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(on the cover): Maya Lin,
Storm King Wavefield (2008),
earthwork covering 4 acres of
11-acre site. Collection of the
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Mountainville, New York.
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Dept. of Art History, Voorhees Hall
628 North Second St.
71 Hamilton Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123, USA
New Brunswick, NJ 08901, USA Phone: +1.215.925.4390
Phone (732) 932-7041 ext. 20 Fax: +1.215.925.4371
Fax (732) 932-1261 info@oldcitypublishing.com
waj@womansartjournal.org www.oldcitypublishing.com

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To celebrate the thirtieth year of Woman's Art Journal, a conference was held at Rutgers University on April 3, 2009. Participating in this event were speakers Robert Hobbs, Dina Comisarenko, Midori Yoshimoto, and Tatiana Flores. All have written for the journal during its three decades of publication. The conference concluded with remarks by Founding Editor Elsa Honig Fine. Following are excerpts Robert Hobbs's presentation, titled "Celebrating 30 Years of Woman's Art Journal: Feminist Deconstruction of Mainstream Art History."

The vitality of artistic movements in the 20th century can frequently be calculated in terms of the range, quality, and depth of the periodicals that have been created with the express purpose of disseminating information about them.... Considering the contributions *WAJ* has made, it is remarkable to note that it was originally financed through the sale of an antique \$20 gold piece at the height of 1980's gold fever.

Elsa Honig Fine had first become aware of the importance of the women's art movement in 1972 when she attended the organizational meeting of the Women's Caucus for Art in San Francisco during the College Art Association's annual conference. This meeting convinced her of the movement's relevance to the visual arts, and encouraged her to write *Women and Art*, published in 1978...a historical overview of women painters and sculptors from the Renaissance to the 20th century.... After originally proposing a journal on women and the arts to the Women's Caucus for Art at the 1979 meeting in Washington, D.C., Elsa Fine undertook the project on her own.... Enunciating the program for her new periodical, Fine pointed out: "While primarily concerned with recording a hidden heritage, we are also interested in a reinterpretation of art history from our new awareness as women...."

WAJ was to be international in its focus, a goal that Fine pursued over the years by travelling to the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and Israel in order to meet and enlist prospective scholars to submit manuscripts of their studies. Fine wanted *WAJ* to be "a vehicle for the exchange of ideas and for honest criticism"... Rather than advocating an art historical or critical position, the journal's strength has been its open-endedness, including its refusal to take sides in the internecine conflicts that have plagued the feminist movement....

Although *WAJ*'s organization was responsive, peripatetic, and opportune, depending entirely on the inclination and interests of submitting scholars, names of survivors in need of recognition, and the ever mounting spate of publication of books and catalogues devoted to women, its role in the world of mainstream art history is large. While it has and continues to include traditional art historical essays, its overall impact has not been the reinforcement of conventional (meaning paternalistic) art history.... Considered categorically, *WAJ* has in fact undermined many of the assumptions of mainstream art history. It is my contention that *WAJ*'s primary focus as the premier art historical periodical devoted exclusively to women's contributions to the visual arts as well as its longevity have enabled it to assume a significant role in deconstructing

the mainstream—that is the patriarchal art history that was still practiced in the 1970s and early 1980s. Although *WAJ* has published essays representing a number of art historical approaches that range from old-fashioned, predominately biographical insights to more advanced, subtly nuanced theoretically conditioned arguments, its overall deconstructive contributions have been far more important than any specific group of essays or single issue....

Deconstruction has opened up the possibility of theorizing and then discerning new subject positions where only enunciated or polarized ones were thought to exist. Although any subject will ultimately deconstruct itself over time, the process can be accelerated with the right set of incentives, and I'm suggesting that the women's movement in general and *WAJ* in particular did in fact accelerate the deconstruction of mainstream art history—keeping its masculinist feet to the fire, so to speak—by providing new means of access and ways of understanding.... The changes feminism in general and *WAJ* in particular have enacted on patriarchal art history...have discrete life spans: once feminist art history becomes mainstream, as it now is, the terms change, the sphere of history makes an about turn, and now feminist art as a branch of mainstream art history needs to become deconstructed....

Today the challenges facing *WAJ* are vastly different from those at its inception. Feminism's acceptance into the mainstream brings with it new as well as familiar challenges. While masculinist inequities still persist, and the contributions of worthwhile women artists, critics, art historians, collectors and arts administrators still need to be acknowledged and celebrated, as they have been in the *WAJ*, the terms "woman" and "man" have assumed new subject positions for many people, and consequently different relationships and meanings. The result of this repositioning of male and female roles is that feminism in many guises needs to be updated and at times deconstructed. More self-criticality and historical self-consciousness are warranted, not only in regards to the time before the advent of mid-twentieth century feminism but also in the period since then....

The journal is very fortunate in having such highly professional and conscientious co-editors as Joan Marter and Margaret Barlow in addition to its admirable book editor Ute Tellini. It's also a testament to its importance and continued relevance to the art historical field at large that it is being published under the auspices of Rutgers University's Department of Art History. My sincere appreciation to all of you who continue to make this periodical a valuable forum for new scholarship on women in the visual arts. In conclusion, let me say, "Bravo," for a job very well done.

Robert Hobbs

*The Rhoda Thalheimer Endowed Chair of Art History
Virginia Commonwealth University
Visiting Professor, Yale University*

MAYA LIN'S PERPETUAL LANDSCAPES AND STORM KING WAVEFIELD

By Dina Deitsch



Fig. 1. Maya Lin, *Storm King Wavefield* (2008), earthwork covering 4 acres of 11-acre site. Collection of the Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, New York. © Maya Lin, Maya Lin Studio. Photo: Jerry L. Thompson.

In Spring of 2009, as trees blossomed in the Hudson Highlands along the New York State Thruway, Storm King Art Center in Mountainville officially opened Maya Lin's *Storm King Wavefield* (cover and Fig. 1). The sculpture park's very first earthwork in its forty-nine-year history, at four acres, is Lin's largest site-specific art installation to date.

Storm King Wavefield (Pl. 1) is the third and final work in a series that includes the smaller-scale *Wave Field* (1995; Pl. 2) in Ann Arbor, and *Flutter* (2005; Pl. 3) in Miami, outdoor works that also explore water-wave formations in earth and grass. In

this most recent iteration, seven rows of grass-covered mounds, or waves, are set within a shallow basin at the Art Center's southern edge, reaching from ten to fifteen feet high, with a determination to rise over the heads of visitors as they walk among them.¹ An immersive earth sculpture, *Storm King Wavefield* relies on the fusion of opposites—land and water, solidity and fluidity, visibility and concealment—to remake the landscape into a new perceptual experience.

In fact, Maya Lin (b.1959) has been exploring the "place where opposites meet" for over two decades, merging

materials, disciplines, and discourses, in a practice that befittingly spans architecture, memorial design, sculpture, and art installation.² She explains: "I feel I exist on the boundaries. Somewhere between science and art, art and architecture, public and private, east and west....I am always trying to find a balance between these opposing forces, finding the place where opposites meet...existing not on either side but on the line that divides."³ As varied as her career has been, it is unified by a deep interest in creating and reassessing our experience with and understanding of the landscape. Her installations underscore and question our physical, perceptual, and conceptual interactions with environments, growing in recent years into a more overt ecological activism. It is the relationship between humans and nature that lies at the core of Lin's work.

Sited at the very edge of a property and merging the basic elements of earth and water, *Storm King Wavefield* provides viewers with an utterly novel awareness of the landscape. In this respect, Lin's newest earthwork reflects and expands on the central issues of her work—those being liminality, participation, phenomenology, and ecology. These affinities are highlighted throughout Lin's oeuvre.

Storm King Wavefield is situated just beyond British sculptor Andy Goldsworthy's *Storm King Wall* (1997-98), a five-foot serpentine wall of stones collected from the property that wends its way 2,278 feet, over a hill and through the pond, winding in and out of trees in a playful take on the implied divisions of old stone walls. Lin decided to site her work south of this re-created boundary, in a basin that was originally a gravel pit, hidden at that time from the public, although central to the "unofficial history" of Storm King.⁴ While seemingly a natural landscape, with rolling hills and valleys punctuated by impressive modernist and postmodernist outdoor sculpture, Storm King Art Center is and always has been a human-made construction. The gravel on the property was leftover material from the construction of the Thruway that borders the property and runs alongside Lin's project. When the Art Center opened in 1960, the pit occupied several acres of its land, and over the years the gravel has been used to shape the park, sculpting hills and creating sites for specific large-scale sculpture. These gravel hilltops, now covered with grass, hold iconic works by Alexander Calder, Isamu Noguchi, and Kenneth Snelson.

Eight years ago, when Storm King Chairman H. Peter Stern invited Lin to propose a project, he remembers that she gravitated immediately to this peripheral site, rich with Storm King's history and mission. It was unclear at the time if the gravel pit could actually be used for sculpture. Since the area was technically a mine, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation had to approve its reclamation as an artwork.⁵ Lin proposed other projects in the interim but kept returning to the gravel pit.⁶ Ultimately, thanks to Lin's own environmental concerns and enthusiasm, as well as that of the area's reclamation specialist, Halina W. Duda, the Art Center received approval for *Storm King Wavefield* as a land reclamation project on Lin's chosen site.

Stones and gravel from the pit provided at least 60 percent of the material used to sculpt the waves; the remainder was made up of organic soil covered with local grasses that are

sustainable and organic. Working with Frank Tantillo, a landscaper, Lin and the Art Center devised natural water drainage systems to wick away collecting water from the sloping ground, avoiding plastic and other nonorganic materials. To offset the carbon footprint from Lin's frequent driving trips from Manhattan, where she has lived and worked since 1986, to Mountainville (about 55 miles north), Storm King agreed to plant up to 500 trees along the border between *Wavefield* and, appropriately enough, the New York State Thruway.⁷

Lin's choice of location and materials underlies her rethinking of this landscape in terms of the site's connection to a sustainable ecosystem. Similarly, the viewer's experience of *Storm King Wavefield* inspires a reassessment of the environment on a physical and perceptual level. In the spirit of 1960s-era earthworks, which were so inflected by concepts of phenomenological perception, Lin's installation is meant to be both seen and felt. Walking along the crests of the waves, down the steep grades of each mound, and then around the surrounding basin inspires playfulness, and at the same time provides an ever-changing view of the landscape. It offers new perspectives of the mountains and rolling hills that encompass the site and are echoed in the waves.

Experienced on foot at a rapid pace, the rising and quickly dropping slopes can make your stomach flip; but in the lower troughs, caught between the rising walls of grass, there is an instant feeling of safety and security. In this same moment, walking through the high corridors of waves, a water allusion returns, as perhaps in the biblical evocation of the Red Sea dividing. As these grass waves routinely break, they retain a human scale and rhythm so they never are completely overwhelming. In this, *Storm King Wavefield* makes the visitor wholly aware of the immediate, surrounding environment, both physically and conceptually.

Asked how her work fits into the legacy of Earth Art, dominated by the popular male pantheon of Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, and Walter De Maria, Lin acknowledges their formative influence on her thinking but notes that much of their iconic work was about mark-making. Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), for example, is a large-scale drawing in rocks and earth, designed in part for the aerial photographs that have made it so famous. Heizer cut deep gouges into the ground for *Double Negative* (1969), while de Maria actually drew lines in the desert for *Two Parallel Lines* (1969), or spiked it with a field of metal rods for *Lighting Field* (1977). Lin says she is less interested in physically marking the earth than in creating environments or adjusting sites in a way that alters or increases a visitor's perception of the landscape. She explains, "I am interested in perception—psychological perception—in creating an experiential psychological space for viewers."⁸

Lin shares a greater affinity with the women practitioners of Earth Art such as Nancy Holt, whose *Sun Tunnels* (1973-76) were designed to make viewers aware of their surrounding space and the passage of time while introducing a human scale into the vastness of the desert. While Holt (who was married to Smithson) used a more overt visual intervention into the landscape compared to the clean aesthetic and hidden



Fig. 2. Maya Lin, *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1982). Washington, D.C. © Maya Lin, Maya Lin Studio, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York.

infrastructure of *Storm King Wavefield*, her *Sun Tunnels* is similarly focused on re-visioning the landscape for the viewer. Holt set four eighteen-foot concrete tunnels with nine-foot diameters in an open X-formation in the Utah desert, arranging them so that the rising and setting sun would be visually centered in the tunnels on the days of the solstices to mark “the yearly extreme positions of the sun on the horizon.”⁹ Each tunnel had a series of apertures cut into its upper half, referencing specific star constellations and noting the daily passage of time as sun spots move across the tunnel interior.

The experiential landscape first emerged in Lin’s best-known work, the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1982; Fig. 2), which she designed while still a senior at Yale University. The relatively low, minimalist V-shaped structure of black granite, carved with the names of the fallen in chronological order, marked a shift in memorial and monument building in this country by emphasizing a durational experience over the immediate impact of a raised, figurative statue. While the memorial’s clean lines and fusion with its site evoke earthworks and Minimalist sculpture, most immediately Richard Serra’s *Shift* series from 1970-72, these were not Lin’s starting point in conceiving the project. Her interest in carving into landscape stemmed from an aggregate of concepts—from ancient earth mounds to Japanese gardens to other ideas gleaned from her architectural history courses and readings at Yale, where she developed an interest in the perceptual and psychological experience of space.¹⁰ The memorial famously stirred much controversy when it was chosen in an open competition.¹¹ Ultimately, though, it struck the right emotional tenor for such a contested war by providing a space for solace, reflection, and grief. After opening to the public in November 1982, it was widely reported that the wall had an almost cathartic effect on visitors, as they would cry and interact with the carved names. It was even used by psychologists in their treatment of Vietnam-stress-syndrome.¹²

In describing her vision for the memorial, Lin has said that she envisioned a cut that would open up the earth and reveal itself, as if a healing wound:

I had a simple impulse to cut into the earth.

I imagined taking a knife and cutting into the earth, opening it up, an initial violence and pain that in time would heal....the initial cut would remain a pure flat surface in the earth with a polished, mirrored surface...It would be our interface, between our world and the quieter, darker more peaceful world beyond....

I never looked at the memorial as a wall, an object, but as an edge, to the earth, an opened side.¹³

In her hand-written proposal for the project, she described her vision:

Walking through this park-like area, the memorial appears as a rift in the earth—a long, polished black stone wall, emerging from and receding into the earth....

The memorial is composed not as an unchanging monument, but as a moving composition, to be understood as we move into and out of it; the passage itself is gradual.¹⁴

As Eugenie Tsai notes, in the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, Lin’s “conception of visitors as participants, whose perception is shaped by experience, emerges here, along with the propensity for ground hugging horizontality.”¹⁵ This emphasis on psychological perception and experience has infused a temporal dimension into many of Lin’s large-scale works, some of which also require the viewer/visitor’s passage (either physical or perceptual) through a text. This is the case with two later memorials that also feature text carved into smooth stone.

Civil Rights Memorial (1989; Fig. 3), in Montgomery, Alabama, offers a timeline of important dates of that movement as well as listing the names of forty individuals who lost their lives in the struggle. Lin found her inspiration for the design in words from the bible spoken by Martin Luther King in his “I have a dream speech”: “We are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until ‘justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream’” (Amos 5:24). The last dozen words of this line are inscribed above the



Fig. 3. Maya Lin, *The Civil Rights Memorial* (1989). The Southern Poverty Law Center, Montgomery, Alabama. © Maya Lin, Maya Lin Studio, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York. Photo: John O'Hagan. Courtesy Southern Poverty Law Center.



Fig. 4. Maya Lin, *Women's Table* (1993). Yale University, New Haven. © Maya Lin, Maya Lin Studio, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York. Photo: Norman McGrath.

table marked with the names and dates. Water flowing over surface causes the black granite itself to become reflective.

The Women's Table (1993; Fig. 4) at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, lists the number of women attendees at the school through the years. The memorial initially was intended to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of co-education at Lin's alma mater (1969-89). Because women had in fact been present there since the beginning, the memorial was, instead "dedicated to women at Yale."¹⁶ Configured as a spiral, the list displays "a set of historical facts, and these facts become a depiction of history.... The number of women at Yale grows ever larger, and though the spiral specifically traces Yale's enrollment figures, more generally it marks the emergence of women in modern society."¹⁷

Unlike the Vietnam memorial, these two memorials are table-shaped and feature water running cleanly along the granite and inviting visitors to touch the wet surface as they read the text. Again, there is a conscious fusion of opposites—of stone and water—but even more so, a fusion of different notions of time—that of the historical past with the immediate present. "This use of time," Lin explains, "brings viewers into a real-time experience of these works, allowing for their participation and making past events part of the actual time spent reading the work."¹⁸

The same sensitivity towards different forms of time emerges in Lin's earthworks that relate to the *Wave Field* family. *Eleven Minute Line* (2004; Pl. 4), a recent large scale earthwork by Lin for the Wanås Foundation, in Knislinge, Sweden, similarly plays on temporalities, and though it has no text, the imagery operates not unlike the way language functions in the text-based memorials. For *Eleven Minute Line*, Lin used the vocabulary of earth mounds or ancient burial sites to adjust the existing landscape into a type of meandering, elevated walkway. Inspired by the Serpent mounds in her native Ohio,

dated to 1000 B.C., Lin referenced ancient history to create a durational experience (eleven minutes to be exact) for visitors. A decade earlier, similar formations played into the creation of *Groundswell* (1992-93; Pl. 5), in which Lin sculpted forty-three tons of recycled shatterproof glass into a glittering sea of waves for the Wexner Center at Ohio State University. Set in a rooftop space, highly visible from the museum but out of dangerous reach, the mounds refer to water as well as earth. While the title refers to water, Lin called the work "a conscious effort...to combine my Eastern and Western cultural heritage—namely, mixing my affinity for the southeastern Ohio terrain and its regional burial mounds with my love for the raked-sand gardens of Japan."¹⁹

Although Lin has been occupied with landscape since the beginning of her career, she did not turn to large earthworks until 1995, with *Wave Field* (Fig. 5). Sited on the University of Michigan's Ann Arbor campus, it occupies a 100-by-100-foot site in front of the Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Aerospace building. Hemmed in by walkways, the essentially square field contains eight rows of waves created from built-up soil, sand, and sod, each no higher than three feet. Cognizant of life on a student campus, Lin proportioned the waves in this installation to be decisively and pleasantly human-scaled. Each wave was sized and shaped to make an excellent reading nook, and the field has become something of an outdoor reading room. The effect is that of the ground rising and swelling, but frozen mid-action. Although its scale is much smaller than that of *Storm King Wavefield*, this earlier work is similarly set at an angle to its site to avoid a strict rectilinear grid formation which would have muted the implied dynamics and undulation of the waves.²⁰ *Wave Field* marks the first time Lin sculpted the earth so directly, making no visible additions to the site (all of the added material is covered by the even texture of sod).

The second iteration of the wave field came about through a commission for the Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr., Federal Courthouse in Miami. *Flutter* (2005; Fig. 6), at 459 x 105 feet, is somewhat larger than *Wave Field* and was inspired by the confluence of water and sand of the Florida beaches. Contained areas of grass are again sculpted into frozen waves adjacent to a building. Both earthworks thus allow several possible viewpoints: from ground level, from among the waves, and from directly above, seen from a classroom or office window.

The *Wave Field* series is loosely based on a photograph of sea waves frozen in time, which Lin came across in her research for her commission for the Aerospace Building.²¹ In preparation for the University of Michigan project, Lin spoke with professors in the Aerospace Engineering department and delved into readings about fluid dynamics, aerodynamics, and turbulence.²² She found her immediate inspiration in *An Album of Fluid Motion* by Milton Van Dyke, specifically in a photograph of an even row of ocean waves used to illustrate turbulence, known as a stokes wave.²³ The idea of freezing these waves in earth, as in the photograph, appealed to Lin. It posed a way of capturing the impossible, a liminal moment, as waves can never remain still and have no definite form. "I spent hours looking at the ocean, trying to see a beginning or end, but of course there isn't one," she explains.²⁴

The "frozen" moment of the photograph that roots this imagery is of course itself a double-edged form of time as a combination of constant present-ness and past-ness. It has what Roland Barthes described as "spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority," or a having-been-there quality, while continually providing an image in the physical present.²⁵ On top of this duality, the realized image of the sculpted earth also provides opposing viewing experiences. *Wave Field* and *Flutter* offer both a visual image of the rolling ground when seen from a distance, as in the views from the classroom and courthouse windows above; and a durational, time-based experience of the sculpture, as students and members of the public approach, walk among, and even sit among or on the mounds.

Source imagery, such as the stokes wave photograph, has long been important to Lin's projects and speaks to her interest in seeing the land anew. This applies in equal measure to her sculpture and smaller-scale works (recent examples of which are in the exhibition "Systematic Landscapes," organized by the Henry Art Gallery of Seattle, and traveling to the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.). In works such as *2 x 4 Landscape* (2006; Fig. 7) or *Waterline* (2006; Fig. 8), Lin uses a single material—wood in the former and wire in the latter—to articulate natural forms, which, not surprisingly, echo the wave shapes of *Wave Field*, and to embody a landscape within the space—and materials—of architecture.²⁶ Lin derives this imagery from scientific data and new mapping technologies as



Fig. 5. Maya Lin, *Wave Field* (1995), 100' x 100'. FXB Aerospace Building, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. © Maya Lin, Maya Lin Studio, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York. Photo: Tim Thayer.

a means to explore the new ways we are now able to visualize our environment. *Waterline*, for example, is a line drawing in space of the underwater location of the world's most remote island, just off of Antarctica, which she acquired while working with scientists at Woods Hole research center.²⁷ Science and new imaging technologies have become an increasingly important component of her practice, as they have changed our relationship to landscape by altering our perceptions and providing new vantage points of the earth.²⁸

Lin's work is intrinsically connected to her environmental activism. She sculpts actual or figurative terrains that ask us to reconsider our surroundings. This is fully evident in the reclamation aspect of *Storm King Wavefield*. "What we don't see, we pollute," she explains.²⁹

In this environmentalism lies her strongest ties to the legacy of Earth Art. In the early 1970s, after *Spiral Jetty*, Robert Smithson, the movement's unofficial theorist, shifted away from creating new projects and turned his attention to pre-existing sites within which he could intervene. One of these was a series of land-reclamation projects for large, devastated industrial sites, such as the Bingham Copper Mining Pit in Utah. For this enormous open mine, he proposed a revolving disk at the base, from which one could witness nature slowly reclaiming the eroded and scarred ground. This followed his engagement with the picturesque landscape and ideas of entropy with which he had been grappling throughout his career. In his last published article, "Frederick Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape," Smithson argued for a notion of the picturesque that took into account the dialectic of the physical site and its temporal context.³⁰ He also wrote about earthworks as a vehicle for land



Fig. 6. Maya Lin, *Flutter* (2005), 459' x 105'. Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr. Federal Courthouse, Miami, Florida. © Maya Lin, Maya Lin Studio, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York. Photo: Robin Hill and Michael Cannell.

reclamation, and the need for artists to mediate between the ecologist and the industrialist. While Smithson's reclamation projects set a clear precedent for Lin, his interest in reusing mines was an aesthetic, theoretical proposition rather than an outright salvation project for the betterment of humanity. This is in clear contrast to Lin, a self-proclaimed environmentalist who sees her work increasingly moving into activism.

Storm King Wavefield's slippage into a reclamation project and the careful ecological consideration in its construction are no coincidence. Lin serves on the Board of Trustees of the Natural Resources Defense Council and is a former member of the Yale Corporation and the Energy Foundation. This aspect to Lin's form of reclamation once again finds its legacy in one of the few female earth artists, Agnes Denes (b. 1931). Imbuing environmental activism into her large-scale installations that traffic in materials of the earth: trees and wheat, Denes provides a model for Lin's recent earthworks. In *Wheatfield-A Contradiction* (1982), Denes set up a striking contrast between the rural and urban and American economic values by planting a two-acre wheat field in a Manhattan landfill that was to be Battery Park City (in clear view of Wall Street, the newly built World Trade Center, and the Statue of Liberty). Describing the work as "a symbol, a universal concept; it represented food, energy, commerce, world trade and economics. It referred to mismanagement, waste, world hunger and ecological concerns,"³¹ Denes harvested more than

a thousand pounds of wheat from one of the world's most expensive tracks of real estate. As a public art project and earthwork, *Wheatfield* directly engaged the topography of the landscape, in this case a landfill that required sifting and cleaning before planting, towards a productive and ecological result that was still rife with meaning and metaphor.

In a more overt gesture recognizing the global relationship to the environment, Denes proposed *Tree Mountain* in 1982, a project to plant 10,000 trees by 10,000 people according to a mathematically derived pattern. As a massive earthwork and monument, *Tree Mountain* was above all a land reclamation project designed to transform areas denuded by thoughtless development and over-mining. The proposal was realized in gravel pits of Ylöjärvi, Finland, between 1993 and 1996, with 11,000 trees planted by 11,000 people from all over the world as part of Finland's contribution to help alleviate the world's ecological stress.³² *Tree Mountain* is to be maintained for 400 years (four times the feasible lifetime of 100 years), in order to become, what Denes describes as, a "living time capsule...[which] can pass from being a curiosity to being a shrine, from being the possible remnants of a decadent era to being one of the monuments of a great civilization."³³ Like Denes's projects, Lin's *Wave Field* series and *Eleven Minute Line* use the materials of the

landscape to alter it. She reaches back to reference ancient monuments—the earth mounds—much like Denes's *Tree Mountain* evokes the timeless as a forest. Also significant, both *Storm King Wavefield* and *Tree Mountain* are sited on gravel pits.

Lin's practice, however, remains distinct from the Earth Arts mentioned above in that she routinely works in populated, if not often urban, locations. Smithson, Holt, and even Denes, placed their projects in remote areas as a way to re-engage with the American landscape (even *Wheatfield* was a low-traffic area as a landfill). Lin is interested in addressing the public where they are most readily found and offering them a new way of seeing their existing landscape.

Tree Mountains' global audience is something which Lin is beginning to address in her most current and directly environmental project, *What is Missing?* (2009), scheduled to open on Earth Day. Set within the Golden State Park, and a green architecture tour de force, it began as a commission from the San Francisco Arts Commission for the new Renzo Piano building for the California Academy of Sciences. It grew into Lin's only self-initiated memorial and is dedicated to the Earth itself. According to the artist, this is the fifth and final memorial in a series that began with the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, followed by the *Civil Rights Memorial*, *Women's Table*, and the *Confluence Project*, a work in progress to commemorate the journey of Lewis and Clark and the Native American tribes who lived in the regions they explored.

The intentionally amorphous *What is Missing?* challenges the very idea of a memorial or monument as a singular or static entity. Lin's design for the *Vietnam War Memorial* used a minimal vocabulary to stress an extended experience over the immediacy and grand statement of a large statue and palpably shifted the direction of American memorials, a phenomenon she hopes to repeat with this final memorial project. The new project is described by the artist as a multi-site and multimedia memorial designed to "focus our attention on species and places that have gone extinct or will most likely disappear within our lifetime."³⁴

Debuting as a permanent sound and media installation on the Academy's East Terrace on Earth Day 2009, *What is Missing?* will expand considerably over the following year into a website, multi-site video project, and book involving a number of international scientific and environmental organizations.³⁵ The website will feature a global map of the past, present, and future, through which to track the changing landscape and extinction patterns, as well as the interconnectivity between everyday actions (of buying groceries for instance) and their ecological impact (the forest from which the paper for the bags came from, the farms where the food traveled from, and the carbon footprint of that trek). The aim of the project is to not only focus on our rapid changing climate and the effects on our planet, but will serve as a locus of activism—informing people of what is being done and what can be done to help.

As a radical extension of her earthworks, Lin designed *What is Missing?* to provoke a hyper-awareness of the environment among the worldwide public, placing parts at various places around the world with lists of their extinct species. Rather than aiming at a limited, site-specific public, Lin has set her sights on a much larger, virtual and global audience, adjusting her work for the scale of the project. As with the photograph that inspired *Wave Field*, Lin uses compound temporalities (past, present, and future map) to expand our psychological perception of the landscape.

Opening just before Lin's final memorial and what she intends as her strongest ecological statement, *Storm King Wavefield* also reflects the most pressing issues in her oeuvre. Lin's interest in boundaries and edges emerge in its fusion of elements and locations—the land and sea; her emphasis on viewer participation and experience; and the environmental ramifications of its construction that speak to her growing activism. *Storm King Wavefield* thus sets out to exemplify the essence of Lin's architectural, memorial, and sculptural



Fig. 7. Maya Lin, *2 x 4 Landscape* (2006), wood, 10' x 52' 7" x 36'.
© Maya Lin, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York. Photo: Colleen Chartier.



Fig. 8. Maya Lin, *Water Line* (2006), aluminum tubing and paint, 19' x 34' 8" x 29' 2".
© Maya Lin, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York. Photo: Colleen Chartier.

projects: to "make people aware of their surroundings, not just the physical world but also the psychological world we live in."³⁶

Dina Deitsch is Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art at DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, Massachusetts, and a Ph.D. candidate in Art History at the Institute of Fine arts at New York University. Her dissertation examines the intersections of early video art and neo-avant-garde architecture. •

NOTES

1. Interview with Maya Lin, Jan. 16, 2009.
2. Classified as Art, Architecture, and Memorials on her studio website, Mayalin.com.
3. Maya Lin, *Boundaries* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 0:01-08.
4. Interview with David Collens, director and curator of Storm King Art Center, Dec. 18, 2008.
5. Ibid. According to Collens, one "need[s] approval to close a mine to be sure it is done correctly. For example, slopes cannot be too steep and also the correct grass mix [has to be] planted as specified for the site."
6. In fact, just one hour after receiving approval for another project, Lin called Collens and explained that she really had to return to the original site. Interview with the artist, Jan. 16, 2009.
7. See Carol Kino, "Once Inspired by a War, Now by the Land," *New York Times*, November 9, 2008.
8. Lin, Interview with the artist, Jan. 16, 2009.
9. Nancy Holt, "Sun Tunnels," *ArtForum* (April 1977): 32.
10. John Beardsley, "Hidden in Plain View: The Land Art of Maya Lin," *Systematic Landscapes* (Seattle, Univ. of Washington, Henry Art Gallery, and New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 2006), 87.
11. Lin's design was chosen by a jury from an open-call competition and was announced on May 6, 1981. Lin was a 21-year old undergraduate architecture student at the time and had submitted the design as the final project for a course on funerary architecture. Each arm of the V-shaped granite wall measures 200 feet, as they rise from the ground and converge at the center at a height of 10 feet. The ground rises to the back of the wall. The east arm points directly to the Washington Monument, the west to the Lincoln Memorial.
After Lin's design was publicly chosen, controversy erupted. The *National Review* published an editorial on September 18, 1981, that called the memorial anti-war because of its black color and V-shape, that implied a peace sign. In all, the seemingly unobtrusive and abstract quality, i.e., the non-traditional design, of the memorial seemed a diminished tribute to some veterans. After a public meeting and the staunch protest of veteran Tom Carhart, among others, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (a non-profit organization dedicated to creating the memorial) ultimately compromised and agreed to add a flag pole and a figurative sculpture of soldiers by sculptor Frederick Hart. After much debate, it was agreed to place the two together 120 feet to the side of the standing memorial to form an entrance. When it finally opened to the public on November 13, 1982, "praise for Lin's completed memorial in the press was almost universal." See Nicholas Capasso, "Vietnam Veterans Memorial," in *Writings About Art* (Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994), 326, 316-31.
12. Ibid., 326.
13. Lin, *Boundaries*, 4:10-11.
14. Proposal reprinted in Lin, *Boundaries*, 4:05.
15. Eugenie Tsai, "Walking the Field," *Wanås 2004: Maya Lin* (Knislinge, Sweden: Wanås Foundation, 2004), 38.
16. Lin, *Boundaries*, 4:38. On women at Yale since 1869, see for example, Betsy Fahlman, "Women Art Students at Yale, 1869-1913: Never True Sons of the University," *WAJ*, 12:1 (1991): 15-23.
17. Ibid., 4:39.
18. Ibid., 2:05.
19. Ibid., 6:17.
20. Ibid., 6:21.
21. Research is an enormous part of the artist's design process, and sometimes occupies her for months before she begins to devise a concept. Lin calls these investigations "crash courses" and attributes this tendency to her academic diligence—a consequence, perhaps, of being raised by academic parents. Her father was a ceramicist and Dean of the College of Art at the University of Ohio, where her mother was also a poet and professor of literature. Interview with the artist, Jan. 16, 2009.
22. *Wave Field* was built for the FXB (Francois-Xavier Bagnoud) Aerospace Building, named for a promising graduate student in the aerospace engineering department who died at 24 in a helicopter crash. Lin was commissioned by The Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud, a humanitarian foundation established in his honor by Bagnoud's mother. Lin wrote, "In learning about the nature of flight, I discovered that turbulence resistance and the study of fluid dynamics were fundamental aspects of the field, that images of fluid dynamics were powerful and intriguing." Lin, *Boundaries*, 6:18.
23. When Lin requested more images, one of the professors sent her Van Dyke's book. According to the *Glossary of Meteorology*, A stokes wave is "a nonlinear irrotational long-crested ocean wave, neglecting surface tension effects. It was first described by Sir George Gabriel Stokes (1819–1903), who produced a series expansion in powers of the wave amplitude. Its steepest form has a crest with a 120° angle." Accessed Dec. 15, 08, at <http://amsglossary.allenpress.com/glossary/browse?s=s&p=103>
24. Ibid., 6:21.
25. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 18.
26. Richard Andrews, "Outside In: Maya Lin's Systematic Landscapes," in *Systematic Landscapes*, 61.
27. Ibid., 66.
28. Ibid., 63.
29. Lin, Interview, Jan. 16, 2009.
30. Smithson, "Frederick Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape," *Artforum* 11, no. 6 (Feb 1973): 64-65.
31. Agnes Denes, "Wheatfield – A Confrontation," reprinted in *Agnes Denes, Projects for Public Spaces: A Retrospective* (Lewisburg, PA: Samek Art Gallery, Bucknell Univ., 2003), 29.
32. Aira Kalela, Ministry of Environment, Finland, "Tree Mountain Proposal," in *Agnes Denes, Projects for Public Spaces*, 31.
33. Denes continues, "the trees live on through the centuries—stable and majestic, outliving their owners who created the patterns and the philosophy, but not the tree. There is a strange paradox in this." The 400-year project was designed to create a forest that would eventually become ancient yet structured through a distinctly modern, scientific ideology. Agnes Denes, "Tree Mountain proposal, 1982-3" reprinted in *Agnes Denes* (Ithaca: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell Univ., 1992), 121.
34. Lin, Interview Jan. 16, 2009.
35. Including the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the American Museum of Natural History, ARKive, World Wildlife Fund, Wildlife Conservation Society, the Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, International Union for Conservation of Nature, the National Geographic Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, Oceana, Panthera, and the Van Alen Institute.
36. Lin, *Boundaries*, 2:03.

THE MINIMAL PRESENCE OF SIMONE FORTI

By Virginia B. Spivey

In May 1961, a young choreographer named Simone Forti (b. 1935) presented “Five Dance Constructions and Some Other Things,” a concert of experimental dance, at Yoko Ono’s Chambers Street loft.¹ A few years later, in November 1964, Forti’s ex-husband, Robert Morris, exhibited a group of seven sculptures at New York’s Green Gallery. Commonly called the “Plywood Show,” this exhibition marked a shift in critical response to Morris and signaled an increasing interest among art audiences in the reduced aesthetic that would become known as Minimalism. Although some scholars have noted Morris’s plywood constructions resembled the props Forti used in her dances, her Chambers Street performance is relatively unknown to art historians.² The dancer and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer later said:

[Forti’s concert] proved to be way ahead of its time.... As things then stood, it was as though a vacuum sealed that event. Nothing was written about it and dancers went on dancing and painters and ex-painters went on making painterly happenings and theater pieces. It would be another two and half years before the idea of a construction to generate movement or situation would take hold.³

Forti’s innovative choreography has long deserved closer scrutiny, especially for its conceptual affinity to Minimalism of the 1960s.

Minimalism in art has typically been discussed as a movement originating in New York, when spare abstract forms began to emerge from the studios of Morris, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Frank Stella, Carl Andre, and Sol LeWitt. Women are conspicuously absent in this narrative, although female artists such as Jo Baer, Anne Truitt, and Judy Gerowitz (better known as Judy Chicago) were producing similar work at the same time. In an effort to extend the movement’s narrow construction, scholars have recently acknowledged the range of minimalist aesthetic practices that developed in the early 1960s.⁴ This new wave of research is not art historical revisionism, but an attempt to restore Minimalism to its place within the diverse artistic landscape of the period. Such an endeavor demands that art history expand to include previously overlooked individuals, and it forces us to re-examine Minimalism by recognizing how different disciplines were integral to its development.

These issues converge in a study of Simone Forti. Scholarly bias in art history has ignored many women like Forti.⁵ Her situation was compounded by similar attitudes in the academy that viewed dance as an uncritical (often feminized) art form, more rooted in bodily expression than intellectual activity.⁶ Another factor is that, like many women of the time, Forti chose not to promote her own career, which she saw as secondary to her husband’s professional ambitions. Morris’s interest in painting first led the newlywed couple to San Francisco in 1956 and later to New York. After divorcing Morris in 1960, Forti married Happenings artist Robert Whitman, who asked that she give up her own work and assist him while they tried to start a family.⁷

When her second marriage ended in 1966 and Forti returned to her career, the radical developments in dance predicted by her choreography had already been established. This was largely due to the groundbreaking performances of the Judson Dance Theater, a group that is frequently discussed in art historical texts because of its interdisciplinary focus.⁸ Although Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, and other Judson members cite Forti as a significant influence, the fact that she never participated in the group’s performances led to her omission. Today, Forti is well-known among dance scholars; yet, her name remains unfamiliar to most art historians.⁹ A closer look at her work not only demonstrates Forti’s importance to art history, but also underscores the vital exchange between avant-garde dance and visual art in the 1960s.

Forti began her study of dance soon after she and Morris arrived in San Francisco. By the time of her first public performance in December 1960, at New York’s Reuben Gallery, she had developed a distinctive choreographic approach that synthesized a number of influences. One of the most important was Anna Halprin, co-founder of San Francisco’s Halprin-Lathrop Institute and a major proponent of modern dance on the West Coast. Around 1956, Halprin became concerned about the direction of contemporary dance, and she started conducting experimental workshops at her home in Marin County.¹⁰ The goal was to explore her preconceptions about what constituted dance, movement, and composition.¹¹ Informed by Halprin’s knowledge of anatomy, Forti and other students analyzed movement to determine whether their actions were executed in the most anatomically efficient way, or whether they were learned motions performed according to

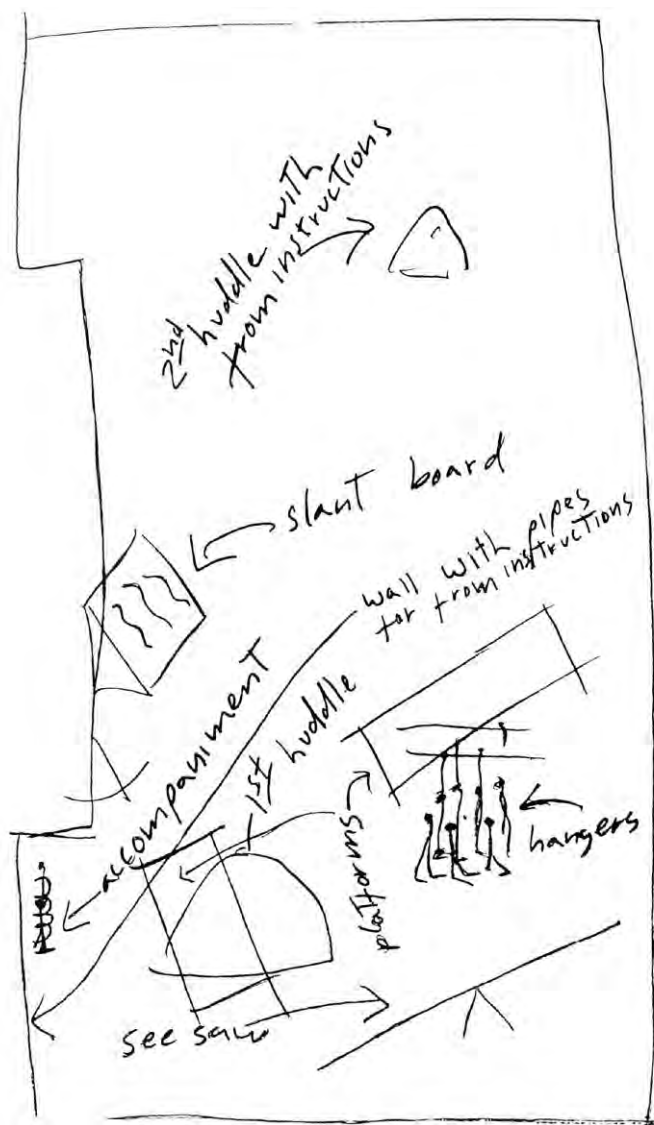


Fig. 1. Simone Forti, Plan for "Five Dance Constructions and Some Other Things" (1961), performance at 112 Chambers Street, New York City.

habit. Improvisation proved Halprin's greatest tool during these years, not as a means of self-expression, but as a way to generate unpredictable actions.¹²

After moving to New York, Forti took classes at the modern dance schools of Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. In contrast to Halprin's concern with individual skills and limitations, Graham and Cunningham based their ideas on rigorous physical demands of the balletically trained body. Forti found both choreographers' techniques extremely complicated and felt she could not keep up with what they asked her to do. She described her disappointment with Cunningham in her diary, "Merce Cunningham was a master of adult, isolated articulation [of different parts of the body]. And that the thing I had to offer was still very close to the holistic and generalized response of children."¹³ Forti, who also taught nursery school in New York, felt more inspired watching her students at play. The children's ability to think clearly, to solve problems directly, and to find joy in simple repeated actions resonated with her own straightforward approach to inquiry.¹⁴



Fig. 2. Simone Forti, *Slant Board* (1981), performance by Simone Forti, Elinore Radeff, and unidentified dancer, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Photo: courtesy Simone Forti.

Forti's frustration with modern dance changed when she entered Robert Dunn's dance workshop at the Cunningham School in the fall of 1960. Dunn had worked extensively with Cunningham as a musician and composer and had attended John Cage's class, "Composition of Experimental Music," at the New School for Social Research from 1958-1960.¹⁵ Influenced by the innovative atmosphere of Cage's seminar, Dunn's instruction drew from an eclectic range of material, including Zen Buddhism, Taoism, and existentialism.¹⁶ He introduced his students to avant-garde music and explained to them John Cage's chance-based methods of composition. Forti was impressed with Cage's approach because it allowed for indeterminacy while retaining a sense of organized composition. She realized she could adapt his ideas to structure her own dances.

Another source of influence was the group of New York Happenings artists that included Robert Whitman, Allan Kaprow, and Jim Dine.¹⁷ Forti found the kind of "wild action" that characterized Whitman's theater pieces particularly intriguing.¹⁸ He often immersed spectators directly in his performances, providing them an immediate experience that ranged from vaguely threatening to spectacular. Whitman's influence is most apparent in *Rollers*, a dance Forti presented in her performance at the Reuben Gallery in December 1960. Forti and Patty Oldenburg each sat in a small wooden box on wheels with strings attached. Audience members were asked to pull the performers around the stage area while both women would sing a single note, holding it for the duration. As the boxes careened and veered dangerously, however, what began as a musical tone transformed into a panicked,

shrieking scream, rising and falling according to the boxes' uncontrollable movements.

Forti had sought a choreographic method that would strike a balance between the absolute control of ballet choreographers and the freedom of pure improvisation. Drawing from the influences of Halprin, Cage, and Whitman as well as the children she taught, her solution was to assign specific tasks, use props, and set certain limits for performers to negotiate according to their particular physical abilities. As *Rollers* demonstrates, this strategy propelled action in the dance, but remained outside of her immediate control. Forti's work radically asserted that dance could derive from simple actions and fundamental movements of the body. Based on the physical skills and abilities of individuals, her choreography implied that anyone could be a dancer, regardless of body type, specialized training, or technical skill.

Forti's mature work, like Minimalism, signaled a shift away from emotional expressionism and illusionism. Here, the dancer no longer appears transformed into a dying swan or nutcracker prince moving effortlessly across the stage; rather, the viewer sees a real person, made of flesh and bone, subject to gravity's pull and limited by her or his body's particular skills and range of motion. Forti's reliance on props and predetermined rules to dictate choreography corresponds to the desire among Minimalist artists for an objective, systemic method of production, and her interest in spatial perception and viewer experience anticipates the phenomenological interpretations commonly used to explain Minimalism.

A comparison of Forti's "Five Dance Constructions and Some Other Things" (1961; Fig. 1) to Morris's "Plywood Show" sheds light on these aspects of Forti's practice and brings deserved attention to her contribution to a Minimalist aesthetic. Forti's concert included five new dances, *Slant Board*, *Huddle*, *Platforms*, *Hangers*, *Accompaniment for La Monte's Two Sounds* and *La Monte's Two Sounds*, and *See Saw*, which had debuted six months earlier in the Reuben Gallery performance.¹⁹ While a dance performance may initially seem unrelated to the exhibition of Morris's artwork, Forti situated each of her dances, which she called "dance constructions," in a manner akin to sculptures in a gallery. Showing each dance separately throughout Ono's open loft, she apparently intended them to function like objects that viewers would experience from all sides.

Visitors entered the space to find *Slant Board* (1961; Fig. 2) directly before them. Forti instructed the performers in this dance to move simultaneously upward and across a wooden ramp, which leaned against a wall at a forty-five-degree angle and had long knotted ropes attached to help the dancers in their task. Although they could pause to rest, they had to remain on the board for the duration of the ten-minute dance. Forti did not dictate specific steps for the performers to imitate, rather each dancer's movements derived from physical abilities including strength, stamina, and coordination, as well as their combined efforts not to interfere with the others on the board.

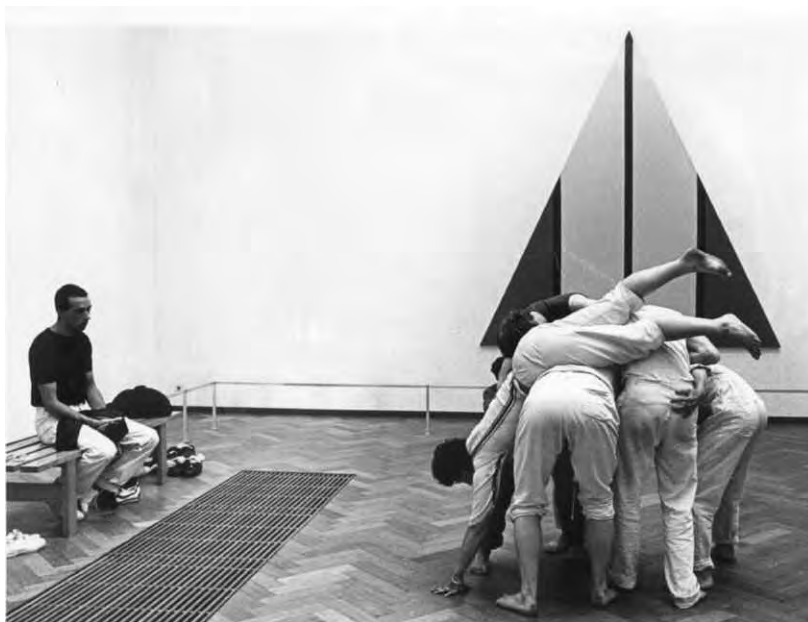


Fig. 3. Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1981), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Photo courtesy Simone Forti.

The next dance was *Huddle* (1961; Fig. 3), a work in which no additional props were employed, but six or seven performers used their bodies to form a circular web by bending forward and weaving their arms around each others' waists and shoulders. The dance began when one person disengaged from the group and started to climb over the structure using foot and hand-holds formed by bodies of other participants. Once the first dancer had climbed over the other bodies, she or he joined back into the huddle and another would begin to climb. Forti did not specify a climbing order; palpable shifts in balance signaled the dancers to begin their task. Throughout the dance, the audience moved around *Huddle* to see changes that occurred in the mass of bodies as climbers detached and rejoined the group.

Viewers then saw *Hangers*, where five dancers stood passively inside long loops made with ropes hung closely together from the ceiling. Four additional performers walked quickly between them, causing those suspended in the ropes to swing and collide. Although impossible to control, movement in the dance was affected by weight and size of the hanging performers as well as by how fast the others walked between them. Next, the audience watched *Platforms* (1961; Fig. 4), in which Morris and Forti hid under two rectangular wooden boxes, whistled for fifteen minutes, then got up and walked away.

The fifth dance, *Accompaniment for La Monte's 2 sounds* and *La Monte's 2 sounds*, was actually more a musical performance with dance serving as the attendant element. Forti hung from a long rope loop, similar to those used in *Hangers*, while another performer twisted the rope tightly before releasing it and turning on a twelve-minute tape recording of avant-garde composer La Monte Young's *2 sounds*.²⁰ As the music played, Forti spun around as the rope unwound and then rewound from the momentum. Once this motion had completely stopped, Forti remained hanging until the music ended and

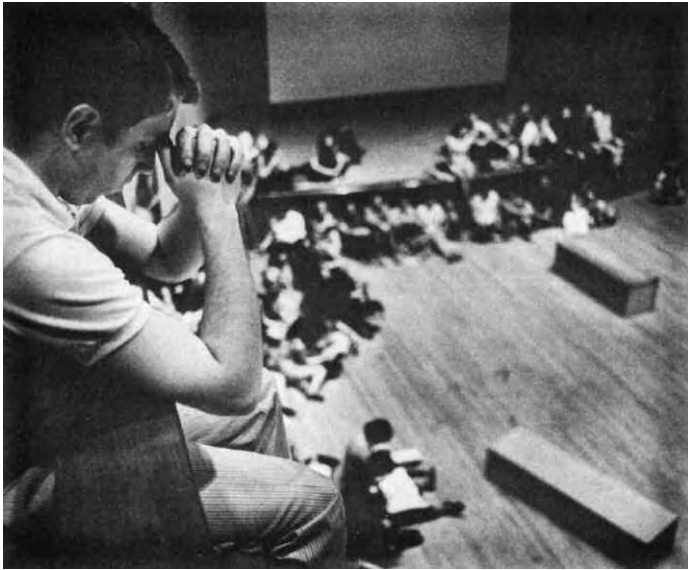


Fig. 4. Simone Forti, *Platforms* (1961), Loeb Student Center, New York University. Photo: Peter Moore © Estate of Peter Moore/ VAGA, NYC.

Herding began. This was one of three short “game pieces,” which Forti structured as a competition among participants. Here, the dancers played with the audience by gathering everyone together, then forcing them to move back and forth through the loft until they became irritated.²¹

By that time, they were in place to view *See-Saw*. Performed by Robert Morris and Yvonne Rainer, this dance relied on an eight-foot plank that sat on top of a sawhorse.²² For twenty-minutes, the couple see-sawed up and down, stood next to each other, and moved tentatively across the board, positioning themselves any way necessary not to fall. Because of the prop’s constantly shifting equilibrium, working together was an essential aspect of the duet. At one point, their roles deviated while Morris read a monotone discourse from *ArtNews* and Rainer began flailing her body about and shrieking loudly. However, throughout most of the dance, the performers had to coordinate their movements, remaining aware of how each one’s actions would impact the other. Also, during the presentation of *See-Saw*, another smaller version of *Huddle* occurred behind the audience. Forti says that she did not intend for viewers to pay close attention to this second performance of *Huddle*; she only wanted audience members to “be aware” of something happening behind them.²³

Forti’s installation of her dances throughout the open space effectively blurred distinctions between real and performative space. None of these dances employed special lighting effects or costumes to provide temporal or visual cues. Predetermined rules dictated the beginning of a dance, which later ended when the performers completed their assigned tasks. Furthermore, typical of Forti’s choreography, all the performances relied on a set of rules, often combined with a central prop, to generate movements; however, instead of a seated proscenium, the audience gathered and milled around each piece as it was presented.²⁴

While the identity of all the performers cannot be

confirmed, a partial list includes Forti, Morris, Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown and Carl Lehmann-Haupt.²⁵ When these people were not dancing, they would join the audience and later shift back into their roles as dancers when called on to perform. Obscuring such distinctions extended further throughout Forti’s event. Like the performers, Forti forced the entire audience to interact with her rules and obstacles as they navigated the dances shown throughout the loft. In this way, Forti’s dance constructions functioned as separate “objects” for viewers to encounter and negotiate according to their bodies’ kinesthetic and psychological response.

Visitors to Morris’s “Plywood Show” (1964; Fig. 5) at the Green Gallery three years later came upon a similar situation. To enter, they had to walk beneath a horizontal plinth that spanned two walls above the gallery’s entrance. Titled *Untitled (Corner Beam)*, this object was like all of Morris’s work on view: it was built with plywood and nails, hand-painted Merkin Pilgrim gray, and lacked any notable surface texture or detail. Once inside, viewers had to move around *Untitled (Floor Beam)*, a twenty-six-foot rectangular beam with one rounded edge, lying in the center of the floor. To their right was *Untitled (Table)*, a symmetrical L-shaped form that abutted the wall at a ninety-degree angle, leaving a large square opening, and behind them to the left, a triangular shaped structure *Untitled (Corner Piece)* was wedged into the corner. *Untitled (Cloud)* hung at eye level from the ceiling. In another area of the room stood *Untitled (Boiler)*, a four-by-eight-foot cylinder lodged between rectangular blocks. The final piece in the show, *Untitled (Wall/Floor Slab)* (1964; Fig. 6), was an eight-foot square form that leaned at an angle against a side wall.

Just walking into the room made visitors more aware of their surroundings. Frank Stella commented, “I’d never been so conscious of the space between the corners, walls, and floor.”²⁶ Donald Judd wrote in his review of the show: “Morris’s works are minimal visually, but they’re powerful spatially. It’s an unusual asymmetry... The work looks well together, but it isn’t an environment.”²⁷ Such comments indicate that, like Forti’s dance constructions, Morris’s structures engaged the viewer in a physical and psychological encounter. In his 1966 essay “Notes on Sculpture, Part 2,” Morris explained this effect in phenomenological terms:

The object is but one of the terms in the newer esthetic. It is in some way more reflexive, because one’s awareness of oneself existing in the same space as the work is stronger than in previous work, with its many internal relationships. One is more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from various positions and under varied conditions of light and spatial context.²⁸

Morris’s belief that sculpture might be understood phenomenologically not only called attention to the anthropomorphic nature of his work; it further implied that bodies and objects possess interchangeable characteristics, a notion which stemmed from ideas Forti explored in her choreography.

Forti viewed the human body as a material object defined by its weight, mass, and scale in relationship to the other things surrounding her. She recalls studying such spatial acuity by sitting on the floor beside ordinary household objects like a cereal box, a roll of toilet paper, or a fingernail brush. After a while, she would reposition herself in a different place among the scattered items. Forti's intent in these experiments was to explore phenomenological perception of the space around her. By comparing her own body to inanimate objects, she hoped to understand better how their shared physical and spatial properties contribute to human perception.²⁹

Forti conceived of dance itself as sculptural, hence her use of the term "dance constructions" to describe her choreographic work. She had first begun to sketch sculptural designs related to her movement investigations while in San Francisco. It was before her concert at the Reuben Gallery that Forti became panic-stricken about how to construct her plans. She explained:

I was sitting on my bed with a pad, or notebook, of newsprint and crayons, and I drew these pieces, and I said, "yes, I'll do these pieces." And then I remember one night, being awake in bed and just being desperate, thinking, "How am I ... I don't know how to build this stuff." And talking it over with Bob and him saying, "I'll build it for you."³⁰

Even when there were no additional props, Forti viewed dance as an object. In *Huddle*, for example, she intended the viewer to walk around the mass of bodies as though it were a single sculpture.

Morris's Minimalist structures reflect a similar understanding of the body as an object with measurable quantities of mass, volume, and weight. The obvious resemblance of Morris's *Untitled (Wall/Floor Slab)* to props he built for Forti indicates her impact on his sculpture. Morris readily admits he "later altered [Forti's designs] slightly" for some of his early works.³¹ Nevertheless, it is an overstatement to say his sculpture derived entirely from her innovations. While the couple certainly shared their artistic thoughts and concerns, the years of their marriage, from 1956 to 1961, were a time of experimentation and growth for both artists. Their similar experiences during this formative period suggest strongly that, together, they developed a common vocabulary to convey ideas in each of their chosen media. Morris credits Forti with introducing him to the tenets of experimental dance, and the couple even led their own movement workshops while living in San Francisco. After moving to New York in 1960, both Forti and Morris became closely involved with the city's avant-garde dance and theatre community.

Recognizing Morris's place within this distinctive milieu is important to understanding how his work developed outside of the circumstances motivating other Minimalist artists. For example, like his colleagues, Morris sought a way to eliminate



Fig. 5. Robert Morris, "The Plywood Show" (1964). © Robert Morris/ Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York, New York.

subjective decision-making and expressive association from the creative process. However, in contrast to Stella or Judd who derived their solutions from problems in painting, Morris cites Forti's task-based choreography as the primary influence on his sculptural method. He explained: "To follow a rule (rather than to consciously 'perform') altered the intentionality of dance making. By analogy, I employed 'construction' in making sculpture. Both provided a different structural way of working; a priori in both cases."³²

Although Morris adamantly resists the idea that Forti's work suggested to him dance as a sculptural equivalent, his work clearly implies a bodily presence that was explicit in Forti's choreography. Morris's earliest abstract sculpture, *Column* (1961) reflects this relationship to the body most clearly. Although later exhibited as sculpture, *Column* first appeared in a performance at New York's Living Theater in 1962.³³ Two-feet square, eight-feet high and painted gray, it stood vertically on an otherwise empty stage for three and a half minutes before being pulled over by a string held off stage. It then remained horizontal for another three and half minutes until the lights went down and the performance ended. Morris had originally intended to stand inside the hollow structure and fall over, making *Column* appear to move of its own volition; but, a head injury from the fall in rehearsal forced him to substitute the pull-string in the actual performance.

Its materials, geometric structure, and scale make obvious that *Column* was a direct precursor to the abstract sculptures Morris would later exhibit in the "Plywood Show." Its origins in dance suggest directions for interpreting these subsequent works. If Morris had been inside *Column* as planned, its debut would have resembled Forti's *Platforms*. As the Living Theater performance transpired, Morris's removal of a human



Fig. 6. Robert Morris, *Untitled (Wall/Floor Slab)* (1964; 1979), aluminum version of plywood original, 96" x 96" x 12" © Robert Morris/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York, New York. Collection of the Akron Art Museum.

presence from stage proved that an inanimate object could evoke bodily action and assume its own anthropomorphic effect through scale, movement, and temporal experience. Yet, different from *Platforms* and Forti's other dance constructions, *Column* did not interact directly with Morris's audience since it was presented in a more traditional theatrical context. By contrast, positioning sculpture throughout the open space of the Green Gallery recalled the conditions of Forti's 1961 concert. Placed directly on the floor and attached to ceiling and walls, Morris's objects appeared integrated with the architectural space of the gallery. In this way, the viewer's experience was similar to that of the audience that had moved through Yoko Ono's loft to watch Forti's next dance. Like Forti's event, Morris's installation required viewers to engage with each object physically in a way that blurred boundaries between the realm of art and real life.

This aspect of Morris's work is precisely what led critic Michael Fried to call Minimalism "theatrical" in his influential 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood." Fried argued that Minimalist sculpture, which had to be experienced over time in real space, obscured essential characteristics distinguishing visual art from theater. Bolstered by Morris's phenomenological explanations, Fried called attention to Minimalism's tendency to convey "presence" to the viewer, a term he used to denote the object's anthropomorphic qualities. Whereas representational sculpture achieved this effect through mimesis or allusive form, the physical scale of Minimalist objects forced the viewer to interact as if they were other persons existing in a shared space.³⁴ Although Fried was critical of these features, his observation accurately

highlighted Minimalism's performativity and consequently entered art history as characteristic of all Minimalist works.³⁵

The performative dimension of Minimalist art demands scholars examine its correspondence to dance and experimental performance. While recent literature on Morris usually acknowledges his involvement with performance, the broader relationship between Minimalism and postmodern dance of the period has not been thoroughly explored. A notable exception is Yvonne Rainer's choreography of the mid-1960s, which has long been mentioned in this context.³⁶ Rainer is distinguished, however, from other performers and dance critics of the time by her own theoretical explanations of her work. Her inclusion in Minimalism's history resulted largely from her appropriation of its critical language, as well as her liminal position between avant-garde art and dance.³⁷

Fried's essay shows how Robert Morris's phenomenological theories helped shape Minimalism's critical reception and interpretation but overlooks Forti's influence on Morris.³⁸ Comparing "Five Dance Constructions and Some Other Things" to the "Plywood Show" clearly reveals the importance of Forti's work to

Morris's aesthetic and conceptual development, especially his interest in bodily experience and perception. Her choreography of the early 1960s also reveals an affinity to Minimalism that challenges traditional conceptions of the movement. In their literal presentation of and emphasis on the body's sculptural qualities, Forti's dance constructions offer a correlative to objects later produced by Morris, Judd and other visual artists.³⁹ When added to the Minimalist lexicon, Forti's work expands our current definition by acknowledging the diversity of artists and disciplines that contributed to Minimalism's development. The circumstances that once caused Forti's neglect in art history are greatly diminished, and her accomplishment can no longer be sealed in a vacuum. Simone Forti must now be included in the complete history of Minimalism. ●

Virginia B. Spivey is an independent art historian specializing in late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century intersections of visual culture, dance and feminist performance, and issues of identity and gender expression.

NOTES

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1. Forti's concert, presented May 26-27, was part of a series of Proto-Fluxus events, now known as the Chambers Street Series, organized by La Monte Young and presented at Ono's loft between December 1960 and June 1961. See Owen F. Smith, *Fluxus: the History of an Attitude* (San Diego: San Diego State Univ. Press, 1998), 28-30.
2. The few art historians who mention Forti's concert discuss, at most, one or two of the dances performed without providing analysis of the entire event. See Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 26; Anna Chave, "Minimalism and Biography," *Art Bulletin*, 82 (March, 2000): 155-56; and Carrie Lambert, "More or Less Minimalism: Six Notes on Performance and Visual Art in the 1960s," in Ann Goldstein, ed., *A minimal future?: art as object 1958-1968* (Los Angeles and Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 105. Dance historian Sally Banes provides the most thorough discussion of Forti's concert previously published. See Sally Banes, *Terpischore in Sneakers, Post-modern Dance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 26-28.
3. Yvonne Rainer, "An imperfect reminiscence of my studies and the beginning of a career and contingent events," in *Work: 1961-1973* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974), 7.
4. See Goldstein, ed., *A minimal future?: art as object 1958-1968*; Lynn Zelevansky, ed. *Beyond Geometry: Experiments in Form, 1940s-70s* (Los Angeles: L.A. County Museum of Art, 2004); and Pepe Karmel, "The Year of Living Minimally," *Art in America* 82.11 (December, 2004): 90-149.
5. See Anna Chave, "Minimalism and Biography," *Art Bulletin*, 82 (March, 2000): 149-63.
6. See Ellen W. Goellner, and Jacqueline Shea Murphy, "Introduction: Movement Movements," in *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance*, eds. Ellen W. Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press), 1-37.
7. Simone Forti, telephone interview with the author, July 14, 2000.
8. See Barbara Haskell, *Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism, and Performance, 1958-1964* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1984); Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1993). On the Judson Dance Theater, see Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983).
9. Forti is satisfied with the attention she has received. "A lot of my invisibility has been chosen by me, as a guarantor of freedom to proceed through all my changes. . . . It's not been a tendency as a woman; it's been my path as an artist seeking my most empowering position." Simone Forti, e-mail to the author, February 10, 2009.
10. Halprin's workshops eventually developed into the San Francisco Dancers' Workshop. See Anna Halprin, *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1995), 254.
11. Yvonne Rainer, "Yvonne Rainer interviews Ann Halprin," *Tulane Drama Review* (Winter, 1965): 143.
12. Ibid.
13. Simone Forti, *Handbook in Motion* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974), 34.
14. Forti, telephone interview with the author, July 14, 2000.
15. On the influence of Cage's class, see Joseph Jacobs, "Crashing New York à la John Cage," in Joan Marter, ed., *Off Limits: Rutgers University and the Avant-Garde, 1957-1963* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1999), 65-99.
16. Dunn's workshop evolved into the Judson Dance Theater. The group's first concert was presented as an end-of-year public recital of dances made for Dunn's class. After Dunn ended his weekly sessions in 1962, the JDT developed into both an experimental forum and a vehicle for promoting avant-garde concepts in dance. For a thorough discussion of Dunn's class and its impact on dance of the 1960s, see Sally Banes, "Robert Dunn's Workshop," in *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater*, 1-33.
17. See Haskell, *Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance, 1958-1964*; and Marter, ed. *Off Limits: Rutgers University and the Avant-Garde, 1957-1963*.
18. Forti saw Whitman's E.G. at the Reuben Gallery on June 11, 1960, and assisted with his *American Moon* in December 1960. It was through her connection to Whitman that Forti was invited to participate on the Christmas program of Happenings at the Reuben Gallery in 1960. Forti, telephone interview with the author, December 21, 2001.
19. No known photographs or film of the 1961 concert exist. Forti provides the most complete descriptions of her dances. See Forti, *Handbook in Motion*, 56-67.
20. *2 Sounds* was a stereo tape of noises Young had recorded at Anna Halprin's workshop while he was a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley. Simone Forti, interview with Louise Sunshine, May 8, 1994, Oral History Project, Jerome Robbins Dance Research Collection, New York Public Library, transcription of Cassette 1, 45.
21. The others were *Censor*, where one person shook a pan of nails while another sang a song with their mutual goal to find perfect balance between the two; and *From Instructions*, in which one man was told to tie another to some pipes on the wall, and the other was told to lie on the floor for the duration of the piece. Forti, *Handbook in Motion*, 66.
22. Forti originally intended to perform with Morris, but an injury forced her to ask Rainer to dance instead. Forti, telephone interview with the author, July 14, 2000.
23. Forti, telephone interview with the author, November 2, 2000.
24. Forti says her treatment of the dances was, in part, a response to photographs of Japanese Gutai performances she had seen in San Francisco. Although the Gutai distinguished their actions from the final objects they would exhibit, Forti saw in their work a way to engage her audience without demanding direct participation. This strategy was an intentional shift from her use of the audience in *Rollers*, where the action of pulling the performers around the stage area became potentially hazardous to the participants. Forti, telephone interview with the author, July 14, 2000. On the Gutai, see Alexandra Munroe, "To Challenge the Mid-Summer Sun: The Gutai Group," in Alexandra Munroe, ed., *Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky* (New York: Abrams, 1994), 83-124.
25. Morris, fax to the author, November 9, 2000; Rainer, e-mail to the author, February 26, 2001; Forti recalls that she and Morris danced together in *Platforms*, and that in *Accompaniment for LaMonte's 2 Sounds* and *LaMonte's 2 Sounds*, she hung in the rope loop while Morris spun her. She also specifies that Morris and Carl Lehmann-Haupt performed the game piece *From Instructions*. Forti, telephone interview with the author, November 2, 2000.
26. Quoted in James S. Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2001), 113.
27. The exhibition at the Green Gallery opened December 16, 1964, and closed on January 9, 1965. Donald Judd, "In the Galleries: Robert Morris," *Arts Magazine* 39 (February 1965): 39. Reprinted in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975), 165.
28. Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," *Artforum* (October 1966): 20-23. Reprinted in *Continuous Project Altered Daily, The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 15.
29. Forti, telephone interview with the author, July 14, 2000.
30. Ibid.
31. Morris, fax to the author, November 11, 2000.

32. Morris, fax to the author, November 9, 2000.
33. *Column's* origins at the Living Theater are well documented although contradictory dates have been posited for both the original construction and performance. See, for example, Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), 201-03; Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 47-48; Kimberly Paice, catalogue entry, "Columns, 1961," in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Foundation, 1994), 90; Chave, "Minimalism and Biography," fn. 47, 162; Meyer, *Minimalism and Polemics*, 51; and Edward Strickland, *Minimalism: Origins* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1993), 263-64.
34. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5 (June 1967) 12-23. Reprinted in Gregory Battcock, ed. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968), 127-28.
35. Fried, who based his essay largely on the writings of Morris and Donald Judd, conflated the two artists' ideas. Judd's formalist goals were overshadowed, in Fried's mind, by Morris's insistence that sculpture involve the viewer. For this reason, Morris's phenomenological focus served as a central premise of Fried's criticism. See James S. Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics*, esp. 229-34. On performativity and Minimalism, see Maurice Berger, *Minimal Politics: Performativity and Minimalism in Recent American Art* (Baltimore: Fine Arts Gallery, Univ. of Maryland, Baltimore County, 1997).
36. Trisha Brown's choreography and her work in visual art has been the subject of two recent museum exhibitions. See Hendel Teicher, ed. *Trisha Brown: dance and art in dialogue 1961-2001* (Andover, MA: Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, 2002) and Peter Eleey, ed. *Trisha Brown: so that the audience does not know whether or not I have stopped dancing* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2008).
37. See Yvonne Rainer, "A Quasi-Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora or an Analysis of *Trio A*," written in 1966 and first published in Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, 263-73. Rainer credits Robert Morris and Barbara Rose as major influences on her critical writing style. Both provided a more analytical model than the more popular "off-the-cuff" dance criticism of Jill Johnston and others. Rainer, e-mail to the author, February 26, 2001.
38. Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson also use the example of Morris's work in their phenomenological readings of Minimalist sculpture. Although both authors note Morris's involvement in postmodern dance, they do not discuss Forti beyond the mention of her name. See Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (New York: Viking, 1977) and Annette Michelson, "An Aesthetics of Transgression," in *Robert Morris* (Washington DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969).
39. See Carrie Lambert, "More or Less Minimalism: Six Notes on Performance and Visual Art in the 1960s."



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BENEDETTA CAPPÀ MARINETTI AND THE SECOND PHASE OF FUTURISM

By Siobhan M. Conaty

As scholars have addressed the problems between the art of Italian Futurism, gender, and politics, the majority of studies focus on the rhetoric of the founding figure of Futurism, F.T. Marinetti. Standing in contrast to the standard, masculinist Futurist line, however, is the artwork of his wife, Benedetta Cappa Marinetti (1897-1977), which delineates a strong concern for the intertwined role of women during the second phase of Futurism. The pair met in 1918 and married five years later. Benedetta's exhibition history provides an impressive account of her prolific Futurist activities and serves to indicate recognition by her peers of her artistic capabilities. By 1926, she was being invited repeatedly to participate in Venice Biennials, Roman Quadrennials, and other major international Futurist exhibitions. These were all premier exhibition venues and cultural markers for international recognition and respect. This essay helps to place Benedetta in proper context within the longer history of Futurism. Despite the negative attitude toward women in Futurist writings, the "feminine" can be seen as a principal subject in her artwork as well as in her own writing, helping to define women's experience during the period between the two World Wars. Although Benedetta, as she was known, generally supported Futurist (and thereby many Fascist) ideas, she was able to implement her own brand of gender reform through her art and rhetoric.

Benedetta was one of five children born to Amalia Cipollini Cappa and Innocenzo Cappa, both originally from the Piedmont region of Italy. Her father, an official in the Ministry of the Railways and later in the army, died soon after returning home from World War I as a result of a nervous condition brought about by his experiences on the front lines.¹ Her mother was a cultured woman influenced by the Waldensian faith, a Pre-Reformation Non-Catholic Christian sect.

Two of Benedetta's four brothers played a role in her introduction to the world of politics and art. Alberto was a historian and writer, and Arturo worked on the political journals, *Il Comunista* and *L'Ordine Nuovo* (The New Order).² Both were Socialists and participated in Futurist meetings and activities.³ Arturo also knew the Russian Futurists through his live-in companion, the Bohemian painter Rougena Zatkova (1885-1923).

During World War I, Benedetta worked at an after-school program for underprivileged children. She studied to become an elementary school teacher as well as attending a program at the *Università degli studi di Roma*.⁴ Benedetta surely would have



Fig. 1. Rougena Zatkova, *Portrait of F.T. Marinetti* (1920), oil on canvas, 41 1/4" x 37 13/16". Private Collection.

known of Maria Montessori's new pedagogical system for teaching children. Montessori opened *Casa dei Bambini* in Rome in 1907, with the idea that young children's education should focus on sensory experiences, most importantly, tactile experiences. Benedetta would later reconfigure these concepts for Futurist ideology.⁵

Encouraged by her brothers' activities with the Futurists and her friendship with Rougena Zatkova, after the war, Benedetta became increasingly interested in art.⁶ Zatkova was involved in Futurism at least as early as 1915, when she attended the *Serata degli intonarumori* (Evening of noisemaking)⁷ at Marinetti's house in Milan. Zatkova's *Portrait of F.T. Marinetti* (c.1920; Fig. 1) demonstrates her alignment to Futurist aesthetics as well as her knowledge of contemporary movements such as Cubism and Orphism. Not only a close friend, Zatkova—a successful woman and an active, contributing member of the Futurist movement—was an important role model for Benedetta, who

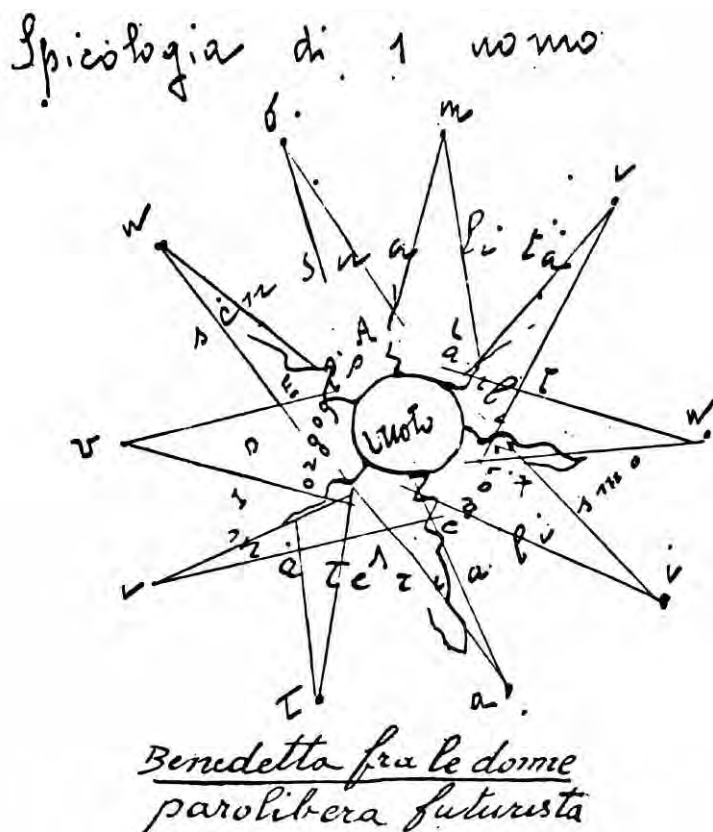


Fig. 2. Benedetta, *Spicologia di 1 uomo* (Spychology of a Man) (1918-19), ink on paper, Marinetti Collection, Milan.

left teaching and began to study with the Futurist painter Giacomo Balla. His atelier, known as *Casa Balla*, was just a few blocks from her family's home in Rome, and it was there that Benedetta first met Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the driving force behind the Futurist movement.⁸

Their developing relationship can be traced in their letters, dating from 1918. Early letters display a formality on both parts and deal primarily with sharing Futurist ideas and discussing their respective literary works. For example, Benedetta shared with Marinetti her early exploration with Futurism, called "*parolibera*," a combination of visual and text elements, such as *Spicologia di 1 uomo* (1918-19; Fig. 2).⁹

Crucial for understanding the origins of Benedetta and Marinetti's intellectual bond is a letter dated November 23, 1918, in which Benedetta wrote to Marinetti: "Thank you for keeping your promise about the books I sent you. I was troubled ... to see my name written as "*parolibera futurista*." I am too free and rebellious — I do not want to be constricted. I want only to be me."¹⁰

Marinetti responded, writing: "I call you this because I was convinced that you could understand my mind and my sensibility. *Parolibera futurista* means precisely this: to be oneself. It is a key point which separates us definitively from the multitudes who are all yesterday and nothing. It is a motto that keeps us united in the cause."¹¹ In this letter Marinetti also encouraged Benedetta to continue to write with the power found in these *parole in liberta*, saying that he was not instructing her to move in any particular direction, but was

happy to support her as she moved toward Futurist ideas. He wrote, "I am a friend, not a teacher. Like a futurist friend, I am glad to support your genius towards this original leap."¹² In another letter, he wrote: "I read for the second time with much attention your *Legends of Silence*. It reveals a genius of original strength... Have you read my *Mafarka the futurist*? Did you like it?"¹³

On February 14, 1919, Marinetti sent a telegram expressing his profound sympathy and friendly devotion, and five days later, another telegram with the words: "*Una forte stretta di mano dal vostro amico Marinetti*" (A strong handshake from your friend Marinetti).¹⁴ The cause behind these sentiments was likely the death of Benedetta's father.¹⁵ Benedetta's period of grief and mourning seems to have marked a turning point in their relationship. It is perhaps not a coincidence that her father's death marked the beginning of a romantic attachment with the much older Marinetti, considered the father figure of the Futurist movement.

In a series of letters dating from May to December 1919,¹⁶ the nature and content of the couple's discourse changed dramatically. Marinetti's letters are now addressed to "My dear strong spirit and sweet one," and filled with such comments as "I think always, always of you." In a letter dated August 16, he wrote: "Do not forget your promise to work. You must carry your genius to its ultimate splendor. Every day."¹⁷ During 1920 and 1921 he sent Benedetta love letters or telegrams almost every day they were apart.¹⁸ It is notable that these passionate, sentimental, and somewhat traditional letters were being penned by the leader of the Futurist movement at the same time he was writing treatises *against* the tenets of love and sentimentalism.¹⁹ Also significant is Marinetti's consistent recognition of the value and "genius" of Benedetta's art and literary work. On October 10, 1921, he wrote: "I hope that you do not ever forget the force and original strength of your genius, your work. You must work for you, for me, for us."²⁰

By the summer of 1920, Marinetti was writing to Benedetta using "*Movimento Futurista*" letterhead and addressing his letters and telegrams to "B. Cappa Marinetti," even though they did not officially marry for several years.²¹ They were living together at a time when it would have been more socially appropriate for Benedetta to receive mail under the pretense of being a married woman. This is just one of the many contradictions between Marinetti's Futurist life and his Futurist rhetoric. At the same time his manifestos were blasting love and marriage and scorning women, he was falling in love with a woman whom he addressed, most conventionally, as his wife. Although their situation was considered quite shocking for a woman of Benedetta's standing, her brother Arturo had been living with Zatkova for some time and she was well accepted by the Cappa family. The fact that Marinetti's parents were not married likely influenced his non-traditional views on marriage and the family.

In May 1923, Marinetti inquired about the status of Benedetta's "amazing" Futurist painting, *Velocità di motoscofo* (Velocity of a Motorboat) (1919-24; Pl. 6). Shortly after, he wrote to encourage her, saying that he was looking forward to seeing it finished.²² Marinetti first used the words *marito*

(husband) and *sposa* (bride) in a letter to Benedetta dated July 23, 1923.²³ Zoccoli states that they were married that year, “probably to please her family.” It was a simple ceremony celebrated at Villasanta di Monza, with her brother Alberto Cappa and Umberto Notari as witnesses.²⁴ Although Bentivoglio describes the marriage as a sacrifice Marinetti made for Benedetta,²⁵ I am not convinced. As we have seen, Marinetti, the man who called love and sentimentalism “the least natural thing in the world,” had no difficulty dictating one mode of conduct for Futurism while living another himself.²⁶

After their marriage, the couple lived first in Milan, then in Rome, where, together, they helped usher in the second of phase of Futurism. Marinetti’s marriage and the influence of his wife, the birth of three daughters, and a happy family life, would transform the Futurist movement in significant ways. Benedetta would, in fact, play a pivotal role in the literary and artistic evolution of this next phase, which lasted until the early 1940s. After the death of some of the principal Futurist artists in World War I,²⁷ Marinetti tried to sustain the movement’s momentum with new ideas. The violence and chaos of the first phase was replaced in the second phase by an emphasis on the Futurist desire to capture the sensory thrill and spiritual aspects of modern phenomena such as automobile and air travel.

During the earliest years of her acquaintance with Futurism (1918–21), Benedetta experimented with multi-material tactile boards. “Viewers” touching these works would physically encounter different textures, resulting in a heightened, multi-sensory aesthetic experience. Both Claudia Salaris and Lia Giachero have noted the influence of Benedetta’s interest in childhood education, especially the concurrent theories of Maria Montessori, on her experiments in multiple material art work.²⁸ Montessori’s method involved developing children’s senses by placing them before a table covered with various objects with differing types of surfaces. She found that when children worked with tactile objects their interest became volatile and their learning process became spontaneous. Based on these responses, Montessori assembled a highly specific group of tactile materials designed to stimulate young minds and senses.²⁹

When Marinetti wrote *Tattilismo, manifesta futurista* (Futurist manifesto of tactilism) in 1921, he claimed in the text to have come upon the idea of Tactilism during World War I while sitting in the trenches. Fumbling in the darkness, he said, his hands encountered the oddly juxtaposed sensations of guns, dinner plates, dirt, and the heads of sleeping soldiers.³⁰ Although Marinetti and Benedetta worked together developing a series of works that were meant to be felt and not seen—the art form they termed *tavola tattile* (tactile table or board)—in his manifesto Marinetti represented himself as the sole creator of both the text and the artwork used as a model, titled *Sudan-Parigi* (Sudan-Paris) (c.1920; Pl. 7). He wrote:

One of these abstract tactile boards made by me, and that has as a title Sudan-Paris, contains, in the part representing Sudan, rough, greasy, coarse, prickly, burning tactile values (spongy material, sponge, wool, brush, wire brush); in the part representing The Sea, there are slippery, metallic, fresh values (silver-coated

paper); in the part representing Paris there are soft, delicate, caressing tactile values, hot and cold at the same time (silk, velvet, feathers, down).³¹

The resemblance to Montessori’s theories is apparent throughout the Tactilism manifesto, and Benedetta is the logical source for this connection. Marinetti applied Montessori’s methods for stimulating sensory experiences in children ostensibly to create single-handedly a new form of Futurist art. Like Montessori, Marinetti developed a highly specified group of materials with specific sensory functions, claiming authorship of this concept also, and declaring: “I have created a first educational scale of touch, which is, at the same time, a scale of tactile values for Tactilism, or the Art of Touch.”³² Not until 1938, in the *Manifesto della ceramica futurista* (Manifesto of futurist ceramics), did Marinetti acknowledge Benedetta’s contribution to the origins of Tactilism, now claiming they invented it together.³³

In 1942 Marinetti further clarified Benedetta’s role, stating “When I was working with Benedetta on the first tactile board, for the most part created—and always carried out—by her, we dreamed of this completeness of poetry-art-life.”³⁴ When he subsequently described the process of making the *tavola tattile*, Marinetti made clear just how much Benedetta had contributed to this new Futurist art form:

Benedetta created with her own hands, more sensitive than mine... a tactile board formed by a flat carton on which she hooked pieces of cork, wood, and metals, using every rasping and velvety surface, to form a scale which, from the rougher to the smoothest and most compact, to warm, tepid, and cold, of cloths, silks, velvets, could make the fingertips experience graduating sensations.³⁵

In an unpublished essay, Marinetti even admitted “that it was Benedetta who formed *Sudan-Parigi* from flattened cardboard, onto which she attached pieces of cork, wood, and metal.”³⁶ And yet, *Sudan-Parigi*, one of the most important works of this genre, is still consistently labeled as a work by Marinetti alone.³⁷ There is no doubt that Marinetti at first took full credit for a theory and a work of art that he actually developed with the help of his wife’s expertise in Montessori practices. However, even though Marinetti eventually admitted Tactilism was developed collaboratively with Benedetta, museums and scholars still do not recognize this fact. This is a prime example of how Benedetta’s experience was, and unfortunately remains, limited by her position as the “significant other” in this creative partnership.

As the second phase of Futurism evolved, Benedetta’s name began to appear on many of the crucial documents defining its parameters.³⁸ In 1926, she, along with Marinetti, Fedele Azari, and Fillia,³⁹ signed the introduction to the catalogue for the *Mostra di trentaquattro pittori futuristi* (Exhibition of thirty-four Futurist painters) in Milan.⁴⁰ By proposing a new interpretation of *l’arte meccanica*, the exhibition and catalogue were pivotal in the changing nature of Futurism’s second phase. Maintaining that Futurist art should be conceived like a

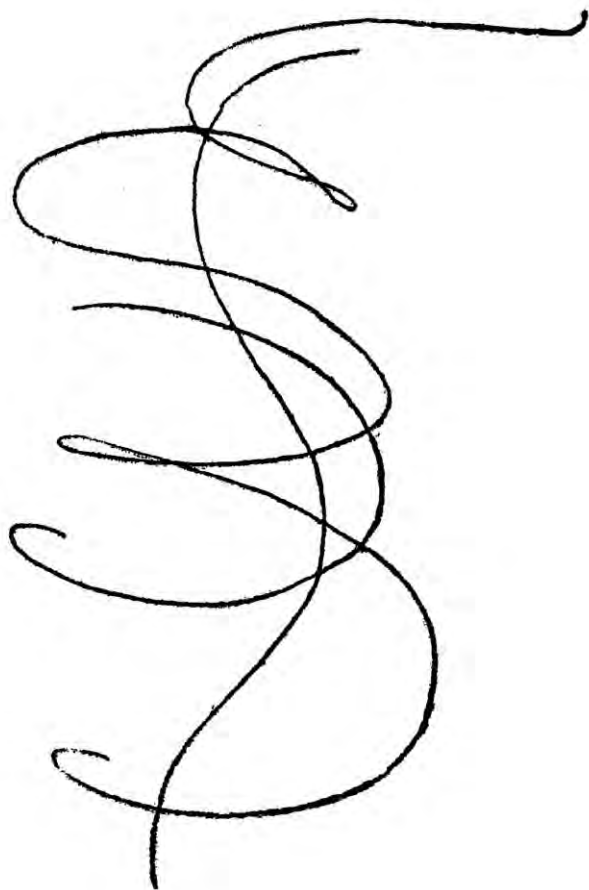


Fig. 3. Benedetta, *Forze femminili: Spirale di dolcezza + serpe di fascino* (Feminine Forces: Spiral of Sweetness + Serpent of Charm) (1924), ink on paper, 7 13/16" x 5 1/2". From *Le forze umane. Romanzo astratto con sintesi grafiche* (Human Forces: Abstract novel with graphic synthesis). Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

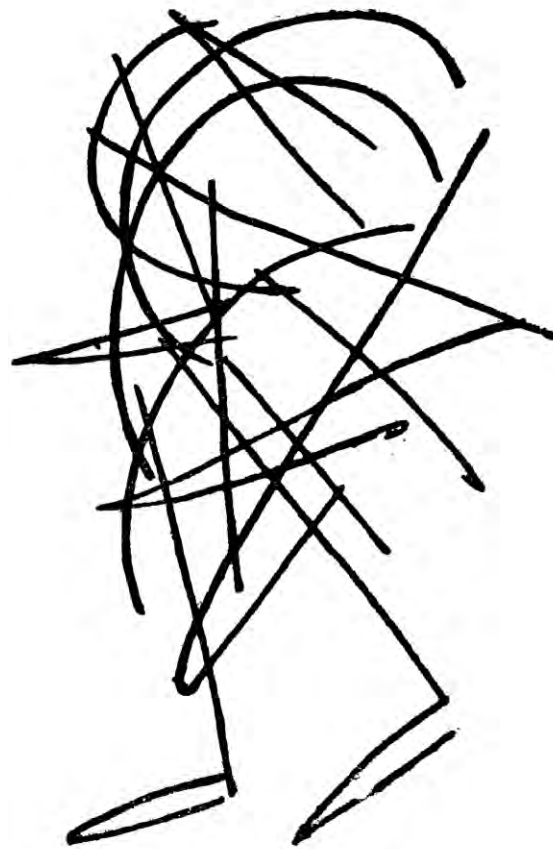


Fig. 4. Benedetta, *Forze maschili: Armi e piume* (Masculine Forces: Weapons and Feathers) (1924), ink on paper, 7 13/16" x 5 1/2". From *Le forze umane. Romanzo astratto con sintesi grafiche* (Human Forces: Abstract novel with graphic synthesis). Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

machine,⁴¹ the works and text emphasized the importance of simple colors on canvas and the impact of maximum emotion. The ultimate goal of the artists was an investigation of the relationships between color and physical materials, form and weight, and finally, color and emotions.⁴²

A few years later, Benedetta participated in another crucial doctrine of second phase Futurism, the *Manifesto dell'Aeropittura*.⁴³ The manifesto was published officially in 1931 as "*La prima affermazione nel mondo di una nuova arte italiana. L'Aeropittura. Un manifesto di Marinetti*" (The first affirmation in the world of a new Italian art, Aeropainting. A manifesto by Marinetti).⁴⁴ The text was reproduced later that year for the first Futurist exhibition of *Aeropittura* in Rome. The *Manifesto of Aeropainting* declared that Futurists were now determined to leave the constraints of the earth with poetry, painting, and sculpture and achieve an aesthetic of flight and of aerial life.⁴⁵ The purpose of their artwork would henceforth be to capture the optical and psychic sensations of flight attained from firsthand experiences of flying. The formal tenets of this manifesto called for shifting perspectives and flattened, momentary views of the landscape from above. The manifesto was signed by eight Futurist men and Benedetta.⁴⁶

Benedetta's earliest artistic explorations with Futurism

included her experiments with the *parolibera* technique and development of what she called "*sintesi grafiche*" (graphic synthesis) to illustrate her 1924 novel, *Le Forze Umane*. The nineteen works she created were intended not to illustrate as much as to synthesize the text and its concepts. Graphic drawings from this book, such as *Totale raggiunto* (Achieved totality) and *Dolore* (Pain) combine abstraction with text, and intuitive sketching with language. This juxtaposition sets up a struggle between the abstract and the actual. Other works from this text illustrate the powerful effects of masculine and feminine union, for example, *Forze femminili: Spirale di dolcezza + serpe di fascino* (Feminine forces: Spiral of sweetness + serpent of charm) (Fig. 3) and *Forze maschili: Armi e piume* (Masculine forces: Weapons and feathers) (Fig. 4). *Forze femminili* depicts the individual, but limited power of the female with spiraling curves. *Forze maschili* are shown in a series of sharp angles. The full capacity of human power is brought to fruition when the two genders are united in *Fusione di nuclei= amore*, (Fusion of nuclei = love).

These designs illustrate Benedetta's ideology of gender—that men and women are separate, but equivalent—by depicting the vitality of both the curvaceous lines of female forces and the jagged lines of masculine forces. Other images in *Forze umane*

show the powerful, atomic reaction when the two sexes are joined, as in *Contatti di due nuclei potenti (femminile e maschile)* (Contact of two potential nuclei [feminine and masculine]). The positive and potent result of the union of genders is “love,” as seen in *Fusion di nuclei = amore*. These drawings demonstrate visually the recurrent theme also evident in Benedetta’s writings on gender; men cannot exist without women, and vice-versa. Benedetta supported the essentialist idea that males and females are different, but believed that only by combining their strengths, could humankind progress to modernity. Similarly, Futurism and Fascism (even when taking an anti-female stance), could not succeed without the contributions of women in their biological and spiritual capacity.

Between 1926 and 1930, Benedetta designed stage sets for three of Marinetti’s Futurist theatrical productions, *Prigionieri e l’amore* (The Prisoners and love) (1926); *L’oceano del cuore* (The ocean of the heart) (1927); and *Simultanina* (Simultaneity) (1930). These designs are now lost, except for two photographs of Benedetta’s sketches for *L’oceano del cuore*, which were published in *Comoedia* in 1928.⁴⁷ She also experimented with ceramic, glass, and tactile artwork,⁴⁸ but her greatest accomplishments in the Futurist style are seen in her paintings. Her first Futurist painting, *Armonia* (Harmony) (1922-24),⁴⁹ was a collaborative work with Volt, the Futurist alias for Vincenzo Fani.⁵⁰ *Armonia* represents the extent of Benedetta’s growing knowledge of abstraction and Futurist concepts as evidenced in its shimmering scene of sun, sky and earth that vibrates with the dynamic forces of the universe. *Velocità di motoscafo* (see Pl. 6) demonstrates her progression to dynamic abstraction in Futurist terms. The barely discernible motorboat slices through the water leaving a path of rhythmic patterns of blue and yellow. The red and black color of the motorboat emphasizes the violence of the movement that cuts and reverberates through the canvas.

While Benedetta’s activities indicate that she believed in the Futurist/Fascist model for women, a closer look at her literary and artistic production reveals a subtle form of resistance, one that was carried out within the boundaries of Futurism’s original misogynist ideology. Sorting through the contradictions and paradoxes of Benedetta’s words and actions, I have found instances where her activities, though apparently serving these causes, actually forged positive changes for women.

This resistance is first evident where Benedetta confronted signature and authorship issues. By eliminating a last name altogether, she removed all traces of a past patriarchal line and of her husband’s family.⁵¹ Whereas she may have been autonomous regarding her name, her response to Marinetti’s “contempt for women” in Futurist rhetoric was quite different. Though initially shocked by its anti-female language, she was still inclined to find a worthy rationale behind such misogyny. The Getty Research Institute holds a number of typed and handwritten drafts of essays by Benedetta that deal specifically with issues of gender in Futurism. One untitled and undated essay examines the “scorn” for women delineated in Marinetti’s first manifesto of Futurism.⁵² In it, Benedetta recalls her initial reaction when she first read his words, stating, “it was like a violent slap in the face” (*mi avvicina al*

Futurismo mi schiaffeggiarono violentemente), then expressing her resolve to try and understand these terrible words. After confronting Marinetti on the matter, she clarifies that his scornful comments were meant for only certain *types* of women, particularly the overly romantic, masculine, pessimistic, and fatalistic. She advocates another path for women, Futurism, which defies past stereotypes of women and supports the new modern Fascist mindset. Benedetta claims in this text that “she has found the place for women in Futurism,” affirming that, because Futurism is a program of Italian art and life, the place of the woman must also be found in art and life, while protected by the domain of Fascism.⁵³

This type of rationalization epitomizes Benedetta’s handling of future gender issues from her position within Futurism. She did not make waves or make angry claims in her support for the independence and value of women; instead, she suggested subtle changes in the way women should be perceived. This came in the form of lectures, novels, explanations of Marinetti’s harsh words, and paintings that celebrated the feminine. Benedetta tried to shift Futurist ideology by working from the inside, “correcting” misunderstandings of previous Futurist rhetoric and appending new theories based on her reconceptualizations. She did this with her visual art, and close readings of several of her paintings provide some clues.

Benedetta completed what might be considered her masterpiece, *Il Grande X* (Pl. 8) in 1931, the same year she signed the *Manifesto dell’Aeropittura*, advocating finding beauty in the fusion of painting and flight. While *Il Grande X* reflects in general the Futurist celebration of speed and technology in Italy, it also represents a shift in the second generation away from the strictly mechanical, toward the more personal and spiritual elements of dynamism. This desire to overcome earthbound limits was a theme which would inspire many of Benedetta’s visual works.

Il Grande X defies the traditional masculinist narrative of Futurist painting by putting forth a distinctly feminine and spiritual perspective. In Benedetta’s own words, the paintings during her *aeropittura* period aimed at communicating “the notion of subjective and objective space of the sensations and emotions of the aviator, lyrical essential, ascensional, and symbolic transfiguration.”⁵⁴ The desire to overcome earthbound limitations became the theme that inspired many of her works. The painting depicts an earthly industrial world below and an ethereal, spiritual space above. A large, curvilinear X intersects these spaces, dividing the canvas into four triangular quadrants.

At the bottom is a city street filled with skyscrapers and speeding vehicles represented by spheres of light. Over the dominant color of gray, accents of red and yellow add the sensation of the speed and dynamism of the city at night. Benedetta’s signature here serves as more than an indexical reference to the artist. In Italian, the word *benedetta* literally means to bless, or to consecrate. Though the term is generally used in its masculine form, *benedetto*, it may be feminized according to the gender of its subject (for example, in the phrase *terra benedetta*, consecrated ground). Here, the artist



Fig. 5. Benedetta with two of her daughters in front of *Synthesis of Sea Communications*, (1933), before installation in the Palermo Post Office, black and white photograph, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

signed her first name boldly in capital letters, using the same yellow and red colors that represent the sensation of swiftly moving light in the modern city (the headlights of the automobiles and the office lights of the skyscrapers). By placing her name in the only segment which depicts earthly activity, Benedetta in effect, consecrates this Futurist city with her feminine presence.

The Fascists had appropriated the Roman numeral "X" as the official symbol of their political revolution. Benedetta's curvilinear "X" represents a blatant reversal of the bold "X" used by other artists of this period—thereby serving as an indirect critique of the overt hyper-masculinism of Mussolini's regime. In the upper right quadrant of *Il Grande X*, two ghostlike forms float, the generalized shapes of a male and a female body. Benedetta's depiction of these figures shows the "female" form in ascension (toward the spiritual) and the "male" form descending (toward the material). Neither is shown as superior or inferior; rather they are separate entities

that function in different, but significant capacities. These politicized and gendered signs of Benedetta's *Il Grande X* exemplify the symbolic mode of resistance that Futurist women were compelled to employ.

Unusual for a woman of her time, Benedetta had flown in airplanes before painting *Il Grande X*, and she incorporated her experience of new perspectives, freedom from the force of gravity, and a dreamlike aerial atmosphere into this and other works.⁵⁵ In the catalogue for the 1931 *Mostra Futurista di Aeropittura* (Futurist Exhibition of Aeropainting), held in Rome, she wrote: "The paintings I am exhibiting are the plastic results of my flights over Rome, the Apennines, Milan, the Mediterranean, Palermo, Tunis."⁵⁶ Based on these experiences, she was able to rupture the conventional sense of foreground, middle-ground, and background by adopting the irrational avant-garde perspective of the *aeropittura*.

Benedetta's *aeropittura* were exhibited in all of the major Futurist shows as well as at the principal Italian exhibition venues. The acclaim she received from this exposure led to her first major public commission in 1933, to paint a series of large-scale canvases for the new Central Post Office in Palermo, Sicily, designed by Angiolo Mazzoni, a state architect and engineer.⁵⁷ Mazzoni asked Benedetta to paint a series of works representing the subject of advances in technology and communication for the Director's Conference Hall. The five works she produced (using a mix of tempera and encaustic paint on canvas) incorporated the wonders of modern technology with the perpetual movements of the sea, the earth, and the sky: *Sintesi delle comunicazioni marittime* (Synthesis of Sea Communications) (Fig. 5 and Pl. 9); *Sintesi delle comunicazioni terrestri* (Synthesis of Land Communications) (Pl. 10); *Sintesi delle comunicazioni aeree* (Synthesis of Air Communications) (Fig. 6); *Sintesi delle comunicazioni telegrafiche e telefoniche* (Synthesis of Telegraph and Telephone Communications); and *Sintesi delle comunicazioni radiofoniche* (Synthesis of Radio Communications). These works celebrate modern technological progress (a first generation Futurist ideal), while foregrounding a sense of the power and mystery of the universe (a second generation Futurist ideal).

Benedetta negotiated these seemingly contrary goals by combining the dual notions of nature and technology in a manner that suggests a physical and spiritual connection between the two. In her writings on gender, she clearly linked nature with the feminine, connecting both of these to the sacred. *Sintesi delle comunicazioni marittime* continues the formal program of *Velocità di motoscafo*, although now a large industrial ship slices through the abstract, lyrical lines of the ocean, which literally seems to support the boat on its journey to land. The ship has departed from an industrial city with factories and smokestacks, and is moving toward a smaller town with adobe buildings and an old-world wooden rowboat as its only mode of sea transportation. Clearly, in this composition Benedetta is recognizing the major industrial changes occurring in Italy, depicting the new, modern world interacting with the old. Yet, contrasting Futurist and Fascist ideologies, she does not simply celebrate modern industry. The manner in which she presents her powerful rendition of

the sea and the sky makes it obvious that this progress would not have been possible without the forces of nature. This bias toward the natural and the spiritual is in distinct opposition to the rhetoric of early Futurism. It is also Benedetta's subtle way of inserting the feminine, or what she considered the necessary component of the feminine, into the Futurist agenda.

Synthesis of Land Communications celebrates the new highways, bridges (note the grandiose fascist colonnade), and tunnels that Mussolini had built throughout the countryside. A closer look at this panel demonstrates Benedetta's conflicting take on these advancements. The right side of the painting is dominated by the modern amenities of the highway and arched colonnade; on the other side is a small village, a memory of the country's past, with track lines that bring the eye upward toward a tunnel that unfolds with organic abstract layers, like the petals of a flower. The directional force of the tracks carries the eye upward, and even the lines of the constructed arch bring us toward the zig-zag mountainous space. A strong beam of light connects the two realms. Sun, earth, water and modern technology are the unifying forces for Benedetta's construction of the new, modern Italy. Beyond just celebrating the old and the new, Benedetta was acknowledging both as intertwined and mutually complementary. It is important to note that the organic, abstract layers (like the petals of a flower) found in many of her works have a remarkable similarity to the later, first generation feminist artists' "vaginal iconography."

These Palermo canvases oppose the idea that humankind has learned to harness nature with modern technology; in fact they reveal nature as the ultimate source of power. Benedetta linked nature (which she associated with female qualities) to the domain of the sacred, thus securing an exalted space for the feminine in Futurism. With these works, Benedetta was actually deconstructing the age-old binary, "woman is to nature as man is to culture (i.e., technology)," by joining the two elements to create a successful, Futurist world, indicating that modern industry (masculinity) could not succeed without nature (femininity). These paintings depict visually Benedetta's recurring theme of the necessary and powerful union of masculine and feminine forces as the best method of advancing society.

As Benedetta's visual explorations progressed, celebration of the mechanical element, so important to the first group of Futurists, became less and less evident in her work. In *Cime arse di solitudine* (Parched mountains of solitude) (1936), both civilization and nature are represented, but without the modern city or glorification of technology. The city is shown as subordinate to nature, represented by a mere grouping of



Fig. 6. Benedetta in front of *Synthesis of Air Communications* (1933), before installation in the Palermo Post Office, black and white photograph, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

rough-hewn buildings supported by the higher realms of the earth, sky, and sea. A distinctly mystical element has been added in the form of an aerial ring (suggesting a halo) seen around the top of the mountain terrain. This mystical mountain has apparently replaced the skyscraper of *Il Grande X* as the new pinnacle of Futurist ideology.⁵⁸

Benedetta recognized "the feminine" and the female body as possessing a power not available to men, and she used it to undermine systems of masculine domination and to appropriate authority. She recognized the potential of the feminine as a powerful medium to critique the patriarchal system Jacques Lacan would later term "the Symbolic Order."⁵⁹

She firmly believed that neither Futurism nor Fascism could prosper without an infusion of the feminine sense of the spiritual, maternal, and aesthetic. Contrary to Marinetti's hopes in *Mafarka il futurista*, where he advocated mechanical reproduction of sons, Benedetta asserted that Futurism could not be run successfully by men alone.

Using nature-based concepts of "the feminine" effectively as a way to alter the course of the second phase of Futurism, Benedetta negotiated a space for women. At a time when there was no public arena for verbal conflict or protest, Benedetta used her paintings to gain symbolic power. Against all odds, Benedetta asserted the voice of a woman into early-twentieth-century Italian art and politics.

By 1939, with the large canvas *Monte Tabor* (Pl. 11), Benedetta moved toward excising all images of the modern world. *Monte Tabor* recalls the style of *Il Grande X* with its concentric circles, rippling forms, and layered surfaces, but any hint of industry or humanity is missing. The title refers to the sacred space of Mount Tabor in Palestine, which, according to the New Testament (Matthew 17:1-6), was the location of the transfiguration of Christ. During the transfiguration, a dazzling brightness emanated from Christ's body, as if the sun

was shining from within, thus revealing him to his followers as divine. Benedetta has removed the physical being of Christ in *Monte Tabor* and bequeathed the essence of divinity to the mountain itself. Earth, and by association its population and industry, is shown as a mere component of a much larger system of the natural and the spiritual world. Furthermore, she again linked nature (associated with female qualities) to the domain of the sacred, thus securing an exalted space for the feminine in Futurism. It is my argument that in *Monte Tabor* (and the other paintings discussed here), Benedetta attempted to embody the feminine, thereby integrating the experience of women into the dominant system of masculinity in Italian culture.

For her male colleagues, *aeropittura* provided a new formal device for depicting the earth, but for Benedetta, it also enabled her to link the earthly with the spiritual realm. In contrast to the more typically masculine second-generation Futurist association of the industrial with the spiritual, in paintings like *Monte Tabor* Benedetta brought nature, a metaphor for the feminine, into the mix. She then used the spiritual denotation of her name to transform the industrial, natural and ethereal space of her paintings into a literal *terra benedetta*, a highly personalized and sacred—yet still Futurist—ground.

When Italy entered World War II in 1940, F.T. Marinetti, at age sixty-four, volunteered to fight at the Russian front. In fact, he was following Benedetta's proposal, outlined in *La leva militare capovolta* (Military service reversed) (1932), in which she encouraged older men to serve in order to preserve the younger men for nation-building and reproduction. While her husband was at war, Benedetta played her part on the home front, lecturing across Italy from her essay *Donna della patria in Guerra* (Women of the Fatherland at War). Back home, ill and exhausted, Marinetti died in Venice in December 1944, and as she had with her father, Benedetta felt the great personal loss as a result of the very system she had promoted. Following her husband's death, Benedetta ceased creating artwork, dedicating herself, instead, to preserving the memory of the Futurist movement—a sometimes difficult task in post-war Italy when its affiliation with Fascism was unpopular.⁶⁰ Benedetta died in Venice in May 1977, survived by her three daughters and a legacy that is yet to be fully acknowledged.

While politics and spirituality were her primary motivations, Benedetta also specifically addressed issues of gender in her literary work and in her paintings, where she used nature-based concepts of "the feminine" effectively as a way to change the course of the second phase of Futurism. Largely thanks to Benedetta, her husband F.T. Marinetti re-orchestrated the shifting ideologies of Futurism to embrace feminine elements of intuition, spirituality, and the mystical forces of the earth. •

Siobhán M. Conaty is an Assistant Professor of Art History at La Salle University in Philadelphia. Her research focuses on art, politics, and gender issues in early twentieth century modernism. She has published previously on this topic in the *International Journal of the Humanities* (2005).

Notes

1. Simona Cigliana, *Benedetta: Le forze umane, Viaggio di Garará, Astra e il sottomarino* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Altana, 1998), 39. "[É] morto prematuramente, ricoverato in un nosocomio a seguito di un terribile esaurimento nervoso manifestatosi al fronte."
2. *L'Ordine Nuovo* was also a communist journal, under the direction of Antonio Gramsci and published in Turin during 1919-25. Though a lawyer by profession, Arturo Cappa was deeply involved in Socialist politics. When the Fascist regime took control of Italy, he had to leave Italy because of his political leanings. See Mirella Bentivoglio and Franca Zoccoli, *Women Artists of Italian Futurism: Almost Lost to History...* (New York: Midmarch Press, 1997), 180, fn.14.
3. Franca Zoccoli, *Benedetta Cappa Marinetti: L'incantesimo della luce* (Milan: Selene Edizioni, 2000), 23. "*Compagno della Zatkova, Arturo era in contatto con I futuristi russi e fin dai tempi della Prima guerra mondiale frequentava le serate futuriste a Roma, in compagnia del più giovane Alberto.*" See also the English translation, Franca Zoccoli, *Benedetta Cappa Marinetti, Queen of Futurism* (New York: Midmarch Press, 2003), 19. "Arturo, Zatkova's companion, was in touch with the Russian Futurists; he had also attended, with the younger Alberto, Futurist soirées in Rome."
4. Benedetta received a diploma from *Vittoria Colonna* for "maestro di giardino" on Feb. 18, 1916. The diploma from the *Università degli studi di Roma* is dated July 9, 1917. It does not specify the type of program, though it was most likely in education. These diplomas can be found in The Getty Research Institute, Special Collections, The Papers of F.T. Marinetti and Benedetta Cappa Marinetti, (Arch. # 920092), Box 6, Folder 35 (hereafter, Getty: FTM & BCM).
5. Claudia Salaris was the first to suggest the connection between Montessori's theory's and the Futurist manifesto of Tactilism. See her *Storia del futurismo. Libri gironali manifesti* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1985), 132.
6. Filippo Piazzoni (Vittoria Marinetti's son) indicated that Zatkova was one of the most important artistic influences on his grandmother's young life. Interview with author, Sept. 7, 2001, Milan.
7. "Intonarumori" was an invented Futurist word for a series of instruments that generated dissonant noises. There is no literal translation.
8. Benedetta's family had known Marinetti as early as 1910, when her father's cousin, a lawyer, defended him against charges of indecency and pornography for his novel *Mafarka il Futurista*.
9. In this Futurist play on words, Benedetta combined "spy" and "psychology"; there is no English equivalent.
10. This letter, in the collection of Filippo Piazzoni, is reproduced in Franca Zoccoli, *Benedetta Cappa Marinetti*, 20. "*Grazie per la promessa mantenuta per qui(quei?) libri che mi Le spedito. Ho provato fastidio... nel vedere il mio nome scritto a 'parolibera futurista.' Sono troppo libera e ribelle — non voglio freni. Voglio essere io solamente.*" All translations are by the author, unless otherwise specified.
11. I was able to locate the letter in which Marinetti directly responded to Benedetta's letter of Nov. 23, 1918. The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, The F.T. Marinetti Papers, Box 1, Folder 18. [1918- May 27, 1919]: "*Vi chiamo così perché mi sono convinto subito parlandavi che il mio cervello e la mia sensibilità non avevano bisogno di punti. Parolibera futurista significa precisamente: essere io. E un distintivo che ci separa nettamente dai moltissimi che loro tutti ieri e niente. E una parola d'ordine che ci lega nella lotta.*" Marinetti's return address from this series of letters is an army address, hence the specific end-date of this group
12. "*Sono un amico, non un maestro. Come amico futurista sono lieto di favorire il vostro ingegno nel suo slancio originalissimo.*"
13. Yale: Beinecke, Box 1, Folder 18. Dated 1918 – May 27, 1919: "*Ho letto una seconda volta con molto attenzione la vostra Leggenda*

- del Silenzio. Rivela un ingegno originale forte.... Avete letto il mio *Ma farka il futurista? Vi piace?*" Note Marinetti is still using the formal "vostra" in his language. I have not come across any other reference to Benedetta's work, *Legends of Silence*, in my research.
14. Yale: Beinecke, Box 1, Folder 18. Telegrams dated February 14 and 19, 1919.
 15. I have not come across a specific date of Innocenzo Cappa's death in any of the previous scholarship. Filippo Piazzoni confirmed the year as 1918, letter to author, April 4, 2002.
 16. Yale: Beinecke, Box 1, Folder 19.
 17. "Non dimenticare la promessa di lavorare. Devi portare il suo ingegno al suo massimo splendore. Ogni giorno." Yale: Beinecke, Box 1, Folder 19, Letter dated August 16, 1919.
 18. Yale: Beinecke, Box 1, Folders 20-23.
 19. *Contro l'amore e il parlamentarismo* (1911-15) in *Guerra sola igiene del mondo* (Milano: Poesia, 1915), and *Contro il matrimonio* (Roma Futurista, May 25, 1919).
 20. "Io spero che, non dimentichero mai il tuo ingegno alto forte e originale, tu lavori. Devi lavorare per te, per me, per noi." Yale: Beinecke, Box 2, Folder 25.
 21. Yale: Beinecke, Box 1, Folder 22.
 22. Yale: Beinecke, Box 2 Folder 32. Letter dated May 11, 1923: "Scrivimi a ... cosa fui e se lavori al meraviglioso tua mare - motoscafo." Letter dated May 23, 1923: "Hai lavorato? Il motoscafo? Ho ansietà? aressiata? si vederlo finito. Credo sul? tuo ingegno plastico originalissimo."
 23. Yale: Beinecke, Box 2, Folder 32.
 24. Zoccoli, *Benedetta Cappa Marinetti*, 30. "Si sposarono più tardi, nel 1923, probabilmente per compiacere la famiglia di lei. La cerimonia, semplicissima, fu celebrata a Villasanta di Monza, alla presenza dei testimoni che furono Umberto Notari e il fratello prediletto di Benedetta, Alberto."
 25. Bentivoglio and Zoccoli, *Women Artists of Italian Futurism*, 37.
 26. F.T. Marinetti, *Contro l'amore e Parlamentarianismo*, (1911-15), *Guerra sola igiene del mondo*, (Milan: Poesia, 1915), in Luciano De Maria, *Teoria e invenzione futurista* (Milan: Mondadori, 1968), 292-93.
 27. According to Marinetti, thirteen Futurists died in World War I. Among them were Umberto Boccioni, Antonio Sant'Elia, Ugo Tommei, Athos Casarini, and Carlo Erba.
 28. Lia Giachero, "Mani 'palpatrici d'orizzonti' Il contributo di Benedetta Marinetti al manifesto per il Tattilismo," *Richerche di storia dell'arte*, no.45 (1991), Claudia Salaris, *Storia del futurismo. Libri gironali manifesto* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1985), 128.
 29. Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method* (Cambridge, Mass: Robert Bentley, 1967). Montessori originally published her book in 1911.
 30. Caroline Tisdall and Angelo Bozzolla, *Futurism* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), 198.
 31. F.T. Marinetti, *Futurist Manifesto of Tactilism*, (*Comedia*, January 1921). English trans. from Lisa Panzera, "La Futurista Benedetta," from the exhibit catalogue, *La Futurista: Benedetta Cappa Marinetti*, (Philadelphia: Moore College of Art and Design, 1998), 55-56.
 32. F.T. Marinetti, *Futurist Manifesto of Tactilism*, (*Comedia*, January 1921). English trans. from Panzera, "La Futurista Benedetta," 55.
 33. F.T. Marinetti and Tullio, *Manifesto della ceramica futurista*, *La Gazzetta del popolo*, 7 September 1938. The text reads: "Noi futuristi vogliamo fare la ceramica multitattile (perfezionamento del Tattilismo inventato da Marinetti e Benedetta..." (We Futurists want to make multi-tactile ceramics (perfected in *Tattilismo* and invented by Marinetti and Benedetta...).
 34. Alberto Viviani, *Dal verso libero all'aeropoesia*, (Turin: Paravia, 1942), 118. English trans. comes from Bentivoglio and Zoccoli, *Women Artists of Italian Futurism*, 40.
 35. Gino Agnese, "Marinetti, una vita esplosiva," (Milan, *Camunia*, 1990), 209. English translation from Bentivoglio and Zoccoli, *Women Artists of Italian Futurism*, 40.
 36. Panzera, "La Futurista Benedetta," 12. The unpublished essay by Marinetti, "Le tavole tattili costruite da Benedetta sulla spiaggia di Antignano. Una sensibilità italiana nata in Egitto," in *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista* (Milan: Mondadori, 1969), 263, was quoted in Lia Giachero, "Mani 'palpatrici d'orizzonti,' Il contributo di Benedetta Marinetti al manifesto per il tattilismo," *Richerche di Storia dell'Arte*, 45 (1991): 65.
 37. It was labeled as Marinetti's in the large-scale Futurist exhibition, "Futurismo 1909-1944," at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, July 2001.
 38. It is important to note that during and after the years of Benedetta's children's births was a period of prolific creativity in all realms of the arts. Benedetta had three daughters: Vittoria, (mother of Filippo Piazzoni) born in 1927, Ala, born in 1928; and Luce, born in 1932. All three had Futurist names, the English translations are Victory, Wing, and Light.
 39. Fedele Azari was a pilot and one of the forerunners of the *aeropittura* style. Fillia, a pseudonym for Luis Colombo, founded the Futurist movement in Turin in 1923.
 40. *Mostra di trentaquattro pittori futuristi* (Milan: Galleria Pesaro, Nov.-Dec., 1926).
 41. Ibid., Introduction, "un'opera futurista sarà concepita come una macchina."
 42. Ibid., "...i rapporti tra colore e materia, fra forma e peso, fra colore ad emotività."
 43. It is first mentioned in F.T. Marinetti, "Prospettive del volo e aeropittura," *Gazzetta del Popolo* (Torino) (Sept. 22, 1929), but was not published officially until 1931. In any case, the concept of *aeropittura* was something that the Futurists had been developing, creating paintings of planes and from the perspective of flight by the mid 1920s. For further discussion of this issue see Salvatore Ventura, *L'aeropittore Tato e le vere origini del manifesto dell'aeropittura* (Rome: Edizioni Fragmenta, 1991); and Massimo Duranti, ed., *Dottori e l'Aeropittura. Aeropittori e aeroscultori futuristi*, exh. cat., *Arte contemporanea a Palazzo Mediceo, Città di Seravezza* (Florence: Maschietto e Musolino, 1996), 17-18.
 44. *Il Giornale della Domenica*, vols. 1-2 (Feb. 1931).
 45. Tisdall and Bozzolla, *Futurism*, 199. *The Manifesto of Aeropainting* was written on Sept. 22, 1929, but not published officially until 1931.
 46. The men were Giacomo Balla, Fortunato Depero, Gerardo Dottori, Fillia (Luis Colombo), F.T. Marinetti, Enrico Prampolini, Mino Somenzi and Tato (Guglielmo Sansoni). Two years later, Benedetta was still active in the theorizing of the second phase, and she was the only woman who signed the *Manifesto Plastica Murale*. This manifesto was developed for the exhibition, *I Mostra nazionale di plastica murale per l'edilizia fascista*, (Exhibition of synthetic murals for Fascist Buildings) which opened at the Palazzo Ducale in Genoa, in November 1934. The other signers were Marinetti, Ambrosi, Andreoni, Depero, Dottori, Oriani, Munari, Prampolini, Rosso and Tato. The manifesto was published in *Stile Futurista*, a. I, n. 5 (Dec. 1934).
 47. These sketches were published in the French theater and fashion journal, *Comoedia*, a.X, n.6 (June-July 1928). See also Lia Giachero, "'Senza alcuna preoccupazione plastica' Benedetta e la grafica di indagine psicologica," in Anna Maria Ruta, *Benedetta, fughe e ritorni, Presenze futuriste in Sicilia*, exh. cat., (Palermo: Palazzo delle Poste, 1998), 47. "Sul ponte di comando vetrato buio si vede il bagliore bluastr delle vetrate." Giachero also reproduces the third sketch from *The Ocean of the Heart*, titled *Passerella della Dante nel porto carnealesco di Rio de Janeiro*, dated 1929, in color (pp.

48, 58). She does not discuss this sketch in her text, nor supply the source for the photograph. This scene shows the ship arriving in Rio de Janeiro with an abstract view of native carnival figures on shore. I found a reproduction of this in Benedetta's papers at the Getty: Pier Luis Fortunati, "'L'oceano del cuore, *Dramma in Cinque sintesi di Marinetti*.'" *L'Impero* (Roma) (Dec. 1927): 3. If it was published in a 1927 newspaper, the 1929 dating by Ruta and Giachero must be incorrect. Since the play was also written in 1927, Benedetta's set design must also date from that year.

48. The only surviving work from this genre is *Sudan-Parigi*, of which Marinetti is still credited as the sole creator in exhibitions and texts. Benedetta worked on a series of ceramic works where reproductions of her paintings were placed on plates and tiles. These were made in Faenza by the Bottega d'Arte of R. Gatti and M. Ortoloni. For images see Ruta, *Benedetta: Fughe e Ritorni: Dinamismo di un motoscafo*, (terra-cotta plate) (c.1929), 27, and *Prendendo quota*, (tiles) (1931), 64. Her glass projects include *Vetrata per il Ministero delle Comunicazioni* (1936), Rome, and a joint project with Tato called *Tre polimaterici per il vesibolo Case della Piccola italiana* (1934); images of both can be found in Ruta, *Benedetta: Fughe e Ritorni*, 45. There are also records for a project of glass windows that was never realized. Two sketches from 1936, *Paesaggio cosmico* and *Paesaggio marino* exist in a private collection in Italy. For images see Ruta, *Benedetta: Fughe e Ritorni*, 72.

49. The date of this work may have been incorrectly listed in the "Futurismo 1909-1944" exhibition (Rome, 2001) and in Ruta,

Benedetta: Fughe e Ritorni, as 1919. Filippo Piazzoni, who owns the work, states that the date is more likely 1922-24 because it represents the last image of *Le Forze Umane*, and therefore must have been created during Benedetta's work on this book. Piazzoni interview with author, Sept. 7, 2001, Milano.

50. Vincenzo Fani (1888-1927), was a friend of the Marinettis. Although a lawyer by trade, he was active in Futurism and supported the nationalist ideas of Fascism. See Enrico Crispolti, *Futurismo, 1909-1944*, exh. cat., (Rome: Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 2001), 595.

51. Benedetta was not the only woman of the second generation Futurists to use only a first name or a single name. Others were Regina (Regina Bracchi) and Barbara (Olga Biglieri Scurto). Still other women followed the suit of some of the male Futurists and took on a new, one-word pseudonym: Futurluce (Elda Norchi), and Magamal (Eva Kuhn Amendola) are two examples.

52. Getty: FTM & BCM, Box 6, Folder 4. Based on the language and subject, I would date this to the early 1930s.

53. Getty: FTM & BCM, Box 6, Folder 4. "Così io ho trovato e vorrei dire scoperto il posto della donna nel Futurismo: e poiché il Futurismo è programma di arte di vita d'italianità, il posto della donna nell'arte e nelle vita, nel nostro clima romano fascista," p. 1.

54. Benedetta, "Le Futurisme," in *Cahiers d'Art*, 25:1 (1950):16.

55. For a discussion of Benedetta's experience flying see Bentivoglio and Zoccoli, *Women Artists of Italian Futurism*, 112, 186, fn. 34. A photograph of her standing with Marinetti and others in front of a small plane, unmarked and undated, is in Getty, FTM (850702), Box 11, Folder 225.

56. English translation by Franca Zoccoli, *Women Artists of Italian Futurism*, 186, fn. 34. Zoccoli notes that Benedetta proudly included the altitudes of each flight: "I quadri presentati da me sono il risultato plastico dei miei voli su Roma (800 metri), Appennini (3500 metri), Milano (2500 metri), Mediterraneo Palermo-Tunisi (800 metri)."

57. Mazzoni signed (with Marinetti and Somenzi) the *Manifesto dell'Architettura Aerea* in 1934. The Palermo Post Office has both Futurist interior decoration and a stern Fascist neo-classical structure. For a thorough description of this project, see Anna Maria Ruta, "Nel palazzo delle Poste, a Palermo," in the Enrico Crispolti, ed., *Futurismo e Meridione*, exh. cat. (Napoli: Palazzo Reale, July 18 – Oct. 31, 1996), 228-33.

58. Benedetta had also written *Spiritualità della donna italiana* by this time.

59. French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's Symbolic Order consists of a system of signs, roles, and rituals that regulates society. Lacan recognized the system of regulations deemed by society to be gendered, noting that in order to fit into the Symbolic Order, one must submit to the "Law of the Father." Lacan acknowledged feminine experiences would be limited and repressed as long as the Law of the Father remained intact. Rosemarie Tong discusses Lacan's Symbolic Order in her chapter on "Postmodern Feminism," in *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998). Lacan posits these ideas in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 64-66, and in "The Meaning of the Phallus," in J. Mitchell and J. Rose, eds., *Feminine sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne* (New York: Norton, 1982), 84.

60. In an interview with author, Sept. 7, 2001, Filippo Piazzoni stated that although she did make a few occasional drawings, Benedetta did not continue to work as an artist after Marinetti's death. The Marinetti papers are now divided in three locations, Yale University, the Getty Research Institute, and Filippo Piazzoni's private collection. Piazzoni also indicated that for a short period during the 1940s, Benedetta established a Futurist Foundation, where she kept artwork and documents, but the foundation was located in an inconvenient spot in the countryside where it was not secure and was too costly to maintain.

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THE EARLY CAREER OF VIOLET OAKLEY, ILLUSTRATOR

By Bailey Van Hook

Violet Oakley (1874-1961) achieved fame as the only major female beaux-arts muralist; however, her early career was in illustration, a field increasingly populated by women. Driven by financial necessity and a “dragon of ambition,” Oakley and her sister Hester (1871-1905) entered the field during its so-called ‘golden age.’¹ Providential timing, along with obvious talent, accounted for her rapid rise in three years from fledgling newcomer to recognized professional. In that period, she executed about a hundred illustrations in a variety of styles, ranging from a tonal realism to a decorative aestheticism, showing herself a quick learner and a versatile practitioner. Most of those illustrations, however, have neither been reproduced nor cited in most publications on Oakley—indeed when she later achieved success as a muralist, she herself omitted all but a few of them from her published list of works. But a scrapbook and an account book kept by her mother allow us to reconstruct her early career. Additional details are found in Hester Oakley’s novel *As Having Nothing* (1898), the tale of Elizabeth Wallace, a young woman based loosely on characteristics of both sisters, who after returning from art studies abroad, supports her mother entirely through her work in illustration.²

Together these documents provide us with a broader picture of the Oakleys’ experience than is possible for most of their female contemporaries. They are also important biographically, since they provide a window into Violet Oakley’s early ambition and successes. Oakley had a long career as a muralist, spanning fifty years, from her first commission, for All Angels Church in Manhattan in 1900, through her three cycles for the Pennsylvania State Capitol (1906-27), to The Great Women of the Bible series she executed in 1949 for a church in northwest Philadelphia. Her murals, informed by her deep religious beliefs and grounded in intensive research, evolved from a realist style rooted in illustration, to one increasingly abstract and stylized. Her intensely idealistic nature fueled her art, as she became engaged in the struggle for universal peace in the years between the world wars, traveling to the League of Nations and depicting its participants. Her early career provides us with a picture of a highly motivated yet shy and insecure artist, desperately anxious to succeed professionally and, perhaps more important, economically. Although her upbringing was cosseted and very comfortable, her family had lost its money and, to her mind, social status, and Oakley was determined to restore both.

The Oakley sisters were blessed with a family in which female ambition in the arts was not questioned. Not only were both their grandfathers, George Oakley and William Swain, founding members of the National Academy of Design, but two aunts, Juliana and Georgiana Oakley, had exhibited there, and their Aunt Isabel had studied with the painter Frank Duveneck. Juliana had maintained a studio apart from her family on East Tenth Street in Manhattan. Their mother, Cornelia Swain, who Oakley claimed had been a student of William Morris Hunt, ran a portrait studio in San Francisco for three years.³ The family’s home in South Orange, New Jersey, was decorated with mezzotints and their aunts’ copies of old masters.

Although Hester graduated from Vassar, Violet Oakley, three years younger and sickly and asthmatic as a child, never attended college. Both women went to the Art Students League during the 1893-94 school year, going into the city with their father, Arthur Oakley, who worked downtown in the financial district. They studied with J. Carroll Beckwith and Irving Wiles.⁴ That spring, however, their instruction at the League was abruptly terminated when their father became ill with what Violet later acknowledged was a nervous breakdown, probably brought on by personal and business losses in the financial panic of 1893. In late 1894, with their father’s health improved, the family traveled to France and England to visit Arthur’s relatives, including his sister Juliana, now married and living in Nice. The Oakley sisters studied briefly with Edmond Aman-Jean and Raphaël Collin at the Académie Montparnasse in the spring of 1895. With the family now evidently in straitened economic circumstances, Violet decided to go into illustration, as a “financial starter.”⁵ The decision led the sisters to take a summer class with the American artist Charles “Shorty” Lasar in Rye, England.

When the Oakleys returned to New York that fall, the family lived in a rooming house, a large step down from their spacious home in South Orange. The sisters took a studio at the Rembrandt apartment building adjoining Carnegie Hall, resumed their studies at the nearby Art Students League, and attempted to break into illustration.⁶ It was an auspicious time to enter the field. First, there was the rise of a literate and educated middle class that supported an increased number of periodicals.⁷ Also, many women had more opportunity for leisure because of new labor-saving devices. These developments in turn fed a thirst for illustrated stories. *Ladies’ Home Journal*, priced at a dime, was a phenomenal success. In 1893 it had a circulation of 700,000 and by 1903 it had reached a million.⁸

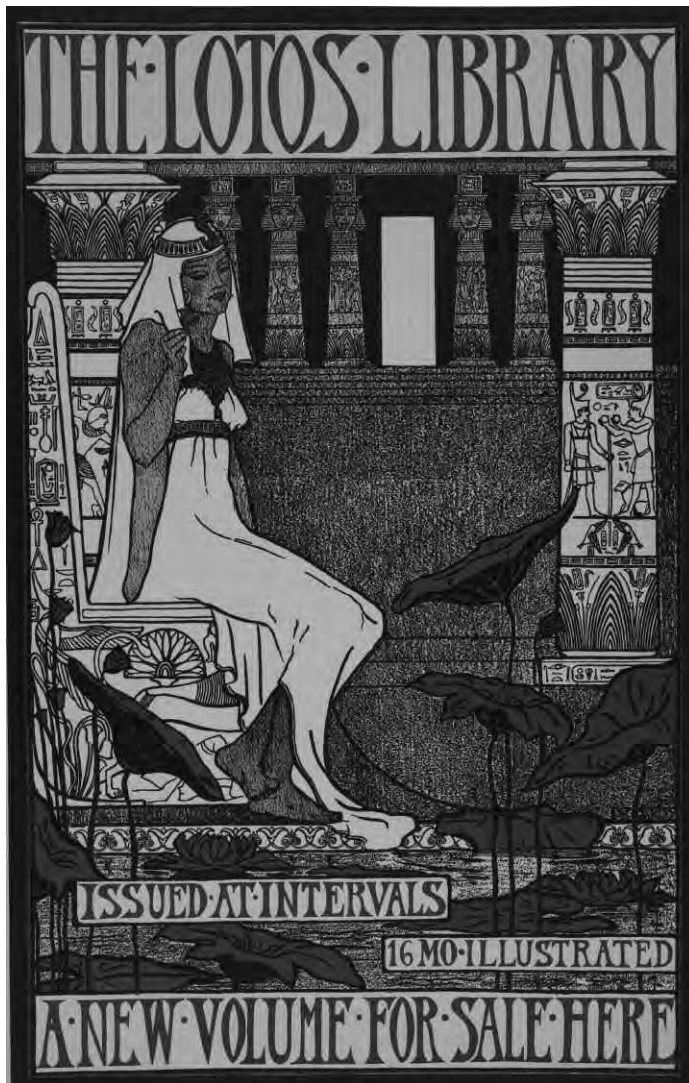


Fig. 1. Violet Oakley, Poster (lithograph), *The Lotos Library* (1896), collection New York Public Library.

Until the mid-1880s most illustrations in newspapers, periodicals, and books were reproduced by wood engraving. A decade later, this method was eclipsed by a photographic means of reproduction, the halftone. It allowed an artist's sketch to be translated, not by the laborious and somewhat subjective art of the wood engraver, but by a quicker, far cheaper and more scientific method. Instead of the finely defined lines and clear contrasts of the sketches created with the wood engraver in mind, halftone reproduction encouraged soft, tonal drawings, sometimes even created by paint and brush, ready for the camera. It also gave artists greater freedom in their choice of materials as well as in the size of original drawing. The downside was that the wage for individual illustrations decreased dramatically, from about \$300 to as low as \$20. Much of the work was done by freelancers, among whom there was fierce competition.

The Oakley sisters made the rounds of periodicals soon after their return to New York. A freelancer would typically begin by bringing her portfolio of illustrations to an editor. If

he liked what he saw, the editor would likely hire her to illustrate something as a test. If she "passed" he would send more work her way. The way forward for Elizabeth Wallace, Hester's fictionalized heroine, likely mirrored that experienced by the Oakley sisters. "One fateful day" an art editor suggested that Elizabeth's decorative line work would be perfect for advertisements and posters (35). The Oakley sisters' first work came from those same easier, less prestigious, and lower-paying commissions.

Women illustrators were becoming increasingly common starting in the 1870s; by the 1890s they were well established. By one estimate there were eighty women illustrators active in the United States during the period between 1880 and 1914.⁹ In many ways it was an ideal career for women at a time in which gender roles were rapidly changing. A woman could be paid as a professional yet spend limited time in the public sphere. Although the major magazines and publishing houses were based in urban areas, it was not necessary for the illustrator to live near them, since once an illustrator's reputation was established, the art editor could as easily send her the stories as have them picked up. A woman could work in her own studio, an extension of the domestic and more private sphere of the home, deemed more appropriate than the rough and tumble world of business and commerce.¹⁰

According to Cornelia Oakley's accounts, kept in a notebook during the years 1895 to 1899, in 1895 her daughters' work consisted almost wholly of advertisements, for Pears soap, gloves, brushes, and chocolate, for \$10 or \$15 apiece. The next year, 1896, there are more ads—for bicycles, soap, toothwash, fiber chamois, and a decorative Delft border around a photo of a young girl in an ad for Mellin foods.¹¹ Over the next five years there is not only a notable rise in both the nature of the Oakley sisters' commissions—mostly from advertisements to book and story illustrations, periodical covers, and posters—but also in the payments they received, revealing the trajectory of successful illustrators. Also recorded are stories and poems, presumably by Hester. It is evident from the account book that jobs gradually increased not only in remuneration but also in importance. A big moment comes in February 1896, when Violet writes her mother and sister: "Hip! Hip! Hip Hurrah!! ... *Cosmopolitan* accepts article & Illustrations for \$80 [in huge numbers]...I don't think I was ever quite so happy over anything. Just think what it means!!!!!!!!!!"¹² Sometime that year, Oakley did a poster for Max Pemberton's *The Puritan Wife* for Dodd, Mead and Co., for which she received \$20. Soon after she received the commission for another poster for the *Lotos Library* (1896; Fig. 1), published by Lippincott, this one done in the flat, stylized manner so popular in the 1890s, a style that will recur later in Oakley's work. Even more encouraging were several lucrative commissions to illustrate short stories and novels. Oakley received a commission to illustrate a popular novel, Elizabeth Phipps Train's *A Marital Liability*, whose four illustrations, including the frontispiece (1897; Fig. 2), brought her \$60 and her name on the title page.¹³

While there was no great challenge in the ads, which necessitated rather summary drawing, the illustrations for short

stories and novels called for more developed figures and more complex compositions. At first the illustrations were conventionally conceived and rather awkwardly executed. In *Marital Liability*, as well as *Mrs. Crichton's Creditor*, another commission from Lippincott, Oakley's style was naïve and unformed, betraying her relative lack of artistic training. The figures were slight, without any real weight or substance. The women are wasp-waisted, the men slightly heavier. The features on both are indistinguishable. Settings are sketched-in, but the space is shallow and the depiction of light is summary.

Nevertheless, some of the commissions began to bear fruit since there was return business from the same publishers. Following *A Marital Liability*, for example, in 1898 she received commissions from Lotos Library to illustrate three more novels. It is significant that the publisher J. B. Lippincott and *Ladies' Home Journal* were located not in New York but in Philadelphia, where the Oakley family had moved sometime during 1896, apparently to seek further treatment for Arthur. Violet was taking classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, with Cecilia Beaux, Joseph DeCamp, and Henry Thouron. But more important to her increasing success was the class in illustration conducted by Howard Pyle at the Drexel Institute in the winter of 1896-97.¹⁴ Oakley was immediately attracted to Pyle's personality and style. He was by all accounts charismatic—tall, commanding, and confident, then at the top of his profession in America, his status as an illustrator rivaled only by those of Charles Dana Gibson and Frederic Remington.

Pyle was not only the most influential teacher of illustration at the end of the nineteenth century, he was its pioneer.¹⁵ Most contemporary illustrators had been trained as painters, but Pyle was one of the first to concentrate on illustration from the beginning of his professional career. He was also one of its passionate advocates, believing that illustration was among some of the best creative work being done in the country. In 1894, he offered his services to the best art school in his area, the Pennsylvania Academy, only to be told that the school was solely concerned with fine arts. Soon after this rebuff, however, the Drexel Institute, also in Philadelphia, offered him a class in illustration.

In the early Drexel years, Pyle's classes were notably welcoming to women. The Oakleys, Elizabeth Shippen Green, and Jessie Willcox Smith had great praise for their teacher.¹⁶ Pyle was constantly exhorting his students to live in their pictures, to imagine their characters had lives before and after the scene they were depicting, and to feel the wind and rain on their skin.¹⁷ Oakley recalled that Pyle developed in his students what he called "'mental projection'—whereby he could see clearly the events to be illustrated as actually occurring in dramatic action, right before his mental vision."¹⁸

As important to her personally as Pyle was to her professionally was Jessie Willcox Smith, whom Oakley met in Pyle's class.¹⁹ A professional illustrator for almost ten years, Smith had a long apprenticeship—doing advertisements, like Oakley—before her talent was recognized. Smith had been a student of Pyle's since he opened his classes in the fall of 1894.²⁰ The friendship between Oakley and Smith grew



Fig. 2. Violet Oakley, Frontispiece for Elizabeth Phipps Train, *A Marital Liability* (Philadelphia, 1897).

stronger after Pyle recommended that together they illustrate a new edition of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie* (1847). It was a testament to Oakley's ability and artistic maturity that Pyle paired the two artists, since Smith had far more experience, both academically and professionally.²¹ She had been a student at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts for three years, then of Pyle's for three years, concurrent with her professional career.

Oakley and Smith received the *Evangeline* commission by March of 1897 and finished the drawings in July.²² Houghton, Mifflin in the United States and the Riverside Press in England published the edition late that year.²³ Smith's image of *Evangeline* standing alone in a field, dressed in clothes appropriate to the Acadian setting, leads as the frontispiece, but the ten illustrations are split evenly between Oakley and Smith. Although both were tackling the type of romantic,

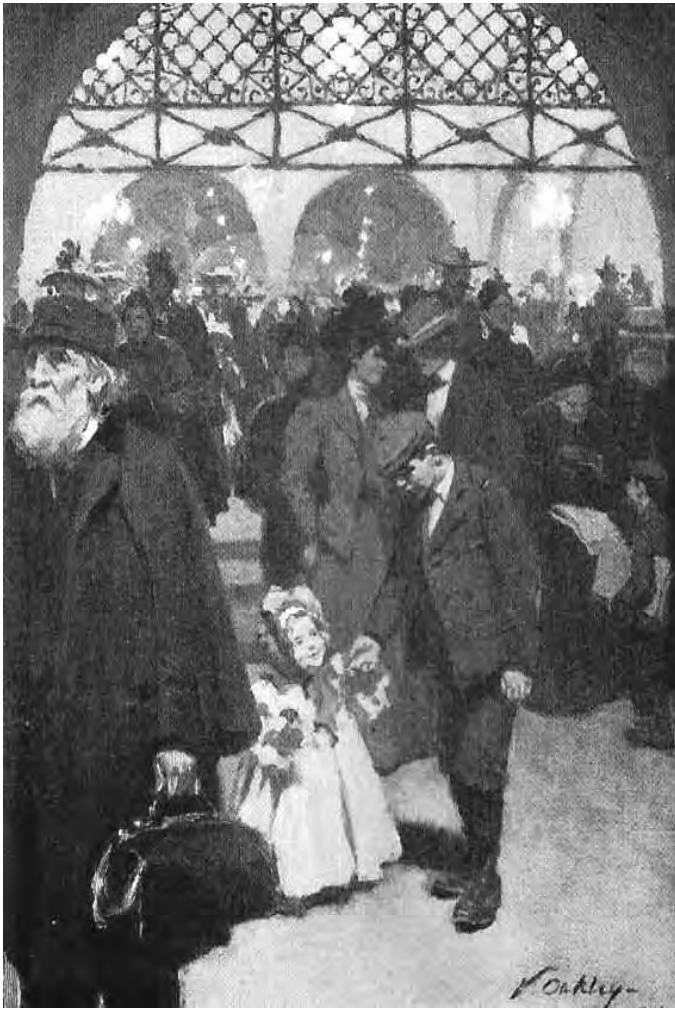


Fig. 3. Violet Oakley, Frontispiece for James Otis, *The Princess and Joe Potter* (Boston, 1898).

historical, and American subject much beloved by Pyle, neither artist attempted the extensive detail common in his illustrations. Smith's are more indebted to Pyle, however, with their sharp diagonals and empty foreground space. Oakley's illustrations are flatter and more decorative, with surface patterns that demonstrate her knowledge of Art Nouveau, then very popular in Europe and probably known to her from her brief time abroad, and apparent in the style of American illustrators like Will Bradley. A winding path in the back of one, "Reverend walked he among them" (1897; Pl. 12), is worthy of the Belgian Henri van der Velde. It also has the hard outlines current among the Nabi painters, whom she may also have become familiar with while in Paris. Others show the more conventional technique of academic painters like Frank Millet, who painted colonial genre at the time.²⁴

Evangeline, Violet Oakley's first major commission, provided an opportunity to illustrate a classic work by a leading American author and apparently gave her a newfound confidence. That spring, in response to a request that she do two illustrations for a short story for *Woman's Home Companion*, she asked the editor for more money, emphasizing how busy she was and dropping the names of her current



Fig. 4. Violet Oakley, Frontispiece for Octave Thanet [Alice French], *Slave to Duty and Other Women* (Chicago and New York, 1898).

commissions for Houghton Mifflin and Little, Brown.²⁵

Oakley was soon receiving more sophisticated projects, illustrating stories and doing covers for *Woman's Home Companion* and *Ladies' Home Journal*. Most were illustrations for romance fiction, with strong, handsome heroes, manly and virile, and uniformly beautiful and spirited heroines; the stories were full of coincidences of love denied and love restored, many with a so-called 'marriage plot,'²⁶ leading inevitably toward that conclusion. It is difficult to know whether the correspondence between the gender of the creator and the reader was intentional or brought on by the gender prescriptions of the era. Did female authors and illustrators gravitate to women's periodicals because they felt more comfortable addressing that audience or because they would more likely be hired? Still, from early on, the pieces Violet Oakley illustrated were more varied and wide ranging than those her sister Hester wrote.²⁷

The style of most of Oakley's illustrations for romantic fiction could be described as tonal realism, the kind of subtly shaded work made possible by the halftone. Her work improved remarkably in the year after publishing illustrations for *A Marital Liability*. The commissions for novel and magazine

illustrations were usually far from the action-filled scenes beloved by Pyle, but they clearly show the effects of his training. For the short story "A Silk-Lined Girl" in *Ladies' Home Journal* (November 1898), or the juvenile novel *The Princess and Joe Potter* (1898; Fig. 3), the figures are fuller, with more weight and substance; the settings are more complex; the individuality of the figures more pronounced; and the artistic reach more ambitious, especially in terms of landscape. The space is deep, the angles oblique, and there are often large empty areas, a compositional technique Pyle shared with Frederic Remington, Japanese prints, French impressionists like Degas, and his contemporaries like John Singer Sargent and William Merritt Chase. Like her teacher, Oakley was also fond of depicting figures in the foreground seen from behind. The shading is sophisticated and somewhat dramatic, sometimes featuring candles or firelight.

She used the same tonal realism for her illustrations for Octave Thanet's short story "A Slave to Duty," which appeared in *Woman's Home Companion* in 1898. When the story was included in a collection published later that year, Oakley was asked to execute a different illustration to be used as the frontispiece (1898; Fig. 4). Thanet was the pseudonym of Alice French (1850-1934), a progressive writer who often treated themes not commonly found in contemporary literature. The title story, "A Slave to Duty," features mental retardation, spousal and child abuse, marital infidelity, and drunkenness. Oakley's illustration shows a wife and her husband (an artist) in his studio. She stares stonily ahead while her husband entreats her to take him back. Oakley uses several modernist devices that Pyle often employed, such as cropping off the easel and portfolio in the foreground, pushing the figures back into the space, and leaving some prominent spaces empty.

Oakley's four illustrations for the popular author Amélie Rives's romance, *A Damsel Errant* (1898), prove that Oakley, like her teacher Pyle, could work in a variety of styles simultaneously.²⁸ The frontispiece (Fig. 5) was in a busy Pre-Raphaelite style, with a heavily detailed border reminiscent of manuscript illumination, Albrecht Durer, Walter Crane, and Aubrey Beardsley, while its subject, a kind of troubadour fiction, put it squarely in Pyle's favorite camp and compares with the style he used to illustrate such tales as *Robin Hood*.²⁹ Foregoing the dramatic lighting, chiaroscuro, and painterly effects of her tonal realism, this linear style looks appropriately old-fashioned (as though she was reaching back to the wood engraving). It is apparent that Oakley had no one signature style of illustration; but what she lacked in distinctiveness, she possessed in flexibility and adaptability.

In 1897 Violet Oakley and Jessie Willcox Smith joined The Plastic Club, an all-female group formed that spring in response to Philadelphia's Charcoal Club, which was exclusively for male artists. The Plastic Club was a place where female artists could



Fig. 5 (left). Violet Oakley, Frontispiece for Amélie Rives, [Princess Troubetzkoy], *A Damsel Errant* (Philadelphia, 1898).



Fig. 6 (right). Violet Oakley, Frontispiece for Harriet Prescott Spofford, *The Maid He Married* (Chicago and New York, 1899).

socialize, exchange ideas, host lectures, sketch, and hold exhibitions.³⁰ Reflecting its membership, the Plastic Club showed especial sympathy toward illustration, alternating between exhibitions of black and white in the fall and color in the spring. In November 1897, Oakley exhibited her illustrations from *Evangeline* and the frontispiece from *A Damsel Errant*.

The following year, at the second annual black and white exhibition, Oakley received serious attention. The *Philadelphian* called her "the talented young illustrator, whose name is becoming widely known for her clever work." Another reviewer was even more effusive:

Of all the illustrators who have come into public notice in this city within the past few years, Miss Oakley has made the most rapid progress. Given an instructive refinement of expression, she has added to her native gifts an excellent and individual technique. One or two of her drawings are as good as anything that [William T.] Smedley, for example, has ever done.³¹

There were other markers of success. One of her drawings appeared in a feature story on the cover of a section of the [Philadelphia] *Sunday Press* in February 1898, with the heading "Does the American Girl's Face lack Earnestness?" The pensive young woman she depicted was captioned "Miss Oakley's favorite."³² Among the other six artists represented was Charles Dana Gibson, as well as the aforementioned W. T.

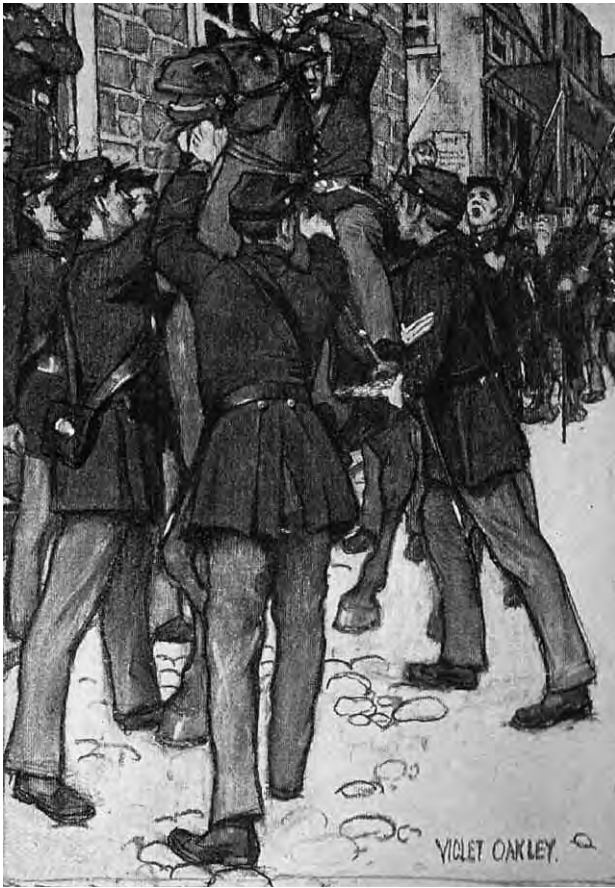


Fig. 7. Violet Oakley, Frontispiece for Charles King *From School to Battlefield: A Story of the War Days* (Philadelphia, 1899).



Fig. 8. Violet Oakley, Cover, *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* (December 1902).

short story collection. Lippincott was an old house, but Stone was a pioneering young publisher, whose *The Chapbook*, initiated while he was still an undergraduate at Harvard, became one of the most influential of the ‘aesthetic’ ‘little magazines’ of the 1890s.³³ Stone may have encouraged Oakley

Smedley, one of the leading illustrators in the United States who would become the first president of the Society of Illustrators in 1901. Oakley may have been a local artist appearing in the local paper, but she was also placed amidst major illustrators of the day.

There are patterns to be found in the commissions that Oakley received. With the exception of those for *Evangeline* and *The Princess and Joe Potter*, the bulk of her book illustrations were commissioned by two publishers: J. B. Lippincott, based in Philadelphia, and Herbert S. Stone of Chicago, who had published Thanet’s

to adopt a more decorative (or ‘aesthetic’) style for the frontispieces for several novels he published in 1898 and 1899. For Harriet Prescott Spofford’s *The Maid He Married*, for example, her frontispiece (titled “The Lady That Sings”) (1899; Fig. 6) is unlike her work for the other books.³⁴ The most noticeable difference was her outlining of subtly shaded figures with hard decorative contours, creating a flatter, more planar effect. It seems that Oakley combined the tonal realism she practiced for most of her magazine illustrations with the pronounced linearity of her illustrations for *A Damsel Errant*. In keeping with this new style, she changed her signature from “V. Oakley” or “Violet Oakley” in a cursive script to block letters, in some cases using simply “VO” in a flat block across or down the page. It is noteworthy that both Jessie Willcox Smith and Elizabeth Shippen Green, whom she also met in Pyle’s classes, likewise adopted a flatter style and the same distinctive banner signature during this period. Also notable is the pronounced similarity between the frontispiece for *The Maid He Married* and works by Smith, compounded by the fact that the subject of the illustration, a mother putting a child to bed, would become Smith’s hallmark.

Oakley explored this new style in more complex, multi-figured compositions made for Charles King’s reminiscences of Civil War service in *From School to Battlefield* (1899).³⁵ Although in its own way romanticized, the book was a far cry from the women’s fiction she most often illustrated; these illustrations would prove a valuable experience and precedent for her later murals. In the frontispiece (Fig. 7) a group of soldiers tries to restrain a horse and its angry rider. In the pyramidal composition, Oakley creates a powerful upward surge of energy through the legs and torsos of the soldiers, all outlined heavily to stand out in sharp relief, yet forming a pattern that reinforces the picture plane.

Increasingly, Violet Oakley received assignments for magazine covers, considered more prestigious commissions than story illustrations. Her first was a Thanksgiving cover for *Ladies’ Home Journal* in 1897, which led to a Thanksgiving themed cover for *Woman’s Home Companion* the next year. In the spring of 1899, Oakley did the first of her covers for *Collier’s*, a scene of white-clothed women on a flower-covered hill in a maypole dance.³⁶ The mood of joyous abandon was in stark contrast to a sober Lenten cover for the *Woman’s Home Companion* of 1899 that reflected family concerns over her father’s deteriorating mental and physical condition. Around this time Oakley turned to Christian Science, which would provide the undercurrent for much of the spiritual dimension of her later work. In October 1899 an important professional opportunity arose when she received an offer to do a stained glass window on speculation from Caryl Coleman of the Church Glass and Decorating Company. The success of the window led to a major commission for stained glass windows, a mosaic altarpiece, and the large two-part mural for All Angels Church in Manhattan. With little time left for illustration work at this time, Cornelia Oakley’s account book ends here.

In 1902, Oakley moved with Smith and Green and another friend, Henrietta Cozens, to the former Red Rose Inn outside

Philadelphia.³⁷ The relationship with her housemates was obviously the inspiration for two more *Collier's* covers. One shows three women on a cliff overlooking the sea, but another was more directly inspired by their friendship. On the cover for June 1902, the month after they moved in together, the four women are shown raising their glasses in a toast. The image is based on a photograph of the same scene when in real life they celebrated obtaining the Red Rose lease. Oakley also did two covers in 1902 for *Everybody's Magazine*, using her new life as a source. On the June cover, one woman reads a letter, while the other, probably Cozens, trims a rose hedge. For September (1902; Pl. 13), an older woman, perhaps Violet's mother, Cornelia, and a visitor are served tea in an English-style drawing room, resembling descriptions of the Red Rose. The setting is as refined and genteel as their home purportedly was. As successful professional women maintaining a conspicuously prosperous lifestyle on Philadelphia's Main Line—as Anglophiles their references were to Henry James and the homes portrayed in *Country Life*—they attracted media attention and curiosity.³⁸ Responding to one report, Oakley was quoted as saying, "This is not going to be an artists' colony at all."³⁹ With its decidedly un-bohemian atmosphere, comfortable setting, chintz décor, uniformed maid, and older occupant (or chaperone), the illustration seems an argument for their respectability.

Oakley continued doing illustrations until 1908. Christmas covers for *Everybody's Magazine* in 1901 and for *Century* in 1902 (Fig. 8) were inspired by the Epiphany window she designed for Coleman.⁴⁰ As her illustrations gravitated toward religious subjects, she was often called upon to do a special Christmas or Easter subject for popular magazines. The style she employed was often indebted to the aesthetic common to stained glass, with flat planes and hard outlines. It could be argued, however, that she had used the style earlier, before ever working in stained glass, in the frontispieces for Herbert Stone and illustrations for *From School to Battlefield*.

Tellingly, some of her last magazine illustrations, reflecting this inward seriousness, were similarly decorative. Five watercolor illustrations made for George Baxter's "Story of Vashti" (Fig. 9), published in *Everybody's Magazine* in December 1902, accompany a story expanded from the brief mention of Vashti, the first wife of the Persian king who later married the Hebrew Esther. Despite the Old Testament lineage, the story was more in the mode of the romantic fiction Oakley so often illustrated. Although in later life she ignored or disparaged much of her illustration work, she continued to list the original watercolors, an evident mark of her pride in them. Highly stylized, as though using an ancient style rooted in ancient Persia or Assyria, the overall flatness is pronounced, as is the stiffness and solemnity of the figures, which nevertheless are elegant and finely drawn. With this style, Oakley created a timeless, universal scene, far removed from the contemporaneity and specificity of her earlier tonal realism.

The success of her stained glass window and the All Angels Church murals led to Oakley receiving a major commission for the decoration of the Governor's Reception Room in the



Fig. 9. Violet Oakley, Illustration for "Story of Vashti," *Everybody's Magazine* (December, 1902).



Fig. 10. Violet Oakley, William Tyndale Printing his Translation of the Bible, (1906), mural, oil on canvas, 6' x 6'6" , Governor's Reception Room, Pennsylvania State Capitol, Harrisburg (courtesy of Brian Hunt & Pennsylvania Capitol Preservation Committee).

Pennsylvania State Capitol, one enormously prestigious for an artist only twenty-eight years old, and in a field notably lacking in women. The mural cycle, titled "The Founding of the State of Liberty Spiritual," was greatly indebted to her experience with illustration and to her teacher Howard Pyle. The narrative traced the evolution of spiritual events that led eventually to Penn's settlement of the colony of Pennsylvania. The scenes open like the pages of a book, with lengthy inscriptions telling the story on view. To reinforce the picture plane, as the beaux-arts mural aesthetic mandated (and so that the murals could be easily read from a distance), the figures were heavily outlined and the action centered on the

foreground. In *William Tyndale Printing his Translation of the Bible* (1906; Fig. 10), the heavily outlined figures, decorative planarism, shallow space, and the figure seen from behind reflect her knowledge of illustration.

That first mural cycle for the State Capitol was met with near unanimous praise, and when Edwin Austin Abbey, who had been contracted to paint most of the other major spaces in the capitol, died unexpectedly in 1911, Oakley was chosen to replace him. Her mural cycle for the Senate, "The Creation and Preservation of the Union," as well as the final cycle for the Supreme Court, "The Opening of the Book of the Law," were less naturalistic than her work for the Governor's Reception Room. Instead, the flat, stylized appearance of *Washington Marching Through Philadelphia* (1917; Pl. 14) bears more resemblance to the "Vashti" illustrations.

By 1908, Oakley had all but ceased to do illustrations. In the 1930s, however, in difficult financial straits and increasingly despondent over the situation in Europe, she made a series of covers for the *Christian Science Monitor* and other church publications. Her style was stiffly art deco and the message dire. The fluidity of her early style created for the escapist, fictional drama was gone, as was the life she had created with her housemates at the Red Rose and later at Cogslea forever changed. But those episodes in her career had given her a start, brought her professional recognition and confidence, and led, step by step, to the major commissions of her lifetime. •

Bailey Van Hook is a professor of art history at Virginia Tech. Her interest in Oakley initially came from research she did for *The Virgin and the Dynamo: Public Murals in American Architecture, 1893-1917* (2003). She is currently writing a biography of Violet Oakley.

NOTES

1. The phrase "dragon of ambition" is from Hester Caldwell Oakley's novel, *As Having Nothing* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1898). This period is often designated a 'golden age' of illustration. Violet Oakley's career as an illustrator has never been fully treated, although it is mentioned in most sources on the artist. See especially Anne E. Mayer, *Women Artists in the Howard Pyle Tradition* (Chadds Ford, PA: Brandywine River Museum, 1975); Carolyn Stryker, *The Studios at Cogslea* (Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1976); Patricia Likos, "Violet Oakley," [Philadelphia Museum of Art] *Bulletin* 75 (June 1979): 1-32; Helen Goodman, "Women Illustrators of the Golden Age of American Illustration," *Woman's Art Journal* 8:1 (Spring/Summer 1987): 13-22; Susan Hamburger, "Violet Oakley," in Steven E. Smith, Catherine A. Hastedt, and Donald H. Dyal, *American Book and Magazine Illustrators to 1920* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1998): 221-29; Alice A. Carter, *The Red Rose Girls: An Uncommon Story of Art and Love* (New York: Abrams, 2000).
2. The information that Elizabeth Wallace, the heroine of the novel, was based on Violet comes from Patricia Likos Ricci, "Violet Oakley: American Renaissance Woman," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 126 (April 2002): 226. Dr. Ricci knew Edith Emerson, Oakley's longtime companion, in the 1970s and probably got that information from her. The heroine also bears many similarities to Hester, most notably her friendship with the wealthy Louise Lawrence (Joan Whetmore in the novel). The scrapbook and account book are at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Violet Oakley papers (hereafter AAA, VO), microfilm reel 1204

and unmicrofilmed box 1. I have not been able to identify the sources of reel 1204, frames #218 (a contemporary man and woman), #219 (a medieval scene), #262 (a Native American scene), or #269 ("Are you engaged ..."). I am also indebted to the partial list included in Stryker, *The Studios at Cogslea*, 65-67; Hamburger, "Violet Oakley," 221; and the list of original works given by the Violet Oakley Memorial Foundation to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, courtesy PAFA. I am grateful to the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Archives of American Art for a visiting scholar stipend in spring 2005 that allowed me to study the boxes of Violet Oakley unmicrofilmed material, and to Gale Rawson, Registrar, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, for the opportunity to examine Oakley's studies for illustrations.

3. Edith Emerson, "Violet Oakley, 1874-1961," *The Germantown Crier* 13 (December 1961): 7. See also AAA, VO, reel 3718, 444, envelope addressed to Miss Cornelia Swain, 759 Market Street, San Francisco. According to Sally Webster, the leading authority on Hunt, Hunt's classes only lasted from 1868-75. It seems unlikely that Cornelia, whose first two children were born in New York in 1869 and 1871, would have taken lessons from Hunt in Boston, unless it was during his first year there. See Sally Webster, *William Morris Hunt* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 94.
4. Although some sources surmise that Violet Oakley was a student of John Henry Twachtman, this was apparently not so, according to John Douglas Hale, "The Life and Creative Development of John H. Twachtman," (2 vols., Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1957), I: 143, n. 3. I am grateful to Dr. Lisa N. Peters for providing me with this reference.
5. To the "Cousins" from Michel [de Tarnowsky], Nov. 25, 1895, AAA, VO, 3719, 389. In *As Having Nothing*, the artist Elizabeth Wallace also gives up on her dream, saying that although art training in Paris has been "heavenly," it was "not teaching me a thing that will be marketable for ages. I cannot be a famous portrait painter in a day, and illustration is the thing I need now" (31-32).
6. By December, they were already successful in getting work from *Forget Me Not*, a magazine in London, which they had probably contacted before they left England. Henry Treble (?), *Forget Me Not*, to "Miss Oakley," Dec. 17, 1895, AAA, VO, 3719, 428-29. Articles published at the time show that as unique as the Oakleys' situation was—with its combination of artistic pedigree, family misfortune, and exotic travels—it was also part of a large sociological phenomenon. See for example, Mary Gay Humphreys, "Women Bachelors in New York," *Scribner's Magazine* (Nov. 1896): 623-36, resonates with many of their experiences. See also Jessie Trimble, "Studying and Succeeding in Art," *New Idea Woman's Magazine* 14 (October 1906): 12-15.
7. *Harper's Monthly* and *Harper's Weekly* were veterans, joined by *Scribner's Monthly* (1870), *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* (1881) and *Scribner's Magazine* (1887) for the more intellectually astute; *McClure's* (1893), *Cosmopolitan* (1886), and *Collier's* (1888) for a more popular audience; *Ladies' Home Journal* (1884), *Good Housekeeping* (1885) and the *Woman's Home Companion* (1886) for women; *St. Nicholas* (1873) and *Harper's Young People* (1879) (later *Harper's Round Table*) for children. For a more complete account of these magazines see Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, vol. IV, 1885-1905 (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1957).
8. Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 5-16.
9. [Frank] Weitenkampf, *American Graphic Art* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1912), 219. The estimate of 80 women illustrators comes from Goodman, "Women Illustrators of the Golden Age of American Illustration," 13.
10. Despite their increasing successes, women illustrators were treated to the same flattering yet condescending praise as female painters and sculptors. Harold Payne, in an 1894 article, noted that the advance of women in the field was only two decades old: "Within that period, however, the finer, gentler, more sympathetic touch of

woman has been widely felt in book and periodical illustration, adding a rosier, kindlier glow to our philosophy, and a new perfume to our sentiment." Harold Payne, "American Women Illustrators," *Munsey's Weekly* 11 (1894): 47.

11. Although Cornelia Oakley's account book is invaluable in tracking the early professional progress of her daughters, it often incomplete. Usually the title of the story or book was given, sometimes the publisher but seldom the author. She often does not distinguish which of her daughters received which commission, although it can be presumed that the stories and poems are by Hester, since Violet never was known to have published any. Hester sometimes illustrated her own stories, though occasionally Violet did. Hester did not do book illustrations, with only one exception. The scrapbook includes illustrations, which are small-scale black and white reproductions with no indication of where or when they were published; in very few cases have the originals appeared. The problem is exacerbated because the original scrapbook has been lost and the AAA microfilm has been damaged.
12. Violet Oakley to Cornelia Swain Oakley and Hester Caldwell Oakley, Feb. 3 [1896], AAA, VO, 3719, 437. This was probably the May 21, 1896, entry given as "Rye article with illustrations" in the account book. I have searched *Cosmopolitan* for 1896 and 1897, however, and have not been able to locate the article.
13. All told, Violet had a much shorter apprenticeship in advertising than her friends Elizabeth Shippen Green and Jessie Willcox Smith. In addition, Oakley never seems to have done the kind of repetitive work that Green did, such as line drawings accompanying fashion articles.
14. There is some mystery as to when exactly Violet Oakley began to study with Howard Pyle, to whom scholars attribute the most influence over her early art and the most credit for her early successes. The official records of the Drexel Institute list her as enrolled in his class during only one semester, beginning in February 1897. Patricia Likos Ricci believes, however, that Oakley entered his class sometime the previous fall, Patricia Likos, "Violet Oakley," 4. That scenario seems more likely, since Pyle was responsible for a major commission that she received in March 1897.
15. See Henry C. Pitz, *The Brandywine Tradition* (New York: Weatherlane, 1968) and *Howard Pyle: Writer, Illustrator and Founder of the Brandywine School* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1975); Ann Barton Brown, *Howard Pyle, A Teacher: The Formal Years, 1894-1905* (Chadds Ford, PA: Brandywine River Museum, 1980), and Mayer, *Women Artists in the Howard Pyle Tradition*.
16. Pyle's willingness to accept female students had changed by the beginning of the next decade. See for example, Michelle H. Bogart, "Artistic Ideals and Commercial Practices: The Problem of Status for American Illustrators," *Prospects* 15 (1990): 233.
17. Pitz, *Brandywine Tradition*, 136.
18. Violet Oakley, notes for lecture on Howard Pyle, 1953 journal, AAA, VO, unmicrofilmed, box 13.
19. Ibid.
20. S. Michael Schnessel, *Jessie Willcox Smith* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1977), 33. After briefly attending the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, where she was unsatisfied with its unambitious and gender-straitened curriculum, Smith enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1885, studying with Thomas Eakins. There she learned anatomy, perspective and photography. When Eakins was dismissed because of an impropriety involving a male model in a female life class, Smith studied with Thomas Anshutz and James B. Kelly. In 1888, she graduated from the PAFA. That same year her first published illustration appeared in *St. Nicholas*, a magazine for children. In 1889, she was hired by the advertising department of the *Ladies' Home Journal* to draw borders and similarly decorative work.
21. The commission was typical of Pyle's generosity with his students, which even went to the point of recommending them when he could not himself take on a job. But although most authors emphasize Pyle's

other commitments and praise his generosity in giving the assignment to Oakley and Smith, possibly the commission did not appeal to him. Longfellow's long poem was more in the style of work Pyle had done in the early 1880s—Victorian, genteel, and slightly precious. Pyle's illustrations from the mid 1890s were more rousing, vigorous, and energetic—"manly" in the language of the day. The *Evangeline* illustrations were also to be in color, a technology still at a formative stage in the United States and with often disappointing results. (Although Pyle had done color illustrations for several books, he had not yet done his first magazine illustration reproduced in color). It was however, more advanced in Europe, especially in England, where illustrators such as Kate Greenaway had long worked in color. Edward Penfield, his friend and an editor at *Harper's*, often gave Pyle's students their first opportunity to publish. *Drexel's Great School of American Illustration*, 6.

22. A letter from Pyle to Oakley that summer is blunt but not unkind:

I have looked over your drawings for EVANGELINE and do not see anything especial to criticize. Your English musket in the church scene is not correct. The Town musket of the period was not especially different from the town musket of 1776. However, it is possible that the inaccuracy may not be noticed.

I like your headbands the better. You decorative sense seems to me to be very strong.

- Howard Pyle to Violet Oakley, July 9, 1897, AAA, VO, 3719, 725. The next letter a week later is more positive:

I think your drawing of Evangeline and her lover is a very, very great improvement over the former drawing. I like it very much as it is, with the possible exception of Evangeline's right arm which seems to me a little thin, not quite full and ample enough in its outlines. Upon the whole, however, it seems to me to be a very good drawing indeed.

- Pyle to VO, July 17, 1897, AAA, VO, 3719, 726.

23. W. S. Scudder to Pyle, July 6, 1897, AAA, VO, 3719, 723, says he is glad to hear it is almost finished. The book included Pyle's "Note on the Illustrations" (p. xiii-xv), in which he contrasted the relative directions taken by American literature and art. Although American literature took its inspiration from "a God-made Nature... a wild and untamed world," pictorial art "flavors too often of the limitations of the studio walls rather than breathes the wide and luminous expanse of beaming nature." However, Pyle wrote, American illustration is an exception since it is inspired by "a broader field than that of academic traditions." He called attention to the etymology of the word illustrator, saying "how proud should he be of having brought his light into the darkness." Then, rather strangely, given the robust terms in which he had discussed illustration, he calls Smith and Oakley's works "chaste and simple drawings." He found it appropriate that Longfellow's poem, which was older, and from the beginnings of American literary art, should be paired with a young art form. He was proud to see his pupils giving shape to his instruction and found their illustrations possessing both "grace and beauty," singling out the image of Evangeline in the fields (by Smith) and one of a boat flowing on the river (by Oakley).
24. Pyle was right to shy away from the new technology that allowed illustrations to be reproduced in color, since the colors in *Evangeline* do not seem saturated enough; in addition they seem to be in a separate plane from the outlines. The frequent description of the technique employed by many of Pyle's female students—watercolor applied over a drawing set with applied fixative—may have been the reason. The overall quality and appearance of the illustrations shared many characteristics with one of Pyle's earliest books in color, *Yankee Doodle* (1881), reproductions he did not deem successful. Pitz, *Howard Pyle*, 168.
25. Violet Oakley to J. F. Henderson [Mar. 1897], AAA, VO, 3719, 654. Houghton Mifflin published *Evangeline*. The book for Lippincott was Mrs. Alexander's [Annie French Malone] *Mrs. Crichton's Creditor*, and Maud Wilder Goodwin's *White Aprons* was for Little Brown. The illustrations for *Evangeline* would prove unusual in her career;

- however, in both the notoriety of its author and the use of color, and the other commissions she cites were more typical. Oakley remembered later that after that semester, Pyle advised her to continue work at home, but that she used to visit him occasionally for his criticism, less so after she moved to the country. Violet Oakley, notes for Pyle lecture.
26. I took the phrase from Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman 1895-1915* (Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2005), 19.
 27. Hester was increasingly devoting herself to writing with some noticeable success. Her story "Love in a Fog," with five illustrations by Violet, showed her reaching beyond the periodicals designed specifically for women, yet its subject was the same romantic story favored by those magazines. Hester C. Oakley, "Love in a Fog," *McClure's Magazine* 11 (August 1898): 325-32. It was later reprinted in a short story collection published by *McClure's* entitled simply "Love," with one of Violet's illustrations serving as the frontispiece for the volume. Violet illustrated Hester's "Doubts are Traitors," published in the *Woman's Home Companion* in June 1897, and with Hester illustrated Ella Higginson's "Change of Creed," which appeared there the following month.
 28. Henry Pitz, Pyle's biographer, has identified two main styles, the linear one, derived ultimately from Durer, and a more painterly, impressionist method, influenced by the Spanish-born Parisian Daniel Vierge. Pitz, *The Brandywine Tradition*, 84.
 29. A contemporary reviewer, however, compared Oakley's illustrations here to Will Bradley's work. Clipping, source unknown, November 1897, and *The Record*, November 21, 1897, Plastic Club Archives, Box 1, p. 2.
 30. Helen Goodman, "The Plastic Club," *Arts Magazine* (March 1985): 100.
 31. *The Philadelphian*, November 5, 1898, clipping, Plastic Club Archives, Box 1, p. 15; unknown source, November, 1898, Plastic Club Archives, Box 1, p. 14. I have not located the source for the illustrations for "The Solution of a Simple Equation" also mentioned there.
 32. "Does the American Girl's Face Lack Earnestness?" [Philadelphia] *Sunday Press*, February 13, 1898, 3: 29.
 33. After a brief stint with a partner, Hannibal I. Kimball, Stone established the house in his name in Chicago in 1896 and operated it for ten years, publishing a highly respected list and establishing Chicago as a publishing center. John Tebbel, *The History of Book Publishing in the United States*, 4 vols. (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1971-81), II: 435.
 34. In 1900 the design won a silver medal at the Woman's Exhibition in Earl's Court (London). Diploma for Silver Medal, AAA, VO, 3719, 792.
 35. The previous year, she had illustrated his *Ray's Recruit* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1898). Although I focus on the more progressive style of her frontispiece for *From School to Battlefield*, several other illustrations in that book are in the older style of tonal realism, and bear the signature of that style, a cursive "V. Oakley."
 36. *Collier's* (May 20, 1899): cover. It is also similar to her 1899 advertisement for Pettijohn's breakfast food, entitled "The Joy of Spring," AAA, VO, 1204, 260.
 37. Pioneering studies of the group were Carolyn Stryker, *The Studios at Cogslea*; and Patricia Likos, "The Ladies of the Red Rose," *Feminist Art Journal* 13 (fall 1976): 11-15, 43. See also Charlotte Herzog, "A Rose by Any Other Name: Violet Oakley, Jessie Willcox Smith, and Elizabeth Shippen Green, *Woman's Art Journal* 14:2 (fall 1993/winter 1994): 11-16. The group was more recently the subject of Alice A. Carter, *The Red Rose Girls*.
 38. See for example, Frances B. Sheafer, "The Red Rose at Villa Nova: Three Artists and their Beautiful Country Home," *The Art Interchange* 64 (1902): 106-09 and Mary Tracy Earle, "The Red Rose," *The Lamp: A Review and Record of Current Literature* 26 (May 1903): 275-84. When the Red Rose was sold in 1906, the household moved intact to Mt. Airy, to another estate, this one christened with an anagram of the first letters of the household members' last names, Cogslea. Alice Carter first made the connection between a photograph and the June 1902 *Collier's* cover, see Carter, *The Red Rose Girls*, 75. The *Collier's* cover with the three women on a cliff was published on Jan. 31, 1903. I am grateful to Nancy Weaver, Newman Library, Virginia Tech, for all her efforts in locating the *Everybody's* Cover illustrated here.
 39. "To Ply Brushes at the Red Rose," *Evening Bulletin*, March 18, 1902, Pressbook 1, Philadelphia Museum of Art.
 40. Hester Oakley married in 1898 and continued to write under her married name, Ward, until her daughter Margaret was born in 1900. Tragically, Margaret died in 1902, followed by Hester, of scarlet fever, in 1905. Though she never wrote of it, Violet (as well as their mother) was devastated by Hester's death. Almost 20 years later, she created a triptych in her sister's memory, *The Great Wonder: A Vision of the Apocalypse*, for the Alumnae House at Vassar College.

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By Hilda Sabato
New York: Free Press, 2005, 408 pp., \$24.95, paperback

Reviewed by Jessica Dworkin

Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love

This catalogue for a stunningly installed traveling retrospective of Kara Walker's (b. 1969) murals, works on paper, video art, and multimedia installations¹ sports as many mystifying design and pedagogical patinas as does Walker's art, making a trouble-free read of its contents virtually impossible. A reader's first query might well be, "Is this really an exhibition catalogue?" Given its self-description as such, the answer would likely have to be 'yes'; but surely the book—unparalleled in its configuration—bears little resemblance to the museum catalogue genre.² An incontestably innovative editorial and design team conceived the book so as to set it well apart from the customary exhibition catalogue. First, it is hardbound in a khaki linen cover—not in the usual glossy cover prominently featuring a visual art image, as one might expect. The book's lackluster cloth binding connotes instead a recondite scholarly text, which, as it turns out, is rightly indicative of its contents.

black skin or, more appropriately, brown skin. Indeed, not only the cover, but a number of pages within the book are the color and texture of a brown paper bag—as are several of the artist's images featured in a key work of the exhibit and the book—namely the 2001 panorama *Endless Conundrum, An African Anonymous Adventuress* (Fig. 1). The mural contains several forms and figures inspired by Constantin Brancusi's 1938 *Endless Column*, which are brown instead of Walker's customary black (300-05). In terms of the brown book pages, they signify a phenomenon which is well-known to southern African Americans of a certain generation—the "brown paper bag test." The idiom refers to historic intra-racist biases wherein those who do not pass the "test"—that is African Americans whose skin is darker than the color of a brown paper bag—are disdained by their own people—people who themselves have fallen victim to untenable Darwinist beliefs that mixture with European blood makes one somehow "better," more beautiful, closer to white.

critique of this phenomenon, insinuating by its brown and black appearance the provocative and taboo subject matter of Walker's work—particularly the "brown paper bag" paradox of self-loathing with which many African Americans continue to struggle; and upon which Walker's art is centered.⁴

Further amplifying the book's allusive nature is the fact that its title is stamped, *not* onto the hard cover, but rather onto a glossy black paper band (which supplies at least a trace of the slick texture of a museum catalogue cover). The glossy title strip is wrapped tightly and vertically around the front cover of the book like a pallbearer's armband, partially concealing the words that are, in fact, dye-stamped onto the actual cover in black type—an excerpt from Walker's now infamous 1998 *Letter from a Black Girl*, which begins "Dear you hypocritical fucking Twerp...." According to one of the book's designers, Emmet Byrne, the band was conceived at the request of the book's distributor to obscure the expletives in Walker's *Letter*.⁵ *Letter* continues on the inside front cover (still difficult to read because of the obstructive title band), overflows onto the first two brown pages of the book, and concludes on the inside back cover, which is also brown. The black type used for the *Letter* is centered and oversized, further disorienting the reader, who has yet to locate the book's title page or its anticipated curatorial essays.

Of course, art historical and theoretical essays do ultimately reveal themselves in varying formats throughout the book—which is divided into six sections. Part One consists of five critical essays; Part Two is comprised of a visual essay by the artist on the order of John Berger's legendary chapter two in *Ways of Seeing*; Part Three features reproductions of the works in the exhibit; Part Four presents a sixth essay printed on brown pages and heralded as a "lexicon" of the artist's formal language; Part Five reproduces a series of index cards typed by the artist in 2002, which constitute a literary work entitled *Many Black Women (Certain Types)*; and Part Six is a standard epilogue containing requisite back matter (checklist,

bibliography, index, etc.). In addition to these sections, there are a Foreword and Acknowledgements by Walker Art Center Director Kathy Halbreich and Deputy Director and Chief Curator Philippe Vergne, respectively, which briefly introduce and alert the reader to the artist's work and its volatile content.

Vergne's critical essay, the first in Part One of the catalogue, is entitled "The Black Saint Is the Sinner Lady." In it, Vergne perceptively analyzes Walker's aesthetic, using *Endless Conundrum* as a touchstone. Referencing a variety of provocative sources and parallels—everything from Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* and Kongo *nkondi* figures, to the French *Négritude* movement, Lil' Kim, and Richard Pryor—Vergne lucidly articulates the racial and sexual implications of Walker's imagery. There are however, several jarring features of his essay that deserve comment. The article begins, for example, with a joke the author recently heard:

Question: "What do you call an African American with a PhD?"

Answer: "A Nigger" (7).

Having opened with a reiteration of this racial gibe (presumably for Walker-esque shock effect), Vergne goes on to say that the fact that such jokes are still being told in 2007 is proof positive that the racist past of the United States is as yet a palpable part of its present, and that both black and white Americans are implicated in the telling of such jokes. He further argues that Walker's work—mirroring social reality—similarly confounds past and present and proffers cruel satire. He describes Walker as a "court jester—the only person at the court who was able to poke fun at the king...." He adds that "it was a sign of the king's grandeur, his largesse, to allow it" (10).

If, as Vergne suggests, Walker is the court jester, then the reader must assume that the "court" is white America, and the king is the proverbial white male "oppressor" referred to in the book and exhibition title. Intriguing is that Vergne's interpretation suggests that Walker has been "allowed" to critique the "court" rather than that she has forcibly asserted

herself, or that her work has quite simply riveted the court with irresistible attraction. Vergne's point of view suggests that the artist's work has been accepted, collected, displayed, and venerated solely at the voluntary bidding of a white dominated art community; and that this community has the option of *not* "allowing" her voice to be heard. Vergne likewise implies that the permission of Walker's presence at "court" is an indication of the king's "largesse," his liberality and munificence—a somewhat expedient take on the situation, which one might well argue has more to do with a sense of social culpability in the oppressor/oppressed relationship rather than the grandeur or goodness of the metaphoric king.

The second critical essay was penned by distinguished psychoanalyst and cultural historian Sander Gilman. He devotes several opening paragraphs of his "Confessions of an Academic Pornographer" to a discussion of his own professional trajectory, which he sees as similar to Walker's because he, too, was derided for the use of seemingly pornographic imagery (albeit medical drawings) in his scholarly works on black female sexuality.⁷ Gilman's thesis in the Walker catalogue begins in earnest on the third page, where he undertakes a discussion of the antagonism generated between Walker and African American artist Betye Saar, who spearheaded a campaign to censure Walker's work. Saar and an influential group of allies from the African American artgoing community (including award-winning multimedia artist Howardena Pindell) were affronted by the fact that Walker's alarming and demeaning representations of the antebellum South had won her the coveted MacArthur Foundation "genius" fellowship in 1997. In an alternative reading of this now ten-year-old conflict (Saar insisted in both public and private forums that Walker's imagery was tantamount to racist pandering, and that the MacArthur Foundation was errant in awarding her their prestigious fellowship), Gilman states that "SEX" (Gilman's capitalization) rather than race was what really bothered Saar and drove her to crusade so vehemently against Walker (29).

Gilman cites another African American artist whose works also occasionally border on the pornographic—Romare Bearden; but he does not explain why, in comparison to Bearden, Walker's sexually charged images garnered so much more intense condemnation from the black community. Gilman's comparison, in fact, undermines his argument that Saar is bothered in the main by "SEX" in Walker's art. If this were the case, then she and others of her ilk (African Americans who came of age during the Civil Rights movement) would have launched equally hostile protests against any number of other black artists, from Bearden and Renée Cox to Faith Ringgold and Robert Colescott, all of whom make use of sexually-charged content and black stereotypes; several of whom include miscegenation in the brew; and none of whom have been the target of such widespread and bitter denunciation.

After deliberating at length on Freud's theories of dream analysis, and on the relationships between sexuality, fantasy, and creativity, Gilman concludes that those who, like Saar, reject Walker's work are sexual "puritans" (35). Gilman does not, however, address the fact that the same ostensive puritans who abhor Walker's work, extol (or, at the puritanical level, at least abide) the highly sexualized images of other African American artists. Renée Cox's self-portraits, for example, depict black female nudity and sexual empowerment, deliberately pornographic poses, genitalia, and props such as whips, g-strings, and red stiletto heels, and often include in the vignettes the artist's half-white sons. Ironically, nudity, phallic imagery, sexual empowerment, and even red high heels also can be found in the sculptures and installations of Betye Saar's daughter, Alison Saar, a renowned artist in her own right.

Given such examples, one must question whether sex, as Gilman argues, is the principal culprit in Walker's work. Surely Walker's preoccupation with human excrement, bodily fluids, and violent sociopathic acts (many of which are murderous rather than sexual) are the true offenders, and constitute the elements that differentiate Walker's

portrayals from those of other African American artists who embrace sexual content. Not to mention Walker's juxtaposition of "pickaninny" and "sambo" characters with slave masters and mistresses, which predictably incites African American viewers, who might well be understood as reacting, not so much as sexual puritans, but as wounded survivors of a sadistic past who have had salt rubbed into their wounds.

Award-winning poet Kevin Young's disquisition, "Triangular Trade: Coloring, Marking, and Narrative in the Writings of Kara Walker," opens with an index card reproduced from a 2001 literary work by Walker entitled *Texts*. Hand-typed in single spaces that do not conform to the ruled lines of the index card are a series of Dadaist word puns:

African
African't
Africouldn't
Afrishouldn't
Africould've
Africould (36)

Young describes the above text as an act of conjuring rather than conjugation—using his own puns—"carte de visite," "playing the race card," and "trump" card—to suggest the beguiling nature of Walker's index card narratives (50-51). Young compares the hand-typing of the index cards to the immediacy of Walker's cut-out method—both of which he sees as unmitigated activities akin to child's play. He further likens Walker's work to pop-up children's books, taking the opportunity to mention (and to reproduce in the chapter) a *Little Black Sambo* pop-up book in his personal collection.⁸ Indeed, Young reminds the reader more than once that Walker's formal and iconographic algorithms, in particular her many "negress" alter egos, disport a certain childlike demeanor; and he compares her silhouetted figures to the homespun drawings of vernacular artist Bill Traylor (34, 46).⁹

Threaded throughout Young's treatise is a conflicting argument that characterizes Walker's art as anything but child-like. He describes her writings as "cryptic, clever, and challenging" (37) and Walker

herself as a historian whose goal is to mine and reveal cultural fantasies. Using Walker's Metropolitan Museum exhibit, "After the Deluge," as a jumping off point, Young likens the 2006 Met installation of vitrines, books, texts, cut paper panoramas, lighting effects, and photographic miniatures to the erudite works of conceptual artist Fred Wilson—also a MacArthur Fellow (37). (Wilson utilizes similar archival materials in his own installations to critique modern conceptions of black history, culture, and museum practice.) Young further examines how Walker's discerning combinations of literary and figurative "texts" deconstruct the assumed validity of archival museum documents such as nineteenth century stereographic cards and daguerreotypes (several from Young's own collection are reproduced in the essay); the vintage practice of hand-coloring such photos; and the concept of "coloring" as it relates to Walker and to matters of ethnicity more broadly. While somewhat inconsistent in perspective, and perhaps inapposite in its spotlighting of Young's private collection of black memorabilia, "Triangular Trade" is nevertheless a novel read of Walker's work from the point of view of an astute wordsmith.

Celebrated post-modern art critic Thomas McEvelley's essay "Primitivism in the Works of an Emancipated Negress" begins with a reiteration of the Saar-Walker debate. Lucid, smart, and on-point, McEvelley's critique poses a series of mostly unanswerable questions—"Is it possible to draw attention to something without increasing its power ...?" "Is Walker unwittingly reinforcing the stereotypes she parodies?" "Is it that issues of racism have been repressed by a generation of older African Americans ... and she [Walker] brings it back in their face?" "Or is it that the memory of white racism has been repressed by whites and she resurrects it?" (54, 61)¹⁰ As his title suggests, McEvelley's discourse incorporates these queries into an assessment of the concept of primitivism and its historical development during the colonial age—the epoch in which Walker's narratives are set. McEvelley contends that, rather than reifying the "white-on-black" primitivism of the colonial era, Walker inverts the chronicle

and makes the slave holders the true primitives. This, of course, is arguable, since Walker's imagery certainly does not achieve this goal in any clear-cut manner—but McEvelley anticipates the reader's resistance when he poses his next question: "But is it really that simple?" (55) The answer, of course, is "no."

As McEvelley points out, our "neo-modernist world" has become increasingly conservative and no longer readily subscribes to the creative stratagem of inversion as a legitimate cultural critique. Black modernists like Saar and Pindell, he states, don't see Walker's work as that of a black person assigning primitive behavior to whites, but as that of a black person assigning primitive behavior to all other blacks—"black-on-black primitivism," as McEvelley sardonically terms it. Attributing much of the black elder generation's frustration with Walker to a substantial age- and epoch-gap, McEvelley ultimately offers no answers to his own interrogations. He concludes instead, and somewhat indecisively, that "It is ultimately impossible to tell which side Walker is on" and that black critics of Walker's work are "not exactly right, but they are not exactly wrong either" (55-56, 59).

The author of the final essay in Part One of the catalogue is Yale University dean, one-time MoMA chief curator, and 2007 Venice Biennale director, Robert Storr. Employing a word once routinely used to denigrate black Americans, Storr titles his essay "Spooked" (presumably, like Vergne's opening racial joke, to achieve Walker-esque disquiet). His lyrical writing style is nothing short of eloquent, but Storr expends his energies for the first half of his discourse, not on a discussion of Kara Walker, but on an elucidation of the shadow and substance of image-making and the positive-negative or *sol y sombra* totemic dance between European and African culture. In due course, Storr does establish Walker's best-known body of work as a black and white pictorial universe of silhouettes, while differentiating them from her post-2000 oeuvre which has been complicated by the addition of surface texture.



Fig. 2. Kara Walker, *Gone, An Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred Between the Dusky Thighs of a Young Negress and Her Heart* (1994) cut paper on wall, 13' x 50'. Collection Yvonne Force Inc.

Storr evaluates Walker's charcoal, watercolor, pencil, and gouache works and determines that, despite the artist's use of modeling and texture, these images are as yet "shadows without substance, forms without volume" (69, 71). He does not mean, however, that there is nothing of substance in their signification, but rather that, like ghosts (or "figments," to use Storr's word [71]), Walker's drawings and paintings are eerie, ambiguous incarnations of a DuBoisean doppelganger, and are avatars of a cruel joke played on all of us. Storr's essay, like the others in the book, offers some insights, but none of these seem especially conclusive; and none of the essayists come across as being quite certain as to what Walker is really about. Perhaps a drawback here is that, without exception, the essay writers are all men, and only Young is African American. The collection of essays might well have benefited from a more varied group of critical voices—surely at least a few women's voices, other than the artist's—whose "Chronology of Black Suffering Images and Notes, 1992-2007" follows as a "visual essay" on black and white fem-

inity and masculinity, miscegenation, and sexuality.

After over two hundred subsequent glossy pages of art reproductions, including several panoramic foldouts, the voice of a female scholar is, at last, heard; although one might find it suspect that her essay appears at the back of the book rather than up front with the men. In fact, Walker Art Center curator Yasmil Raymond's "Maladies of Power: A Kara Walker Lexicon" might be missed altogether by a less-than-diligent reader who does not make the effort to meticulously investigate the book's contents. Raymond's article is also the only one printed on brown paper. One cannot help but wonder whether this configuration (brown, and at the back of the book, so to speak) could possibly be inadvertent given the judicious means with which the rest of the book was constructed, both formally and iconographically. That said, the essay itself is intelligent and enlightening and not merely, as its placement and title might suggest, a glossary of terms.

Using Walker's own words, Raymond explicates the artist's motives:

"Heroes are not completely pure and villains are not purely evil. I'm interested in the continuity of conflict" (348). Having thus provided the reader with a concise clarification of the artist's aims, Raymond then scrutinizes her formal language. This is done with equal precision. Raymond identifies and defines the functions of each of seven interrelated and recurring visual motifs in Walker's art. "Hoop skirts" are a classic symbol of southern womanhood and gentility, but in Walker's oeuvre they imply sexual secrets and repressed darker truths. In the 1994 mural *Gone, An Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred Between the Dusky Thighs of a Young Negress and Her Heart* (Fig. 2), a lesbian lover hides beneath the hoop skirt of a woman in the heterosexual embrace of a man. On the order of Fragonard's Rococo painting *The Swing* (1766), the woman's petticoats serve to attract the viewer's attention to what lies beneath rather than to conceal it.

The significance of "footwear" in Walker's lexicon, as Raymond explains, differs depending upon the shoe. Knee-high boots connote the slave master; pointed toe shoes or ankle boots, the plantation mistress. Slaves, on the other hand, appear mostly without shoes, unless they are house slaves or the master's offspring. In such cases, they wear the ill-fitting or oversized boots of their oppressors, to which they have access due to their unique relationship with, or proximity to, the white family. Shod slaves also represent potential runaways who can run faster and farther away from the plantation than they could in their bare feet. Thus shod, they exemplify "mobility and insubordination" and embody autonomy and "the promise of freedom" (351-52). Killing tools such as "knives, razors, blades, and ropes," on the other hand, stand for the slave's impotence and vulnerability to violence as "the master's mechanism to impose total control" over his chattel. By the same token, killing tools have the capacity to facilitate slave suicide, which was perceived as a gesture of defiance—"an assault on the master's property" (354-55). Therefore, like shoes, they are indicative of autonomy and the ultimate act of subversion.

"Water," too, has wide-ranging implications in Walker's iconography. In particular, Raymond notes its reference to the Middle Passage or transatlantic slave trade, during which Europeans and Africans came into violent contact. As such, the Middle Passage "becomes a birthplace where modernity comes into existence and where the concepts of Africa and America merge" (358). In other words, water bespeaks modern American hybridization, wherein the cultural barriers and supposed genetic distinctions between blacks and whites break down. The Atlantic Ocean, as the subtext for Walker's representations of water, also implies the actual and metaphoric site of black death, loss, sorrow, and transformation, as experienced by enslaved Africans and their American descendants who suffered the consequences of the Middle Passage.

The fifth cipher—"birth"—is associated by the author with Walker's water lexis. For example, the "birth" of black suffering and self-loathing is represented by Walker as coincident with the Middle Passage; and Africa the continent or "motherland" is parsed as a parent who birthed into the amniotic Atlantic multiple generations of suffering children and then devoured them like Saturn. To underscore the emblematic potency of birth as a concept, Raymond cites the award-winning 1915 D.W. Griffith film, *Birth of a Nation*, which glorified the role of the Ku Klux Klan after the Civil War and swathed America's "birth" in racial violence and hatred. Like Griffith's vision, birth is interpreted by Walker as anything but a loving miracle of nature. In Walker's depictions, babies hang from umbilical cords like lynch victims; they are kicked by their mothers; and they suckle the nipples and penises of their parents and grandparents, thus feeding off the maladies and pathologies of their forebears.

Embodying an inner pathology that might be deemed the thematic source for depraved parenting in Walker's work, "defecation," particularly when performed by men who lack the necessary female apparatus, is rendered as an obscene birth. In this interpretation, children become "shit"—personifications of Walker's recurring refrain of self-hatred. Feces, which are often being eaten or col-

lected in Walker's portrayals, likewise signify dirtiness, defiance, and greed. Walker's birth imagery, as a whole, evokes a "forced denial of parenthood and family ancestry under slavery" (360); and Walker, echoing abiding social misperceptions, consistently depicts blacks as bad parents who, having experienced no nurturing themselves, cannot possibly nurture their own offspring.

Birth alludes as well to the humiliations of slave breeding, slave rape, and slave wet nurses who were compelled to suckle white children while their own children starved. For Walker, such suckled "mother's milk" was stolen food, co-opted by the slave owner for the sustenance of his own family. In this case, mother's milk becomes a subversive contaminant which, once consumed by the white child, taints the child forever with the nursemaid's black biochemistry and with a latent sexual hunger for black women, which must perennially be fed. All in all, Raymond's essay is the most conclusive and definitive in the book. Written with certitude rather than ambiguity or ambivalence, it proffers a thoroughgoing and incisive interpretation of Walker's art—something few other scholars have been willing or able to do objectively. The article provides so much clarification and elucidation, that its exclusion from the main body of essays and its relegation to the back of the book seems especially unfortunate.

Raymond's segment is followed, just before the backmatter, by reproductions of a collection of Walker's index cards (the *Many Black Women*, mentioned above) which, in about one hundred and fifty pithy hand-typed sentences, describes the heterogeneous nature of black womanhood:

Many black women wear their hair in a short close cropped style...

Many black women have active healthy sex drives...

Many black women are dead...

Many black women have committed adultery...

Many black women maintain their dignity...

Many black women enjoy the company of non black friends...

Many black women swallow...

The last fifty or so sentences begin with the word "some": *Some black women are skeptics... Some black women want to lure klansmen into the woods... Some black women hate themselves... Some black women hate white people...* and so on (371-82). The index cards comprise the artist's ruminations and observations about herself and others—and like Walker's visual statements, her written ones pull no punches—they are candid, provocative, and ring of truth.

Lisa E. Farrington is Chair of the Department of Art & Music, John Jay College of Criminal Justice / CUNY. She is the author of, most recently, *Creating Their Own Image: The History of African-American Women Artists* (2005), and is completing a book on Emma Amos. •

NOTES

1. The exhibit opened at the Walker Center in February of 2007; it traveled the following October to New York's Whitney Museum of American Art; and concluded at the UCLA Hammer Museum from February to May 2008.
2. The book is described on the copyright page as an "exhibition catalog made possible by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in support of Walker Art Center publications."
3. Wahneema Lubiano, "But Compared To What?: Reading Realism, Representation, and Essentialism in *School Daze*, *Do The Right Thing*, and the Spike Lee Discourse," in *Representing Blackness: Issues In Film And Video*, ed. Valerie Smith. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 97-122; Walter Goodman, "When Movies Confront Ethnic Groups' Sensitivities; The More Skillful The Film, The Less Potential It Has For Giving Offense," in "Living Arts Pages" in *The New York Times* (13 July 1999): sect. B2, col 3, p. 35; Spike Lee, "Class Act: *School Daze* Takes an Unorthodox Look at Black Student Life," *American Film*, 13 (Jan/Feb 1988): 57. Spike Lee and Lisa Jones, *Uplift the Race: the Construction of 'School Daze'* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988); Linda Lynton, "School Daze: Black College Is Background," *American Cinematographer*, 69 (Feb 1988): 67-72; Ketwana Wilson-McCormick, "School Daze": A Reflection - Sixteen Years Later," *Black Camera*, 19:1 (Spring/Summer 2004): 3-4; M. Thomas, "Linguistic Variation in Spike Lee's *School Daze*," *College English*, 56:8 (Dec. 1994): 911-927.
4. In the film, for example, light and dark

- skinned African American co-eds perform a tongue-in-cheek musical number during which they broadcast their animosity toward one another. Each group expresses its contempt for the skin color, eye color, hair texture, and facial features of the other. Acerbically titled "Good and Bad Hair," the number is set in a hair salon, referring to the straight-versus-curly hair quagmire that continues to plague black women. See for example, Wahneema Lubiano, "But Compared To What?"
5. Emmet Byrne wrote, "We eventually created a vertical band that wraps the cover and hides the naughty parts while (not accidentally) suggesting censorship, something the artist has faced before." See "A Cover in Context: Kara Walker Catalogue," Walker Art Center Design blog: <http://blogs.walkerart.org/design/2007/10/29/book-post/> reproduced from *Walker Magazine* (May/June 2007), n.p.
 6. John Berger. *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC, 1972).
 7. Sander L. Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth Century Art, Medicine, and Literature." *Critical Inquiry* 12:1 (Autumn 1985): 203-42.
 8. Helen Bannerman, *Little Black Sambo* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1943).
 9. See also Robert F. Reid-Pharr, "Black Girl Lost," in *Kara Walker: Pictures from Another Time* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 2002), 35, 47.

10. Thomas McEvily, "Primitivism in the Works of an Emancipated Negress," in *Kara Walker: My Complement*, 54, 61; Donald Kuspit, "Kara Walker's Cakewalk," *Artnet* online magazine, <http://www.artnet.com/magazine/features/kuspit/kuspit11-4-03.asp>.



Mary Heilmann: To Be Someone

by Elizabeth Armstrong, Johanna Burton,
and Dave Hickey
Orange County Museum of Art, 2007

Mary Heilmann: Save the Last Dance for Me

by Terry R. Myers
Afterall Books, 2007

Reviewed by Vittorio Colaizzi

It is an artist's prerogative to shape her persona in an attempt to regulate the discourse around her work; indeed, it is partially expected that she do so. The self is as much a product as the artwork; it is permanently under construction and is, moreover, a collaboration. When an artist has a set of willing collaborators, they can seamlessly present the personality and therefore the lens through which the work is to be seen. But such a wholesale acceptance of an artist's strategy may divert attention from the full scope of her accomplishments, as well as the mechanisms by which she achieves them. On the other hand, a sympathetic voice can provide a textual parallel to the work, so that the act of reading is not simply a gathering of knowledge but an opportunity to dwell in the artist's own way of thinking. Such is the case with two recent books on Mary Heilmann: *To Be Someone*, the catalogue of her traveling retrospective, with essays by Elizabeth

Armstrong, Johanna Burton, and Dave Hickey, and *Mary Heilmann: Save the Last Dance for Me*, in which Terry R. Myers explores the genesis and implications of a single painting. The powerful influence of Heilmann's personality, as well as the authors' genuine affection for the artist and her work, is highly apparent in all of the essays; but in some cases this leads to frustrating lacunae as to the building blocks of her art.

Mary Heilmann (b. 1940) will likely prove to be as important to abstraction at the turn of the millennium as Gerhard Richter. Providing a counterpoint to Richter's baleful and perpetual mediation, Heilmann shows how the dashed hopes of modernism do not amount to a prohibition against the pleasures of its still beautiful languages. Her impact can be seen in artists from more than one subsequent generation, including Jessica Stockholder, Laura Owens, and Tomma Abts, all of whom are mentioned in one or both books. Without imitating her style, all of these artists apply some version of her visual wit and easygoing transgression of existing categories. Because Heilmann's paintings feel somehow impoverished, though never ironic, her position is notoriously difficult to define. Her historical significance is clear: She was one of the first to lighten the gravitas of modernist abstract painting, accommodating it to narrative and association.

In addition to paintings, Heilmann makes chairs. They roll on tiny wheels

and sport multicolored seats and backs woven from nylon strips. Like her paintings, they wrench the austere purity of geometric abstraction into the here and now. Heilmann is very clear that she wants us to sit, relax, take our time with the paintings, and furthermore to acknowledge their situatedness in a wider culture that includes movies, music, cars, and laughter. Here a possible fissure occurs. On the one hand, the chairs encourage us to study the work for as long as we always knew we should. On the other, they remind us that no painting by itself contains the whole world. This realization compels the viewer to consider the paintings en masse as a part of cultural production, potentially devaluing any one in favor of their total effect of continuous metamorphosis. The chairs both invite and deflect sustained contemplation of isolated paintings, an ambiguity that Heilmann herself skillfully sustains, but that in *To Be Someone* is tilted decidedly towards the second option, the consideration of her output as a field and an attitude.

To Be Someone's three essays are generously illustrated with full page reproductions that make for a truly beautiful book. However, the resulting diminution of plates at the back renders it nearly non-chronological, presenting Heilmann's four decades of work as a perpetual present. Of course nothing is willfully suppressed, but after the early

1980s it is difficult to trace the thread of what must have been a varied and complicated journey. The book's title doubtless refers to Heilmann's overdue recognition on the museum circuit, but its literal source is a song by the post-punk group The Jam. Heilmann's critics are eager to proclaim her interest in the music of various generations, including the Drifters, the Velvet Underground, and the Sex Pistols. The repeated, seemingly breathless, yet often only passing mention of these bands suggests, however, that they are invoked as tokens of an edginess that, especially among younger artists, is by now a fait accompli. The artist's own stance is more complex. Though it is true that she savors the iconoclasm of marrying Barnett Newman with Sid Vicious, she also clearly believes in the emotional power of popular music, and is a serious student of its changes over the last few decades.

To her credit, Elizabeth Armstrong does give voice to Heilmann's thoughts on this subject, particularly with regard to Brian Eno's toying with meaning in pop songs (24). Moreover, she provides a solid and sensitive biography that draws from Heilmann's own 1999 text, *The All Night Movie*, as well as interviews with the artist. During Heilmann's rebellious childhood and teen years, she began lifelong immersions in the subcultures of surfing, beat, jazz, and nascent rock and roll, all outcast movements that were foundational for her abiding square-peg outlook. Armstrong enumerates Heilmann's notable teachers and friends, such as Bruce Nauman, David Hockney, and Peter Voulkos (17-18). Voulkos, as Armstrong notes, is particularly important because Heilmann studied ceramics and sculpture and only began to paint as a way of critically engaging Joseph Kosuth and others who declared painting obsolete (20, 24). At a time when painters were abandoning the easel for three dimensions, she channeled her expertise at building, shaping, and coating back into this beleaguered art. Armstrong suggests that Heilmann never thought pictorially but always in terms of the processes and layers that comprise the finished object.

Although Heilmann is an abstract painter, it would be more accurate to say that she is a cultural producer. Not only does she supplement her paintings with furniture, ceramic vessels, fabric design, and audiovisual presentations, she constructs a context through which to see her work. Having discerned this about Heilmann, Johanna Burton takes as her starting point the unorthodox slide presentation, *Her Life*, that the artist uses in place of the traditional visiting-artist lecture given to students. *Her Life* succinctly announces Heilmann's position, linking her abstract paintings (which Burton obligingly calls "seemingly 'nonobjective'") (49) with snapshots of cars, buildings, and neon signs, all set to her own "mix-tape" soundtrack (now an iTunes playlist). Burton in turn echoes this non-linear structure. Her essay is a delight to read because it captures the spirit of Heilmann's enterprise, though it lacks a dispassionate account of her means. The prose circles around subjects, and occasional promises of concision evaporate into deferments and asides, for example:

[A]s we move further into the minutes of *Her Life*—which alternately produces visual surprise and evokes unexpectedly strong affectual fluctuations—one thing becomes clear. In our undergrad art history classes (and even our grad art history classes), the Wölfflinian procession of images held more than one significant difference from what we are experiencing now. It's true that our professors likely didn't set the stage with eclectic soundtracks, nor did they suggest visually that pictures of artworks could be rendered into slow, unstable events up for the taking. But the simpler difference is this: compare and contrast is usually designed to mark distinctions, to say this is like this in X way, but it is different in Y way. In other words, the exercise of asking two "virtual" images (always understood to be merely stand-ins, after all) to take up temporary cohabitation has always been an expedient way to illustrate—and thus parse—context (50).

Such long, clause-ridden sentences are the lingua franca of art writing, and despite never-ending complaints from some quarters, are often necessary for an adequate treatment of complex issues. Burton's command of this mode manages to be both irksome and seductive. It quickly becomes apparent that the ambiguity, circularity, and occasional riveting observations found in her text are an homage to Heilmann's own visual thinking. The act of reading then becomes a two-step analogue to the experience of Heilmann's best paintings. First one is ravished by their luxurious color and casual yet taut geometry, and then one begins an act of archaeology, wherein layers become distinct, their order of application can be deduced, and the always meaningful game of associative "looks like" can commence. In like fashion, Burton's text is less of an organized journey than a lovely amble, but it depends on the reader's willingness to come along.

There is, as mentioned, significant difficulty in explicating exactly how Heilmann's work relates to her abstract forebears. It seems the best way is to resort to elliptical metaphors, which approximate the feeling of looking at one of her paintings, as in: "[S]ipping tea from a lopsided teacup, or, best, sitting in one of her funky latticed chairs... one senses simultaneously the way the artist's promiscuous signifiers rely upon a realm of established effects and yet work to illuminate the operations of those effects" (66).

This marvelous elision of the embodied social being with post-structural theory leaves a neglected middle ground where the painting lies, so that the reader might still wonder exactly what these established effects are and how they operate. Are we talking about color, its intensity and proportion? Or her brushstrokes' pointed refusal of both the hard-edged and the painterly? An absolute familiarity with modernism's tactics is treated as such a foregone conclusion that they become mysterious again. Regarding specific predecessors, Burton poetically lists "a dab of Mondrian, a wisp of Frankenthaler, a Rothkoesque hot spot" (54), without linking these wisps to particular

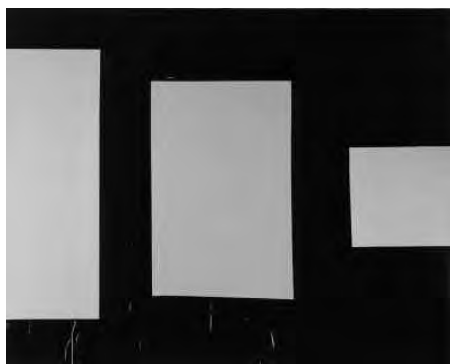


Fig. 1. Mary Heilmann, *Save the Last Dance for Me* (1979), acrylic on canvas, 80" x 100". Private Collection.

paintings. It may be that a more direct treatment would simply be at odds with Burton's notable ambition to weave a literary parallel to Heilmann's work.

Dave Hickey reports from an even more personal perspective than Burton, while at the same time providing a striking realization of her work, describing "the raw physicality of the stretched canvas support, the occasional scuff, flutter, or warp...." He also nails her ambiguous relationship to abstraction's history with the simple claim that she is "absolutely *knowing*" (40). However, despite Hickey's gift of earnest but never overheated rapport, his essay tends to the morosely nostalgic. He describes a kinship he feels with Heilmann because of their parallel journeys from California counterculture to the New York art world, at the same time bemoaning the loss of a mindset of desperation that was replaced by professionalism. Though Hickey's compelling account of Max's Kansas City bar (41-42) is intended to demonstrate Heilmann's own risk-everything approach, by expounding on a lost scene, he reduces Heilmann to a fixture of this scene. A similar effacement occurs with his comparison of Heilmann to one of Norman Rockwell's *Saturday Evening Post* covers, the one with the little girl sitting outside the principal's office with a black eye and a deeply satisfied smile (39). This is a bold move, and it is dependent upon Hickey's previously published argument that Rockwell was far from the stereotypical family-values real-art antidote to modern life, but was rather a stalwart

advocate of the messy individuality and unseemliness that must be tolerated for a democratic society to function. Hickey's take on Rockwell is convincing, but Heilmann's own life and career stem to a large extent from a mistrust or at least a perpetual traversal of any and all types. For Hickey's truly laudable objectives, the Rockwell comparison comes off as rather patronizing. His concluding remarks on surfing are much more effective (43). Like painting, surfing is defined by its materials, in this case the ocean itself, and success depends on negotiating the indifferent and potentially deadly elements. Hickey conveys this situation in a way that is comprehensible and moving to someone who has never even touched a board.

Burton and Hickey's heart-to-heart candor communicates their esteem for Heilmann, but it also begs the question as to whether we should acquiesce to an artist's self-managed persona or whether we could do her more justice by attending to the narrative that appears on the face of the work itself. After all, it is true that in the 1980s Heilmann began to construct shaped canvases, that she frequently returns to and modifies the grid, that she sometimes employs a black linear network that overlaps numerous other colors, and that she repeats the motif of vertical stacks of horizontal colored bands, sometimes crisp, sometimes loose. Exactly when and why these tactics appeared might not be something Heilmann finds interesting to talk about, but they do form part of the record. It may be that such detailed description is still associated with the authoritarian formalism that curtailed the freedom that Heilmann pioneered. But given the unmitigated success of her pluralistic embrace, which now veritably defines the art world, a focus on form may no longer be so dangerously oppressive.

Terry R. Myers bypasses this once-justified assumption in his small but overflowing volume of reflections on a single painting, *Save the Last Dance for Me*, which is part of Afterall Books's One Work series. Far from considering the work with blinders, ignoring its place in the artist's broader oeuvre, Myers treats

this painting as a "turning point" in Heilmann's career (39), discussing several others that came before and after. *Save the Last Dance for Me* (Fig. 1) was painted in 1979 and consists of three skewed pink rectangles on a black ground, which diminish in size from left to right. Much, much more can be said about it than that, and Myers accomplishes this task splendidly. He begins with and often returns to a detailed description that constantly strays into other realms, including art history, but also literature, music, politics, and dance. Myers decisively spins formal analysis out of control so that it at last becomes an inclusive category, not an exclusive one. He segues, slides, or dances (all verbs used within his text) from subject to subject in a way that is anything but arbitrary, following poetic threads that echo the radical permissiveness of Heilmann's brand of abstraction. This permissiveness is anything but homogenized postmodern pastiche in which meaning collapses under sheer information overload. Each facet of history, music, fashion, or emotion is there precisely because it is meaningful, and worth drawing into the orbit of feelings that surround Heilmann's paintings.

Part of Myers's account is a succinct sketch of the zeitgeist of the 1970s, including general anxieties about the future of art as well as Heilmann's grief at the deaths of two friends (13-15). These events stimulated her to bring more personal content in her work. Instead of simply grafting meaningful titles onto geometric abstraction, Heilmann made this content simultaneous to and interdependent with "pure" painterly issues. One could say that Heilmann's content is anecdotal, in that the informed viewer will know that *Save the Last Dance for Me* marks Heilmann's mourning for her friends, her contemplation of abandoning New York, and her meeting a new boyfriend in the park while walking her dog. But one could just as easily describe this content as claustrophobia, humor, transgression, hope, and perseverance, all of which are contained in the painting's irreverent color and composition.

Myers begins and ends with a passage by Edwin Denby, in which the example of seeing a "pretty girl" on the street leads to

the claim that seeing most rewardingly requires the good luck to see at just the right moment from just the right angle (1). The attendant implication, that Heilmann would wish her work to be seen in such an unstable manner, helps to establish one of the book's foundational claims, that Heilmann precipitated a paradigm shift in abstract painting in which the stability and autonomy of modernism is set aside for what Myers calls the painting's "situational nature" (49). Heilmann seems to want her work to be subject to fluctuations in sensitivity and receptiveness, or more simply, to the viewer's *mood*, just as in listening to music or tasting food and wine; sometimes it moves us, sometimes it leaves us cold. Myers works from the old modernist premise that art can directly participate in society by creating ever greater freedom and possibility, but he argues that the terms of engagement have changed. In Heilmann's hands, painting participates not through airtight propositions, but by invitation and allusion. This is not only a change in art, but a change in the way we think about art. As a case in point, Myers points out how the spell of Heilmann retroactively bestows a blasphemous disco glitter to Donald Judd's gold and red boxes (52).

Because criticism often reveals unexamined parameters of the moment in which a work appears, Myers judiciously excerpts *Village Voice* critic Kay Larsen's 1979 review in which she admonishes Heilmann for her lack of "push-ups" (73). This memorable and revealing phrase illuminates the continued grip of the critical language of Judd and many others, in which quality was equated with "strength" and "power." Turning this metaphor on its head, Myers credits Heilmann with a different athletic value: agility (75). He writes that Heilmann "internalised postmodernism's, if not feminism's, critique of the ostentatious power play notoriously associated with the mythic role-model of the male genius painter" (75). In other words, Heilmann was one of the first to realize that agility serves the artist better than strength, which has become a liability in culture's increasingly complex and permeable networks.

As noted, Burton and Hickey

concentrate more on the paintings' effects, and at this they excel, though the causes remain shrouded in mystery, even as they lie in plain sight. While it is true that Hickey communicates the paintings' particular and unreproducible presence, and Burton skillfully reads the 1996 painting *Lola*, these are exceptions. Despite the refreshing tone and format of Heilmann's slide show, which reverberates through much of the writing on her, the presentation itself traffics in formal comparisons, albeit in a once-forbidden way: She links her paintings with personal experience and inclinations gained from her own cultural habitus. And yet her paintings are not neutral placeholders within a field of references, rather they ask to be deemed worthy based on their own qualities. The worthiness of any particular painting is not severed from life (from dance clubs, from neon signs, from animated TV shows), but neither is it dependent solely on the title and the associations it calls up. Heilmann, after all, makes her chairs not only so that we can sit, but so that we can look.

Both volumes are beautiful objects. *To Be Someone* is a compact hardcover, a mere eight by eleven inches, but its design merits coffee-table status. The horizontal bands of color on the jacket come from Heilmann's fabric designs. The book's numerous plates are supplemented by images from the artist's famous slide shows, as well as installation shots and announcements, only a few in black and white, which illustrate how her paintings and objects enliven a space. There is also an exhaustive bibliography and exhibition chronology. Myers' book, like all in the "One Work" series, is an appropriately slim and small paperback, whose text is broken up by full-page images of Heilmann's work along with her visual interlocutors: Matisse, Mondrian, Stockholder, Matta-Clark, etc., again overwhelmingly in color, with a few in black and white. Of particular note are the many images of the painting in question: a wraparound full bleed on the cover, a page of its own, and two different installation shots, one of its first exhibition, and one in a retrospective decades later. Together they underline

both books' theses about the active and dynamic nature of Heilmann's work. •

Vittorio Colazzi is an assistant professor of Art History at Winona State University in Minnesota. He has written for *Art Papers* and *Smithsonian's American Art* journal, and is currently preparing a monograph on Robert Ryman.

Francesca Woodman

by Chris Townsend
Phaidon, 2006.

Reviewed by Jovana Stokic

Chris Townsend's principal goal in this survey is to appraise the work of Francesca Woodman (1958-81), and to "place it within a history of photographic and artistic practices" (6). He situates her work as belonging to post-minimal art, "as concerned with the processes of presentation as it is with the representation of things or of Woodman herself; as concerned to probe and unsettle the limits of the medium in which she chose to work as she was to make images with it" (11). His insistence on asserting the value of her work remains the dominant strategy—explaining how remarkable that such a synthesis of aesthetics and critique was realized by a young woman still going through the conventional stages of an art education. He rightly asserts that "rather than being a prodigy without precursors or peers, Woodman clearly belongs to a defined and recognized tradition" (19).

In the introduction to "Scattered in Space and Time," his essay on Woodman's oeuvre, Townsend addresses the central question of the artist's subjectivity in relation to the photographic representation. The question can be formulated as: Is Francesca Woodman *the subject* of her self-representations? Townsend claims Woodman's photographs of herself are never about her (8). By negating the idea of her works being autobiographical, he closes the possibility of interpreting autobiography in the photographic

representation as a fictional strategy of the formation of subjectivity. Townsend goes on to emphasize Woodman's non-presence:

Her images equate the temporal and spatial photographic indeterminacy of the bodies and objects they depict with the inadequacy of photographic representation. Even when wholly present in the picture as the subject of her self-portraits, Woodman is never quite with us, never quite with herself (7).

Is there not a possibility of reading Woodman's presence in a performative way that would allow us to see how she could have been present *along with her (represented) self*?

In his chapter "In the Tradition of the Self-Portrait," discussing different aspects of the self-portraits, Townsend insists that Woodman was working in a long-established tradition of artists representing themselves. I believe he oversimplifies diverse contemporary analyses of artistic self-representations by explaining the staging of the self as "performances of mutability, fragmentation and fantasy in which the subject of self-portraiture is anything but self-meditative, and the principal revelation offered is that the artist is 'someone else'" (55). That "someone else" is actually the core of the notion of the subject as other. Townsend does not discuss different possibilities of performative readings in the photographic self-portrait. It would be pertinent here to offer Amelia Jones's groundbreaking theoretical opening to the questions of how subjectivity is established, and how meaning is made in relation to all representations of the human body.¹ Jones reminds us that "the photograph, after all, is a death-dealing apparatus in its capacity to fetishize and congeal time."² Further, she inventively proposes that photographic self-portraits are eminently performative, and so life giving.³

In trying to solve the problem of subjectivity in representation, Townsend readily accepts only a portion of Benjamin Buchloh's insightful assertion that Woodman exploited photography's deficiencies to provide knowledge of the subject, rather than its strengths, in order to articulate female desire outside the sys-

tem of patriarchal representation.⁴ He does not credit Buchloh in the following statement: "In Woodman's self-portraits we have a thoroughgoing critique of her medium's incapacity to identify a subject truthfully" (56), which echoes a thought by Buchloh where he asserts that Woodman's photographs "prove the utter insufficiency of photography's positivist empiricism when it comes to the articulation of the subject's existence in desire."⁵

Although Townsend quotes Marcel Proust for the title of his survey, "Scattered in Time and Space" (6), he does not follow up, for example, by citing the brilliant analysis of Arthur Danto, who lucidly compares Woodman's extraordinary intense intellectual preoccupation with the theme of identity by bringing in the strategy of Marcel Proust and the narrator (we know as) "Marcel" in *À la recherche du temps perdu*.⁶ The viewer has to distinguish between Francesca the artist and "Francesca" her character; and this process of destabilizing subjectivity by splitting the female presence in representation can be traced in the ways in which Woodman's own subjectivity undergoes a similar practice of fracturing and bifurcation in the process of image-making.⁷ Townsend insists that one of Woodman's most original contributions to the history of art is her challenge to the conventions of self-portraiture. He does not discuss performative strategies in her subjectivity formation; neither does he elucidate the sexual politics of her self-representation.

In the chapter "Feminist Photography," Townsend attacks feminist criticism by claiming that the reception of Woodman's work today is "in part the discursive construction of successive generations of critics who have interpreted her photographs through their own theoretical concerns rather than 'read' them either formally or contextually" (38-39). He continues the criticism of feminist prejudices in general: "Furthermore, the bias of feminist theory towards psychoanalytic critiques has often led to Woodman's being understood only as victim—an interpretation encouraged by her suicide—placed on the couch and analysed through her images" (39). Citing a single

example of her factual misinterpretation of a photo, he accuses Abigail Solomon-Godeau (in an endnote) of "the blindness that ensues from looking at Woodman's work in a cursory fashion in order to satisfy a pre-ordained theory" (70). He himself shows a blindness towards extraordinary sophisticated and compelling feminist readings of Woodman's work provided by several scholars in recent years.⁸ Taking as a task to undermine the validity of feminist critique while never providing the arguments from any of the specific feminist texts, and only by opposing the most generalized feminist viewpoints, Townsend concludes that:

Woodman's refusal of distinction between the self and the world of objects subverts the ideological structure of the gaze it uses. Those readings that understand her work as a reaction to a masculine gaze both neglect this subversion and rely upon a wholly inadequate appreciation of the disordering of photographic space and time in her works (61).

By not identifying these readings, Townsend does not allow readers to judge whether his interpretation of them is valid or oversimplified. Virtually all recent feminist scholars recognize the ambiguous relationship between narcissism, seduction, fetishism, and non-presence in Woodman's photographic self-representations. The author deems irrelevant recent feminist readings which have provided powerful arguments to show how Woodman's photographic quest for representation of identity transcends the kind of voyeurism normally invoked by the female body, and ultimately proves the artist's rebellion against the patriarchal visual symbolic order.⁹

In his thorough analysis of Woodman's influences, Townsend determines that, while her photographs have little in common with the mainstream photography of her time, they bear many similarities to other forms of American and European photographic practice of the 1970s, or what he calls "the dissident tradition in American photography" (15). He rightly insists that "rather than being a prodigy without precursors or peers, Woodman clearly belongs to a defined and recog-

nized tradition”(19). Further, he offers a detailed account of a diverse range of Woodman’s influence: Surrealism, Gothic literature, and fashion photography. He then goes on to imply that these distinguished her from a typical student’s appropriation of newly acquired knowledge as impulses in one’s own image-making, in particular her intervention with her own body as a dynamic component juxtaposed within the elements of the image (18-19). Nevertheless, he deliberately misses acknowledging the incommensurability of the (desiring) body represented in relation to the sexual politics of the moment.

George Baker noted in 2003 that feminist criticism in the 1990s loosened up and addressed two taboo issues of 1980s feminism: beauty and seduction.¹⁰ Recognizing the category of beauty in Woodman’s work has opened a new direction, a new category, for discussion, one which Townsend never addresses per se. Neither is the complex problem of the artist’s narcissism, outside of the 1980s critique of feminine vanity, treated in depth. I believe that the analysis of beauty in her work can be traced in a formalist way, but can also lead to a territory of complex interrelations of the female body, seduction, and ultimately fetishization and commodification, as in her Eel series (Fig. 1). Such a critical discussion of female beauty in relation to her photographs as desired commodities seems pertinent at a moment when the interest in her work is also very much driven by the art market.

Not mentioning any of the important studies that employ performativity in subject formation, Townsend heavily relies on Margaret Sundell’s brilliant Lacanian analysis, which is only one of the “revisionist” feminist readings that deal with Woodman’s establishing of her subjectivity in representation.¹¹ He proposes the following contrast: “Where most artists in their self-portraits stage performances of self as other, imagining transcendence through the fiction of external agency... Woodman shows us that being photographed, ‘written in light’, is itself the fiction, manifested through the material satisfaction of the gaze by the body” (62). To my mind, this opposition needs further elaboration.



Fig. 1. Francesca Woodman, From Eel series, Rome (1977-78), gelatin silver print. Courtesy George and Betty Woodman.

One area of Woodman’s artistic production, her videos, is covered minimally. Townsend mentions she borrowed a video camera while studying at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1977, and cursorily describes some of her actions surviving on tape (27). However, he does not offer any analysis of the particular actions in which Woodman’s performative strategies are likely to be traced in the formation of her subjectivity in representation. These extant short videos possibly offer a clue to her strategies of *staging of the self*, and could undermine formalist arguments that claim her main interest was that of photography as a medium.

Overall, Townsend’s contribution consists of a serious, non-sensationalist account of the life and work of Francesca Woodman, illuminating the wide range of her interests and influences in order to assert critically her “unique application of the principles of late modernism

through the aesthetic traditions of photography,” not only as a “photographer’s photographer, but as an artist” (67). His incomplete representation of the recent feminist criticism on Woodman prevents the reader from seeing that his goals are ultimately the same as those of feminist critics: to recognize her as a unique artist.

In addition to Townsend’s essay, this richly illustrated volume contains excerpts from Francesca Woodman’s diary with a poignant introduction by her father, George Woodman, and personal memories by her intimate friend, fellow artist Betsy Berne. Finally, there are more than 200 high-quality reproductions, most in black and white of Woodman’s photographs. •

Jovana Stokic, an art historian and critic, is a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Fine Arts at the New York University. Her dissertation is an analysis of Marina Abramovic’s opus, focusing on notions of self-representation and beauty.

NOTES

1. Amelia Jones, "The Eternal Return": Self-Portrait Photography as a Technology of Embodiment," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 27:4 (2002): 947-78.
2. *Ibid.*, 949.
3. *Ibid.*, 950. Jones specifies that this is not the same as saying that "the photograph somehow immortalizes the subject, but rather, that the photograph reiterates the subject (restates her or him such that she/he can be engaged by future interpreters) in some sense beyond the moment of the picture's taking, and, potentially, after the subject's literal death. This reiteration can never establish the "truth" of the subject but merely suggests aspects of the subject that can be encountered by future viewers."
4. Benjamin Buchloh, "Francesca Woodman: Performing the Photograph, Staging the Subject," in *Francesca Woodman: Photographs 1975-1980* (New York: Marian Goodman Gallery, 2004), 41-50. Buchloh's central argument is that this exposure of photography's insufficiency was for Woodman just a part of a larger project, i.e., "an attempt to articulate female desire outside the system of patriarchal representation" (p. 49).
5. *Ibid.*, 41-50. Buchloh avoids the simplified notion of the subject's truthfulness, bringing in a more prescient notion of the subject's desire.
6. Arthur Danto, "Darkness Visible: Francesca Woodman," *The Nation*, (15 November 2004): 36-40. Danto poses a question: "Why, then, did Francesca always photograph herself, if not to reveal herself? Asked this question, she replied that she was always available; it was easier for her to show what she had in mind than to try to get a model to do it. But my conjecture is that she invented a character, whose fictive life was in many ways a metaphor for her own inner life. I have given Francesca's character the name 'Francesca' just to underscore the problem of sorting out what pertains to the artist and the young woman in the photographs" (p. 36).
7. See Harriet Riches, "A Disappearing Act: Francesca Woodman's Portrait of a Reputation," *Oxford Art Journal* 27:1 (2004): 107.
8. For example, three seminal articles are absent from Townsend's bibliography: Jui-Ch'i Liu, "Francesca Woodman's Self-Images: Transforming Bodies in the Space of Femininity," *Woman's Art Journal* 25:1 (Spring/Summer 2004): 26-31, which sheds a light on the formation of feminine space and subjectivity in order to elucidate the sexual politics of her representations, cutting to the core of it—the central theme of Woodman's work, i.e., the theme of an elusive self—and demonstrates that the lack of figural-spatial boundaries makes the viewer aware of the artist self-perception; as Woodman remarked, "I show you what you do not see—the body's inner force" (26). Also Peggy Phelan, "Francesca Woodman's Photography: Death and the Image One More Time," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 27:4 (Summer 2002): 979-1004, which relates Woodman's photography via Buchloh and Barthes to the medium's capability to respond to the ongoing temporality of the work of mourning, and also sees Woodman's refusal of stillness of photography as her presence as photography's most supple ghost. Also Carol Armstrong, "Francesca Woodman: A Ghost in the House of the 'Woman Artist,'" in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher, eds. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 347-71, which shows the importance of the discussion of a large spectrum of critical interpretations (from feminist to the counterfeminist) of Woodman's career in terms of the burdened notion of "woman artist."
9. Amelia Jones and Tracy Warr, *The Artist's Body*, (London: Phaidon, 2000), 170.
10. George Baker, "Francesca Woodman Reconsidered: A Conversation with George Baker, Ann Daly, Nancy Davenport, Laura Larson, and Margaret Sundell," *Art Journal*, 62:2 (Summer 2003): 55.
11. Margaret Sundell, "Vanishing Points: The Photography of Francesca Woodman," in Catherine de Zegher ed., *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of the 20th Century in Art in, of, and from the Feminine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 435-39.

Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities

by Laura E. Pérez
Duke University Press, 2007

Reviewed by Lynda Hoffman-Jeep

Chicana Art is a scholarly work par excellence without the arrogance and pedantry of many such works. Laura Pérez has given us a probingly complex, multifaceted study of more than forty Chicana writers and visual and performance artists from 1965-2000. In her Acknowledgments, she pays rare and moving tribute to *all* of the members of her home department (Ethnic Studies at Berkeley) by name, who have "had the courage to teach, publish, and research in areas that have been ground-breaking while profoundly engaged with our

times" (xiv). Pérez's approach in *Chicana Art*, in concert with the artists themselves and the works they created, is innovative and provocative. Some of the artists' challenges include: representations of oppressed cultural differences, the destruction of stereotypes and the refusal to replace them with new ones, addressing the complexities of subjectivity and agency, and highlighting the ambivalences inherent in identity and desire, while constantly searching for alternative models of greater human and social integrity.

Pérez gives her study "an altar-like structure ... marking the meeting of the embodied and the disembodied, the visible and the invisible, the formal and the conceptual" (14). The chapter titles are drawn from "a unique Nahua literary trope that invokes a third element through the yoking of two others" (14). She thus creates a dialogue that

metaphorically conveys the insufficiency, but nevertheless the pulsing immediacy, of signifying systems. By linking disparate "systems," such as Mexican and Euroamerican, pre-Columbian and European, and spiritual and profane, Pérez reveals meaning, especially when that insight involves "unknowable nature to humans, such as spirituality and the divine, or unknowable because unfamiliar to us, as in cultural difference" (14). Let me cite some examples.

The opening chapter, "Spirit, Glyphs," provides us with a transparent example from the video artist Frances Salomé España. In *Nepatla*, the second piece in *The Confessions Trilogy*, a contemporary woman and an image of the *alma en pena* (soul in purgatory) appear simultaneously on screen, fashioning a 'dance' of flailing gestures" (36). Unlike the traditional, historically received image of the soul in purgatory, the contemporary woman

"appears a kind of urban angel, at once powerful and vulnerable, sexy and angelic" (36). These two paradigmatic images enact the "culturally difficult space occupied by those Latina women caught between Christian religious and social discourses of gender that dichotomize women as spiritual or carnal, angels or whores" (36). Pérez, I think rightly, claims that such juxtapositions produce a different experience of time and consciousness, opening up a place for, here, cultural and gendered insight. In chapter one she also discusses works by visual artists Yreina D. Cervántez and Ester Hernandez as well as by writers Sandra Cisneros and Cherríe Moraga. All of the hybrid works presented in this chapter redefine the social role of art itself, while "transforming a familiar present whose reality is destructive to individual, community, and planet" (46).

In Chapter two "Body, Dress," Pérez introduces the concept of the double metaphor of the social body as text. First, she describes dress and body ornamentation as literal writings on a given individual body. These "markings" address how individuals or groups are inscribed within a hegemonic social body as, for example, women, Chicana, Black, gay, etc. Secondly, she explains how these "markings" themselves can reveal how individuals or groups (re)act against/upon the hegemonic social body as text. In their creative works, the Chicana artists in chapter two *portray* how the individuals/groups imprint the hegemonic social body.

The first example of such interactions is portrayed in Yolanda López's 1994 installation *The Nanny*, where domestic labor is represented by a grey uniform dress with a white collar, hanging on a hanger from a folding screen. The central image is accompanied on the floor by a wash basket and cleaning utensils, obviously representing the role of the ethnic domestic worker. López frames this setting with "the visual language of actual media materials that stage the historical asymmetry of power relations between so-called first and third worlds" (53-54). The advertisements she uses embody the discourses of Euroamerican women tourists to Mexico on the right,

and on the left the wool-producing industry, set against the Mexican garment workers who produce the dress the Euroamerican woman is wearing.

The artist structures her installation so that it clearly portrays the hegemonic social body as text, and the interaction of a socially marginalized group upon it. The artist herself and the scholar Pérez (and we as viewers with them) show (and we come to understand) how marginalized individuals can imprint the hegemonic social body. All of the works discussed in Chapter two depict an imprint from the margins upon the hegemonic social body. The installation by Ester Hernandez portrays the experience of early immigrant women. Select works by Amalia Mesa-Bains "explore the spaces of women's gendered, and transgressive, social and cultural activities" through altar-based installations (59). Diane Gamboa's paper fashions, constructed by the artist from inexpensive materials like butcher paper, tissue, wire, and glitter, document a "desire ... in a gender-, ethnic-, and class-specific way ... for that which is inaccessible economically and culturally to her, as a woman of working-class, Mexican American origins, and others like her" (69). Gamboa's "Urban Royalty" drawings and paintings depict androgynous bodies, lavishly ornamented, that reflect the excessively adorned interiors that they inhabit. "Urban Royalty" "expresses anxiety through the *desencuentros* ('disencounters,' i.e., bad encounters) between people in emotionally strained or hellish, densely decorated party or sex scenes" (75). Turning to the painting of Yreina D. Cervántez, Pérez discusses the roles of masks, tattoos, and other decorations in hegemonic and in contemporary ethnic cultures as well as in pre-Columbian times. This makes for fascinating reading.

In the next chapter, "Altar, Alter," Pérez explores forms of domestic religious practice as represented in the works of Chicana installation artists and *retablo* and canvas painters, photographers and performance artists, and in reliquary-based found-object boxes, the "altar-book," film, and video. Altar instal-

lations and related art forms demonstrate "the search for, and expression of, alternative spiritualities and alternative art practices, particularly those that are visionary with respect to social justice and transformation" (92). In describing these works Pérez uses verbs like "rephrased," "interrogated," "re-enchanted," "restyle," "recreate," and "refigure," in proceeding with her theoretical approach of isolating "third world inflections upon Eurocentric Christianity" that create a new space for critical insight (94). Some of the thirteen artists discussed in this chapter are introduced generally, others in more depth. This dense and fascinating section cannot easily be summarized because of the number of artists, variety of genres, and sheer complexity of the featured works. Here again Pérez is perfectly consistent in her approach, remaining convincing in her discussions of the artists and their creations.

At the heart of Chapter four, "Tierra, Land," are works that demonstrate the politics of place, that is, a specific locale as a site of social and political struggle. Such sites are reflections of spiritual presence, historically charged environments, urban spaces, immigrant experiences of geographical and cultural displacement, and related issues of cultural citizenship. Celia Herrera Rodríguez's performance pieces rethink and explore dominant culture stereotypes and associations, including those of Chicanas (and Chicanos) themselves. The paintings *Tierra Firme* and *La Ruta Turquesa* by Yreina D. Cervántez respond to the false myth of the Mexicano/Latino/Indígena as "illegal alien," while proposing new metaphors for migration and homeland from the old. In her weaving, painting, and mixed-media installations, Consuelo Jiménez explores the possibility of a return to ancestral space. Alma Lopez and Celia Alvarez Muñoz expose the exploitation of female garment workers in Los Angeles, one of the garment-production capitals of the world. Freelance journalist Jo-Ann Mort has written about how the "highly feminized and racialized garment industry thrives because of its own illegal work practices and conditions in Los Angeles" (173). Laura Alvarez's Double Agent *Sirvienta* cartoon series that includes video, digital

images, paintings, and other works on domestic surfaces, exposes social, economic, and cultural inequalities with humor and irony. Rounding out this chapter are Patricia Rodríguez's reliquary-inspired boxes that explore the concepts of burial ground and home; Juana Alicia's murals that depict the power of the natural landscape; and finally Kathleen Alcalá's novels that tell the story of Jewish *mexicanos*, and Cherrie Moraga's plays and writings devoted to those gay and lesbian Chicanos who have no social space or place at all.

The types of art discussed in Chapter five, "Book, Art," range from literary texts to gallery-sized "book" installations, comic-book art, photo- and graphic novellas, zines, sound recordings of the spoken word, and digital interactive CD-ROM. To varying degrees these works are "a form of writing upon the larger text of society [and] may thus question authority, and values reigning within different realms of society, including art historical discourse" (206). Celia Alvarez Muñoz, Delilah Montoya and Yreina Cervántez are represented by their installation-type book art that addresses their bicultural heritage, "translating" a Mesoamerican codex into contemporary terms, and the hostile climate they experienced in graduate school, respectively.

The discussions on the body and dress come into play again in Chapter five with respect to the "Altar Books" of Amalia Mesa-Bains and Sheila and Sandra Ortiz Taylor. Mesa-Bains engages psychoanalytic discourse exploiting some of the possibilities offered by *écriture féminine* while attempting to recreate some of the missing volumes lost "within patriarchal and racist discourse" (224). The Ortiz Taylor sisters' work is a rethinking of the patriarchal family

romance that focuses on generational and cultural differences. The comic book style art by Isis Rodríguez and Laura Molina draws upon this white-male-dominated genre while confronting the very same genre with radical revisions and contextualizations of familiar images. Pérez likens the work of mystery writer Lucha Corpi to that of Rodríguez and Molina in describing it as "a gender- and genre-bender" (241).

Chapter six, "Face, Heart," the final chapter in Pérez's study, is also a kind of sending-forth prayer from the author. Using a Nahua trope that combines the concepts of "face" and "divinized heart" that express healthy and productive personhood, Pérez focuses on works that represent the "process of aligning these [concepts in order to] properly [make] for one's self the face and heart of a harmonious, spiritually guided person of higher purpose" (257). The first section of this chapter ("Christian Virgins, Goddesses, and Superheroes") features artists who have provided a new and dynamic interpretation of the Mexican Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, showing her "as a figure of empowerment for women, a champion of the poor and of social justice" (259).

Two more sections, "Self-Portraits and Representations of the Body" and "Sacred and Divinized Heart (Yolteotl) Imagery," present images that have erased racialized and gendered associations we have of women from art history. Among the strategies enlisted in the self-portraits are masking techniques that block simple recognition of an individual's countenance while "revealing features of an inner landscape" (284). The pre-Columbian *yolteotl* heart is combined with the Christian Sacred Heart in various works, forming a hybridized image that represents the struggle for personal integrity to align oneself within contem-

porary society and even within the universe. Pérez sees in these images the efforts of Chicana artists to "change our ways of thinking and seeing the world" (295).

In her conclusion Pérez reiterates the "politicizing spirituality" that has been the point of her study (297). She reminds us of the spread of multicultural awareness through education and the arts that occurred in the 1980s through 2000 and the more recent backlash against it. All of her sources corroborate the sad fact that Mexican Americans in general and Chicana artists among them, "continue [...] to experience marked inequality in the quality and degree of education, jobs, and income" (301). For Chicana artists this means that their works are underrepresented in mainstream galleries, museums, art histories, and art publications. Very few are able to support themselves with their work. Pérez also briefly discusses the often self-serving motivation for corporate funding of art initiatives.

With her encyclopedic study of Chicana art, Laura Pérez broadens readers' perspectives significantly, enhanced by 82 color illustrations, a 32-page bibliography, and extensive notes. Her theoretical approach, clearly explained in her introduction, is consistently at work in every chapter, considering a rich variety of media and a multitude of artists. *Chicana Art: the politics of spiritual and aesthetic altaries* is an intelligent and highly creative study that has laid the groundwork for scholars from a variety of fields and for those art *aficionados* who wish to enter into a rich terrain. ●

Lynda Hoffman-Jeep is an independent scholar, based in Cincinnati, where she teaches German, Spanish and American Women's History at Ursuline Academy.

Women Artists at the Millennium

edited by Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher
October Books and MIT Press, 2006

Reviewed by Patricia Mathews

This collection of feminist essays by some of the most significant women in the field of art and art history working today is so rich, complex, and innovative that even the footnotes will keep readers riveted. With over 400 pages of text and 200 color illustrations, this substantial

book will engage the reader in its theoretical arguments for a satisfyingly long time. Not one essay in the collection is to be taken lightly. We have the two editors, Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher, to thank for this collection, both well known for their own

perceptive theoretical positions on many subjects.

Women Artists at the Millennium grew out of the November 2001 conference of the same name held at Princeton University, which “brought together papers and discussions by and about contemporary women artists and art historians” (x). This collection reexamines the conference issues from the critical distance of five years. Inspired by but modifying and supplementing the issues that the conference addressed such as the “legacies of feminist practice and critical theory” (xv), the structure of the book follows the four sections of the conference: Legacies, Spaces, Subjectivities, and Identities. Each section consists of three essays, a respondent, and a concluding work or essay by a contemporary woman artist. The interspersing of women artists’ writings and artwork with articles by women art historians creates an effective resonance between the two voices.

The book is meant, as the conference also was described by Armstrong, as “a timely intervention, at a moment when it might be felt that feminist art and art history had either entrenched themselves in worn-out positions or simply lost political momentum” (xx). It is this intervention that enlivens the book’s content. For example, both Griselda Pollock in the “Legacies” section and Emily Apter in “Subjectivities” speak to the embattled position of both theory and feminism in a supposedly post-feminist age. The sophistication and liveliness of feminist art and art historical practice today is evident in this volume.

The writers and artists use a range of methodologies and critical practices, both new and old, all directly related to specific works by women artists. The old saw of the division between form, content, and theory is banished here. Even high theory from the psychoanalytic to that of Deleuze and Guattari is brought to bear on technique as well as content, and new paradigms are suggested.

Within each of the four sections, a range of approaches is used. In general, each section contains one theoretically difficult but significant text, while the other two use methods perhaps more familiar to many but just as rewarding.

The respondent essays range from summaries of the essays in the section to an elaboration of ideas found within them.

Each section is configured beyond the denotations of the terms that identify them. The articles within them open into broader areas that move their rubric to endow each term with surprising and richly extended meanings. Yet, they hold together to create a comprehensive range of interpretations within the field of feminist inquiry that the term implies.

Yvonne Rainer introduces the four sections from an artistic perspective with an essay on the development of her art from the 1960s to the recent past. In many ways, her development parallels the changes in the history of art history and of art by women.

The three essays in the Legacies section that follows describe changing legacies from differing perspectives. Linda Nochlin begins with a discussion of the many changes that have occurred since 1970, when she wrote her original, groundbreaking article, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” These changes include among others the move from “phallic ‘greatness’ to being innovative, making interesting, provocative work, making an impact, and making one’s voice heard” (22). Most importantly, she argues that although gender and women’s art history have definitely found a place in scholarship, it is not ensconced safely in traditional art history. “At its strongest, a feminist art history is a transgressive and antiestablishment practice meant to call many of the major precepts of the discipline into question” (30). Typical of her work, Nochlin has taken mostly known works of art by known women but examined them in new and powerful interpretive lights.

Griselda Pollock follows with a multi-part essay which begins with a study of Bracha Ettinger’s art of the Holocaust from the perspective of the artist’s loss of her mother, an emotionally scarred Holocaust survivor. In the second part of her essay, Pollock discusses Ettinger’s psychoanalytic theory, particularly her concept of a shifting and supplemental space which she calls the “Matrix” (56). This space goes beyond the “pre-Oedipal,” to that of the Lacanian Symbolic. Yet Ettinger’s intricate and rich

theorization is not simply “about shifting from patriarchal to matriarchal politics” (65)—it arises out of Ettinger’s own painting (70). Pollock has written on this body of work before (see review, page 55), as has Ettinger herself, but this essay further enriched my understanding of this authoritative and “radical new theorization of a psychic space that allows for the ‘feminine’ as more than lost object or empty space/absence” (73).

Lisa Tickner completes this group of articles with her essay on the “Mother-Daughter Plot,” beginning with sisters Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell’s relationship with their mother. She goes on to focus on contemporary artist Rachel Whiteread, using the intermediary of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of the rhizome.

Molly Nesbit responds to the articles in “Legacies,” drawing on the sophistication of the readings to question the profession of art history itself, and to ask how one should write about contemporary art today. Ultimately, Nesbit returns to Tickner’s argument by asking, “is it not time to consider just how the feminist releases the paternal tradition” to “see how to acknowledge and use the treasure of men?” (126).

Artist Martha Rosler concludes the “Legacies” section with her remarkably astute overview of the nature of contemporary art and politics from the 1960s to the present. Always deeply involved in these areas, she has a firm grasp on the historical role of feminism in contemporary art and the developing role of art and politics that assumes “mainstream” art as secondary in importance. Within a few pages, Rosler vividly formulates both East and West Coast changes in political opportunities and failures as well as the rise of international art politics.

Ewa Lajer-Burcharth introduces Section II, “Spaces,” with an essay on video-based installations and the woman artist. She considers the construction of video spaces by women as varying constructions of “femininity as something other than *identity*” (146), noting Simone de Beauvoir’s “notion of a woman as a *situation* rather than a *body*” (146). The artists she focuses on investigate and visualize “new kinds of

connections between space and subjectivity" (146). Lajer-Burcharth considers their work in light of a series of theoreticians from Derrida to Hume and Irigaray, among others.

Briony Fer reconsiders the spaces of Agnes Martin's small grids, from "classical qualities" to the fugitive (185). She argues that the use of repetition in the work heightens rather than deadens experience (180) through the varying pencil widths, watercolor blotches, etc., to create "maximum difference" (178) within the minimal play of lines in her grid format. The result is "a spirituality resonant with Eastern forms of thought" (177).

Catherine de Zegher discusses two Brazilian artists who address "the relational as the radical" (190), Lygia Clark and Anna Maria Maiolino. As does Briony Fer, de Zegher notes similar interests in the work of Eva Hesse, and as does Griselda Pollock, de Zegher refers to the writing of Bracha Ettinger. These interactions within the book are common, and enrich the reader's experience. De Zegher envisions a new paradigm for art, based on these and other artists' practice, an "aesthetics of relation and reciprocity" in opposition to the "alienation, separation, negativity, violence, and de(con)struction" so institutionally favored in the twentieth century (216). She argues, for example, that Maiolino's work promotes "subjectivity as relational, blurring the boundaries between self and other and inviting us to a border space between lives" (216).

Brigid Doherty's response to the "Spaces" section discusses sites of intersection between the accounts of spaces of art made by women. She elaborates on ideas from the essays in this section, particularly concerning the artists Sylvia Plath, Agnes Martin, and Ettinger.

Images of the artist Ann Hamilton's installations close this section with two appropriate series: stills from *Untitled (Aleph)* (1992-93), depicting the space of a lipsticked mouth as berries are rolled between her tongue and lips; and images from *Face* (2003), in which a vaguely depicted face moves out of a dark space.

Tamar Garb introduces the next section, "Subjectivities," with her essay on the Palestinian artist Mona Hatoum. The artist infuses supposedly neutral, abstract lines with the presence of the body and its political and/or sexual significance. For example, her grids, imaging the "site of art's most persistent abstraction" (263) and the "point zero of representation" (269), are made from body hair, that "overdetermined sign of the corporeal," to create a "profoundly subversive" work (263). Garb argues that "It is in the interface between these that meaning resides" (273). Hatoum thus brings subjective (bodily) meanings to the objective grid of modernism.

In her complex and engaging article, Mignon Nixon describes the nature of transference in the psychoanalytic process, and then traces how feminist artists of different generations have provoked new forms of transference. She discusses in particular the art of Louise Bourgeois and Sylvia Kolbowski. Her psychoanalytic theoretical sources range from Freud to Melanie Klein, Shoshana Felman, Joan Copjec, Laplanche, and others.

Anne Wagner's article on Rosemarie Trockel focuses on what the author refers to as "de-skilled figuration," or "disfiguration," in the artist's drawings. According to Wagner, Trockel does not accept the notion that figuration through art can reveal much knowledge about another person, that is, art cannot render "psychic truth." The author assumes this stance to be political. Thus, "disfiguration" reveals the inability of art and the viewer to fully capture "inwardness as a form of knowledge" (323).

Emily Apter responds to the essays in this section in a closely argued "referendum on theory and feminism" (327). She also writes very fine overviews of the essays, questioning them and expanding their theoretical positions. Hers is one of the finest responses in the book.

An artwork by Mary Kelly ends this section with the story of a Kosovar Albanian boy, eighteen months old, "mistakenly left for dead during the expulsions by the Serbian military in Kosovo, April 1999" (344). The work focuses on the mother's story of hiding, the child's fading life, and the mother

leaving him for dead. It is a poignant end to "Subjectivities."

Carol Armstrong begins "Identities," the final section, with an essay on Francesca Woodman, the photographer who committed suicide at the age of twenty-two in 1981. Because of her early death and her photographic work best known for the use of her own body, much has been written about her work as a victimized "woman artist." Armstrong reads her work against the grain, that is, as an artist rather than a victim. She argues that Woodman addresses "old myths of femininity" as forms of "irruptive difference" (350). According to Armstrong, her work is not a critique of traditional femininity, but rather a testing or probing of its bounds and definitions.

Abigail Solomon-Godeau examines three "minority or outsider" artists using criteria for the "cultural production of outsiders" found in Deleuze and Guattari's essay, "What Is a Minor Literature?": deterritorialization of language, political immediacy, and collective forms of enunciation (371). The artists she has chosen "operate through two different tactics of enunciation," a "taunt" addressed to the male and/or white spectator, and a "haunting," the conjuring of historical absences and silences" (373). She discusses the various appearances of these characteristics in the works of three artists: Carrie Mae Weems, Tracey Moffatt, and Zoe Leonard.

Anne Higonnet writes a revisionist article on the photography of Sally Mann. She argues that Mann's reputation should not be based completely on the scandal of her infamous *Immediate Family* series, which aroused claims of child abuse. Higonnet briefly outlines the artist's long and varied career, noting for example that despite her most famous series, she has had the greatest financial success from her landscape photographs. The author also claims that the artist has had a "profound influence on the representations of childhood" and on contemporary artists who take up the subject. Higonnet contends that we have come to regard nineteenth-century photography of children differently through Mann's work, itself influenced

by the work of nineteenth-century women photographers. As a result, the need for greater study of these earlier women is called for. Mann's work, then, says Higonnet, has had an "immediate impact on public discourse" (414), exposing, for example, our culture's idealized images of vapidly innocent childhood.

Maria Dibattista responds to this last section. She finds in these three articles a "crisis of embodiment" (429). Her essay looks at them from this perspective and critiques each accordingly, bringing up alternative arguments in each case.

Ellen Gallagher's imagery ends the "Identities" section. The work is one of her "scrimshaw" images. This technique derives from sailors carving elaborate scenes onto bone while out whaling. Gallagher scratches and carves into paper as she does here to create complex detail.

The terms feminine, feminist, and feminisms are the consistent themes that

give this volume continuity. Each section and each article looks not only at art by contemporary women, but also at the relationship between that art and the notion of woman as artist (Pollock, Later-Burcharth, De Zegher, Nixon, Armstrong), and the role gender might play in their art. Some writers assert that women offer a different and indeed more valuable art experience than their male colleagues. Nixon for example, considers women artists to be the bearers of a new form of transference; Garb sees the generally "masculine" grid as taking on feminist political meanings in the work of Hatoum, as does Briony Fer in the work of Agnes Martin. Never, however, do these arguments become essentialist. Indeed, one of the strengths of the book is the number of times artists' works are seen from entirely new perspectives, such as Wagner on Trockel, Armstrong on Francesca Woodman, and Higonnet on Sally Mann.

The one minor complaint I have about this volume is the failure to include a list of contributors. Except for the two editors, the contributors are identified only by their names. Most are well known, but such a list is a courtesy to the reader and to the writers and artists involved in the project. Overall, however, the book is a richly complex and intelligent volume. ●

Patricia Mathews is Professor of Art History, Hobart and William Smith Colleges. She writes on late nineteenth-century French art and on contemporary women artists. She recently completed *Speaking of Absence, Listening to Silence: The Art of May Stevens*, and is writing a book *Suzanne Valadon*.

Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space and the Archive

by Griselda Pollock
Routledge, 2007

Reviewed by Susan Funkenstein

Imagine an exhibition in which the art works are not tethered to the walls. One-of-a-kind paintings are exhibited in more than one gallery simultaneously, and a series of photocopied museum postcards carries more relevance for an art exhibition than the original sculpture. These are some of the ideal feminist exhibition strategies that Griselda Pollock offers in *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, space and the archive*. In the series of examples she presents, women reclaim the art history that had objectified and excluded them; the female nude can symbolize sexual and artistic empowerment; and art history is told not as a narrative of progress, but as a history of ruptures, traumas, and difference.

Critiquing the present-day modernist museum, Pollock finds that institutional

emphases on classification systems tend to omit artists—especially women—whose careers and art works do not fit within the traditional nomenclatures of nation, artistic movement, and style that form the organizing principles of a tidy art historical narrative. Likewise, Pollock contests the notion that the archive can reveal an objective and full history because so much is left out of the archive, such as objects destroyed by war and genocide and items deemed irrelevant by collectors and archivists by virtue of their theme or their maker's gender. As Pollock envisions the archive as fundamentally unable to reveal a single "truth," she freely makes comparisons between artists, art works, and cultural circumstances that at first seem unrelated. Rather than position herself as a scholar with an invisible hand, Pollock makes her own voice heard and readily acknowledges her working process. Her strategy is striking. On several occasions she makes a significant claim, only to declare in the next sentence that no archival documentation exists to substantiate it. This does not mean her point lacks validity; instead, she asserts through

example a multiplicity of ways to interpret a work of art.

The current cultural climate was an impetus for the Virtual Feminist Museum. As Pollock sees it, the modernist museum's relationship with feminism, while never good, has worsened. With its cultural power based in its financial strength, the modernist museum is for Pollock inextricably linked to male hegemony, and the capitalist influence on the museum has only strengthened. Further, feminism is unable to counteract this male-dominated capitalism because it is weakened by post-feminism, the subject of Pollock's most vociferous criticisms as "anti-feminist." Given the modernist museum's strengthening of its ties to (masculinist) capitalism, and post-feminist's lack of challenge to long-standing objectification of women, Pollock's Virtual Feminist Museum has its work cut out for it.

Pollock wants a radical change. Adding female artists to the canon does not fundamentally change the way we think about art history, because the basic guiding principles of classification and exhibition remain the same. So, Pollock

conceptualizes an art historical world outside of masculine heteronormativity in her Virtual Feminist Museum. It is an “imaginary space” outside the confines of academic art history, in which “many representations and images jostle in an expanded archive across time and space, prompting other resonances and opening out unexpected pathways through an archive of the image in time and space” (9). It is not a cyber museum (that would be a Feminist Virtual Museum), but a place where “[a]rtworks ask to be read as cultural *practices* negotiating meanings shaped by both history and the unconscious” (10). And unlike the modernist museum, the Virtual Feminist Museum “counters the narratives of heroic, nationalist and formalist art history” within an “open laboratory rather than a story” (11). Works of art in the Virtual Feminist Museum do not have a meaning imposed on them by a narrativized storytelling of art history. Instead, myriad interpretations are revealed through a feminist practice that espouses the unconscious.

Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum is organized in four parts with a total of seven chapters. Each part begins with a summary paragraph, and then several pages of images open each chapter. Thematically pertinent to the chapter, the images are from and of various countries, time periods, and styles, and together form an exhibition or room in Pollock’s Virtual Feminist Museum.

In Part I, “The afterlife of images: framing fathers,” Pollock sets up her methodological framework for the book. After its first chapter, “What the Graces made me do... Time, Space and the Archive: questions of feminist method,” in which Pollock outlines her intentions behind the Virtual Feminist Museum, she follows with chapters on Aby Warburg and Sigmund Freud in her quest to uncover the “psychology of the image” (1). Warburg, an art historian who developed the method of iconology, looked to the deep feelings “that most deeply agitate human subjects” (11). In his *Mnemosyne Atlas*, photographic reproductions of artworks are arranged not by cultural movement but according to similar gestures and forms—a strategy Pollock similarly employs. Here, compar-

isons, contrasts, and contradictions evoke tensions; and through these tensions, a formula of feeling—a *Pathosformel*—exposes the underlying psychological motivations behind the work of art. Pollock then turns to Freud in Chapter Three, and to his exhibition of antiquities in his consultant room. Pollock asks, “Why so much pagan art in the place of modern science?” (68). She responds by exploring Freud’s theories of trauma, those suffered individually (during an early, pre-verbal childhood), and those shared within a culture (such as anti-Semitism for Jews). Pollock then takes this notion of trauma into her focus on the ancient goddesses Osiris, Demeter, and Persephone, seeing for Freud an intersection of sexuality, violence, death, and time.

Part II “Femininity, modernity, and representation” consists of one lengthy chapter, “Visions of Sex c. 1920.” As Pollock states,

This work presupposes the importance of women’s creative engagements with modernist, avant-garde culture, but also points to the disjunctive temporalities of that engagement because women as artists are negotiating deeper conflicts between “men’s time,” the time of linear national history and “women’s time,” the time of sexual difference (87).

Pollock takes the theme of age and time from Part I into her focus here on the female nude and the calla lily, a flower frequently used by male and female artists alike for its allusions to sexuality and death. Looking at how male artists represented Georgia O’Keeffe, Tina Modotti, Imogen Cunningham, and Josephine Baker as sexual beings, Pollock then reads these images against the grain, exploring how these women expressed themselves as subjects, artists, and sexual women on their own terms. Throughout the chapter we see women’s conflicted relationship with modernism, as they work both within and in resistance to it.

In Part III, Pollock returns to the theme of trauma from her chapter on Freud to investigate intersections of art, the feminine, and the Holocaust. The

tragic loss of six million lives is felt throughout Part III, and Pollock examines how the trauma of the tragedy also demolished the archive and ruptured any notion of a narrative of modernist progress. As Theodor Adorno did with poetry, Pollock queries whether art is indeed still possible after the Holocaust.

Within Part III, Chapter Five looks at *Life? or Theater?* by Charlotte Salomon (1917-43). She created her series of over 1325 paintings while in exile and hiding during World War II and in them explores existential questions of life and death. As a Jewish woman who died at Auschwitz, Salomon’s history was erased, and Pollock’s aim here is to provide contexts, meanings, and motivations for her as an artist. For this reason, Pollock creates scenarios in which Salomon listened to Walter Benjamin’s Berlin radio broadcasts or met Frida Kahlo while in Paris. Although Pollock recognizes that Salomon’s personal history figures prominently in her narrative, she wants *Life? or Theater?* to be read not exclusively as autobiography, but as a work of art with biographical elements. Pollock balances her emphasis in *Life? or Theater?* between underlying psychological feelings, cultural parallels, and the work of art itself as an artistic idea or artifice.

The final two chapters of *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum* focus on contemporary artists, both of whom epitomize Pollock’s feminist practices. Here, the threads of Pollock’s theories come full circle. Chapter Six, “Graces of Catastrophe,” looks at Bracha Ettinger’s (b. 1951) strategies for art after the Holocaust. Framed by Freud’s notion of trauma in Chapter Three, Pollock discusses Ettinger’s shared cultural trauma learned from parents who escaped the Lodz Ghetto. In Ettinger’s artwork, images of Raphael’s *Three Graces* and family photographs from Lodz are reproduced and blurred almost beyond recognition, as if signaling that these events, ideals of beauty, and ways of seeing are a destroyed thing of the past.

Part IV, “Time and the Mark,” includes just Chapter Seven, “The Time of Drawing: Drawing Time. micro/macro (1998-) by Christine Taylor Patten.” Here, Pollock picks up the themes of time, mod-

ernism, and the body from earlier chapters and examines Patten's work as a successful fulfillment of Pollock's ideals. As abstract drawing, Patten's work fits with Western art traditions in materials and of minimalism (i.e., modernism). At the same time, these drawings are distinguished from a masculinist tradition through sensuous curved lines that imply a feminine presence, as well as in their markings of time.

Pollock organizes the book as if each chapter is a room or an exhibition in the Virtual Feminist Museum. Putting the theories she articulates in the text chapters into practice, several pages of images—which function as the exhibition—precede each chapter's text. Their iconographic similarities include the female nude, the Holocaust, or abstraction. In Chapter Two, "The Grace of Time," the images focus on age and the female body. Reproductions of Antonio Canova's *The Three Graces* (1819), a classical representation of "timeless" youthful beauty, share a room with Camille Claudel's *L'Âge Mûr: Maturity* (1899), a meditation on the aging body, and a Lynda Benglis 1974 photograph, in which the artist has dropped her jeans to expose her back and rear end (28-38). Details of the Canova sculpture viewed from a range of perspectives, and photocopied reproductions with deliberately manipulated contrasts, enable Pollock more readily to present multiple interpretations of the work. Here, Pollock provides space for a female viewer and subjecthood for the woman represented in the image. Her use of manipulated copies destabilizes the aura of the rarified "master" piece.

Another chapter, "Visions of Sex c. 1920," features an exhibition of nine rooms, and a chart within the chapter text leads the reader through the show. As this is a virtual museum, the images can move. To make her introductory and concluding points, for example, Pollock exhibits some of the same O'Keeffe nudes in both the first and last exhibition galleries. Her strategy in "Visions of Sex" is to juxtapose images that appear to objectify—such as the nude photographs of Tina Modotti by Edward Weston and of O'Keeffe by her husband, Alfred

Stieglitz, and of Baker performing her *Danse Sauvage*—with those where the woman has more authorship, as in Modotti's photograph of a working-class mother in Mexico, O'Keeffe's flowers, and Baker stylishly dressed in Paris (90-103). Through these often surprising comparisons, we see the similar struggles in representation these women faced circa 1920, and how each found her unique way to resolve them.

Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum is a significant contribution to feminist art history for how Pollock brings together diverse methodologies and artists. The bases of her methodology, however, are not terribly new. Both Warburg and Freud were writing a century ago, and Pollock acknowledges Michel Foucault's work on the archive as well as John Berger's image chapters in *Ways of Seeing*, both of which were published more than thirty years ago. As Pollock's strategy is to move forward by looking back, to turn tradition on its head by using some of its own methodology, it is justifiable for her to use them—but it does undercut some of her professed radicalism. Some of her subjects, like Charlotte Salomon¹, are beginning to receive significant attention (Pollock's forthcoming book is also on Salomon); others, like Frida Kahlo, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Josephine Baker, are already popular subjects. Pollock dismisses much of the scholarship on these women as reinforcing an exclusively biographical interpretation of their artwork or further promoting an imperialist gaze, but Pollock overlooks some excellent work, especially on Baker.²

Despite Pollock's many qualifiers to the contrary, I still think she constructs a monolithic notion of masculine hegemony as a counterpoint to her Virtual Feminist Museum. Although she does clarify her stance that masculinity and male power are historical constructions, and that masculinity and femininity are not stable categories, in her examples it is overwhelmingly the woman, not the man, who does the changing. Moreover, some of Pollock's statements are so general as to seem to reinforce this monolithic view, such as "[o]ld women represented by men in art are there to terrify us as a *memento mori*"

(47). Also, Pollock does recognize the ever-growing field of Museum Studies, but I wonder if she is also overlooking many artists, philosophers, and curators, including Hans Haacke and Fred Wilson, who have critiqued and destabilized the modernist museum practices, not to mention the modernist museums that have welcomed them. They may not have completely overhauled the modernist museum into a Virtual Feminist Museum, but it is improvement nonetheless.

These criticisms, however, should not detract from my overall appraisal of *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum* as an incredibly ambitious, methodologically complex, and intellectually rich book. Pollock provides us with creative ways to conceptualize the field of art history that have the possibility to transform how we interpret and exhibit images. Threads of Pollock's earlier work are here, in her notions of "difference" and "women's time," for example, but are used here in a way that makes this book distinct in her already extensive body of scholarship. Indeed, with *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum*, it is no wonder why Pollock continues to be one of our great art historians. •

Susan Funkenstein is an associate professor of art history at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside. She has published numerous articles on women in Weimar Germany and is working on a book, *Visualizing Weimar Dance: Gender, Body, Modernity*.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Mary Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint Her Life: Charlotte Salomon in the Nazi Era* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), reviewed by Ruth Weisberg in *WAJ* 17:2 (Fall 1996 – Winter 1997): 51-52.
2. See, for example, Beth Genné, "'Glorifying the American Woman': Josephine Baker and George Balanchine," *Discourses in Dance* 3:1 (Fall 2005): 31-57; Nancy Nenno, "Femininity, the Primitive, and Modern Urban Space: Josephine Baker in Berlin," in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1997), 145-61.

Elsie Driggs: The Quick and the Classical

by Constance Kimmerle
James A. Michener Art Museum and
University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008

Reviewed by Betsy Fahlman

Elsie Driggs has long been well known to Americanists, though her reputation was based largely on just a few works, most notably her stunning canvas, *Pittsburgh* (1927; Fig. 1). The process of reclaiming her work and career began on these pages in 1986 with an article by John Loughery.¹ This was followed in 1990 by an exhibition catalogue authored by Thomas C. Folk which accompanied a show of 59 works organized by the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton.² This handsome new volume by Constance Kimmerle completes the process of fully restoring this talented individual to the chronicle of American art history.

Elsie Driggs's (1898-1992) story is a familiar one. Like so many of her female contemporaries, "Mrs. Gatch" was usually "found" when others came to visit her artist husband, whose career she wholeheartedly supported at the expense of her own.³ Driggs herself would receive little attention until after his death in 1968. Thus the chronicle of her career, which commenced with considerable promise, follows a sadly typical course. When she first approached the Charles Daniel Gallery in 1924, his assistant advised her "not to sign her name" (7) so the owner would not know she was female. But Daniel clearly recognized her talent, and not only included her in group shows but in 1929 gave Driggs her first one-person exhibition.⁴ When her work was purchased by notable modernist collectors, including Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney and Ferdinand Howald, she appeared poised for great success. But with her marriage at the age of thirty-seven in late 1935 to the abstract painter Lee Gatch (1902-68), her gradual erasure from the art world began. The year after they married, the couple settled in Lambertville, New Jersey, a town on the Delaware River across from New Hope, Pennsylvania, the latter the center of an

important colony of Pennsylvania Impressionists. The old three-room stone house on the edge of town that was their home for the next thirty-one years was both isolated and "primitive" (7). When they moved in, it lacked running water, and they carried in buckets from the nearby brook. In winter, Driggs melted snow to wash dishes.

In the first of her two major essays, "'Something in the Air,'" Constance Kimmerle, Curator of Collections at the James A. Michener Art Museum, considers the "ideological and emotional richness" (13) of an artist who, although a modernist, had a deep appreciation for the "structure, order, and simplicity" of the Old Masters whom she copied at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (12). Both the Renaissance painter Piero della Francesca and Post-Impressionist Paul Cézanne remained significant influences, with Piero reinforcing the "fresh and vibrant" classicizing vision of the later French painter (25). The balance Driggs achieved between tradition and modernism she characterized as "the quick and the classical" (13). Shaped by the "awesome dynamic forces" and the "social energies" of the Machine Age (14), her late 1920s works embody the spirit of the era. Fascinated with structure, she found in her art "an instrument of insight and discovery" as well as experimentation (15).

Kimmerle's biographical account, the subject of her second essay titled "Elsie Driggs," places the artist's work and career within a rich period context. Driggs studied at the Art Students League with Robert Henri, George Luks (who sketched her sister Elizabeth), and Maurice Sterne, as well as privately with John Sloan. Driggs's earliest surviving paintings are still lifes dating from her student years. Other women artists portrayed these subjects during this period—Georgia O'Keeffe and Helen Torr are among the most noteworthy—and Driggs's oils, *Leaf Forms* (1918) and *Chou* (1923), as well as several beautiful pastels on paper, *Gloxinia* (1925) and *Cineraria* (c. 1926), compare strongly with those of her contemporaries.

During a three-year period, from 1927 to 1929, she created the six major Precisionist paintings for which she

remains best known: *Pittsburgh*, *Blast Furnaces*, and *Queensborough Bridge* (all 1927), *Aeroplane* and *River Rouge Plant* (both 1928), and *Saint Bartholomew's Church* (1929). During this time she was both closely aligned with a significant period movement and based in New York City, and these works marked a brilliant start to her career. They linked "the sharp-edged simplified qualities of modern industrial forms" with the "architectonic structure and form of classical Renaissance artists" (30). She made exquisite drawings as studies for several of these paintings. The Precisionists favored the unusual beauties of industrial subjects, especially buildings (generally workers are not present and the labor that took place inside did not interest these artists). After Driggs was included in "The Precisionist View in American Art," a 1960 traveling exhibition organized by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, these paintings from the twenties—historically her most important work—were often reproduced in publications and remain her most recognized images.

Driggs's earlier, figurative works include ethereal watercolors of animals and people. Their delicate wobbly lines and loose washes of splotchy pigment, a technique she called "spotting" (29), suggest the earlier vaudeville images of Charles Demuth as well as the rhythms of Paul Klee. Driggs could be a powerful figure painter, and among her portraits dating from the first half of the twenties is one of artist Natalie Van Vleck (1901-1981), a student from Sterne's class who favored masculine clothing.⁵ Her animal paintings are unusual, and works like *The Oxen* (1926) reveal her quirky visual sensibility. Figural pieces such as *The Mob* (c. 1925) and *Riot* (1929) anticipate the social realism prominent in American art during the 1930s.

The Depression was a difficult time for all American artists, and Driggs was no exception (her once wealthy family was bankrupted by the stock market crash). The Daniel Gallery, where she first showed her work in 1924, closed in 1932. She received government support under the New Deal, including a commission for a Post Office mural in Rayville, Louisiana.

Kimmerle's book includes four appendices that enrich the content of her text. The first, "Remembering Elsie," is by Thomas C. Folk, who met the artist in 1985. He commissioned her last two works, *The Javits Center* (1986) and *Hoboken* (1986), and hoped she might complete a third canvas of the Pulaski skyway.

A detailed chronology succinctly presents the major events of the artist's life. Especially helpful is the "Selected Exhibition History and Critical Responses" that lists group and one-person exhibitions, with references to reviews and quotations from them. It is invaluable in charting her reception in the art world, beginning with her debut at the Daniel Gallery in 1924. Her second solo show was at the Rehn Gallery in 1935, followed by a third in 1938. Subsequent reviews were positive, but the record reveals a gradual withdrawal from the art world. A review of her show at the "Artists Gallery" in 1948 identifies her as being the "wife of painter Lee Gatch" (139), and responding to her fourth one-person show at Rehn in 1953, a critic notes her brief return "after some years' absence from the art shows" (139).

In 1923, while she was still a student, Driggs visited Italy, where the work of Piero and other Renaissance artists captured her imagination. This stayed with her, and her essay, "The Search for Piero della Francesca," written in the late 1970s for a class she took at New York University, is reprinted here.

Many women entered the field of illustration, which could be done remotely, but unlike her contemporary Wanda Gág, Driggs did not pursue this field. During the mid-thirties, Driggs made illustrations for a potential children's book about a tiger titled "Benji-Ben-Ali-Bengal." It was never published but the typescript is reproduced, along with one of her brightly colored watercolors.

The text is accompanied by 110 excellent reproductions (77 color and 40 black and white), and the high quality of the color plates reveals the strength of Driggs's talent. Also included are archival photographs, as well as works by her better-known Precisionist contem-



Fig. 1. Elsie Driggs, *Pittsburgh* (1927), oil on canvas, 34 1/4" x 40". Whitney Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, 31.177.

poraries Charles Sheeler and Charles Demuth. A five-page bibliography will guide the interested reader to other sources.

In addition to giving the fullest account of her life and career, one of the most significant contributions of this book is how poignantly it conveys the texture of what Folk characterizes as a "toxic marriage" (130) and the effect this difficult relationship had on Driggs's career, the shocking nature of which was missing from previous accounts. It makes for painful reading to see how, thoroughly isolated from the art world, Driggs falls into a co-dependent pattern imposed by her husband's conflicted nature. Driggs genuinely admired Gatch, regarding him as "one of the greatest artists that ever hit this country" (127). But he had no such respect for her achievements, nor was he sensitive to her needs as an artist.

Negotiating the sexual politics of a dual-artist household challenged many women, forcing them to deflect their ambitions and readjust their goals so as not to compete with their spouses. Driggs subordinated her career to Gatch's, even though hers was launched

first (he did not participate in his first group exhibition until 1928, and had his first solo show in 1932). Gatch took over the only studio on their Lambertville property, and Driggs had no space of her own until the early 1960s, with the result that she gave up the medium of oil in favor of watercolors and collages that could more easily be made on the kitchen table. Such media were well suited for someone for whom time was "shredded" (44). She exhibited only sporadically, and not until 1980, a dozen years after her husband's death, was her work brought forward through the efforts of Martin Diamond Fine Arts with her first significant one-artist show in fifty years.⁶

Loughery had earlier observed that although her "name was out of circulation" for nearly three decades, Driggs "was content," by her own admission, "to work in the privacy of her country home, exhibit at rare intervals, and help her husband achieve some measure of the renown she had enjoyed earlier." Further, she "felt alienated from the ever-changing post-war New York Art world," though this was something felt by both men and women as styles

changed over time. Despite this, Driggs was not bitter, and as Folk recollected, "She did not have a huge ego—she was grounded and down to earth" (127).

Her art career was further truncated because of Gatch's intense professional jealousy and suspicion that the men she encountered in the art world were sexually interested in her. Although they went to the city for his openings, he did not want Driggs to attend her second one-person show in New York in 1938. Thus was a promising career short-circuited.

Children and their care altered the delicate balance of many two-artist households, and the birth of their only child, a daughter, in 1938, placed further burdens on Driggs. In his earlier catalogue, Folk noted that she produced little in the forties and fifties "because the role of wife and mother was so time consuming."⁸ Driggs herself noted with gentle understatement that the birth of her daughter "sort of slowed things up for a while" (48).

Driggs's isolation was not, however, solely the result of their rural residence, even though she characterized their location as being "divorced from everything" (43-44). Despite not living far from the many artists who formed the New Hope art colony, the couple socialized little. Gatch suffered from

depression, unpredictable mood swings, and alcoholism, and while he could be "social and approachable," if he had been drinking heavily, he would become "hostile" to his wife and daughter (130).

After Gatch's death, Driggs sold the Lambertville house and with her daughter moved to New York, where she remained until her own death in 1992 at the age of ninety-three. Reinvigorated, she returned to oils and her work increased in scale. However, it is in her late drawings with collage, such as *Audubon* (c. 1978), *Cobbler* (1979) and *The Red Cabbage* (1980) that the fascinating quirk of her early talent flashes once again.

If her art world presence withered over time, this volume gives ample evidence that her creative spirit did not. Driggs remained "an adventuresome artist who remained open to change," ever alert to "the next turn" (7). Ironically, Gatch's star has faded, and it is Elsie Driggs whose position in the history of American art is finally secure.

Betsy Fahlman is Professor of Art History at Arizona State University. Recent publications include *Chimneys and Towers: Charles Demuth's Late Paintings of Lancaster* (2007) and an article on Muriel Draper in *WAJ* (2005-06).

NOTES

1. See John Loughery, "Blending the Classical and the Modern: The Art of Elsie Driggs," *Woman's Art Journal* 7:2 (Fall 1986/Winter 1987): 22-26.
2. Thomas C. Folk, *Elsie Driggs: A Woman of Genius* (Trenton: New Jersey State Museum, 1990).
3. Her contributions have been written out of her husband's chronicle. See Adelyn D. Breeskin, *Lee Gatch, 1902-1968* (Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971). Her text does not mention that Driggs was also an artist.
4. For more on this important gallery, see Julie Mellby, "A Record of Charles Daniel and the Daniel Gallery" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, Hunter College, 1993). Daniel operated his gallery between 1913 and 1932. Mellby lists shows which include work by Driggs in her appendix, including a number missing from Kimmerle's list (p. 262).
5. For more on Van Vleck, see Marian Wardle, ed., *American Women Modernists: The Legacy of Robert Henri, 1910-1945* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2005), which includes Driggs, also a student of Henri.
6. There was a small show at La Boetie in New York in 1971.
7. Loughery, "Blending the Classical and the Modern," 25.
8. Folk, *Elsie Driggs: A Woman of Genius*, 37.

Frida Kahlo: The Still Lives

by Salomon Grimberg
Merrell, 2008

Frida Kahlo: Song of Herself

by Salomon Grimberg
Merrell, 2008

Reviewed by Lynda Hoffman-Jeep

The ongoing adventure of appreciating and understanding the life and work of Frida Kahlo continues. Two companion volumes by Salomon Grimberg delve into Kahlo's complex persona and creativity from new perspectives. The renowned Kahlo scholar Hayden Herrera, whose *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo* (1983) introduced the Mexican artist to the world, prefaces both books with praise for

Grimberg's creative scholarly imagination, calling the results "a refreshing kind of art history" (*Still Lives* 9, hereafter *SL*).

Herrera's and most other biographical accounts focus primarily on Kahlo's eighty-plus self-portraits, which illustrate significant events in her life, beginning with her birth, continuing with the accident in adolescence that caused her damaged body to suffer multiple maladies thereafter, her barrenness, and her chaotic relationship with her husband, the muralist Diego Rivera. Because, as Grimberg says, her "still lives are as reflective of her internal reality as are her self-portraits," *The Still Lives* can be read as a non-traditional biography of Kahlo (*SL* 11). According to Grimberg, a practicing child psychiatrist as well as a leading Kahlo expert,¹ we learn that her

self-portraits "project how she wanted to be seen and remembered," while her still lives refer to private musings, events, reactions, or intimate thoughts about herself as well as about others that she had no desire to explain or share but kept to herself (*SL* 12). Kahlo's lifelong insecurities become the point of departure for this study.

The Still Lives text developed out of a comment the artist made late in life to her lover Josep Bartolf: "I paint flowers so they will not die" (*SL* 11). Grimberg explains how this statement reveals a form of separation anxiety that permeated her life, beginning in infancy, providing examples he finds in each of her still lives. He illuminates layers of artistic, psychological, and cultural complexity in the meaning that still lives

had in her life. Kahlo learned about still life painting from Rivera but redirected the traditional references about the brevity of those things, both human and material, that nurtured her. She made flower and fruit arrangements for her home, and sometimes placed flowers in her hair to mirror flowers in a vase. When her friend and fellow artist Juan O'Gorman asked her how she wanted him to paint her, she replied "Paint me flying", and he did, as a butterfly suspended above a bouquet of eternal flowers (SL 84-85).

It is likely that this aspect of Kahlo's artistic production was disregarded because the subjects appeared as simple compositions of flowers or fruit; but they are significant as she created some forty works, about half the number of self-portraits, and more than any other subject. In *The Still Lives*, we learn that Kahlo's earliest paintings were still lifes, and that she painted still lifes during what Grimberg calls "two regressive periods": 1937-38, after her separation from Rivera over his affair with Kahlo's sister; and 1951-1954, following the completion of her last self-portrait—the *Self-Portrait and Portrait of Doctor Farill*—as her health worsened (SL 49).

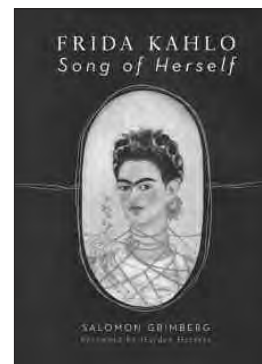
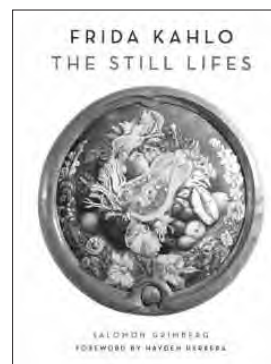
Quoting from newly uncovered sources and interviews with Kahlo confidants, and examining personal events that took place at the time she produced each work, Grimberg interprets every documented work, excavating for its underlying meaning and thereby offering new insights into Kahlo's attitudes about her life and herself. *The Still Lives* begins with a historical discussion of the genre, including its "New World" iterations. The author proceeds chronologically, beginning with Kahlo's first formal still life (1924), a tray she decorated with "withering pink roses," a gift for her maternal aunt Anita (SL 18). Grimberg takes a multi-disciplinary approach in discussing the still lifes and Kahlo's other paintings with still life elements up to the first concentrated phase of still lifes in 1937. He incorporates art-historical, Mexican folk-cultural, biographical, indigenous, linguistic, religious, floricultural as well as inter-textual explanations and interpretations of the works. Throughout the discussions of individual works, the

author demonstrates the many ways in which Kahlo's still lifes "read like pages in a diary" in which she uses objects "intentionally arranged to represent a personal situation" (SL 22).

For example, Grimberg presents the still life *Tunas, Prickly Pears* (c.1937-38), which Kahlo painted during her reconciliation with Rivera following their first separation, as the companion to *Memory* (1937). In the latter painting, a self-portrait, Kahlo portrays herself with a spear stuck in the region of the heart, while her eviscerated, oversize heart lies beside her in a pool of blood. Similarly, in *Tunas*, Kahlo portrays a blood-red prickly pear (which in pre-Columbian times was described as the heart of sacrificial victims) with its center pierced, creating a bloody vision of a damaged heart. Grimberg relates both images to Kahlo's description of her husband in her "Portrait of Rivera" essay (1949), using the same colors she had used earlier to paint the three *tunas*. In contrast to such Rivera-centered works stands the x-rated still life *Xochitl*, painted at the height of her ten-year affair with the Hungarian photographer Nickolas Muray. *Xochitl*, which was Muray's nickname for Kahlo, in the Aztec language means "flower" as well as "something delicate." Additional, relevant details include the ancient iconographic source and the association with the slang expression *coger flores*, meaning to deflower or to ask for sexual favors (SL 52, 55).

Kahlo created a cluster of exceptional still lifes inspired by her friendship with Jacqueline Lamba, the wife of André Breton. The couple first visited Kahlo and Rivera in Mexico in 1938. At the end of their four-month stay, one of the going-away gifts that Kahlo presented to Lamba was *Self Portrait (Miniature)* (1938) (on the cover of *Song of Herself*), containing "a coded message" (57). Grimberg explains:

Strings tied around Kahlo's neck pull at her every which way, suggesting that she ...is helpless, subject to the whims of external forces. Kahlo associates her predicament [sadness at Lamba's



departure] with the imminent death of the out-of-place, budding plant [like Kahlo], which, tied to one of the strings, is uprooted and separated from its source of nourishment [Lamba] (SL 57).

Lamba is also the subject of *The Bride That Becomes Frightened When She sees Life Open* (1943), the still life in which a doll dressed as a bride peeks from behind aggressively cut watermelons. The subject, Grimberg explains, refers to Lamba's predicament over divorcing Breton to marry the American sculptor David Hare. Kahlo painted it while waiting for Lamba to visit her in Mexico, later writing to Lamba, "you are the doll dressed as a bride"; to illustrate, a corresponding photograph shows Lamba coiffed and dressed like the doll which appears in the painting (SL 87). During her friend's seven-month visit, Kahlo bonded deeply with Lamba and her daughter, Aube, and their departure in December 1944 inspired Kahlo's haunting still life *Magnolias* (1945). A photo shows Lamba in Kahlo's garden with a magnolia blossom, and Grimberg suggests Kahlo was reflecting on their friendship and the predicament of women whose only currency for acceptance is their beauty, which disappears as readily as that of a flower (SL 94). In *The Chick* (1945), Kahlo captures the tension and humiliation of an episode in which Lamba and Aube (the chick) were stopped at the U.S. border on their way home and prevented for many days from entering the country. The discussion of each painting is accompanied by relevant details, many revealed for the first time, as well as photographs that further clarify the still life subject.

Among the many other fascinating still lifes from the 1940s discussed in detail are two tondi that treat the Renaissance theme of the dawn and dusk of life. One of these, the untitled still life on the book's cover, was commissioned by the wife of the president of Mexico but then rejected as "indecent" (SL 82). *Sun and Life* (1947), another important work personalized Kahlo's studies of Freud and Egypt in a complex composition that refers back to Renaissance iconology (SL 99-102).

Kahlo's last still lifes, those completed between 1950 and 1954, "communicate her growing neediness, emotional hunger, and acknowledgment of the inevitable passage of time," Grimberg writes (102-03). The artist's "dark sense of humor" (SL 108) reveals itself in some of these works in Kahlo's clever inversion of traditional ekphrasis: she takes linguistic cues and translates them into visual puns. We find her use of inverted ekphrasis in *Lágrimas de coco* (*Coconut Tears*) (1951), in which a tearful coconut weeps "crocodile tears" (*lágrimas de cocodrilo*). The last phase of her work is also imbued with verbal references of varying kinds, as for example *Fruit of Life/Luz* (1953), which Grimberg masterfully interprets as revealing the artist's will to live (SL 130-31). Moreover, her references here to William Blake are both surprising and profound (SL 128-39). In her growing need to conquer death, Kahlo created a complex visual world abounding with life. Her last autographed painting, a still life of watermelons signed one month before her death, is a celebration of life, as she inscribes "*Viva la Vida*" above her signature. Despite her will, the last works are marked by a consistent declining trajectory that mirrors the crises in her emotional and physical health.

Following her death, her still-lives lived on through Rivera and Josep Bartolí's inter-textual responses to her work: Rivera's own last autographed work was a still life with watermelons, and Bartolí drew a portrait of Kahlo walking away from the sea toward a still life of fruit.

In *Frida Kahlo: Song of Herself*, a psycho-

biography, Grimberg continues excavating the intimate visual-verbal dimension of Kahlo and her work. Hayden Herrera writes that "[t]he documents introduced by Salomon Grimberg in *Frida Kahlo Song of Herself* are a breath of fresh air....From them we come close to knowing what it would be like to be a friend of Kahlo's" (*Song of Herself* 11, hereafter *Song*). In his essay on Kahlo, Grimberg speaks of her sense of loss and emptiness, her constant self-invention and need to hold the attention of others. In her efforts to be lovable, he says, Kahlo had to sacrifice "her true self to a mask" (*Song* 21).

Song of Herself may be the first psychobiography of an artist written with her full cooperation.² Olga Campos, a good friend and a regular visitor to the Kahlo-Rivera household, was studying psychology at Mexico's prestigious Universidad Autónoma de México when she began writing a book. She intended to interview several artists about their life and work and apply psychological tests to them. Her objective was to shed light on their creative process. Campos began her interviews at Kahlo's bedside, following a suicide attempt in 1949. The material on the other artists was not completed, and Kahlo's interview (completed in 1950) was stored for some forty years when Campos asked Grimberg to edit and publish her notes.

Grimberg's introductory essay, "With the Image from the Mirror," interprets Kahlo's life from the psychoanalytic perspective of early child development, explaining her obsession with mirrors as inability to sustain a sense of self, making her endlessly hungry for the acknowledgment of others. Campos's essay, "My Memory of Frida" (1991), narrates her friendship with Kahlo and Rivera and how she gathered the information presented in the book. Each section of her interview (e.g., *My Life, My Painting, My Parents, My Body, Friendship, Children, Animals, Food, Love, Sex*) is accompanied by related paintings and previously unseen or little-known drawings, photographs, or non-objective compositions Campos solicited from Kahlo to express emotionally charged words such as hate, pain, love.

Next, James Bridger Harris, PsyD., a specialist in psychological assessment,

interprets Campos's materials, which include a clinical interview, Rorschach Inkblot Test, Thematic Apperception Test, Bleuler-Jung (Word Association) Test and Szondi Test. Dr. Bridger Harris's contribution is beautifully written. For example, the pearl metaphor he uses to summarize Kahlo's profile is especially poignant: "Kahlo had exceptional talent, intelligence, and beauty but did not have a sense of any of these attributes. This is akin to having a handful of pearls but not being able to wear them, since the string that might hold them together is unavailable" (*Song* 132-33). In the end he provides a summary report that diagnoses Kahlo as suffering from "dysthymia (a chronic disquiet) with overlays of major depression and chronic pain syndrome, and with substance abuse in a narcissistic personality. Deficits in self-concepts and self-integration underlie a central conflict between fears of autonomy and fears of abandonment" (*Song* 149).

Finally a medical history of Kahlo compiled by the German obstetrician-gynecologist Dr. Henriette Begun in 1946 gives us a concise overview of Kahlo's difficult medical odyssey. Taken together, the psychological profile and medical history confirm many conjectures that have been made about Kahlo's psychophysical challenges and motivations over the years and open new doors for re-examinations of her oeuvre.

With these lavishly illustrated and meticulously researched studies, Salomon Grimberg has brought us much further in our understanding and appreciation of Frida Kahlo. By covering new ground and providing fresh ideas and a wealth of new sources, he invites renewed looking and pondering for scholars and interested Kahlo fans alike. •

Lynda Hoffman-Jeep is an independent scholar, based in Cincinnati, where she teaches German, Spanish and American Women's History at Ursuline Academy.

NOTES

1. The author's numerous publications on Kahlo begin with his co-authorship of the seminal catalogue raisonné, *Frida Kahlo: Das Gesamtwerk*, eds Helga Prignitz-

Poda, Salomon Grimberg, and Andrea Kettenmann (Frankfurt am Main: Neue Kritik, 1988). He wrote on Kahlo's still lifes in *WAJ* vol. 25, no. 2 (Fall 2004-Winter 2005): 25-30.

2. Sigmund Freud's *A Childhood Reminiscence of Leonardo da Vinci* (1916) was an attempt at explaining the artist's personality through psychoanalytic concepts. Although much has been written on this study, critics

have noted that attempting to psychoanalyze an artist and his or her work, without adequate information or qualifications, makes the study invalid.

Cecilia Beaux: American Figure Painter

by Sylvia Yount, Nina Auerbach,
Mark Bockrath, Kevin Sharp,
Alison Bechtel Wexler
High Museum of Art and
University of California Press, 2007

Reviewed by Jennifer Zarro

In 1899, William Merritt Chase called Cecilia Beaux "not only the greatest living woman painter, but the best that ever lived" (11). By the end of Beaux's (1855-1942) life, however, the art world had little patience for Academic-style society portraits, and ever since, many reasons have been put forth to explain the lack of attention to Beaux's art and history-making life. The feminist movement of the 1970s brought some renewed interest in Beaux's paintings, and more recently, with a major traveling exhibition¹ and accompanying catalogue, curator Sylvia Yount and others have attempted to solidify a place for Beaux in the history of American art.

"Cecilia Beaux: American Figure Painter" was the first exhibition of Beaux's work in thirty years. The show completed its tour in the spring of 2008 at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), where the Philadelphia-born Beaux exhibited her paintings and made history in 1895 as the first female art school instructor in the United States. As reflected in the catalogue, the exhibition was hung chronologically, beginning with early works, including a lovely small oil of Beaux and her sister as children, *Aimée Ernesta* and *Cecilia Beaux* (early 1880s), and *Les Derniers jours d'enfance* (The last days of infancy) (1885). Beaux's many commissioned portraits, which make up the majority of the exhibition, underscore her popularity with the social elite who wished to have themselves immortalized. The exhibition and catalogue succeed in

concentrating on Beaux's work as an artist, and on the paintings themselves. As with many women artists, a critical reading of her work has typically received less attention than her personal and family life and her relationships with contemporaries (12). Although the artist made the occasional still-life and some small landscapes, it is Beaux's incredible prowess as a portraitist—the most economically rewarding genre for women at the end of the nineteenth-century—that is foregrounded.

The lead essay in the catalogue, by Sylvia Yount, discusses the arc of Beaux's art and life. She concludes that the artist was a "study in contrasts" (19), and that her portraits blurred the line between traditional portraiture and the more esteemed genre of figure painting. Many of Beaux's portraits can be read as allegory: not only do they communicate a likeness of the sitter, they encompass the larger meanings and tensions one finds by contemplating changes in life cycles, or class and gender issues. Yount's essay beautifully interweaves Beaux's personal life and achievements with a reading of the paintings, taking care to avoid the trap of overemphasizing biography over an assessment of the artist's influences (12-13). That said, by titling her essay "Family Pictures" she does not ignore the artist's biography in discussing her many portraits of family members. Yount considers Beaux's entire oeuvre, which consistently shows the "people, places, and things that made up the artist's world," as "family pictures" (12).

Cecilia Beaux was a singularly successful woman in a decidedly man's world—a female portrait painter of high regard competing from Philadelphia with international stars such as John Singer Sargent, Whistler, and Anders Zorn. Catalogue essayist Kevin Sharp, writing about the rise of portraiture in the 1890s, notes that Philadelphia's top artist, Thomas Eakins, was distrusted by polite

society (he apparently removed the loincloth of a male model in an anatomy class attended by women), leading those who wished for a more refined painter to find one in Cecilia Beaux.

By 1892 Beaux was at the height of her powers; she recently had returned from studying in Europe, and news of her success in New York with the portrait of her nephew, *Cecil Kent Drinker* (1891; Fig. 1), had reached her home city. The influence of Whistler is clear in the early compositions. In *Les derniers jours d'enfance*, Beaux's sister Etta's pose is reminiscent of Whistler's mother, and in his portrait, young Cecil's pose, cane, fancy dress, and the picture's dark background position this work alongside the best examples of fin-de-siècle portraits of dandies. A modern picture for the times, it underscores the child's discomfort posed in his Regency-revival coachman's coat. These paintings illustrate how portraiture communicated universal information about interpersonal relationships, societal pressures, costume, and class and gender expectations. Sharp notes that at the end of the nineteenth century any concept of conventional portrait painting ceased, so that while Cecilia Beaux embraced traditional portraiture, she imbued it with deeper meaning and personal interests.

In her catalogue essay, "The Queen Stands Alone," Nina Auerbach attributes some aspects of Beaux's works to her unusual upbringing. After Beaux's mother died, her father returned to his native France, and Cecilia and her sister Aimée Ernesta (called Etta) lived with their grandfather's family. When she was about thirteen, her aunts Eliza and Emily Leavitt started taking Cecilia to the PAFA and other local galleries. Auerbach reads Beaux's portraits as containing within them a certain distance; she notes that Beaux's subjects are difficult to know. She writes, "It is



Fig. 1. Cecilia Beaux, *Cecil Kent Drinker* (1891), oil on canvas, 64" x 34 1/2". Philadelphia Museum of Art. Purchased with the Joseph E. Temple Fund.

easy, if possibly facile, to diagnose the distance that characterizes these portraits by recalling that Beaux's own mother died twelve days after her birth" (81). Auerbach proposes that the "strangeness" she finds within Beaux's paintings, and between the paintings and viewers, results from "a self-sufficiency that may trouble stereotypes but without which we would have feebler art and drearier lives," and "pride that energizes Beaux's subjects [and] was the heart of her work" (81). It may be too easy to read her pictures in light of her history, but this knowledge lends a depth to viewing her work. For instance, *Aimée Ernesta and Cecilia Beaux*, based on a photograph, seems much more moving in light of their mother's death and their father's departure. The small painting is a closely cropped, bust-length double portrait of the sisters. Alone together, they are the very young survivors of a broken family unit.

Generally, in her paintings of children Beaux captures their loveliness and youth as well as their discomforts and squirminess. Considering the artist's

personal story as it relates to her numerous paintings of children, Yount notes that contemporary critics thought women were better than men at painting children. Beaux, a motherless child herself and with no children of her own, enjoyed great closeness with her sister's family. About Beaux's striking paintings of children and mothers, Yount concludes that perhaps her "personal history predisposed her to such imagery" (25).

Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), Beaux's contemporary who also painted mothers and children, did attain prominence as an artist who more clearly embraced the "new" anti-academic style. We learn from essayist Kevin Sharp, however, that the genre of portraiture, since Manet and the Impressionists, had become a modern art form that allowed artists to paint their own lives, interests, and societal mores into pictures of others.

That Beaux's paintings show an interest in contemporary trends and styles in art is confirmed by her framing choices. In his essay *Framing Beaux*, Mark Bockrath writes about the effects of picture frames on a work of art. The mid-nineteenth century was a time when artists were designing their own frames in an effort to extend the aesthetic vision out into three-dimensional space. We learn from Bockrath, the former chief conservator at the PAFA, that Beaux carefully considered her frames and kept up to date on the latest framing trends. She embraced the contemporary influences of the Aesthetic and the Arts and Crafts Movements as well as various revival style frames that were popularized by Sargent. Beaux was a stylish painter whose work and presentation of her paintings revealed her interest in contemporary portraiture of the time.

Beaux found her niche in the world of society portraits. Her success can be measured by eighty-plus paintings in the exhibition and catalogue. Yount notes that there was a measure of antagonism between Cassatt and Beaux during their lifetime (both Philadelphia-born, the two often drew comparisons), and it was Cassatt who received the lasting critical attention and entered the art history surveys. Yount notes that art history is still trying to figure out what to do with academic painters.

In her powerful essay, Auerbach suggests that Cassatt may have greater staying power in the canon of women artists because her paintings contain more stereotypically female traits. Cassatt's children squirm against mothers whose bodies give way and encompass them. Beaux's children, on the other hand, quietly scrutinize viewers from the canvas, and there are no soft, yielding and encompassing women. Cassatt's mothers are one with their children and the domestic objects in the room, while Beaux's work reinforces boundaries between people and objects. Cassatt's mothers and children often fit together like puzzle pieces; Beaux's figures have distinct edges and shapes. This explanation takes into account sexist modes of categorizing art based on the extent to which an artist fits into or confirms prescribed gender roles. Attacking these sexist ideologies, Auerbach makes a strong case that it was Beaux's independence and pride that supported her talent and catapulted her to success. Sexism may have played a role in Beaux's (and other women artists') not receiving due attention; but more likely, the teleological teaching of art history allows little room for alternate—in this case Academic—examples in its march toward modernism. Beaux did not attach herself to any master or school; she was proud of her singularity. Neither did she have any prominent mentees or disciples to secure her reputation. Auerbach considers all of these possible reasons why Beaux's reputation has diminished from the soaring success during her lifetime. Finally, she concludes that Beaux's "self-sufficiency... may trouble stereotypes" (81), and that her pride did not allow her to enjoy success under the "umbrella of Impressionism" (82), which made Cassatt a star. She writes that for Beaux, "alliances were demeaning," and concludes that she was proudest of "belonging to no one" (82).

Writing that Beaux was not just a portraitist, but a painter who explored "the line between portraiture and figure painting," Sylvia Yount attempts to "complicate the standard reading of Beaux as a leading society portraitist" (12). This, Yount believes, allowed her to compete

and produce in a larger sphere. Similar in class and culture to her sitters, Beaux may have found success with her portraits because of these commonalities. She herself wrote that portrait painting was the “most ideal occupation in existence” (32), and she was working in the genre during a moment in American history when “the public fascination was as insatiable as the American desire to be portrayed” (67). As Kevin Sharp notes, not only were wealthy Americans having themselves painted, but they were also buying Old Master portraits, as if trying to surround themselves with ancestors they wished they had. Sharp suggests that because of her profession’s popularity and ability to provide her with a good living, Beaux could not afford to indulge in experiments in style,

even toward the end of her career when abstraction became popular. And for all of its supremacy in the 1880s and 1890s, the popularity of portraiture did eventually wane, and society portraits may have become what Auerbach calls “embarrassing reminders of a spoiled past” (79).

With the current renewed interest in historical American painting, and the importance of portraiture in contemporary art, now perhaps, writes Yount, is the time for a “fresh appraisal” of Beaux (46). This exhibition and catalogue do much to help this process along. Besides the five well-documented and abundantly illustrated essays discussed here, a large section of color plates, most full-page, of works in the exhibition illustrate well-known and little-seen works by the artist.

A detailed chronology of Beaux’s long and productive life compiled by Alison Bechtel Wexler and including numerous photographs is complemented by a bibliography and index.

Jennifer Zarro is an independent art historian, based in Philadelphia, where she teaches Modern Art and writes art criticism. ●

NOTES

1. The show opened at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta (May 12 – Sept. 9, 2007), went to the Tacoma Art Museum, Washington (Sept. 29, 2007 – Jan. 6, 2008), and closed at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia (Feb. 2 – April 13, 2008).

The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France, 1814-1914

by Tamar Garb
Yale University Press, 2007

The Body in Time: Figures of Femininity in Late Nineteenth-Century France

by Tamar Garb
University of Washington Press and
Spencer Museum of Art, 2008

Reviewed by Temma Balducci

Showcasing Tamar Garb’s continuing interest in representations of gender in nineteenth-century French visual culture, *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France, 1814-1914*, and *The Body in Time: Figures of Femininity in Late Nineteenth-Century France*, focus on well-known portraits, offering informative recapitulations of past scholarship while positing fresh connections between the works and their historical period.¹

On the issue at the heart of Garb’s enterprise—femininity and representation—however, the book is less successful in large part because she employs a monolithic reading of femininity to interrogate portraits that span the nineteenth century. For example, late-nineteenth-century portraits by artists such as Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) are seen to inade-

quately represent femininity when measured against the alluring and seductive portraits by Ingres from half a century earlier. While Garb details changing representational strategies in relation to portraiture, she does not adequately acknowledge how understandings of femininity shifted throughout the century, and, thus, I believe she misses an opportunity to consider the development of modern female portraiture in France through the lens of revisionist scholarship on gender.

Garb divides her discussion of female portraiture in *The Painted Face* into six chapters, arranged chronologically, each of which takes as its frame of reference a portrait by a canonical artist: Ingres, Manet, Cassatt, Cézanne, Picasso, and Matisse. She employs a vast array of materials and sources in her wide-ranging discussion, including exhibition reviews, journals, letters, and advertisements. Her methodology is equally varied depending on the image(s) under discussion and the requirements of her argument: psychoanalysis, feminism, social art history, semiotics, and formalism. Garb states in the acknowledgements that she chose the six paintings with no consideration in mind other than her own tastes, rather than conforming to “political, intellectual or historical criteria or pre-conceived notions of coverage” (ix), and it is this statement that sets up some of the problems for the text. Though

asserting that she is not writing a history of female portraiture—and, indeed, six random and highly selective portraits do not make a history—Garb does attempt, in the introduction, to position paintings of women within the framework of the metaphorical relationship between make-up and oil paint that existed in Europe since the seventeenth century. She claims that as early as the eighteenth century the artificiality and seductiveness of makeup and oil paint are especially significant in regard to female portraiture. By the nineteenth century, she claims, “the scene of make-up became a crucial site for a painterly meditation on the nature of the medium” (8-9), and “the link between personal adornment and painterly effect was regarded as a worthy subject for art and Woman was, by now, its widely accepted avatar” (9). Further she posits that this “seamless fit between medium and matter” collapsed at the beginning of the twentieth century with artists such as Matisse and Picasso (9). Garb lays out her thesis concerning these ties between makeup, paint, and femininity with carefully chosen images that underscore her argument very explicitly, particularly in the case of representations of women at their toilette. Notably, however, though the book’s title suggests a focus on portraiture, most of the paintings she discusses in the introduction are not portraits, and her attempts to connect make-up, paint, and femininity are less effective



Fig. 1. Mary Cassatt, *Mrs. R. S. Cassatt* (c. 1889), oil on canvas, 38" x 27". Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco.

in the chapters that follow where the topic of makeup is rarely addressed.

Chapter 1, "Fictions of Femininity in the Case of Ingres's Portrait of Madame de Senonnes," begins with a discussion of Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Oval Portrait," which literalizes the link between paint and femininity/female body. In the story, a deranged artist becomes so absorbed in making a lifelike portrait of his wife that he does not notice her death. The gruesome result of his having depicted her through the media of her blood and decaying skin is a disturbingly lifelike representation. Ingres's own paint application has also been seen as having lifelike qualities—so much so that viewers of the painting have been guilty of "slippage between actual woman and portrait image" (34)—suggestive of the connection between paint, makeup, and femininity that Garb underscores in her introduction. She discusses how Ingres's painting (made between 1813 and 1815 but little known until 1853) has been admired for its seductive address (again paint and woman are conflated here) and was also the subject of much theorizing regarding the sitter's identity and nationality. Garb concludes that (male) artists, in fusing paint and

Woman, idealizing their artificiality, and underscoring their seductive qualities, have done little more than serve "fantasies of successive viewing communities as a narrative spur" (57). This chapter is arguably the most important and successful. Ingres's portrait of Mme de Senonnes (and more specifically Ingres's representation of an alluring femininity) becomes the linchpin of Garb's argument, the portrait against which the others are, at least tacitly, measured. Again, however, Garb's notion that in such portraits makeup was "a crucial site for painterly meditations on the nature of medium" is not supported going forward.

In the second chapter, "Framing Femininity in Manet's *Portrait of Mlle E.G.*," Garb focuses on the portrait of Eva Gonzalez exhibited at the Salon of 1870, calling it the "antithesis ... of an 'Ingresque' homage to a beautiful sitter" (59) and a focal point for derision by salon-goers. This canvas, produced by the artist who painted *Olympia*, failed to meet the standards for society portraiture in its lack of idealization (Garb contrasts it in this respect to Carolus-Duran's 1870 portrait of *Mme Ernest Feydeau*) and its improper depiction of the sitter's upper arms. As a portrait of a female artist at work, it was seen as equally unsuccessful because the sitter's clothing and posture were unconvincing for that role. Thus, Manet's portrait of Gonzalez is discussed in the context of its failure to adequately/readably capture femininity in ways that could be understood by contemporaries. In the end, Garb argues that the portrait of Gonzales can be more believably read as a "portrait" of Manet, given the several elements in the painting that reference him: his characteristic brushstrokes, the depicted items that could have been found in his studio, and the easel that showcases one of his typical subjects. There is no discussion in the chapter of the relation between paint/makeup/femininity, seamless or otherwise.

In the third chapter, "Blank Mourning, Portraiture and Separation," Garb looks at Cassatt's image(s) of her mother, particularly *Mrs. R. S. Cassatt*, (c. 1889; Fig. 1) and, to a lesser extent, *Reading 'Le*

Figaro' (1878). Here Garb relies on psychoanalysis to explore Cassatt's evolving relationship with her mother and the influence on both women of the death of Cassatt's sister, Lydia. The lack of finish in *Mrs. R.S. Cassatt* is read as evidence of Cassatt's identification with her mother's depression over her daughter's death and her own aging, so that Cassatt "can neither resolve her feelings nor finish her work" (137). The topic of makeup is again largely absent from this chapter, except where it is cursorily mentioned in connection to Manet's *Woman Reading* (1878-79). As with the portrait of Gonzales in the previous chapter, Garb makes a point of noting that the depiction of Cassatt's mother "makes no concessions to the aesthetics of seduction that was typical of female portraiture of the period" (128). Lacking here, however, are any examples of "typical" female portraits of the period with which to contrast the painting.

"Touching Sexual Difference: *Madame Cézanne in a Red Dress*," the fourth chapter, contains Garb's discussion of Cézanne's many images of his wife, Hortense Fiquet, in which the artist explores the "portrait as pure presence" (139). The reader is apprised that such a project does not require "traditional demands for superficial likeness, psychological insight or seductive address" (139) (so we are forewarned that there will again be scant discussion of makeup). Garb instead attributes a great deal of significance to Fiquet's hands in *Red Dress* (1893-95). Their position in her lap, along with her posture, are crucial to Garb's psychoanalytic reading, as they are seen to register Cézanne's anxiety by furnishing her an "erect posture and miniature penis as if to stave off the fear that her castration (and difference) provoked" (177). Her hands also become a vehicle for Garb's in-depth discussion of Cézanne's painting practice, particularly his efforts to break down subject/object distinctions, which he once attempted to describe in a conversation with Joachim Gasquet through the use of hand gestures (142-44).

Garb does spend quite a bit of time on Cézanne's paint application in relation to femininity and sexuality (without mention of makeup). She argues that in the nineteenth century paint "infused

the surface of the picture itself with the erotic power of female flesh. Never had touch, sexuality and painting been so intimately intertwined" (145). As a portrait, however, she suggests that "Cézanne's image of his wife seduces (if it seduces at all) by other means than those conventionally assigned to female portraiture" (157-58). Thus, again, the femininity of Hortense Fiquet (like that of Gonzalez and Cassatt's mother) is not "securely established" and the painting is "devoid of the artifice and adornment culturally associated with the feminine and repeatedly enshrined in portrait practice" (167-69). On the topic of makeup, she says that Fiquet's "painted face refuses its traditional association with boudoir Beauty and revels in the disjunction between paint and flesh that so much nineteenth-century female portraiture had sought to occlude" (169). At this point in her narrative, however, Garb's only example of this supposed widespread occlusion remains Ingres's portrait of Mme de Senonnes, underscoring her assumption of a femininity that is valid across the entire century. Garb does not acknowledge that Cézanne's image could be seen as something more than an exception to a rule, but as actively constructive of femininity. This would have made a far more compelling argument.

In Chapter 5, "The Portrait in Pieces: Cubism's Corpse," Garb discusses Picasso's *Ma Jolie* (1912-14) and, to a lesser extent, *Female Nude: J'aime Eva* (1912). Here her attention turns to how the traditional eroticism of female portraiture—as posited by herself—is displaced from the female body to language. The words found on the painted surfaces of these images compensate, she claims, for the "dispersal of decathected body parts . . . Language here, instead of marking the death knell of figuration, functions to compensate for loss by offering a sonic invocation of the loved one" (209). Further, she says, "Language substitutes for the tangibility of the integral figure, traditional repository of fantasy, and injects a libidinal energy into the scene of representation itself" (188). So, while traditional "female portraiture was meant to animate the sitter and placate the viewer" (208), images such as *Female Nude* "test

the limits of individual inscription and abstracted generality while placing language at the erotic core of representation" (184). As with the other images she discusses, these offer "no overt sensual gratification of the type that audiences had come to expect from painted portrayals of the beloved" (181). In fact, as she points out, they are hardly portraits in any conventional sense, and her discussion in this chapter focuses more on the abandonment of realism and mimeticism by Cubist artists generally rather than on portraits of women *qua* women. Her statement that "portraiture would never be the same" after Picasso and Cubism had deconstructed it and that both portraiture and the "rigid gender roles" of the nineteenth century (which are never defined) became permeable rather than fixed (201) is problematic, given that none of the images in the previous three chapters, according to her argument, conformed to conventional understandings of femininity either.

In her final chapter, "The Lost Subject of Portraiture: Matisse's *Portrait* of 1913," Garb discusses the ways in which this work questions portraiture as a genre. The lack of a named sitter (in this case, the artist's wife) suggests a portrait of a genre rather than of a person. Garb spends much time reviewing the varied reactions to the painting when it was exhibited at the 1913 Salon d'Automne, when the "discourse of the lover was still the dominant mode through which female portraiture was absorbed" (231). She ties the canvas back to *Mona Lisa*, which was stolen from the Louvre around this time. These two events—the theft and the exhibition of Matisse's painting—are read as symbols of the "ultimate irrecoverability" of portraiture/femininity (246). Matisse's painting is not "alluring" in any traditional sense; its "voluptuousness" is "pictorial rather than carnal" (230). The canvas, writes Garb, is a "consummate rejection both of the mimetic task of portraiture and its conventional image of a seductive femininity" (211).

The topic of makeup resurfaces in this chapter as Garb describes the mask-like face of Matisse's sitter:

The mobilization of the mask as a substitute for the face ... does not

so much suggest the made-up face of the *Parisienne*, with her rouged lips and powdered cheeks—both well-trodden pictorial tropes in which the exotic and the erotic are inscribed on the surface as artifice—but rather it invokes an evacuated subjectivity, drained of vitality and strength (242).

The connection between paint, makeup, and femininity is more forceful in her brief discussion of Matisse's *The Red Madras Headdress* (1907):

Made up in paint ... the eyes are drawn in kohl, the lower lashes blackened with mascara, the red lips brushed into the face, the cheeks smeared with rouge.... Veiled rather than revealing, a mask of *maquillage* seems to conceal the model's face and inscribe her identity as "skin-deep": conceived as a surface saturated with sexuality but devoid of specificity or profundity ... [the face] seemed to proffer a subject in disguise, clad in an exotic Indian headscarf and covered in garish make-up, a "painted woman," artificially put together like the practice of painting itself (241-42).

Given that Garb begins and ends the book by highlighting this connection, one suspects that this is the argument she wanted to make all along, but that there was a disconnect between the images and portraits she chose based on preference, and the history she wanted to write about makeup, paint, and female portraiture. If she had adhered to her original intention, as stated in her acknowledgements, not to write a history of female portraiture and to let each essay stand on its own, her arguments would have been more successful.

In addition to Garb's focus on paintings that undermine the argument laid out in the introduction and her insistence on a monolithic femininity, Garb's problems in addressing gender continue with her strict and conventional distinctions between masculinity and femininity and how these are manifest in

visual culture. She states, for example, that the frontal address of women in portraiture “produced a mirror-like surface for the staging of a female subject whose decorative veneer provided an analogue for the seductive attractions of painting itself, while her body was imagined as an interlocutor or addressee for the admiring spectator” (12). Perhaps. But considering that portraits of men also are oriented to face the viewer, would Garb say similar things about the seductiveness and spectacle of men represented in portraits? I suspect not.

Also vexing with regard to questions of gender are Garb’s continued assumptions about interiors and their accoutrements—wallpaper and chairs, particularly of the floral variety—as somehow uniquely or specifically feminine. In chapter three for example, she writes,

Mme Pontillon’s concealing costume contrasts with the exaggerated padding and anthropomorphic bulges of the colourful couch, which seems to serve as a displaced arena for the exploration of the crevices and folds characteristic of the female sexual organs. Where reproductive sexuality is hidden on the body, it is teased out on the sofa (112).

How then would Garb theorize the numerous contemporaneous images of men sitting on cushioned sofas or padded chairs? Though there is no acknowledgement of it, the stale notions about the rigid distinction between public/private and male/female on which Garb persistently relies have been increasingly interrogated by scholars.²

A small volume published in conjunction with an exhibition at the Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas, as part of the University’s Franklin D. Murphy Lecture Series, *The Body in Time* contains only two chapters. The first focuses on Degas’s images of ballet dancers, while the second, like *The Painted Face*, deals with portraiture.

The second chapter begins with Ingres, and, as in *The Painted Face*, his portraits of women are set up as the epit-

ome of seductive femininity, providing “sensual delight and surface pleasure ... a screen onto which the passions of successive viewers could accumulate and resonate” (44). This is more or less the same argument given about Ingres in the earlier volume, but here Garb reveals its source in an essay published in 1899 by the critic Camille Mauclair, entitled “La femme devant les peintres modernes.” Mauclair, she writes, “delivered an account of the historical gendering of portraiture and the profoundly distinct conventions of representation and modes of viewing that portraits of men and women had traditionally required” (44). In both texts, then, she uses the Mauclair framework—highly select and conservative—within which to position female portraits (and the women pictured?) as little more than ciphers for male sexual desire. In *The Body in Time*, however, Garb does a better job of acknowledging the problematics of Mauclair’s essay. Here, for example, in discussing Manet’s *Portrait of Eva Gonzales*, Garb notes that emergent definitions of femininity clashed with Mauclair’s traditionalism (54)—a more nuanced reading than that given in *The Painted Face*, where this portrait is presented as a failed representation of conventional femininity.

Also not discussed in *The Painted Face*, which relies heavily on Mauclair’s argument that female portraits provided little more than *tabulae rasae* for male desire, is Mauclair’s distinction between such traditional ways of viewing female portraits and the changes in the genre brought about by the fact that women were becoming more “interested in asserting an identity of their own” (56). Garb praises Mauclair for being “one of the first critics to try to describe what was a real shift in representational codes and to ascribe this change to the appearance of an emergent social type, the ‘femme nouvelle’” (59). She refers to his “construction of Woman as a blank slate onto which men would inscribe their desires,” as “phantasmatic” and a “product of fin de siècle gender ideology” (59). Again, this questioning of Mauclair is absent from *The Painted Face*, where it is sorely needed. Indeed, he is hardly mentioned there at all.

On the differing representations of

the New Woman at the end of the century, Garb notes that they were subject to caricature and were “figures of fun” (65), an attitude that extended to female artists in the profession. Thus, she writes that portraits of women and self-portraits by Anna Bilinska-Bohdanowiczowa, Anna Elizabeth Klumpke, Ellen Day Hale, and Marie Bashkirtseff often “defy conventional notions of female prettiness or the demands of idealization to which society portraits adhere” (72), again suggesting some pre-existing and stable femininity against which these artists and portraits are working.

Taken together, the two books offer insights into the practice of portraiture in the nineteenth century, particularly in relation to the dramatically changing representational strategies from Rococo to Cubism. *The Painted Face* is beautifully produced and illustrated throughout, with 70 color images and twice as many black and whites. The text, however, is marred by Garb’s assumption that her chosen portraits do not adequately represent femininity, implying a (never clearly defined) static femininity rather than interrogating these works as actively constitutive of femininity. Garb’s efforts to tell this story within the overlapping and constricting frameworks of Mauclair and makeup/paint/femininity further hinder her efforts. ●

Temma Balducci is an Assistant Professor of Art History at Arkansas State University. She is a co-editor of and contributor to the forthcoming *Interior Portraiture and Masculine Identity in France, 1789-1914* (Ashgate).

NOTES

1. For example, Garb discusses negative reactions to Manet’s *Portrait of Mlle E.G.* (1870), in which the sitter’s upper arms are exposed, in the context of small pox vaccinations.
2. For the most recent questioning of this dichotomy in relation to visual culture, see Aruna d’Souza and Tom McDonough, eds. *The Invisible Flâneuse? Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2006).



Pl. 1. Maya Lin, *Storm King Wavefield* (2008), earthwork covering 4 acres of 11-acre site. Collection of the Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, New York. © Maya Lin, Maya Lin Studio. Photo: Jerry L. Thompson.



Pl. 2. Maya Lin, *Wave Field* (1995), 100' x 100'. FXB Aerospace Building, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. © Maya Lin, Maya Lin Studio, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York. Photo: Balthazar Korab Photography Ltd.



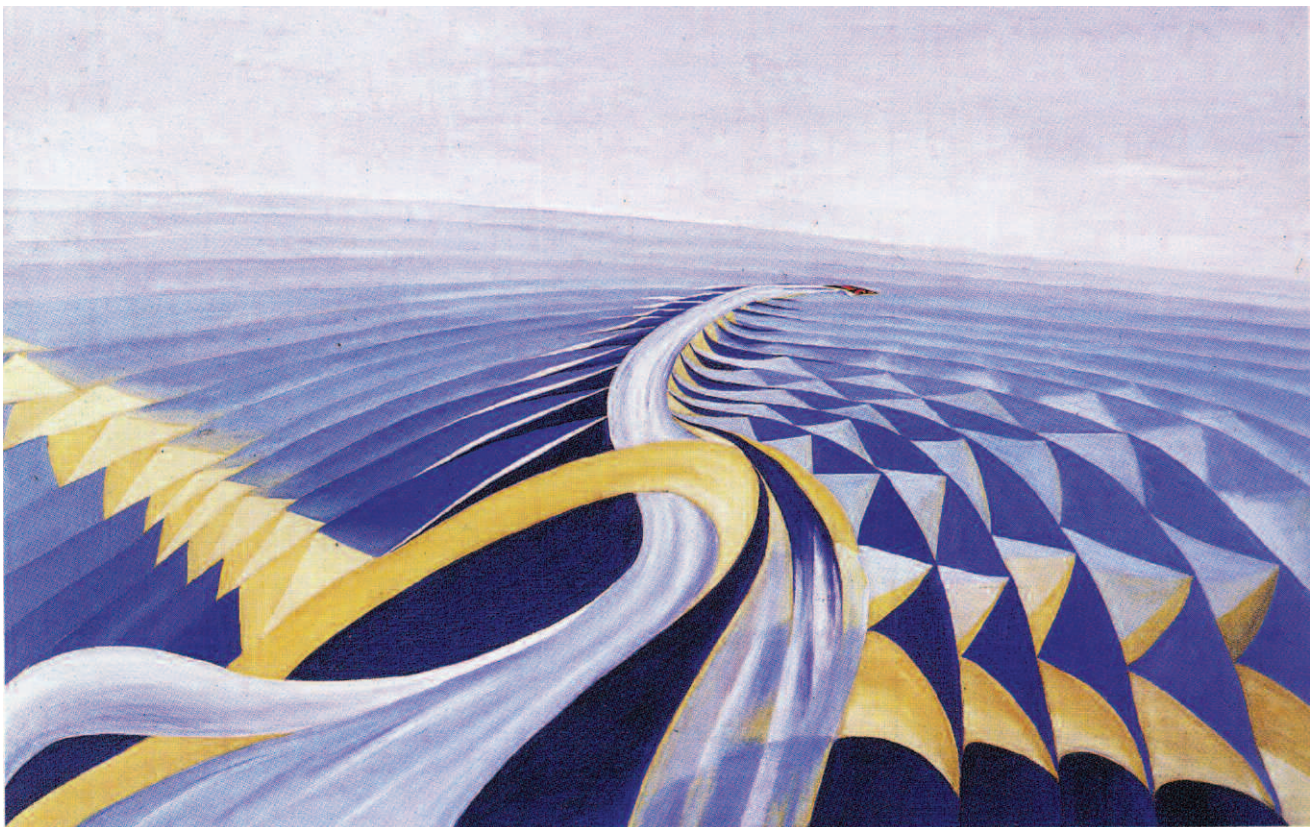
Pl. 3. Maya Lin, *Flutter* (2005), 459' x 105'. Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr. Federal Courthouse, Miami, Florida. © Maya Lin, Maya Lin Studio, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York. Photo: Norman McGrath.



Pl. 4. Maya Lin, *Eleven Minute Line* (2004), Wanås Foundation, Wanås, Sweden. © Maya Lin, Maya Lin Studio, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York. Photo: Anders Norsell.



Pl. 5. Maya Lin, *Groundswell* (1992-93), glass. Wexner Center, Ohio State University, Columbus. © Maya Lin, Maya Lin Studio, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York. Photo: Wexner Center for the Arts, Darnell Lauth.



Pl. 6. Benedetta, *Velocità di motoscafo* (*Velocity of a Motorboat*) (1919-24), oil on canvas, 31 1/2" x 39 3/8". Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome.



Pl. 7. Benedetta and F.T. Marinetti,
Sudan-Parigi (1920), mixed media,
50 3/4" x 35 7/16". Private Collection.



Pl. 8. Benedetta, *Il Grande X*
(*The Great X*) (1931), oil on canvas,
50 3/4" x 35 7/16". Musée d'Art
Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris.



Pl. 9. Benedetta, *Sintesi delle comunicazioni maritime* (*Synthesis of Sea Communications*) (1933), tempera and encaustic on panel, 126" x 76 13/16". Central Post Office, Palermo, Sicily.



Pl. 10. Benedetta, *Sintesi delle comunicazioni terrestri* (*Synthesis of Land Communications*) (1933), tempera and encaustic on panel, 126" x 76 13/16". Central Post Office, Palermo, Sicily.



Pl. 11. Benedetta, *Monte Tabor* (*Mount Tabor*) (1939), oil on canvas, 38 5/8" x 51 3/16". Marinetti Collection, Milan.



Pl. 12. Violet Oakley, "Reverend walked he among them" from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* (Boston and New York, 1897).



Pl. 13. Violet Oakley, Cover for *Everybody's Magazine* (September, 1902) (detail).



Pl. 14. Violet Oakley, *Washington Marching Through Philadelphia* (1917), mural, oil on canvas, 10' 4" x 12' 4", Senate Chamber, Pennsylvania State Capitol, Harrisburg (courtesy of Brian Hunt & Pennsylvania Capitol Preservation Committee).

LINDA STEIN SCULPTURE--"STRONG SUIT: ARMOR AS SECOND SKIN"
curated by Eleanor Flomenhaft. May 13 - June 19, 2009, Reception May 20, 4-7 pm.
National Association of Women Artists (NAWA), 80 Fifth Ave, at 14th St, NY.
Also, on May 20, 12-3 pm, Stein is Keynote Speaker at NAWA 120th Anniversary Luncheon,
National Arts Club, Gramercy Park South, NY. Call NAWA for Tickets.

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