the title of the book seems to be most clearly played out in the reflections offered by these two younger feminists. Muller was part of a panel discussion in 2003 that was sponsored by Veteran Feminists of America. As the director of the A. I. R. Gallery, Muller had looked forward to meeting some of the superstars she had learned about in her women's studies classes. But as one of the few women under forty in attendance, she grew dispirited by repeated references to the "lack of interest, involvement, knowledge, and respect" supposedly evident in younger women (103). Finally, the panel's organizer called on Muller to speak to the issue. She says she decided to play with

the word "veteran" in the name of the group and use it as a political metaphor. She asked the group to consider the relationship between the veterans who had fought for freedom and those who now occupied the liberated territory. Was it right for the veterans to resent the younger women for exercising the freedoms the older women had fought so hard to win? She argues that the most important aspect of third-wave feminism is the inclusion of "younger people, of people of color, of feminist men, of gender justice ideologies, and of activist strategies" that may not have been part of the American second wave (104). She cites as examples work that addresses such things as immigration, postcolonialism, transgender identity, queer culture and eroticism. Her call is for established women's organizations to be more empathetic and inclusive.

Buszek echoed similar feelings and gave as an example her experience at the WCA Boston meeting where she heard older women repeatedly complaining, "Where are the young feminists?" Buszek was sitting right next to one of the questioners and as she looked around she noted at least a third of the audience was under forty. Was the problem the inability of the older feminists to SEE the younger ones? In frustration, Buszek finally got up and said, "We are right here. *Right next to you*" (134). She compared the older feminists to (ironically) a group in a football huddle at halftime, going over the game plan, exhausted, and wondering where their relief was coming from. Meanwhile the younger feminists sat on the bench waving their arms, saying, "Here I am," but those in the huddle were so programmed by their hierarchies and assumptions that they didn't hear them, and the rookies were so intimidated by the superstars in the huddle that they didn't dare go up and tap them on the shoulders. There they were, "ready, willing, unnoticed" (134). The problem was not the wholesale rejection of feminism that many older feminists assumed, but rather a shift of venue. If younger feminists were not allowed to play on the old field, then they would create one of their own. The older women, who should have been coaching them, were either unaware this was happening or had little interest in acknowledging it.

In thinking about the models of second- and third-wave feminism, Buszek came up with an alternative she calls the "perma-wave." Rather than looking at the first wave (eighteenth to early-twentieth centuries), second wave (1960s to 1980) and third wave (1980 to now) as opposing generations, she proposes that we think of the wave metaphor as a structure that "allows for feminist scholarship to 'flow' as it were toward individuals, movements and practices" (137). In other words, just as the water in a wave is carried forward and then flows back to be part of the next building surge, all feminists are part of this fluid, ongoing development. We should recognize evolving feminisms, not generational labels. We do not have to see differences as problems. We are all part of a present that is evolving and redefining feminism.

That spirit of dialogue between young feminists and the pioneers is evident throughout the volume. Several essays look at specific historical issues such as Harriet Senie's gender reading of New York's public memorials. Others examine specific projects and works of art such as Mari Novotny-Jones's performance piece in which she disguised herself as a maid at the Sheraton where the conference was taking place. Her interactions with conference-goers and hotel staff alike showed her just how invisible a uniformed servant could be.

Indeed, the major message of these various essays is that we are entering a new era of feminism where global issues of social justice and ecology weigh as much as traditional ideas about glass ceilings and discrimination. Women have acquired substantial authority as art historians, artists, and critics in recent years. Contemporary feminisms must reflect those multiple voices. Instructors looking for a way to present those points of view to students would be well advised to consider the essays in *Blaze* as a starting point for a new history. We will all benefit from this thoughtful and thought-provoking book. •

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After the Revolution: Women Who Transformed Contemporary Art

by Eleanor Heartney, Helaine Posner, Nancy Princenthal, and Sue Scott Prestel, 2007

Reviewed by Janet Marquardt

Although the authors originally envisioned including more than three dozen "women who transformed contemporary art," in this volume, their editor recommended covering fewer artists in greater depth, according to author Sue Scott.[1] *After the Revolution: Women Who Transformed Contemporary Art* is a collection of essays on twelve female artists. I applaud that decision, but, at the same time, regret the result.

As growing numbers of women successfully enter the art profession and make significant contributions, the list becomes unwieldy. Authors such as Whitney Chadwick—whose *Women, Art, and Society* (now in its expanded fourth edition) does a marvelous job of surveying the increasing exposure of women's work in international art expositions and introducing new names—can only provide limited information about individual artists. Chadwick's book covers several centuries, but the latest final chapter serves as a source book on current work, much like Lucy Lippard's *Mixed Blessings* did in the 1990s, introducing tantalizing glimpses of new work worthy of notice. We need a book that brings these artists to life, showing us their work, their messages, and the contexts of their lives.

From its title, *After the Revolution: Women Who Transformed Contemporary Art* would at first appear to be a goddess-send, referring to Linda Nochlin's 1971 *Art News* essay as a starting point and celebrating the wealth of change in the art world for women since.

Prefaced, briefly, by Linda Nochlin, who reminds us that "contemporary women artists as a group need to be singled out for critical attention" (7), the book draws out the question of whether "genius" and "greatness" are still at issue or whether the revolution has indeed managed to change the paradigm, as she called for in 1971. The answer is guarded. Nochlin, for one, brushes the question aside when she says "'great' or not is beside the point today," emphasizing instead these artists' "vitality, originality, malleability, an incisive relationship to the present and all it implies and an ability to deal with darkness and negativity and ambiguity" (8). Serving as sources of "inspiration and stimulation" for younger artists, these key artists, she writes, have become "both revolutionaries and post-revolutionary at the same time" (8). The authors' co-written introduction rephrases Nochlin's original call for change as a challenge to improve "the conditions under which women artists work" (9), and they admit that she warned against finding a few superstars to consider the battle won. They believe, rather, that the "cumulative weight" of the achievements of their featured artists might "demonstrate an underlying institutional shift during the past thirty-five years" (10).

In the end, the authors chose twelve artists, and while we may appreciate them, we may also question some of the authors' decisions. The authors, all critics and curators, write from the perspective of the exhibition essay about living artists whom they have chosen to stand as models. Arranged chronologically, they begin with Louise Bourgeois, who was born in 1911, and end with Dana Schutz, who turned thirty in 2006. Their chronicling of each artist is a bit disappointing, treating all their work as equally important and singling out no piece for in-depth analysis. In fact, the ability of each author to introduce a critical perspective depends a great deal upon the work she is covering. Artists

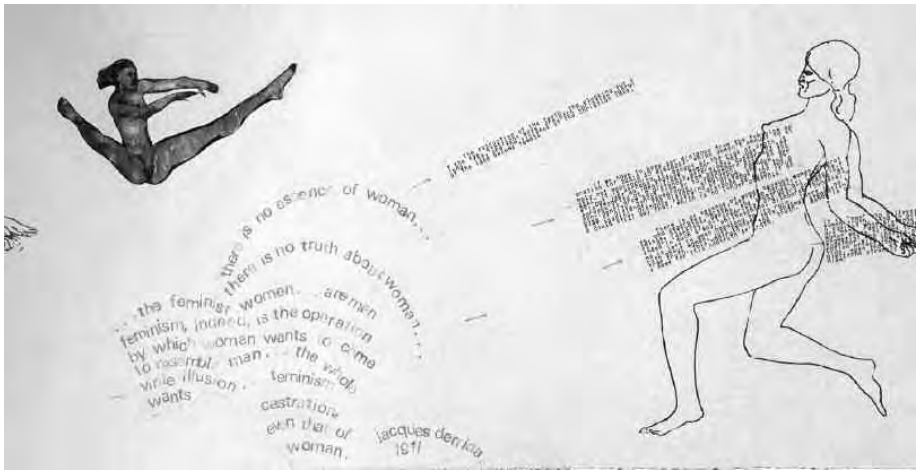


Fig. 1. Nancy Spero, *Notes in Time on Women II* (Panel 17, detail) (1979), handprinting, gouache, typewritten texts, and collage on paper, overall 20" x 219'. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

such as Nancy Spero, Ann Hamilton. and Shirin Neshat engage in levels of profound introspection which enrich any interpretative writing. In fact, authors Eleanor Heartney and Helaine Posner make particularly valuable contributions in the way that they introduce cultural contexts and compare the work of other artists with that of their subject matter, showing influences among them and introducing more artists for readers' exploration. All of the essays attempt this at some level, making the book a launching point for further studies. At the same time, this tendency raises the perennial question: Why do some artists rise to the top while others remain obscure? Is it really only the quality of the work? What did the writers see in these artists over others? (I was hung up for a while making lists of the names I felt they had left out, or given short shrift, or that I would have substituted for some of their choices.) I fussed about the fact that nearly all the artists selected live in New York (is this another outdated paradigm?) and the predominance of U.S. artists. I was uneasy about the premise of selecting names to associate with the transitive properties of the verb "to transform" when serving the object "contemporary art." I finally settled down and decided to read the essays.

It became clear that there was a strong desire to represent varied media and different attitudes about the role of women as "contemporary" artists. The final twelve included artists who began before a feminist voice was recognized (Bourgeois, Spero), paid little attention to the issues (Elizabeth Murray), made work that has been read both for and against the cause (Cindy Sherman), made the most radical statements about women's physical presence (Kiki Smith) and intellectual power (Marina Abramovic), took the newest directions in their medium (Jenny Holzer, Hamilton), or represented non-Western voices (Neshat) or fresh takes on tradition (Judy Pfaff, Schutz). The authors have attempted to chart a growing awareness among women in the United States that their art could express difference and effect change. Yet for Neshat, Ellen Gallagher, and Schutz, the subjects of the final three essays and who have been exhibiting only fourteen, thirteen, and five years, respectively, one could hardly say they have already "transformed" contemporary art. The contrast in the length of the individual bibliographical material (a nice bonus along with the index) could not be more striking—Schutz has three entries whereas the older artists weigh in with documentary citations in the many dozens. Perhaps the authors are projecting promising trends, relying upon their joint expertise to choose the next generation, It is a trap of course, pitting the danger of choosing too soon against affecting the outcome by the very act of inclusion. And yet why not? Male critics have fingered the "geniuses" of the past for generations, so maybe it is time women picked women and selected

not just the artists but the standards, too. None of these artists is merely throwing materials around, hoping they will land in an artful way which some critic will champion. The question of why these twelve were selected is never clearly answered, but the choices are powerful and the writing is clear and informed. In fact, the final two selections are both painters (Schutz more than Gallagher, but both work primarily in two-dimensional media) with highly charged social commentary and historical references, denying the demand for ever more radical art forms to guarantee notice and success. In a way, the entire book sets up this essential characteristic of women's art—in some aspect every artist covered accessed forms, stereotypes, voices, materials, and traditions either ignored or barely tapped by their male contemporaries but shaped into powerful statements of women's presence and critical thought. For instance, Posner chronicles Nancy Spero's incorporation of French feminist theory with work that responds to Cixous's *écriture feminine* with a new *peinture feminine* (Fig. 1). Finally, the style of the essays might point to another aspect valued in feminist discourse—comparisons between artists are even-handed, supportive rather than destructive, subverting the traditional model to bury the competition.

It is instructive to note how much of this material still refers to the authoritative voices of men: critics, historians, fathers, partners. Certainly we want male critics and art historians examining female work, and we continue to evaluate the impact of relationships and artistic exchanges (see for example *WAJ* 28-2 dedicated to Lee Krasner). But one can nearly chart the lessening of that impact from the older to the younger artists (at what point do the authors stop quoting Robert Storr?) as the need to link the stylistic influence of male partners on women's work seems to fade and the possibility of reversing the flow—women influencing men—gains validity. The authors end their introduction with a word about nostalgia and the commemorative aspect of it being thirty-five years and counting since Nochlin's key essay. They prefer to see the work as "a hopeful beginning" rather than the last word, intended as "an expanded approach to viewing and judging art as well as making it" (26). With only twelve examples from among the dozens of women who could have been chosen to represent artists "transforming" the norms for contemporary art, this volume falls short of fulfilling the patent need for a broader survey textbook on contemporary women in art. Nevertheless, though most certainly only a beginning, this book is an excellent incentive to mount more solo exhibitions, dedicate more catalogues, write more monographs, and generally bring more critical scholarship on women to students, scholars, and consumers. •

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Notes

1. For the authors' presentation at The New School, Oct. 10, 2007, see http://fora.tv/2007/10/10/Women_Who_Transformed_Contemporary_Art.

Russian Modernism Between East and West: Natal'ia Goncharova and the Russian Avant-Garde

by Jane Ashton Sharp
Cambridge University Press, 2006

Reviewed by Cheryl Kramer

Over the course of the past twenty years Russian art of the Silver Age has received much scholarly attention in the West through exhibitions and publications. Much of this research has focused upon the avant-garde, including the role of women. Jane Ashton Sharp's *Russian Modernism between East and West: Natal'ia Goncharova and the Russian Avant-Garde*, the first monograph on Goncharova in English since Mary Chamot's *Goncharova Stage Designs and Paintings* (1979), is a welcome addition on this subject.[1]

Natal'ia Goncharova (1881–1963) was born in Negaevo in the Tula province to an impoverished aristocratic family with strong ties to the Russian Orthodox Church. Before moving to Moscow in 1893, she spent her childhood at her grandparents' estate. This period in the Russian countryside together with subsequent return visits would prove pivotal to her later artistic development, both formally and ideologically. When she enrolled in sculpture classes at the progressive Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture,[2] Goncharova met Mikhail Larionov. The two became lifelong companions as well as artistic partners, and their relationship would have a profound effect on the promotion and public reception of the artist and her work.

Goncharova, labeled by the press as a member of the vanguard youth, became a leader of Neoprimitivism, a profoundly nationalistic art movement whose members turned to native traditions, such as icons, *lubki* (popular prints), carved wooden toys and painted shop signs, as sources of inspiration. Neoprimitivism was also characterized by a strong interest in pictorial elements of color, texture, line, and volume, which resulted in a monoplanar representation, the denial of spatial depth, the use of patterning, and the blending of text and image.

The development of Neoprimitivism should be viewed within the context of anti-academicism. Goncharova's antagonism towards academic art was fostered during her tenure at the Moscow School. She also used the East–West debate as a tool of confrontation. Neoprimitivism arose from the fusion of Eastern and Western forms, and, as she acknowledges in her statements, Goncharova worked through a series of Western styles before arriving at her own Neoprimitivist style (271–73; 276). She originally synthesized French trends to explore pictorial prob-

lems and question the existing art standards in Russia and thereby stimulated change in Russian painting. By 1911, however, she had turned back to the East, which she considered the source of all artistic innovation,[3] and in 1913 she became more aggressive in her stance.[4] In their "Rayist and Futurist Manifesto," Goncharova and Larionov proclaimed that the West had a negative effect on the East and on art in general, "We are against the West, which is vulgarizing our forms and Eastern forms, and which is bringing down the level of everything."[5] This vehement denunciation further suggests that the artists were anxious to disassociate themselves from Western styles and to assert the primacy of their own style, Neoprimitivism.

Russian Modernism between East and West is based upon the author's Ph.D. dissertation, which provided a feminist reading of Goncharova's oeuvre and her reception in pre-Revolutionary Russia.[6] Sharp, an Associate Professor of Art History at Rutgers University, has expanded her original manuscript to include an extended reading of Orientalism as it pertains to Russia, and particularly Goncharova and Neoprimitivism. The text begins with Goncharova's declaration of 1913 that, after "pass[ing] through all that the West can offer at the present time…. I now shake the dust from my feet and distance myself from the West" (1). The author then reconstructs and critically examines Goncharova's professions of cultural identity, and how the practices that underpin them defined Russian modernism at a pivotal moment between the 1905 revolution and the beginning of the First World War. She posits that Goncharova's work was in fact "a radically revisionist cultural project," given the artist's attitude towards artistic agency (1). Goncharova, in her return to the East, her promotion of Neoprimitivism, and her diversity of style and media, contradicted the image of the European master, and, as Sharp asserts, "cast doubt on the homogeneity of modernist discourse"(2).

Sharp reconsiders Goncharova and her significance "in light of her different stake in modernist art history," and positions the artist in opposition to the then "emerging narrative of originality," which by 1913 had become a prevailing concern, or "hidebound of holies," in contemporary criticism (2–3). Building upon recent scholarship, particularly that of Parther Mitter, John Clark, and Peter Wollen, in chapter one, "Orientalisms," Sharp builds a framework for Orientalism in Russia.[7] She situates the Russian intelligentsia's East and West binary within an Orientalist context and traces the shifting of these terms in a greater discourse on national identity found in avant-garde texts. In chapter two, "A Westernizing Avant-Garde," she then presents the contemporary critique of Muscovite avant-garde's focus on the West and contextualizes Goncharova's turn back toward the East.



Fig. 1. Natal'ia Goncharova, *Still Life on a Tiger Skin* (1908), oil on canvas, 55" x 53 3/4". Museum Ludwig, Cologne.

Sharp proceeds in chapters three and four, "Art into Life," and "Nationality on Display: Official Exhibitions, Avant-Garde Interventions," respectively, to shape the impact of the promotion and reception of exhibitions of the avant-garde in Moscow on the East-West polarization, exploring Goncharova's role. In chapter four she traces Goncharova and Larionov's construction of national identity through their choice of artists and works exhibited between 1909 and 1913. She expands this discussion to include collecting practices of both the avant-garde and the wealthy bourgeoisie.

Chapter five, "Orientalism in Reverse," discusses the duality of ornament, which on the one hand transcends time and cultural difference while simultaneously marking a historically and culturally specific place, in relation to Goncharova's attitudes towards copying. Here Sharp argues that Goncharova's focus on ornament and the copy was meant to exalt the collective traditions of the East in contrast to Western individualism. She then proceeds to reappraise the artist's body of still life paintings based upon the motif of the copy, such as *Still Life on a Tiger Skin* (1908; Fig. 1), *Still Life (Scrolls and a Stone Statuette)* (1910), and *Chinese Still Life* (1910). Most compelling in this chapter is her discussion of Goncharova's *Harvest: Composition in Nine Parts* and *Grape Gathering: Composition in Nine Parts* (both 1911), in which she demonstrates Goncharova's sophisticated engagement with technique, history, and theoretical constructs.

In the sixth chapter, "Antiartist: The Year 1913–1914," Sharp focuses on Goncharova's solo retrospective exhibitions in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Through critical reviews of Goncharova's series of paintings and drawings, Sharp argues that Goncharova's reception "as paragon of radical form and feminist politics merges the twin discourses of gender and national identity" (231). While Sharp discusses gender throughout the text, she does it most fruitfully in this chapter, presenting gendered, narrow contemporary readings of the artist and her work.

After reconstructing Goncharova's pivotal role in shaping the avant-garde in pre-Revolutionary Russia, in her concluding chapter, "Two Paradigms for Russian Modernism," Sharp examines how Goncharova's art can be valued today. She points out that the artist would have been congruent with the present-day global culture, given her engagement with technique, her open view of authorship, and her theories regarding identity. In debunking such myths as artistic autonomy, period style, and historical narrative as myths of cultural dominance, the author establishes Goncharova's importance as fundamental to Russian modernism.

Finally, Sharp closes with a discussion of Goncharova's legacy compared with that of the Russian Suprematist Kazimir Malevich, highlighting the historical and biographical factors, such as war and a changing national imperative, that led to the championing of his language of myth and parable, of geometry and color.

The chapters are organized thematically, and presented roughly chronologically, with subheadings further clarifying their extensive themes. The appendices provide useful English translations of five important texts by Goncharova and Larionov, including Goncharova's "Creative Creed." The sixteen color plates and 173 black-and-white illustrations and photographs are well-placed and complement Sharp's discussion; however, an increased number and range of color illustrations would have visually underscored the theoretical and stylistic multiplicity of Goncharova's work and the development of her oeuvre more completely. While her Russian-language source material includes recently released material and is comprehensive, her bibliography of post-2001 English-language material is surprisingly less so.

In this significant publication, more appropriate for a specialized, scholarly audience steeped in postmodern discourse, Sharp expertly conveys the complexity of Goncharova's work and that of her dialogue with her sources. She explores as well the extent of her discourse with contemporary artists, critics, and her audience. She successfully addresses the contemporary binary view of the "civilized" West and "barbarian" Russia. Her reading of the vanguard radicalism of early-twentieth-century Russian modernism could have been sharpened, however, with more explicit discussion of the political and social statements that heighten the complexity of Goncharova's work. This layer of meaning, together with the necessary stylistic, cultural, and historical perspective, was lost on her Western audience when, after four years in Switzerland, Spain, Italy, and France, she and Larionov settled permanently in Paris in 1919. And, as Sharp acknowledges, the Russian-specific dialogue also was largely lost on her new audience, leaving her categorized as a decorative artist. Indeed, this is a minor criticism, as such a discussion and its necessary reading of Goncharova's oeuvre should be the subject of its own text, and Sharp paves the way for such complementary treatment of this pivotal artist's work.

Russian Modernism between East and West is an important publication that not only redresses the lack of a current scholarly English monograph on Goncharova, but also advances considerably our understanding of the Russian avant-garde. •

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NOTES

1. Mary Chamot, *Goncharova. Stage Designs and Paintings* (London: Oresko Books, 1979). Seven years earlier Chamot published a monograph on Goncharova in French. *Gontcharova* (Paris: La Bibliothéque des Arts, 1972).
2. The Moscow School was established as an art society in 1833 and recognized as an institution of higher education in 1843. It offered the only real educational alternative to the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg, to which it was subject. Known for its liberal approach to teaching, the Moscow School boasted a more progressive faculty and thus attracted artistically and politically open-minded students.
3. Goncharova, "Preface," See John E. Bowlt, ed. and trans., *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 57–58.
4. Larionov and Goncharova, "Rayists and Futurists: A Manifesto," *Oslinyi khvost i mishen* (Moscow, 1913). For an English translation see Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, 87.
5. Ibid., 90.
6. Jane Ashton Sharp, Primitivism, 'Neoprimitivism' and the Art of Natal'ia Goncharova, 1907–1914." (Ph.D. diss., Yale Univ., 1992).
7. Parther Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850–1922 Occidental Orientations* (London: Cambridge, 1995); John Clark, "Yoga in Japan: Model or Exception? Modernity in Japanese Art 1850s–1940s: An International Comparison," in *Art History*, 18, (1985): 253–85; Peter Wollen, "Fashion/ Orientalism/the Body," in *New Foundations*, 1 (1987): 5–53.

May Stevens

by Patricia Hills
Pomegranate Communications, 2005

Reviewed by Gylbert Coker

During their thirty-plus-year friendship, Patricia Hills and May Stevens (b. 1924) had numerous conversations which Hills taped, including a marathon nine-hour session in August 2002. These tapes became the foundation for this book. The result is a conversation with Stevens that is intimate and personal.

It is rare that a writer captures an artist speaking so freely in her own voice. Such scholarly prescience here makes for an insightful engagement with the artist that affords the reader human drama, philosophical musings, as well as information on how Stevens constructs her art. From the outset, Hills tells us the idea was paramount that the conversation "should be read as a seamless conversation" (preface, n.p.). To this end, there is an element of free association in Stevens's conversation that sometimes leads her off topic to a distant memory; reminiscent of Gertrude Stein. It is just this kind of self interruption, yielding sidebars of mini ideas or musings, that makes the conversation so alive and spontaneous. Stevens is a good conversationalist, and in her own quixotic way she tells us about her life, her mother and father, her brother and his illness. She talks about her art, how she develops her style, and why she has strong feelings about such issues as war, racism, feminism, and her mother.

The conversation begins with, "I love story, I love narrative, I use it in my work. I tell stories. The stories are anecdotes about events; and they're selected because they mean something to me. I choose them because I see meaning in them" (11). This very statement takes us off on a clear and open road. No stop signs, no lights. This feeling of "listening" to Stevens without interruption provides a surprising, multi-leveled and surreal exposé of Stevens's philosophy of life and art—the history she has lived, the art world in which she works and socializes, and her personality.

We learn, for example, that her preoccupation with racial issues has to do

with her reaction to her father's racism. It seems that her relationships with African American artists were maintained within a racial context. To Stevens's credit, she does acknowledge her bias. She tells us about one such relationship:

> In the 1970s I became friends with Vivian Browne, who worked with me in the women's movement and whom I invited to join *Heresies*. She was very instrumental in seeing that *Heresies* did an issue on race. We went to Cuba together. We roomed together when we went to Washington, D. C., to the College Art Association. When I started to be close friends with Vivian I was conscious of the fact that I might say the wrong thing, I might do the wrong thing, I might offend her without meaning to. It seems to me that if you do not live among black people, then you don't always know how they are thinking and what their needs are, or their thoughts, their sensibilities, and their sensitivities (37).

What a fascinating passage to illustrate how Stevens believed that people's thoughts and desires were racially based rather than basically human.

After Stevens left home and moved to New York, she enrolled in The Art Students League, where she met Rudolf Baranik. A Lithuanian Jew and a World War II veteran, he was attending school on the G.I Bill. The two artists fell in love, got married, and went to live in Paris where the "real" artists were working. The couple sailed for France in 1948 and for the next three years remained in Paris, where their only child, Steven, was born. One passage about life in Paris speaks to the treatment of female artists during that era. When one of her professors, following a dinner in the couple's apartment/studio, looked at several of Stevens's paintings, he remarked that he found her not to be honest, because her painting was too strong for a woman. Stevens says: "I was amazed, deeply hurt, unable to speak. Actually, I didn't like his work either" (20).

Hills reminds us how the Vietnam War polarized the nation and the world in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Stevens saw in this great divide an alienation like that within her family—between her parents, and between herself and her parents. Stevens painted *The Family* (1967) and *The Living Room* (1967), both of which spoke to this personal alienation. She realized that the portrait of her father symbolized issues far greater than her personal feelings about him. During 1967-1968 she began to explore the possibilities of this image in *Big Daddy* and *Big Daddy in Vietnam*. As her father's image gradually lost its individuality, "Big Daddy" emerged as a unique iconographical image that came to embody a broader psychological and political reality for her (33). By transforming his particular characteristics into the iconic authoritarian image of "Big Daddy," she broadens the dialogue to capture the essence of cultural imperialism, taking the discussion beyond merely talk of race and ethnicity to dominance of one power over another. This can be male dominance over females, one nation or religion over another, and so on. In fact, the sections on Stevens's experience with her father helps us better understand the fear and trepidation of many people feel toward the "other."

Stevens developed the "Big Daddy" image with a sense of irony and humor (Fig. 1). The image is flat, with a limited range of colors, and "Big Daddy is bald, squat, and wrinkled, like the bull dog in his lap. Over time, with a nod to Francis Bacon, Stevens's brushwork became lush and the compositions more Baroque, creating a figure that seems to be dissolving into itself, or disappearing behind the twisted United States flag of red, white, and blue. Stevens received critical attention for the "Big Daddy series." Indebted in style to Pop Art, and in political fervor to her strong anti-war sentiments, these images were among the earliest attacks on our policy in Vietnam by an American artist.

As a child, Stevens was an avid reader, and she spoke to Hills about how she transforms the energy she gets from literature into her artwork. "Kafka says if we lose that ability to feel for others, we have lost a lot" (29). Hills brings out how Stevens embraces Kafka's words in her continued pursuit of human understanding and compassion for others.



Fig. 1. May Stevens, *Top Man*, (1975), acrylic on canvas, 60" x 40". Courtesy Mary Ryan Gallery, New York.

Hills references Stevens's methodological process as being based upon a willingness to deconstruct existing stylistic systems to re-construct her visual voice. She talks about Stevens's representations being a complex dialectic. Her paintings embody the performative act of making the picture within the finished material work. That is to say, there are several activities taking place at the same time. First, the artist's conceptual process is that of the testimonial journalist—using personal experiences to tap into universal themes. Her involvement in the 1970s with various women's awareness activities enabled her to bring into her work experiences, memories, and feelings about gender and power relations. Second, her range of painterly techniques—size, surface, paint touch, matte versus iridescent qualities of pigment, montage effects, trompe l'oeil effects, layering, patterns—all lend themselves to a surface that expresses an emotional state of agitated anxiety.

In the 1970s and 1980s, as Stevens became involved with women's rights, she joined with other feminists in exhibiting images of women. She began her Ordinary/Extraordinary series, which includes images of her mother, Alice. The

large size of of works such as *Alice in the Garden* (1988-89) underscores the monumentality of women who devote their lives to their husbands and children. In this series, we are asked to consider women whose lives have brought them little joy, but rather sadness, disappointment, failure, and isolation. The four figures of Alice are larger than life and float in a sea of green, which underscores her emotional state (the gestural brushstrokes and the shift in tone from a bright welcoming green to shades that progressively grows darker). Her hands are folded in her lap, her feet are placed in variously closed positions, and her face looks downward. At no time does she engage the viewer.

Hills perceives a Jungian sensibility in Stevens that holds that beneath one's private memories is a symbolic association common to all women (68). In Ordinary/Extraordinary, Stevens juxtaposes Alice with Rosa Luxemburg, an educated woman who became an international theoretician, organizer, and actual world-changer. Stevens wants her viewers to consider the reality of all women within the confines of a male dominated socio-political-economic construct: whether uneducated or educated, or with limited or unlimited choices, women within the male controlled paradigm are "others" and remain in varying degrees isolated.

In 1996, Stevens was drawn to a newspaper article about a murdered child, Elisa Izquierda, who had been abused by her mother and her mother's boyfriend. Wanting to represent the unrepresentable, Stevens turned to Pablo Neruda's poem *Explico Alguans Cosas* (I explain a few things) in which Neruda determines that metaphors can not accomplish this task: "Y por las calles la sangre de los ninos/corria simplamente, como sangre de los ninos" (and through the streets the blood of children simply runs like blood of children) (81). Stevens approached the problem using collage to create the Tic-Tac-Toe series, incorporating fragments of newspaper clippings or degraded photocopies of them. According to Hills, Stevens chose to engage in a contradictory act: to create an imagery of Elisa and other children from the newspaper photographs, and then methodically to destroy those images, by tearing at them and pressing burning cigarettes into their images. Through the process of mimicking the original creation of a child by a man and a woman and then the destruction of that child through physical and psychological abuse, Stevens hoped to approach the horror of the original acts of abuse. Stevens's intention is not, states Hills, to provide an actual emotional experience, but to offer a "pickax" cathartic release (67).

Earlier, in works like *Sea of Words (1990-1991)*, Stevens incorporated words in a different format. In this painting, four rowers appear as distant white forms on a shifting word-sea of green. Explaining the value Stevens finds in inscribing words into her paintings, Hills writes, "Facing the contradiction between painting as performative process and as finished exhibition-worthy product, [Stevens] selects the process, thereby resolving the Yeatsian choice between 'perfection of the life, or of the work'" (79).

Almost 120 images—more than ninety in full-color—represent the scope of Stevens's long career, starting with her earlier work, including her Big Daddy Series and a powerful group of social protest paintings (1967-1976), through her recent series titled Rivers and Other Bodies of Water (2000-present). Also included are an exhibition history, a chronology, and a selected bibliography. This is a book that demands the reader's attention both intellectually and visually. Skillfully weaving together the words of the artist, Hills has enabled the reader to gain insight into the thought process of Stevens, who uses her art to unravel and reconstruct various perspectives of "truth" that can exist in human behavior. •

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The Figurative Sculpture of Magdalena Abakanowicz: Bodies, Environments and Myths

by Joanna Inglot
University of California Press, 2004

Reviewed by Mary Ball Howkins

The trajectory of Magdalena Abakanowicz (b. 1930) from postwar Poland to international renown is a story of an exceptional artist's strategic choices made in exceptional circumstances. Joanna Inglot's lucid, in-depth study, *The Figurative Sculpture of Magdalena Abakanowicz: Bodies, Environments and Myths,* presents a double unveiling concerning Abakanowicz's career as a young Polish artist, then internationally ranked sculptor. First, it reveals a new perspective on Abakanowicz's oeuvre by grounding it in the unique evolution of the twentieth-century Polish cultural landscape, including detailed accounts of Poland's postwar generation of artists, sociopolitical developments, as well as rural folk traditions, all mostly uncharted in the previous literature on the sculptor's work. Inglot accomplishes this by mining Polish literature, art journals, and archival materials, and by conducting personal interviews in the artist's country of origin. Secondly, the study reveals the degree to which Abakanowicz deftly shaped her public artistic identity in international circles, effectively mythologizing it and her art. Indeed, Inglot has structured her monograph to demythologize the sculptor's artistic persona and career to date, beginning with the artist's autobiographical narrative "Portrait X 20" (1978-80), and disclosed over the book's entirety the extent to which ignorance of Polish art contributed to North Americans' and Western Europeans' seduction by that constructed narrative.

"Portrait X 20," Inglot points out, was written at a turning point in Abakanowicz's career and presents her as a socially isolated outsider, driven by imagination, a deeply personal intuition, and a desire to be viewed as a mystic. Yet

Inglot cautions us not to accept the narrative at face value, rather as a strategic construction, one in fact profoundly rooted in Polish Romantic heritage, steeped in nostalgia for the moods and appearances of an ideal rural Poland, its cottages, peasant art and forests.

Inglot examines "Portrait X 20" for its disclosures regarding Abakanowicz's aristocratic background, considered a liability in postwar Communist Poland. She also looks for its omissions. Two particular omissions helped guard Abakanowicz's family's anonymity during an era of Soviet political repression: there is no mention of the artist's uncle, a leader in the World War II Resistance movement against the Soviet occupation of Poland, nor is there a mention of her family's flight from the advancing Soviet army. In a short chapter documenting Abakanowicz's artistic education within the Polish cultural and political setting of the 1950s, Inglot proceeds to dispel some confusion regarding the medium that was the artist's early training focus—weaving, despite the artist's own claim that she enrolled in a "fine art" program. Inglot also charts Abakanowicz's response to Surrealism and then Constructivism through artist contacts and the work she produced during student years. From 1956 to 1960, a thaw in official governmental policy meant that some Polish artists were supported in cultural exchanges with foreign artists from Europe and North America. Polish art journals kept readers informed about new art developments in major European cities and New York, and this era of cultural exchange, from which Abakanowicz benefited, set the ground work for her emergence on the international art scene.

The strongest revisionary focus of Inglot's study occurs in chapters three and four. Here the author considers shifts in Abakanowicz' approach to fiber in the context of Polish and international developments and in the context of the artist's manipulation of her relationship to the Polish government. It was in the early 1960s that Abakanowicz shifted from flat wall hangings to an expressive three-dimensional projection of the human body and transcended the traditional "craft" designation of fiber art in a sculptural series that the artist called Abakans.

In bringing to light the milieu in which Abakanowicz turned to relief-like structures, precursors to the Abakans, Inglot examines the influence of weavers such as Maria Laszkiewicz and tapestry designer Mieczyslaw Szymanski, both of whom encouraged more sculptural effects in weaving technique. The author also makes us aware of the role played by *art informel*, encountered by the artist during a stay in France, in the shift from "craft" to "art," as well as the Eastern European use of fibrous rustic materials in its weaving traditions. The work of Abakanowicz's colleague Wojciech Sadley is presented as an intriguing precedent for the sculptor's expressive figuration of skin, viscera, and garments in the Abakans, despite the two artists' divergent aesthetic goals.

By the 1970s, Abakanowicz was convinced that "weaving" was a stigma to be left behind, and she began to address the human form more directly. What is unique in Inglot's account of this seminal period in the 1970s and 1980s is the degree to which Abakanowicz's figuration (for example, Fig. 1, a standing figure from 1989) reflects the experience of her Polish generation as a whole. As an expression of the vast losses and horrors that Poland suffered during and after World War II, the human body emerged as a dominant motif in Polish sculpture from 1955 to 1980. As is the case throughout Inglot's study, the author's linking of Abakanowicz's evolution as a sculptor in relation to Polish and international currents is framed to reveal the uniqueness and power of the artist's expressive figuration, rather than to diminish it. Scarred, pitted, amputated, and impoverished bodies found expression in the work of Polish colleagues in the 1960s and early 1970s. These gave precedent for Abakanowicz's rugged burlap bodily impressions in Seated Figures (1974-79), suggesting the fragility of human existence. But in addition to such fragility, Inglot asserts, lies the rich and transformative organic life of dried soil, of crusted natural material like stone or bark. Together these bring to mind the oppositional cycles of growth and decline.



Fig. 1. Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Standing Figure on Bench* (1989), bronze, 6' 4" x 1' 8" x1". Courtesy of Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito, Japan.

Inglot demonstrates that her cycles of burlap figures manifest the key tendencies in Polish postwar sculpture. Inglot establishes that Abakanowicz's generation of artists found in the shabby and rough materials of folk expression, including burlap (adopted by the artist in the early 1970s), a medium to express their distrust of material value and wealth. And they fashioned these same rough materials into scarred human skin and hollowed out bodies to express the suffering and subjugation lived by their wider Polish generation through a World War and repressive Communist regime.

Of particular fascination is the section on Abakanowicz's mining of ancient Polish folk rituals and symbols, which were given a powerful revival by Polish Romanticism and incorporated widely into the Polish cultural landscape—into

theater, literature, and the visual arts. Ancient Slavic folk and Polish Catholic ceremonies could be recalled and attuned to the crowds and gatherings under Communist rule. Inglot points out that during the 1970s and 1980s, a period of intensifying opposition to Communist rule, cultural traditions and symbols were appropriated by all competing parties—the regime, the Church, the organized opposition to the government, as well as artists. Yet with the regime collapse in 1986, Abakanowicz's series of Crowds (1986-90s) came too late to comment directly on Communist sociopolitical policy. Abakanowicz, as indicated in previous literature on the artist, avoided being deliberately political.[1] Abakanowicz's avoidance of direct political commentary in her work earned her some resentment in Poland, yet permitted her to pursue an international career unhampered by governmental tampering. Inglot quotes Leslie Milosky in characterizing Abakanowicz's relationship with the regime as "sustained through symbiotic silences" (98).

In the next to the last chapter, entitled "Myth and the Sacred," Inglot does what earlier historians, including Barbara Rose, have not. She places in context Abakanowicz's self-presentation as shaman, and the artist's characterization of her own work in universal and mythical terms. Inglot identifies Abakanowicz as a "new primitivist," and aligns her sculptural explorations with those of Joseph Beuys, Nancy Graves, and Robert Smithson, among others. These artists sought, in different national settings, to link their work with "prehistoric and archaic systems of thought and belief" (109). In tracing Abakanowicz's fascination with indigenous cultures and theories of myth and religion, Inglot considers the influence of Mircea Eliade, a leading interpreter of religious experience whose selected essays were translated and published in two editions in Warsaw in the early 1970s. While the artist has not publicly acknowledged Eliade's influence, indeed she seems to have quoted Eliade almost word for word in 1973 (105). She mirrored in concept and language Eliade's conviction that all people are united by a shared understanding of the world, as well as united by the symbols and myths they generate. Abakanowicz wrote: "In the unconscious of contemporary man, mythology is still buoyant…The most superficial being is crowded with symbols and the most logical person lives through images…They are a real and undeniable part of human nature…"[2] It was Eliade's universalizing of humanity and human spiritual life that apparently appealed to Warsaw's intelligentsia. Whether or not Abakanowicz formulated her shamanistic and universalizing perspective under his influence may not be definitely established, Inglot nonetheless forges an intriguing connection.

The large size and high quality of this book are commendable and its contents are eminently readable and useful. Twelve color and 49 black-and-white images—an adequate number but not profuse—are faithful to the author's narrative which grounds Abakanowicz's sculpture in an Eastern European milieu. An extensive bibliography directs the reader to unpublished material as well as published. For those like myself, only tangentially aware of Poland's recent history and Eastern European artistic traditions, a chronology outlining Abakanowicz's development alongside Polish historical events would have been useful. Yet the book's informed narrative does that job so well that this small lacuna can be easily forgiven. •

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Notes

1. See for example, Barbara Rose, *Magdalena Abakanowicz* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 8; and Jasia Reichardt, "Magdalena Abakanowicz," in *Magdalena Abakanowicz*, exh. cat. (Chicago and New York: Museum of Contemporary Art and Abbeville Press, 1982).
2. See the artist's 1973 statement in *Magdalena Abakanowicz*, exh.cat., 152; Inglot (131, note 20) translates Eliade's writing from the Polish edition, where the wording is almost identical to Abakanowicz's: *Sacrum, Mit, Historia: Wybor esejow* (Warsaw: Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970), 37.

Cindy Sherman

edited by Régis Durand
Flammarion-Jeu de Paume, 2007

Cindy Sherman

edited by Johanna Burton
MIT Press, 2006

Reviewed by Michelle Meagher

The cover of the extraordinarily comprehensive catalogue published by Flammarion-Jeu de Paume to accompany a European retrospective of the work of the American photographer Cindy Sherman speaks volumes about the themes and preoccupations of the artist. It features Sherman's *Untitled #360* (2000), depicting an aging woman posing for her portrait, trying almost desperately to appear young, hip, and relaxed. She wears bright red lipstick and black nail polish; her long hair is brassy and dry, large moles and nipples alike push through the cotton of her tight white t-shirt. The title—*Cindy Sherman*—is placed strategically over the woman's eyes, obstructing the so-called windows to the self. The catalogue's cover thus depicts the central themes of Sherman's work: the impossibility of self-revelation, the impossibility of discovering the other or of being discovered by an other, and the ambivalent relationship that women hold to the structures of the gaze.

For anyone familiar with Sherman's work, it is immediately clear that *Untitled #360* is in fact a self-portrait, or rather a postmodern variation on the self-portrait. Sherman is an artist who has staked a career on making photographs of herself. In the vast majority of the photographs she has taken over the last thirty years, she depicts herself in some form of

disguise: here, she's an aging beauty; in *Untitled Film Still #21* (Fig. 1; 1978), she's a young blonde in the city; in *Untitled #122* (1983) she's a well-dressed model with fists clenched in fury; in *Untitled #412* (2003) she's a deranged female clown. Born in 1954, in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, Sherman studied art and photography at the State University College in Buffalo, graduating with a B.A. in 1976. While at Buffalo, she was involved with the Hallwalls group, artists including Robert Longo, Nancy Dwyer, and Charles Clough, who shared studio and exhibition space. A year after graduating, Sherman moved, with Longo and a $3,000 NEA grant, to New York City and began work on her most well-known series of photographs, the Untitled Film Stills (1977-1980).

Influenced by the postmodern trends toward appropriation and deconstruction, these early images turned on their capacity to mimic the conventions of mid-century popular B-grade film and, specifically, the publicity stills circulated by production companies and movie houses. In the Untitled Film Stills, Sherman presents herself in the guise of film noir heroines, suggesting not only that she can easily inhabit any of these characters, but also that the actresses themselves are ultimately interchangeable. In these stills from imaginary films, Sherman captures the feminist assertion, which would emerge at the forefront of feminist theoretical discussions a decade later, that femininity is little more than a performance. The themes of performance and artifice form the foundation of this series, but they also frame all of Sherman's subsequent works—including that simultaneously depressing and hilarious image that Régis Durand has selected for the cover of *Cindy Sherman,* the exhibition catalogue.

Durand has executed a remarkably thorough exhibition that offers both breadth and depth to its spectators; this is an exhibit that is sure to please both the novice and the enduring fan of Sherman's work. The works took up nine rooms at the Galerie Jeu de Paume in Paris (May 16 to September 3, 2006); each series was introduced by a short "lecture" offered by Durand which provided context, interpretation, and occasional explanation. Following curatorial conventions of chronological display, both the exhibit and the catalogue begin with Sherman's juvenilia—recently released and reprinted photographs that she produced while a student in Buffalo. *Untitled A* to *E* (all 1975), for instance, are five black and white head shots of Sherman in different guises: a perky young girl, a glamorous woman, a middle-aged male laborer. Murder Mystery (1976-2000) is a series of images pieced together to construct a fictional murder mystery story. Here, Sherman is a gumshoe detective, a sultry ingénue, a dramatic leading man, a compliant maid, etc. The most exciting addition to the retrospective exhibition is a short film from Sherman's art school days in which the artist presents herself as a paper doll with a collection of cut-out clothing. The exhibition presents all sixty-nine original Untitled Film Stills plus the recently discovered *Untitled Film Still #62* (1977). Subsequent rooms include Rear Screen Projections and Centerfolds, Fairy Tales, History, Sex, Horror and Surrealist Pictures, Hollywood/Hamptons Types, Broken Dolls, and Clowns.



Fig. 1. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #21* (1978), black and white photograph, 8" x 10". Courtesy of the Artist and Metro Pictures.

Durand's framing of the hundreds of images tends toward minimizing difference by describing the ways in which the series emerge logically along the trajectory of Sherman's work as well as by drawing frequent comparisons—thematic and formal—between series. Indeed, in his general introduction to the work, Durand emphasizes his fascination with "its extraordinary internal coherence" (230). The History Portraits, for instance, are described as a "logical extension of Sherman's work" (259); the oddly named Civil War pictures are described as a "logical extension of the *Sex Pictures*" (260). This search for a logical trajectory is particularly pronounced in Durand's discussion of The Clowns. These images, which occupied the last room in the exhibition, are described as an inevitable and logical extension of Sherman's "hysterical chameleonism" (268). Making links between these and *Untitled A-E*, originally produced in 1975, Durand poses The Clowns as the culmination of all that was embryonic in Sherman's earliest work.

One could not fail to notice the striking absence in Durand's text of any new and productive discussion of the gendered nature of Sherman's masquerades. Like many other critics, Durand falls into the convention of discussing Sherman's work in a gender-blind manner. Although he gives lip service to the issue of Sherman's identity as a woman, he does not significantly explore the extent to which her "gallery of social stereotypes" (236) comprises overwhelmingly feminine stereotypes performed on a body culturally coded as feminine. Rather than examine the work's evocation of the performative nature of *feminine* identity, Durand rather suggests that the work bespeaks the falsity of *all* identity. This insistence upon the work's neutrality is a purposeful and intensely troubling blind spot that recurs in the critical assessment of Sherman's work. The neutrality that Durand seems to unwittingly reproduce is more fully evident in the second essay in this catalogue, J. P. Criqui's "The Lady Vanishes." This essay makes two central points. One is that the work is not centered on Sherman's identity, or even on the question of identity itself, as so many critics have insisted in the past. Rather, Criqui argues that the work is about the making of the images, about the process of representation: "each picture only relates to itself" (274). This assertion evades the insistence of feminist artists and critics

that a work of art ought to have some grounding and potential impact outside itself. Criqui's second point, suggested in his title, is that the work is successful to the extent that Sherman has managed to place herself in oblivion, in other words, she has removed herself from the picture. Criqui thus celebrates Sherman's capacity to make herself invisible. Rendered to oblivion, Sherman's gender and the gendered nature of her representational practices are eclipsed in favor of a neutralized interpretation that emphasizes the play of appearance and disappearance.

To be fair, the catalogue covers the base of feminism and gender by the inclusion of a third review essay, by the feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey. "A Phantasmagoria of the Female Body," which she originally wrote in 1991 for the journal *New Left Review*, has been reproduced several times[1] and is also included in Johanna Burton's edited volume titled *Cindy Sherman*, discussed below. The focus of Mulvey's often-cited essay is on images produced between 1977 and 1987, a ten-year period during which Sherman's images underwent a transformation that Mulvey describes as a dissection of "the phantasmagoric space conjured up by the female body, from its exteriority to its interiority" (286). Her focus on the specifically gendered aspects of the work—its exploration of femininity and the female body—places Sherman's work quite squarely within the discourses of feminist art and feminist visual culture. Mulvey argues persuasively here that Sherman's imagery evokes the structure and function of fetishism. The smooth workings of fetishism are represented in the Untitled Film Stills, where female bodies are carefully poised, composed, and made up. These fetishized idealized femininities are destabilized in later works in which the abject is given representation. Mulvey's placement of Sherman's work within the logics of feminist visual culture was important and influential, spurring on a variety of critical engagements and theoretical engagements with Sherman's work (see my discussions of Krauss and Foster below). As it appears in Durand's catalogue, the essay ends with a short postscript in which Mulvey says that her thinking on Sherman has changed since the original writing of this essay. Now, for exmple, she is struck by "the way that the images [refer] to moments of stillness as the site of uncertainty in cinema" (302). Sherman's works can thus be viewed as closely aligned with Mulvey's own recent interest in temporality in film.[2] An exploration of contemporary significance of Sherman's work would, indeed, be beneficial to this catalogue

Given Sherman's celebrity stature within the field of art, it seems surprising that the catalogue does not carry more heft. Certainly, it is comprehensive visually—Durand provides snapshots of all the images included in his retrospective as well as more than two hundred well-reproduced color photographs. To this extent, it is a stunning resource for anyone interested in Sherman's work. But Durand's comments, Criqui's essay, and a re-hashing of Mulvey's well-known essay on Sherman's early work do not quite measure up. Mulvey's postscript is ultimately disappointing and only draws attention to the catalogue's inadequate treatment of the issues raised in this essay. This strikes me as an opportunity lost—an opportunity to more fully engage the work after thirty-five years of its circulation through the field of art.

To some exent, Johanna Burton's volume, also titled *Cindy Sherman*, offers a solution to the limitations of the Durand catalogue. This text is a compilation of the most important and influential scholarly analyses of Sherman's work, beginning with Craig Owens's dazzling "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism, Part 2," and culminating with an essay by Burton herself in which she draws on Sherman to theorize a specifically feminine aggressivity in art. Burton's *Cindy Sherman* is the most recent publication in MIT Press's October Files series. Like other texts in the series (which has, to date, covered artists Richard Serra, Andy Warhol, Eva Hesse, James Coleman, and Robert Rauschenberg), Burton's text traces the critical discourses that have been inspired by an individual artist. The book is not only about Cindy Sherman; it is also, and indeed more centrally, about the discourses spinning around Sherman since the late 1970s. We see here the ways in which her work was productively employed in the exploration of key concepts in the field of art—postmodernism, semiotics, feminism.

Judith Williamson's "A Piece of the Action," originally prepared for the influential feminist film journal *Screen*, highlights the clearly gendered qualities of the work and considers it to be exemplary of feminist art practice. In Williamson's view, the work constitutes a poignant, witty, and intelligent argument about the representations of femininity and the potential those representations—"images of Woman"—have to seep into the fabric of our everyday thoughts and feelings. Sherman's work is thus said to confound the distinctions between artificial and real, between surface and depth, in ways that alert spectators to the structures of femininity under patriarchal visual regimes. If Williamson's essay writes hopefully about the power of feminist art to expose the structures of femininity as it exists within patriarchal visual regimes, Abigail Solomon-Godeau's essay, written almost a decade later and also included here, reveals the limits and pitfalls of feminist art. "Suitable for Framing: The Critical Recasting of Cindy Sherman" has long stood at the top of my list of important scholarly examinations of Sherman's work. In it, Solomon-Godeau offers an incisive examination of the "apparatus of publicity" (57) through which Sherman was able to achieve the status of great artist in the 1980s. As Solomon-Godeau points out, by the time that Sherman had her first major one person show at the Whitney in 1987, the art critical scholarship on her work had undergone a troubling transformation. Primarily using catalogue and review essays, she is able to argue convincingly that Sherman's work had been recast in ways that elided and denied the "most prominent and denaturalizing aspects of Sherman's pictures" and that, ultimately, repressed feminism's significance as a term in criticism (53). This is a trend that has, if the essays by Durand and Criqui discussed above are any indication, persisted. Ultimately, Solomon-Godeau is deeply critical here of art critical

writing in which Sherman's clear emphasis on femininity is neutralized and read as a universal commentary on human subjectivity.

The frequency with which postmodern discourses were employed to frame the work is made evident by the inclusion of several essays that align Sherman with the postmodern aesthetic sensibilities that were only just emerging with force in the late 1970s and early 1980s—sensibilities that were, more often than not, posed in opposition to feminist politics and critical practices. Craig Owens's "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism, Part 2," originally published in the MIT journal *October* in 1980, places Sherman's work squarely within the framework of postmodernism. Sherman's Untitled Film Stills are on offer here as exemplary of postmodernism's allegorical mode and deconstructive impulse. In "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," Douglas Crimp, writing in the same year, follows Owens in an exploration of the contours of postmodernism, paying special attention to its positioning within photographic activities. He argues that postmodern photographic art like that produced by Sherrie Levine, Richard Prince, and, specifically, Cindy Sherman, contributes to the deconstruction of art's aura. The aura of a postmodern work of art, he argues, functions through absence rather than presence and, in this reversal, constitutes a displacement that reveals any aura to be only an aspect of the copy.

Norman Bryson also reads Sherman's work as deeply influenced by a postmodern visual regime. In his essay, "House of Wax," Bryson argues that Sherman is one of a number of artists that, in the face of postmodernism, turned to abjection as a means of evoking the horror of the real. Hal Foster's essay, originally published in *October* and further developed in his 1996 book *The Return of the Real*, similarly turns on Sherman's early 1990s preoccupation with trauma and abjection. He argues that this work is part of a larger art interest in the problem of the real—an interest spurred by poststructuralist postmodern theoretical models that bury the real behind discourse, and in the realm of the visual, conceal the real behind a screen or image repertoire. Foster's argument is indebted to Laura Mulvey's important 1991 essay—also included in Burton's volume. Like Mulvey, Foster argues that Sherman's work follows a trajectory in which the body is turned inside out. While Mulvey reads this turning inside out as offering a shift in perspective that defetishizes the female body, Foster enriches this argument with Lacanian theoretical observations in order to draw out the relationship between, on the one hand, the imaginary, symbolic, and the real, and, on the other hand, the object-gaze, the image-screen, and the subjects of representation.

Whereas Foster pushes Mulvey's argument in a new direction, Rosalind Krauss is deeply critical of Mulvey's readings. In fact, Krauss takes aim at both Mulvey and Williamson for investing Sherman's work with feminist intention and for taking it up as work that offers clear statements about images of women, the female body, and the gendered structures of the gaze. "Cindy Sherman-Untitled," Krauss's theoretically sophisticated and trenchant analysis, which was originally prepared for a 1993 catalogue and was subsequently reproduced in her 1999 book *Bachelors*, demands a careful treatment of Sherman's imagery. She deals not with its thematic content (i.e., the signified), but rather examines and explores the formal photographic codes that Sherman employs as signifiers. To "rush headlong for the signified, the content, the constructed meaning" (134) of a specific image is, in Krauss's view, not only to refuse the artist the work she has done, but also to get caught up at the level of myth.

Krauss emphasizes the formal codes of Sherman's photographic practice as a way to move beyond mythic readings that focus on character and intention. Kaja Silverman, on the other hand, foregrounds the field of vision into which the images and the characters constructed within them circulate. In "How to Face the Gaze," Silverman addresses Sherman's Untitled Film Stills in order to explore and test Lacan's suggestion that mimicry can be conceived as a form of agency. She treats the figures in the stills as characters who struggle to represent themselves and to get themselves seen in the field of vision. Mimicry, she argues, might well be a form of agency, but it is, ultimately, one that is hemmed in by the constraints of cultural intelligibility and the material realities of embodiment.

Johanna Burton wraps up this wide-ranging exploration of Cindy Sherman's work with her own "A Body Slate," the only essay written specifically for this volume, the only one written after 1996, and thus the only text to address Sherman's fascinating contemporary figurative work. Burton directs attention to what she calls the "relentless—if ever shifting—corporeality" (198) of Sherman's oeuvre, insisting that the work ought to be aligned with the conventions and practices of body art. By placing Sherman's imagery in this context, Burton is able to dislodge it from critical discourses of photography and theories of the gaze. Instead of conceiving Sherman's characters as passive victims of a dominating masculine gaze, Burton insists that "Sherman slyly reverses the presumed hierarchy between viewer and object" (207)—the viewer here is transfixed by an image that offers only "radical superficiality" (207). Moreover, she suggests that Sherman's most recent work is structured according to a feminine aggressivity in which characters are mobilized as armor against what Amelia Jones has called a projective eye.[3] Many of the essays included in Burton's volume highlight the gendered aspect of the work. For Williamson and Mulvey, Sherman's work stands as a feminist response to representations of women in patriarchal social orders. Others recognize Sherman's significance within the field of feminist visual studies: Solomon-Godeau considers the discursive placement of Sherman as a woman artist within the field of visual art; Silverman and Burton use Sherman's work to establish new feminist modes of theorizing visuality. For readers interested in questions of gender in/and representation, Burton has more to offer than Durand's exhibition catalogue. Although I commend Durand for his thorough and visually appealing text, and I commend Burton for a project that draws together the most important theoretical work to be inspired by Sherman's photographic practice, I'm left wondering about the significance and

impact of her current and ongoing work, specifically as it relates to feminist art criticism and feminist visual culture. Why, for instance, has there been what Burton describes as a "dearth of risky writing" (196) on Sherman since the mid-1990s? What might a sustained critical examination of Sherman's oeuvre— including work produced after 2000— offer to what art critic Arthur C. Danto once called Sherman Studies? What, moreover, might be gained from an examination of Sherman's most recent works from a feminist perspective? The gaps in these texts seem to indicate that there is much to be gained from a fresh look at images that continue to fascinate spectators and critics. A fresh look at Sherman that examines the works' current significance for feminist cultural production and scholarship strikes me as a needed move for understanding the semantic mobility of her work, and for understanding the contours of feminist visual culture studies. Framed this way, critics and art historians can begin to ask new, compelling, contemporary questions about Sherman's parade of Untitleds. •

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Notes

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1. It was reproduced as "Cosmetics and Abjection" in Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity* (London: British Film Institute, 1996) and in Morag Shiach, *Feminism and Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001).
2. See, for instance, Mulvey's *Death 24X a Second* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).
3. See Amelia Jones, "Tracing the Subject With Cindy Sherman," in *Cindy Sherman: Retrospective* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 33-54.

Kiki Smith: A Gathering, 1980-2005

by Siri Engberg, with contributions by Linda Nochlin, Lynne Tillman, and Marina Warner
Walker Art Center, 2005

Reviewed by Patricia Briggs

Artists and critics with an interest in feminist aesthetics, gender, and the body have ruminated over the sculpture, prints, and drawings of Kiki Smith (b. 1954) since the late 1980s. Following decades during which progressive artists had all but rejected the representation of the figure, Smith's aesthetic representations of fragile internal organs, disengaged body parts, and figures performing abject postures played a critical role in reintegrating images of the human figure into contemporary art. Often made from materials that suggest human flesh or reference women's traditional crafts, Smith's work features a stark materiality, which rejects both classical idealization and popular culture's fetishization of the body. Without appearing didactic or prescriptive, Smith's work of the past three decades has contributed significantly to the development of a critical discourse that has re-conceptualized representations of the body in light of feminist, psychoanalytic, and poststructuralist theories. Produced in conjunction with the first full-scale exhibition of this artist's work presented in the United States, *Kiki Smith: A Gathering*, with its black-edged book block and a striking cover featuring a mane of tangled dark hair, is itself a beautiful object that mirrors the aesthetic of the artist.

Since 1990, when the first thin exhibition catalogue devoted to Smith's work appeared,[1] many small exhibition catalogues and brochures have been published; yet surprisingly few substantial books have been devoted to this prolific artist. Though lavishly illustrated and with informative and perceptive essays, the Museum of Modern Art's 2003 catalogue, *Kiki Smith: Prints, Books & Things*, is too narrowly focused to be considered a definitive source.[2] Helaine Posner's 1998 monograph, with an essay by the author, an interview with the artist, and 140 color plates, approximates the achievement of the Walker Art Center catalogue.[3]

The most comprehensive publication on the artist to date, *Kiki Smith: A Gathering* includes an interview, three critical essays, 134 color plates, an exhibition history, an extensive bibliography, and *Thicket*, a visual essay. The visual essay has become one of the artist's signatures, since the early 1990 ICA catalogue was composed almost entirely of Smith's snapshots and handwritten texts. In 2001 Smith created *Bedlam*, a collection of images featuring photographs of herself dressed as Red Riding Hood, for *Kiki Smith: Telling Tales*, a small book authored by Smith and Posner in conjunction with an exhibition at the International Center for Photography.[4] In the Walker catalogue Smith's *Thicket* links the artist's journey with nature and fertility by weaving together photographs of landscapes and artfully composed shots of her works. We see a tree-lined path, a photograph of the artist lost in thought, a black bird, egg and sperm-like worm shapes, and branchy forms that suggest growth. The "essay" closes with a detail of the thoughtful face of one of Smith's bronze nudes. Writing of *Thicket*, Walker Art Center curator Siri Engberg notes that Smith is interested in exploring the ways that "her own work can be reenvisioned and renarrated when viewed in detail through the selectivity of the camera's lens" (28). With *Thicket*, the artist presents a compelling tale of creativity, birth, and renewal.

Engberg's "Introduction: Making Things" offers a useful overview of Smith's development, starting with the artist's childhood spent as a "studio assistant" to her father, the sculptor Tony Smith, and concluding with *Homespun Tales*, her contribution to the 2005 Venice Biennale. Sketching in as

backdrop highlights of feminist and women's art of the 1970s onward, Engberg outlines Smith's oeuvre. Noting her major exhibitions and identifying key influences, Engberg traces the artist's collaborative projects during the 1970s and early 1980s, and her 1985 training as an emergency medical technician and the coincident emergence of images of body parts and internal organs in her art. Throughout the 1990s Smith's exploration of human gesture and bodily functions gives way to a preoccupation with animals, celestial imagery, and fairytale and mythological narratives. Highlighting her sensitivity to the poetic and conceptual resonances of her materials, Engberg also underscores the way that Smith often shapes new meaning for sculptures in the manner in which she installs them. Particularly sensitive to the way the artist melds her domestic and studio life—"Smith once called herself a 'housewife artist'"(19)—Engberg examines Smith's exploration of "traditionally feminine practices, such as embroidery, sewing, papier-mâché, and dyeing" (21), concluding with a discussion of *Homespun Tales*, exhibited at the Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice. Installed in a Renaissance palazzo decorated with domestic scenes painted by Pietro Longhi during the eighteenth century, Smith's installation features "vignettes based on her ideas of early American domestic environments" (28). Participating in a dialogue with and across history, Smith presents "full-scale bronze figures and delicate small figurines, furniture, blankets, and household objects, all inspired by the women depicted in the Longhi paintings" (28).

Noted feminist art historian Linda Nochlin, in "Unholy Postures: Kiki Smith and the Body," places Smith's approach to the body in art historical context at the same time that she analyzes the subject in light of the "history of violence and its representation" (31). Describing works such as *Tale* (1992), which depicts a woman crawling with "filthy buttocks and [a] rectum from which emerges a literal 'tail' of shit—or perhaps a long, long intestine, or both" (31), Nochlin reminds the reader that Smith's representations of the female body challenge the classical ideal in ways that continue to shock viewers' sensibilities today. Identifying postures of "abjection and degradation" in Smith's work, Nochlin argues that these positions occur in life "when a body succumbs to pain or torture and becomes merely the victim of an external force" (32). Seeing echoes of the "accounts of modern torture in Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* or the annals of Amnesty International," Nochlin likens Smith's rhetoric of implied pain and suffering to the representation of horrors shown in medieval altarpieces chronicling the martyrdom of Christian saints—Saint Bartholomew being burned or Saint John boiled alive (31).

For Nochlin, Smith's images of tormented women embody suffering in ways that Christian martyrs do not. Saints receive their torture but appear not to feel pain; a martyr's flesh dies yet his or her soul is victorious. There is no such "compensatory redemption" in Smith's art, writes Nochlin (36). Even would-be female heroines are shown in such a way that "undercuts their traditional dignity" (35), as in *Lot's Wife* (1993-96), showing the biblical figure at the moment she is transformed into stone with "scabby rough hide" instead of "smooth skin" (35), and *Virgin Mary* (1992; Fig. 1) showing Christ's mother as "bald, nude, and flayed like an anatomical *écorché*" (35). Nochlin concludes that unlike the bodies of saints, which are transformed and delivered by the pain they endure on earth, Smith's bodies are "ephemeral, debased, and mortal." They endure a kind of Hell on earth; their abjection is "deeply inscribed in the human flesh … eternal, unbearable, irredeemable" (36). Although Smith's vulnerable figures are often associated with the AIDS epidemic or issues of violence against women, Nochlin suggests a new reading by associating them with victims of torture and war crimes. Smith's art is, then, the creation of "the sensitive moral imagination in tune with the vicissitudes of our terrible times" (36). With images of the Abu Ghraib prison tortures, videotaped beheadings, and daily news reports of war casualties in mind, Nochlin offers a twenty-first-century reading of Smith's art.



Fig. 1. Kiki Smith, *Virgin Mary* (1992), beeswax, microcrystalline wax, cheesecloth, and wood on steel base, 67 1/2" x 26", x 14 1/2". Courtesy the artist and Pace Wildenstein, New York.

Marina Warner's understanding of Smith's work in "Wolf-girl, Soul-bird: The Mortal Art of Kiki Smith" counters Nochlin's rather dark interpretation. Warner, well known for her analysis of female characters in religious and mythical narratives, reads Smith's cast of female characters (Eve, Lilith, Daphne, Magdalene, etc.) and her renderings of animals (wolf, bird, deer, cat, lizard, monkey) as "a new mythological bestiary for our time" (43). Akin to symbolic figures in religious iconography, the characters in Smith's art become charged with symbolic meaning. "[T]raditionally scorned" figures like witches, harpies, snakes, and monstrous hybrids "gain value and positive power" (44). These symbolically charged characters are guides or companions for the artist; they give her strength as she aesthetically explores difficult philosophical terrain. Surrounded by her "city of ladies" and her animal "companion-helpers," Smith

has "confronted hideous possibilities and dealt with adversaries and harm, separation and grief " (43). Smith returns again and again to the most difficult of subjects, death. With her drawings of taxidermied animals ("cotton still over their eyes"), references to dead crows, and sculptured figures hung as in effigy, rather than turning away from death, Smith studies it, accepts it; she is drawn to its mystery (50).

Recognizing Smith's interest in Catholicism, Warner identifies in her work a preoccupation with the themes of birth, rebirth, and spirit or soul. Birds and moths appear often as symbols of the soul or spirit (50) and Smith often turns to narratives of "female resurrections" from familiar folktales. The lithograph *Born* (2001) features Red Riding Hood and her grandmother embracing as they emerge from the bloody belly of a wolf (51). As in child's play or religious ritual, in Smith's art the most "paltry, even despised, street and household items (detritus, doilies, souvenir figurines, tattoo-parlor patterns)" undergo a kind of transubstantiation and are transformed into the "marvelous" (45). At the same time that the abject and maligned become sensuous and beautiful in Smith's art, Warner argues that the viewer's sensibilities, too, are recalibrated as they encounter it. Her work "realigns physical responses to physical phenomena and fosters a new creative empathy" (44). Significantly, whereas Nochlin sees power in its acceptance of the corruptibility of the flesh, Warner argues that in Smith's world, the abject and lowly (animals, women, the disenfranchised) are repositioned and revalued within the order of things. "Smith is one of a number of artists, writers, and thinkers who are at work redrafting the map of creation, where man no longer lords over it and where humans must acknowledge their kinship with animals" (53). Comparing Smith to Marianne Moore, Rachel Carson, and Ursula LeGuin, Warner argues that Smith rethinks categories—even biologies—in such a way that women and animals are no longer subordinate or disparaged. In Smith's work, then, there are glimpses of a world where "negation transmutes into plentitude" (53).

Even with its essays by noted scholars, expansive bibliography, and well-documented exhibition history, this catalogue's most notable feature is the quality and quantity of black and white photographs and color plates. The chronology and end pages offer informal shots of Smith's life and studio, giving the reader an intimate and compelling view of the artist's life. There are family photographs of the artist as a young girl and as a teenager, installation shots of notable exhibitions, and documentation of lesser-known, ephemeral projects. The image quality and layout of the color plates are superb. At times the reproduction of a single work fills two pages allowing the reader to see subtle details in texture or color that would not be visible in the more customary single-page reproduction. Great care has been taken, not only to present installation views of Smith's sculptural works, but also to adjust the size and layout of each reproduction in a way that engages viewers' sense of touch as well as their sense of sight. Paging through this extraordinarily beautifully designed catalogue, one truly feels the powerful presence of Smith's art. •

Patricia Briggs is Associate Professor at Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Her article "Matisse's Odalisque and the Photographic *Académie*" was recently published in *History of Photography,* and her writing appears in *Artforum International*, *Art Papers*, *Public Art Review,* and *Sense and Society*.

NOTES

1. Institute of Contemporary Art/Amsterdam, *Kiki Smith*. (The Hague: Sdu Publishers, 1990).
2. Wendy Weitman, *Kiki Smith: Prints, Books & Things*. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2003).
3. Helaine Posner, *Kiki Smith*. (Boston: Bulfinch Press/Little Brown, 1998). With an interview by David Frankel.
4. Helaine Posner, *Kiki Smith: Telling Tales* (New York: International Center for Photography, 2001).

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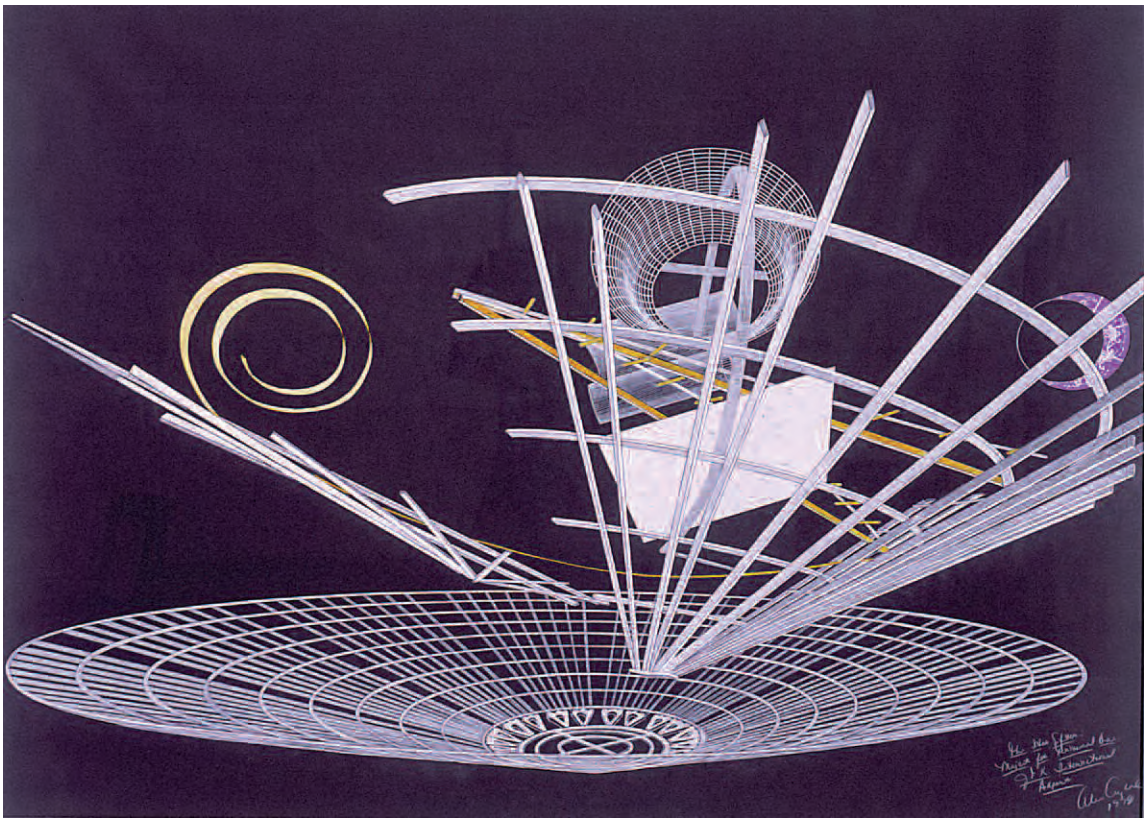
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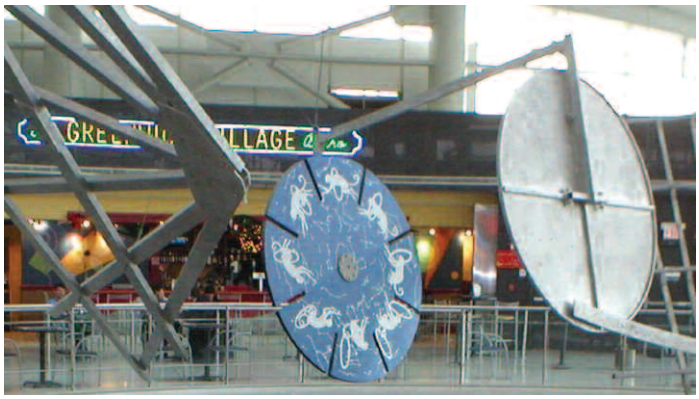
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Pl. 1. Alice Aycock, *Star Sifter* (Rotunda Project for Terminal One, JFK International Airport) (1998), stainless steel, aluminum, motorized parts, H. 40′ x W. 60′, with suspended elements of varying heights. Courtesy of the artist.



Pl. 2. Alice Aycock, proposal for *Star Sifter* (1998). Ink and colored pencil on black paper, 48″ x 71″. Private collection. Courtesy of the artist.



Pl. 3. Alice Aycock, *Star Sifter* (1998), detail of zoetrope. Photo: Mary Tinti.

Pl. 4. Alice Aycock, *Strange Attractor for Kansas City* (Long Term Parking Facility, Kansas City [Missouri] International Airport) (2007), aluminum, neon, halogen lights, H. 42′ x L. 26′ x W. 30′6″. Courtesy of the artist.





Pl. 5. Alice Aycock, *Ghost Ballet for the East Bank Machineworks*, (Nashville, Tennessee) (2005-07) aluminum, neon, thermoformed acrylic shapes, c. L.100′ x H.100′ x D. 60′. Courtesy of the artist.



Pl. 6. Alice Aycock, *The Uncertainty of Ground State Fluctuations (for Clayton, Missouri)* (2007), structural and spun aluminum, fiberglass, thermoformed acrylic, c. H. 19′ x W. 20′ x D. 20′. Courtesy of the artist.



Pl. 7. Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Pancho Villa and La Adelita* (c. 1927), oil on canvas, 25 5/9" x 17 3/4".



Pl. 8. Lola Cueto, *Fountain* (c. 1925), cotton thread woven on wax, 28 1/8" x 18 1/8".



Pl. 9. Rosario Cabrera, *Portrait of Nahui Olin* (c. 1921), oil on canvas, 18″ x 14″.



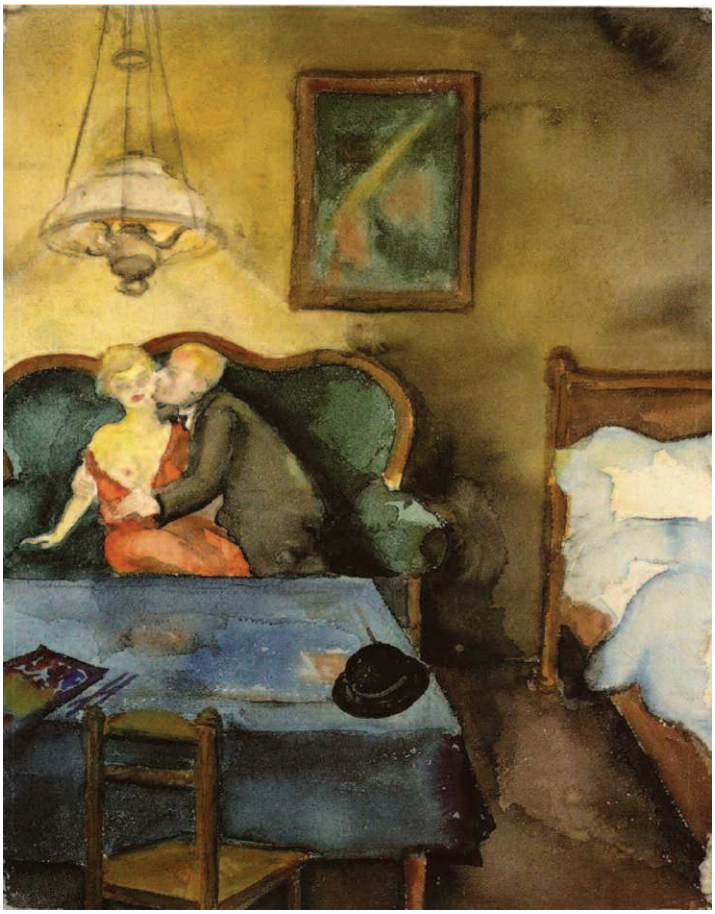
Pl. 10. Rosario Cabrera, *Portrait of Fernando Leal* (c. 1922), oil on board, 39 1/2″ x 31 1/2″.



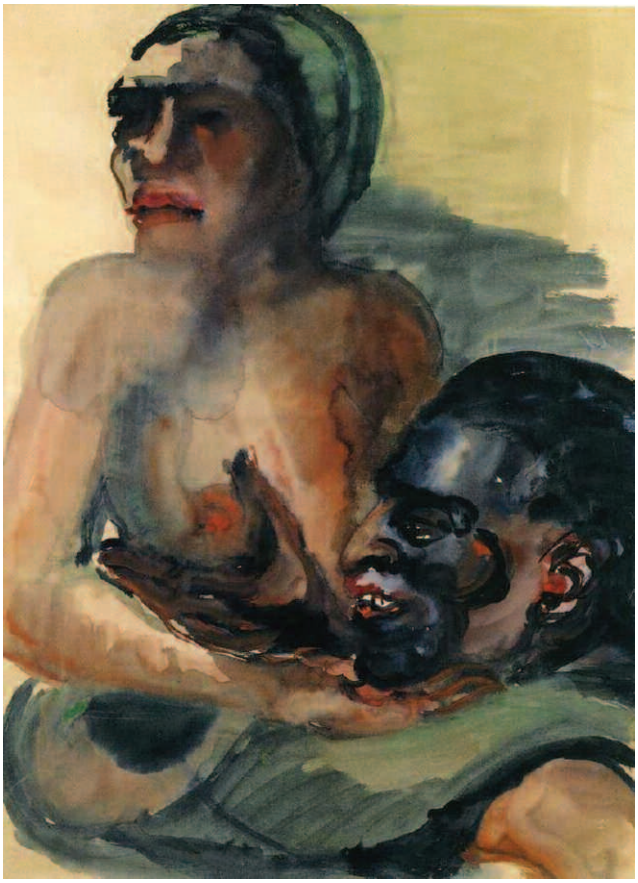
Pl. 11. Nahui Olin, *Self-Portrait in the Gardens of Versailles* (c. 1920s), oil on board, 46 1/2″ x 39 1/2″.



Pl. 12. Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, Lissy (1931), watercolor and pencil, 26 3/4" x 19 1/4". Courtesy Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler Foundation, Hamburg.



Pl. 13. Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, Lovers (1922-23), watercolor, 14 1/4" x 11 1/4". Courtesy Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler Foundation, Hamburg.



Pl. 14. Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, Lovers (1930), watercolor, 25 3/8" x 18 3/4". Courtesy Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler Foundation, Hamburg.



Pl. 15. Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, Herbert Street/St. Pauli (1930), watercolor, 22 5/8" x 20". Courtesy Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler Foundation, Hamburg.



Pl. 16. Projecta Casket (4th century), Gilded silver, 22″ x 17″ x 11 1/4″. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Pl. 17. *Moses and the Daughters of the Pharaoh* (432-440), Mosaic, 4′11″ x 6′8″. Scala/Art Resource, New York.

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