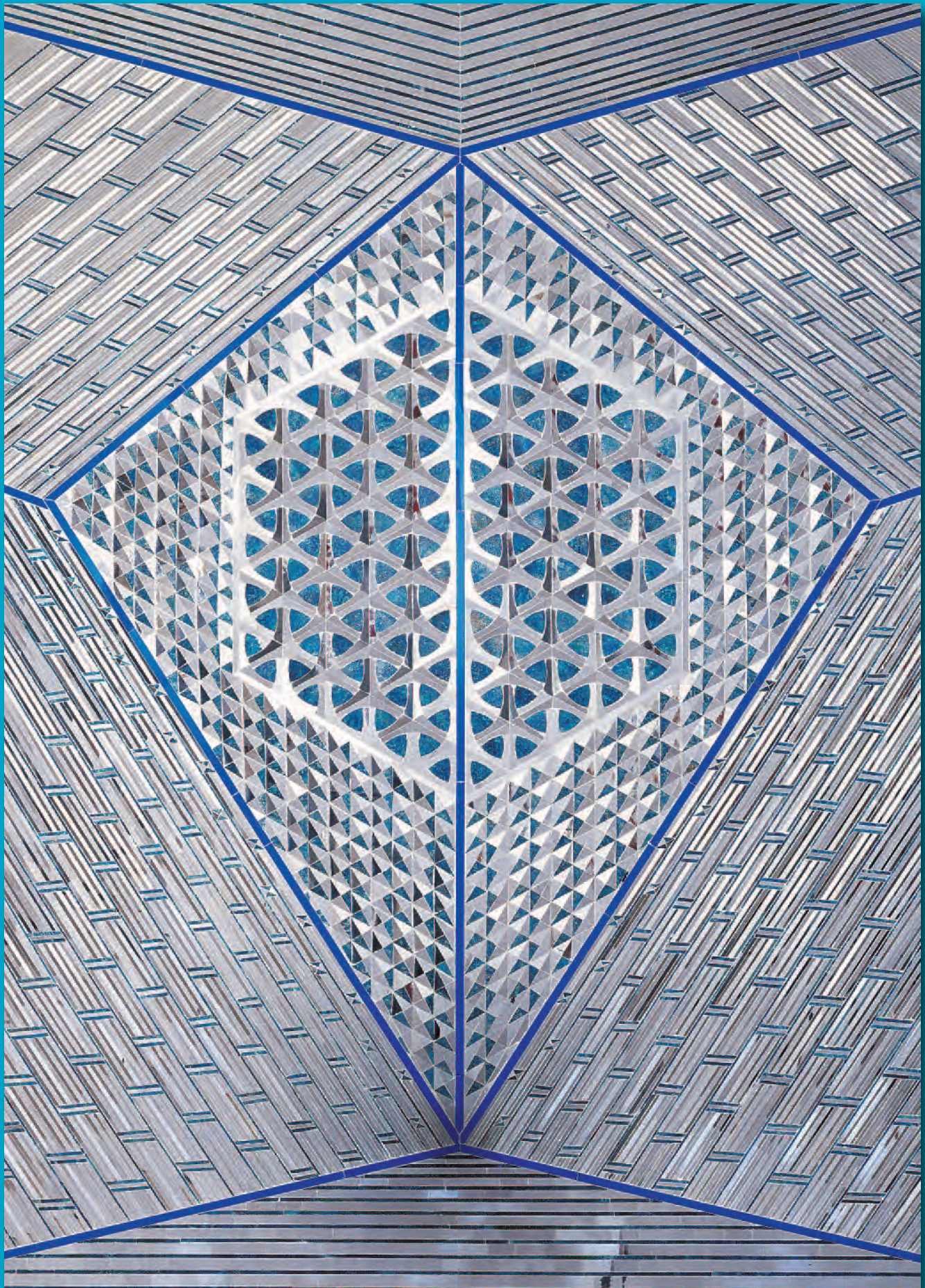
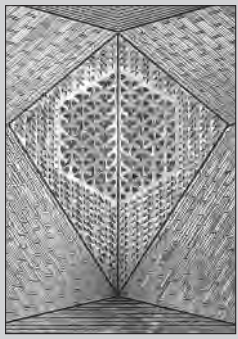


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(on the cover) Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Variations on the Hexagon* (detail), (installation 2006), mirror, reverse-glass painting, amulets, aluminum and plaster on wood, 72" x 51 1/4", each panel. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.

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FALL/WINTER 2012 VOLUME 33, NUMBER 1

2 IN MEMORIAM

Pamela Hemenway Simpson (1946 – 2011)

3 PORTRAITS, ISSUES AND INSIGHTS

Monir Shahrudy Farmanfarmaian, Empowered by American
Art: An Artist's Journey By Donna Stein

10 mandana moghaddam: *Chelgis ii* and the Iranian Woman
By Somayeh Noori Shirazi

17 Minna Citron's "Femininities": Her Commentary on
the Culture of Vanity By Jennifer L. Streb

25 The Curious Case of the Two Mrs. Sloans By Alexis L. Boylan

32 Progress Illuminated: Two Stained Glass Windows from the
1893 Woman's Building By Charlene G. Garfinkle

REVIEWS

39 *Dancing With the Dark: Joan Snyder Prints, 1963-2010*
by Marilyn Symmes and Faye Hirsch
Reviewed by Gretchen Wagner

41 *Nancy Holt: Sightlines* edited by Lena J. Williams,
essays by Pamela Lee, Lucy R. Lippard, et al.
Reviewed by Christine Filippone

44 *Michelle Stuart: Sculptural Objects, Journeys In & Out of the Studio*
by Michelle Stuart, essay by Lucy Lippard
Reviewed by Robin Rice

46 *Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedo's Political Art*
by Mieke Bal Reviewed by Robert J. Belton

48 *Hannah Wilke* by Nancy Princenthal
Reviewed by Mary Caroline Simpson

50 *Joan Mitchell, Lady Painter* by Patricia Albers
Reviewed by Virginia Allison Harbin

52 *Double Solitaire: The Surreal Worlds of Kay Sage and Yves Tanguy*
essays by Stephen Robeson Miller and Jonathan Stuhlman
Reviewed by Janet A. Kaplan

53 *Man Ray / Lee Miller: Partners in Surrealism*
by Phillip Prodger, essays by Lynda Roscoe Hartigan and
Anthony Penrose Reviewed by Salomon Grimberg

55 *Marie-Louise von Motesiczky 1906-1996: A Catalog Raisonné
of the Paintings* by Ines Schlenker
Reviewed by Carmen Stonge

56 *Harriet Hosmer, A Cultural Biography* by Kate Culkin;
Races of Mankind, The Sculptures of Malvina Hoffman
by Marianne Kinkel Reviewed by Jennifer Wingate

57 *Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian
Exposition* by Wanda M. Corn Reviewed by Betsy Fahlman

59 *Empress Maria-Theresa and the Politics of Habsburg Imperial Art*
by Michael Yonan; *Empress Eugénie and the Arts: Politics and
Visual Culture in the Nineteenth Century* by Alison McQueen
Reviewed by Olivia Gruber Florek

62 *Brunelleschi's Egg: Nature, Art, and Gender in Renaissance Italy*
by Mary D. Garrard Reviewed by Marjorie Och

With deep regret we note the passing of Pamela Simpson, a dear friend of *WAJ*. Pam was a longtime contributor, and an active member of our editorial board. Over three decades, Pam contributed more than three dozen book reviews covering a wide variety of topics, applying her intelligence and perceptiveness well beyond her primary academic interests in American art and architecture. Her article on Caroline Shaw Brooks, “The Centennial Butter Sculptress,” published in *WAJ* in 2007, was a preview of the research that would become her final book, which was in press at the time of her death in October. Pam never turned down an assignment or request, and she was every editor’s dream: an impeccable wordsmith.

Pam was an ideal *WAJ* board member. Generous with her time and a gracious scholar, Pam was a guiding force as a thoughtful reader, evaluating articles submitted to us, and identifying for publication many fine articles on nineteenth and early twentieth century American art. By offering suggestions for young authors to strengthen their articles, she helped to shape the vision of American art through a gendered perspective.

Pam’s own exceptional scholarship is much in evidence in the recently published five-volume *Grove Encyclopedia of American Art* (for which Joan was editor in chief). As an invaluable area editor, Pam helped shape the focus on nineteenth-century American art and artists and contributed numerous entries.

We acknowledge her contributions to *Woman’s Art Journal* with gratitude and deep affection. She is deeply missed by all of us who had the extraordinary pleasure of knowing and working with her, and we invited a few of Pam’s friends to share some thoughts on her career, her life, and her accomplishments.

Joan Marter and Margaret Barlow,
Editors, Woman’s Art Journal

To so many of us, Pam was a loyal and thoughtful friend and professional colleague. During the thirty-eight years Pam taught at Washington and Lee University, she became a legend, accumulating an impressive list of “firsts,” including being the first woman to be hired in a tenure-track position, the first woman to be tenured, and the first female professor to receive an endowed chair.

A dedicated, quiet, but determined feminist, Pam sought equality for all members of academia and the larger world and, specifically, equality for women as members of a profession that did not always welcome us as equals. These qualities were



Pamela Hemenway Simpson
1946–2011

also the result of her commitment to a feminist view that women’s intellectual interests and professional careers should be supported and recognized.

One of the signal graces in Pam’s life was her ability to sustain a balance between complicated demands: between teaching, research, and writing and commitment to her family; between her many leadership roles in professional and social change organizations and her mentoring of younger academic colleagues; and between the firmness of her expectations for responsible dedication to the tasks at hand and her ability to offer compassionate caring and friendship to an extended network of scholar friends and former students.

Intellectually, academically, and personally, Pam simply looked at what had to be done and did it with humor and graciousness, bringing many of us with her along those paths. But she was also a tenacious fighter for the cause of feminism who affected many of our lives.

Betsy Fahlman,
Arizona State University

Helen Langa,
American University

Pam was a beloved member of the research community specializing in the history of American art and architecture. In addition to her generous contributions as teacher, mentor, and administrator, she produced a distinguished body of award-winning publications that helped to expand our understanding of the nature and breadth of U.S. visual culture. Her 1999 book *Cheap, Quick and Easy: Imitative Architectural Materials, 1870–1930*, for example, demonstrated in a highly engaging manner how machine-made products such as linoleum and pressed metal made architectural ornament available to the masses. Other book projects involved the architecture of Lexington, Virginia, where Pam lived and worked, and Confederate Civil War memorials. Her final book, *Corn Palaces and Butter Queens: A History of Crop Art and Dairy Sculpture*, the product of many years’ research, has just been published by the University of Minnesota Press. In typical Simpson style, it celebrates regional art forms that reached a broad public—art made out of butter, grains, fruits, and vegetables that declared America’s rich abundance and beguiled audiences at venues from state fairs to world fairs.

Cynthia Mills,
Smithsonian American Art Museum

MONIR SHAHROUDY FARMANFARMAIAN

EMPOWERED BY AMERICAN ART: AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY

By Donna Stein

At the age of eighty-eight, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian is one of Iran's most inspired and innovative living artists (Fig. 1).¹ Her distinctive work, a synthesis of Persian elements and avant-garde ideas that bring East and West together inside the frame, has drawn the attention of international critics, curators, and collectors. Farmanfarmaian is the first contemporary artist to combine geometric design, reverse-glass painting, and mirror mosaic techniques from traditional Persian palatial, sacred, and folk art. Used together, these elements have coalesced in the development of a uniquely beautiful, post-modern, multicultural aesthetic. Simple geometric figures such as the triangle, circle, and hexagon create the basis of her abstract symbolic vocabulary and provide the structural skeleton for compositions that seem to have infinite potential. Farmanfarmaian adheres to the Islamic laws of balance and unity to define spatial relationships, and through repetition, she constructs harmonious cycles without a beginning or an end. She applies geometric patterns with a minimalist twist, relying on instinct and intuition after many years of studying geometry, Sufi cosmology, the arcane symbolism of shapes, and how the universe is expressed through points, lines, and angles. Color and a sense of the environment are introduced through light reflection and refraction. Her wall and free-standing sculptures explore the possibility of extending the beauty of these traditional configurations into the third dimension.

Born in 1924 in Qazvin, a small city some 130 miles northwest of Tehran, Monir Shahroudy was descended from a long line of ayatollahs and traders on her father's side and the Ottoman aristocracy on her mother's. Her early years were idyllic, spent in a beautiful house surrounded by gardens. Painted images of flowers, nightingales, and other birds ornamented the ceilings, doors, and stained-glass window frames of their home. Her father was a leader of Qazvin's political and intellectual life and an advocate for a modern role for women and secular education, having started the first school for girls. He also had artistic talent; he designed and methodically plotted carpet patterns based on garden themes that were then woven to his specifications.

When her father was elected to Parliament as a representative from Qazvin in 1932, the family moved to Tehran, into a house filled with plaster portrait busts of the old kings and great poets. Monir attended a Zoroastrian school for girls who were the



Fig. 1. Monir Farmanfarmaian in her studio, New York City (2000). Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.

daughters of free thinkers from every religion and ethnic background. Mischievous and playful, traits she has retained her whole life, Monir was not much of a student, but she was good with her hands and excelled in art, especially drawing. From a young age she enjoyed doing all kinds of needlework—sewing, knitting, crocheting, embroidery, and lace-making. While in high school, she took drawing lessons from a private tutor who had traveled and studied in Europe. Because there



Fig. 2. Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Irises* (1973), mirror, old and new reverse-glass painting, plaster on wood, 47" x 30 1/2". Private collection. Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.

were no art books in Iran, she learned by copying postcards of western landscapes, still-lives, and portraits, using colored pencils. She attended the Fine Arts College at Tehran University for a semester before realizing that, if she was to become an artist, she needed to see and study real paintings, not just postcard images, and that would mean going abroad. Her favorite teacher, a French woman, introduced her to the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists, and Monir's dream was to continue her education in Paris; but that was not to be.

Because World War II was raging, she could not go to Paris. Instead, she landed in New York City, far from the sources of her art and inspiration. During two distinct periods in her creative life—totaling thirty-eight years—she would live in this city. Her first extended stay on U.S. soil was by default. After an adventurous trip via India that took several months because of the war in the Pacific, she arrived in Los Angeles in February 1945.² Almost immediately, she boarded a cross-country train headed to New York City, where she remained for a dozen years, until 1957.

Finally able to see art firsthand, Monir eagerly visited museums, galleries, and artists' studios in New York. During the summer of 1945 she attended classes at Cornell University, and that fall she enrolled as a fashion illustration major at Parsons School of Design. It was there she began to understand that her distinctive preference for brilliant, clear colors was inextricably linked to her Iranian heritage. Later, she took evening classes at the Art Students League to be able to retain her student status and receive financial support from her family. Monir became immersed in the artistic life of the city. Through her American sponsor, the writer and Iranian scholar Donald Wilber, she met Arthur Upham Pope, the prominent historian of Iranian art and architecture. Their friendship opened doors to a circle of art historians and curators at the Metropolitan Museum of Art that began a lifelong association, which led, most recently, to commissions for a mirror mosaic for the museum's contemporary art collection entitled *Flight of the Dolphin* (2010), and a fountain for its Islamic Galleries.

In 1950, she married the Iranian painter, Manoucher Yekta. Typical of the time, Monir's role as the wife of an artist who aspired to be an important painter made it impossible for her to satisfy her own passion to live as an artist. She was appreciated for her "exotic beauty," but like so many women artists before her, she had to sublimate her own dreams and ambitions. Assuming the traditional role of wife—and soon also of mother—she promoted her husband's career by entertaining, with style, various acquaintances of artistic influence who crossed their path.

She visited the Museum of Modern Art often. Through a chance meeting there with Abe Chanin, an influential educator at the museum, Monir was introduced to the Eighth Street Club, a private and informal gathering of diverse vanguard artists who met for social and intellectual stimulation. At these meetings, influential tastemakers presented the latest ideas and lectured about modern art and philosophy. She got to know the progressive artists Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, Joan Mitchell, Louise Nevelson, Frederick Kiesler, and Larry Rivers, and the architect Philip Johnson, among others. Their socializing often continued nearby at the Cedar Bar. She observed their passion for experimentation with new materials and forms, though she later admitted: "They were exciting times, but half the time I didn't really understand what they were talking about." Chanin mentored Monir, explaining to her "everything from art history and aesthetic theory" and keeping her up to date on "personal rivalries" and the latest art-world gossip. Chanin also introduced her to Alexander Liberman, the editorial director of Condé Nast, who gave Monir her first

freelance job—a pen and ink drawing of six brassieres for *Glamour* magazine. Through Chanin she met the collectors Bernard and Becky Reis and the artists Barnett Newman and Alexander Calder, who gave her a small metal sculpture of a seal when she visited his studio. She also met important dealers, including Sidney Janis, Leo Castelli, Robert Hill and Sam Koontz.

From Monir's first visit on her honeymoon, the Woodstock art community became an important social and artistic milieu for her. During several summers there she made enduring friendships. Throughout the summer of 1951, when her daughter Nima was nine months old, Monir's family shared a small cottage with friends at Byrdcliffe Arts Colony, a utopian community established in 1902 by Jane and Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead and subsequently run by their son, writer Peter Whitehead.

Perhaps the most significant friendship artistically was with her closest Woodstock neighbors, Milton Avery and his wife Sally Michel. Every morning Avery appeared with his sketchbook and for exactly two hours would draw as Monir did her chores and cared for Nima. Although he never showed her his drawings, his daily practice may have reinforced her own joy in drawing. She began a lifelong practice of sketching from life—landscapes, flowers, and nudes when she had a captive model.

It was the beginning of an easy habit that would follow me the rest of my life, like a loyal seeing-eye dog: a sketchbook, a bottle of ink, three pens and sometimes a brush. I found that I could look at a flower very carefully and trust my hand to follow in a spontaneous line from the top of the page to the bottom. The anatomy was true. The dance of thin lines and the thicker lines captures the tissue of petals, the tease and flounce and swirl of their skirts, and the certainty of deep rhythms in the shape of all plants.³

Drawn in ink with pen or brush, or colored pencil, her flowers follow a typically Persian tradition from the Safavid period (1501-1736), with finely observed portraits of flowers evoking personality and gesture.

To support herself and Nima following her divorce in 1953, Monir became a freelance fashion illustrator, creating dress and textile designs for magazine editors and agents. Supportive Woodstock friends introduced her to the art director of Bonwit Teller, where she was offered a full-time job doing fashion layouts. One of her co-workers there was Andy Warhol, whom she admired for his talent and whimsy. (After losing touch for many years, they would be reunited by Nima, who moved to New York after college and found a job as a writer for *Interview*, the magazine Warhol helped found in 1969.)

Shortly before Monir was set to leave for Tehran in early 1957, Milton Avery asked her to pose for him one last time. He painted a large portrait for himself and a smaller version for her to remember him by.⁴ Perhaps her greatest legacy from Avery was his teaching her to make monotypes.

Returning to Tehran via Paris in February 1957, she married Abolbasha Farmanfarmaian, a brilliant young lawyer

educated at the University of Chicago and Columbia University with a princely birthright from the Qajar Dynasty (1785-1925). Their honeymoon to Abadan and Isfahan awakened her taste for the history and beauty of ancient Persia. She became a tourist in her own country, and subsequent travels throughout Iran inspired her to learn about and collect examples of its prolific cultural heritage. A fascination with tribal and folk artistic traditions led her to rethink the past and conceive a new path for her art.

With the support of her husband, Farmanfarmaian returned to creating art and began experimenting with the monotype technique in a new rooftop studio. By the following year, she was able to show a group of abstract monotypes at the Venice Biennale. The encouragement garnered from her American friends also helped her find a path to incorporate art into her daily life. "I loved gardening, and so flowers were among my earliest inspirations," she recalled.⁵ The result was more than one hundred monotypes of flowers that made up her first solo exhibition at Tehran University in 1963.

A visit to Shah Cheragh Shrine in Shiraz with American minimalists Robert Morris and Marcia Hafif, an artist of Iranian descent she first met in Tehran in the early 1960s,⁶ proved to be a turning point in her art practice. "Imagine stepping inside the center of a diamond and staring at the sun," is the way Farmanfarmaian explained the experience.⁷ They sat for hours in the high-domed hall observing the tiny mirror mosaics that covered every inch of the grand room, transforming the architectural interior into a light performance, "...all movement and fluid light, all solids fractured and dissolved in brilliance, in space, in prayer."⁸

Farmanfarmaian's response was a new determination to incorporate mirror mosaics into her art. She immediately began using mirror mosaic techniques with the help of master craftsman Hajji Ostad Mohammad Navid, whose technical expertise matched her ambition and design abilities. The first series of these bas-reliefs incorporated fragments of Qajar paintings on glass, blending the old and the new. These were exhibited in 1973 in Tehran at the Iran-America Society, and included artworks like *Poetry Books* (1970; Pl. 1) and *Irises* (1973; Fig. 2).⁹ In her memoir Monir explained her initial working method with Hajji Ostad:

I gave him patterns on paper—stars, triangles, strips and crescents—and asked him to cut 20 of these, 100 of those...I also gave him some of the abstract paintings behind glass I had done and asked him to cut those in pieces. The mirror ...was unusually fine, specially made in Belgium for the Iranian market, and half the gauge of the thinnest mirror found in America.¹⁰

Working together, Farmanfarmaian and Hajji Ostad devised a contemporary way of preparing the plywood backing with an epoxy and sand mixture to hold the plaster, which was also mixed with Elmer's glue. To their surprise it was easy to handle, did not have a strong smell, and was a stable foundation for the cut pieces of mirror and reverse-painted glass. The elemental forms found in Farmanfarmaian's works refer to the spiritual geometries of Islamic architecture.



Fig. 3. Monir Farmanfarmaian, Apartment reception area , Park Avenue, New York City (1983), reverse-glass painting and mirror, 197" x 138".
Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.

Mosaics in these buildings are designed to conform to the mystical tenets of Sufism, which suggests that all of the forms can be connected with spiritual attributes.

Jewels, a transitional work from 1974 (Pl. 2), no longer includes bits and pieces of older Qajar artworks, but still retains the realistic reference to a jewel box and its contents with some added pieces of actual tribal jewelry. By the mid 1970s, Farmanfarmaian would stop using figurative elements and began working in a purely abstract manner. *Geometry of Hope* (1975; Pl. 3) exemplifies the best of these works. The four foot square panel is composed of green reverse-painted glass and mirrored pieces in a complex pattern of squares and triangles on different levels. A raised outline of squares creates a lattice across the surface, with smaller squares inside each unit delineated by other raised lines that separate the triangular elements. This elegant but simple repeated composition that distills mathematical logic from traditional designs already reveals Farmanfarmaian's facility with complex geometries.

Based on her deep and very personal understanding of the value of seeing and studying actual artworks, Farmanfarmaian conceived of establishing a museum that would provide these opportunities for others in her country, and especially for its artists.¹¹ In 1970, on a visit to see Nima in New York, Farmanfarmaian explored the possibility of bringing important artworks to Tehran for the benefit of her students. Among the artists she consulted was Frank Stella, whose studio she visited on Jones Street in Greenwich Village. They spent an afternoon together discussing her project and non-figurative abstraction. He invited her to accompany him that evening to an opening at the Museum of Modern Art. When the after-dinner speeches started, she realized he was the evening's honoree. That day marked the beginning of a very special friendship.

The seventies were an important decade for Farmanfarmaian in many respects. In 1974, a door opened when her brother-in-law, during a business trip to New York, showed one of her mirror mosaics to his business associate, David Rockefeller, who, in turn, showed it to MoMA curator Dorothy

Miller. Soon after, Nima took the piece to Jacques Kaplan, who offered Farmanfarmaian her first solo exhibition in the U.S., which opened the following April at the Jacques Kaplan/Mario Ravagnan Gallery in New York (where I first met the artist). Many of her artist friends attended the opening.¹² Dorothy Miller bought a piece for the Chase Manhattan Bank Collection and recommended Farmanfarmaian's geometric abstractions to gallerist Denise René, who later showed her work in her Paris and New York galleries.¹³

Nima arranged for Andy Warhol and Bob Colacello to travel to Tehran for ten days in July 1976 to photograph the Empress of Iran for a silkscreen portrait series and to see the Crown Jewels. On Bastille Day, July 14, the Farmanfarmaians hosted a luncheon garden party in Warhol's honor that turned into a press event. Warhol presented Monir with a Marilyn Monroe silkscreen print, and she gave him one of her mirrored balls. Although he didn't say much, Warhol was very attentive and had his ever-present camera at the ready.¹⁴ Also that year, when Louise Nevelson, her friend from the Art Students League and the Eighth Street Club, was in Tehran to lecture at the Iran-America Society (IAS), Farmanfarmaian hosted a gala dinner that included Nevelson's dealer from Pace Gallery, Arnold Glimcher, as a guest. About six months later, Glimcher contacted Farmanfarmaian to say that Lucas Samaras, another of his artists, would be visiting Tehran in May 1977 for an exhibit of his work at the IAS and a lecture about his art and a recent film, "Self." Samaras visited Farmanfarmaian's home several times, and she took him to Shemshak, a ski resort in the nearby Elborz Mountains, and into the surrounding countryside. Their mutual interest in the potential of mirrors and their reflection and refraction of imagery opened an artistic dialogue and solidified their friendship. Videographer/photographer Hermine Freed arrived in Tehran a few weeks later, also to lecture at the IAS. Freed would become one of Farmanfarmaian's closest friends during her second stay in New York.

Following the Iranian Revolution of January 1979, Farmanfarmaian once again found herself in New York, this time as a refugee. She and her husband had come to the U.S. the previous month for a Christmas and New Year's visit with their daughters. (Nima, now married, was living in New York City, and her sister Zahra was a student at Bennington College in Vermont.) Thus began Farmanfarmaian's second extended stay in America. She and her husband had no idea how long their exile would last or if they

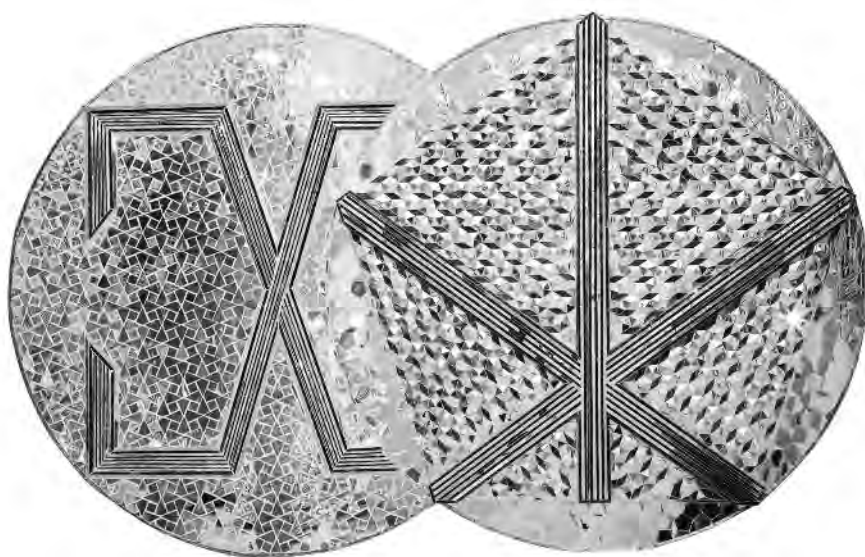


Fig. 4. Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Square and Pentagon* (2008), mirror, reverse-glass painting and plaster on wood, 39 3/8" x 63". Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.



Fig. 5. Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Nonagon* (2008), mirror, plaster and natural glue on wood, 39 1/4" diameter of a circle. Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.

would ever return home, and, in fact, he never did. During what became more than a quarter century as an unwilling exile, Farmanfarmaian was deeply affected by the agony associated with the confiscation of her own art and extensive collections, not to mention her separation from family, friends,



Fig. 6. Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Cube Within Cubes* (Geometric Cube Statue) (2008), mirror, reverse-glass painting on plexiglass, 23 5/8" x 23 5/8" x 23 5/8". Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.

the privileged life she had enjoyed, and the country she loved.

A commission for the new airport in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, got Farmanfarmaian creating again, and by 1981 she had set up a studio and was doing some commercial textile designs. While completing an important site-specific reverse-glass painting and mirror mosaic installation in 1983 for the entry of a Park Avenue apartment building (Fig. 3), she discovered the difficulties of working in her chosen medium in the U.S. She had to devise a simple repeat pattern for the wall to compensate for the lack of skilled workers in mirror mosaic techniques and the difficulty of cutting the thicker gauge mirrored glass available in New York. What brought her to an

even deeper appreciation of Hajji Ostad's wizardry was that "[i]t took a firm of architects many expensive hours of computer time to calculate how to extend my design in the space."¹⁵ In 1988, she designed a bold composition based on a triangle and square motif for a dramatic stained glass window commissioned for the 36th floor of the Dag Hammarskjöld Tower in New York City. During the twenty-five-year hiatus as a political refugee in New York, however, Farmanfarmaian seldom showed her work and was disappointed that she no longer had the technical support needed to continue her explorations in mirror mosaics. Eventually, she carved out a small area in her living room for a studio and quietly worked on autobiographical assemblages she called "my memory boxes."

A year after her beloved husband's death, and with great trepidation, she traveled to Iran in the winter of 1992, to explore the possibility that as a woman alone she could live as an artist under the Islamic regime. A decade passed before she visited Tehran again in 2002. She went back in 2004 to purchase an apartment and re-establish a studio and workshop. Finally, in 2005, following the release of her memoir, *A Mirror Garden*, she returned home permanently. She found a few of her old workers and some others trained in the now-dying art of mirror mosaic, and with a refreshed vision she began to create anew. In a recent exhibition catalog, Farmanfarmaian wrote about her commitment to perpetuating the Persian artisan tradition:

Mirror-works, the geometric design of forms, reverse-glass paintings and many other artistic creations do not belong only to museums or the rich; you can find them everywhere, they are part of our living artistic experience and they each have an ancient history behind them. But mirrors speak to contemporary human beings as well. No wonder it is equally present in ancient myths and in modern psychology. Many artists today use mirrors in their works. However, in the Persian culture, a mirror is not solely a surface to reflect light, but it is a metaphor for light itself—emanating, refracted and scattered. Statues and structures erected for religious ceremonies make ample use of mirrors—in commemorative statues for those passed-away young, the entrance and reception rooms of palaces, prayer halls, and sanctuaries of mosques. I have made use of mirrors in many of my works, along with the exquisite bird and flower designs found around the country.... Some of the arts that gained popularity in Iran, like reverse-glass painting, are not purely Iranian crafts, but the delicate taste of Iranian artists have made them native. These artisans have willingly and playfully taken those elements that have found a way into our popular culture and add to the richness of artistic creation throughout the world. This is how I define my role vis-à-vis the arts of Iran—offering a new way of looking at ancient aesthetic elements of this land using tools that are not limited to a particular geography.¹⁶

Variations on the Hexagon (2006; front cover and Pl. 4), a major commission for the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, reveals a mature artist at the apex of her creativity. Here the artist has eschewed the symmetry and simplicity that defined her first series of artworks, realized in the 1970s, in favor of more complex and colorful compositions such as *Square and Pentagon* (2008; Fig. 4), *Square and Triangle* (2010; Pl. 5), and *Nonagon* (2008; Fig. 5), a complex wall relief employing only mirror mosaic to visualize the overlapping lines that compose the nine-sided figure whose touch points mark the edge of an imaginary circle. While religious piety is not her motivation, the results of her efforts contain meanings that literally and spiritually connect to her Islamic faith. Sculptures like *Cube within Cube* (2008; Fig. 6) explore the possibility of extending the beauty of these traditional geometries into the third dimension. They illustrate her artistic legacy in the science of Pythagorean mathematics and her singular approach to geometric form as she moves from two to three dimensions. *Lightning for Neda* (2009; Pls. 6a and 6b), commissioned for the Sixth Asia Pacific Triennial at the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane, Australia, uses the same design vocabulary and techniques of mosaic relief in mirror, reverse-painted glass and stucco. Repeating patterns are generated from a single unit like a hexagon. Forms are combined, duplicated, repeated, interlaced, and managed in intricate combinations to create spatial order, rhythm, movement and light. The artist exuberantly orchestrates the geometric motifs into six space-revealing tableaux, one for each of the six virtues of generosity, self-discipline, patience, determination, insight, and compassion. Here, for the first time, Farmanfarmaian makes a sly political reference in the title by remembering the murder of Neda Agha-Soltan, a young woman who was peacefully protesting the election results in Tehran.

Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian's mirror mosaics dazzle the eye. At the same time, their geometry and decorative roots hold deeply layered references to Persian cultural history as well as its exquisite refined modern aesthetic. As her grandson Aziz has observed, "She arrives at higher math through pure aesthetics. Meditating on her work is like taking a shortcut to infinity."¹⁷ •

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Notes

1. A version of this essay was originally written in conjunction with a text by the author for Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian's self-titled monograph, edited by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Karen Marta (Dubai: Third Line and Damiani Editore, 2011).
2. All dates and information noted in this article about her life not otherwise referenced were established and confirmed in conversation with the artist on June 19, 2010.
3. Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian and Zara Houshman, *A Mirror Garden* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 115. Anyone wishing to know more about this fascinating artist should read this autobiographical account of her eventful life.

4. The portrait is currently owned by the artist's daughter Zahra.
5. Rose Issa and James Parry, "Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian: The Rebirth of an Iranian Legend and the Story of her Mirror Mosaics," *Canvas* IV, 5 (Sept./Oct. 2008): 142.
6. Marcia Hafif stayed at the Farmanfarmaian's home for a week on her first trip to Iran in c.1962–63.
7. Marisa Mazria Katz, "Cosmic Geometry: The Life and Work of Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian," *Vogue Daily*, October 19, 2011, <http://www.vogue.com/culture/article/cosmic-geometry-the-life-and-work-of-monir-shahroudy-farmanfarmaian/>.
8. Farmanfarmaian and Houshman, *A Mirror Garden*, 186.
9. The Iran-America Society (IAS) was founded in the 1950s to promote understanding between the people of Iran and the people of the United States of America.
10. Farmanfarmaian and Houshman, *A Mirror Garden*, 187–88.
11. Farmanfarmaian later learned that the Queen, Farah Diba, had been working on a similar plan independently, which resulted in the opening of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in October 1977.
12. Monir knew that I had been hired in February 1975 as an art advisor to the Secretariat of Her Majesty Queen Farah of Iran, and when I introduced myself to her at this exhibition, she made sure to present me to other Iranian artists at the opening, including Ghasem Hajizadeh and Marco Gregorian. Although I had traveled to Iran in 1973 and 1974, I had little knowledge of contemporary Iranian art and found it difficult to contextualize Monir's art at that time.
13. René visited Tehran the following year and saw the artist's most recent work on exhibit at the Iran-America Society, which led to Farmanfarmaian's first exhibit in Paris in March 1977 at the Galerie Denise René, followed by a show in her New York gallery that November. When Monir asked me to write the introduction for the Paris exhibition brochure, I interviewed her for the first time in early 1977.
14. The previous night Warhol had attended the opening of the exhibit *Selected Graphics from the Private Collection of Farah Pahlavi, Her Imperial Majesty, The Shahbanou of Iran* at the Negarestan Museum, curated by this author.
15. Farmanfarmaian and Houshman, *A Mirror Garden*, 193.
16. Monir Farmanfarmaian, "A Fresh Look at the Art of Iranian Artisans," *Selected Works of Monir Farmanfarmaian, 1979–2008* (Tehran, Nazar Research and Cultural Institute, 2008), 140.
17. Obrist and Marta, *Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian*, 147.

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MANDANA MOGHADDAM

CHELGIS II AND THE IRANIAN WOMAN

By Somayeh Noori Shirazi

Iranian contemporary art has been more often represented to the world through its cinema; however, since 2000, the plastic art of Iran has started to find its place in renowned art galleries, museums, and international exhibitions. For instance, the presence of Iranian visual artists in Venice Biennales in 2003, 2005, 2009, and 2011 indicates a growing potential for their practice in Iran. Iranian artists' works also have gained attention at art auctions and accounted for some of the highest sales. In April of 2008 for instance, barely four years after the establishment of Christie's branch in Dubai for modern and contemporary Middle Eastern and Turkish art, the price paid for a work of art by a living Iranian artist, the sculptor Parviz Tanavoli, set a world auction record for any Middle Eastern artist.¹

Among these well-regarded artworks are some remarkable examples by Iranian female artists with a feminist perspective. Some of these artists are living in Iran while others are in self-imposed exile and have taken a second nationality. Among the most celebrated female artists in the first group are Monir Farmanfarmaian (b. 1924, see the article on page 3 of this issue), Shirin Fakhim (b. 1973, assemblage), Shadi Ghadirian (b. 1974, photography), and Shirin Ali-Abadi (b. 1973, photography, painting, installation). Those in the second group include Shirin Neshat (b. 1957, photography and film), who lives and work in the United States; Parastou Forouhar (b. 1962, photography, installation), who resides in Germany; Ghazel (b. 1966, performance, video art and installation) working in France; and the Iranian-Swedish Mandana Moghaddam (b. 1962), whose installation work is the subject of this article.

In 2005, Mandana Moghaddam's *Chelgis II* (2005; Fig. 1 and Pl. 7) was exhibited in the 51st Venice Biennale, representing Iran's contemporary art. Although this installation, with its unmistakable feminist perspective, was admired during the exhibition, it has not been much scrutinized by art critics. Its subtle nuances of meaning have remained uncharted, in large part because significant aspects of this artwork refer to lived experiences of being a woman in Iranian society and culture.

Moghaddam's works² share considerable ties in form and content with her aforementioned contemporaries. The media she utilizes indicate that she is concerned with appropriate uses of contemporary art language, as for instance her noteworthy use of natural hair in *Chelgis II*. Such organic materials being used in contemporary art carry new meanings,



Fig. 1. Mandana Moghaddam, *Chelgis II* (2005), cement, hair, red ribbon, 87" x 75" x 39". Photo: Mandana Moghaddam

and allow the artist to bring to audiences the experience of the significance of these media to emphasize their desired meaning. In addition, Moghaddam's works often connect with her country's socio-cultural history; for example, her *Chelgis* series refers to an Iranian folktale.

Mandana Moghaddam, born in Tehran, was seventeen years old in 1979, when the Pahlavi monarchy was replaced by the Islamic Republic following a revolution which brought about a series of traumatic events for her. A few months after the revolution, her father, a member of the Shah's army, was executed. She then was deprived of continuing her education because of her political activities. Eventually, by 1983, these adverse conditions forced Moghaddam to leave the country.

After spending several years in Turkey, in 1988 she was granted asylum in Sweden, where she resided in Gothenburg (Göteborg). She continued her studies and received a bachelor's degree in fine arts from Domen Art School (Dömen Konstkola), and in 2002 a master's degree in art theory from the University of Gothenburg, Valand School of Fine Arts. Following her graduation, after nineteen years away, she returned to her homeland. This was made possible thanks to the relative freedom during Khatami's presidency. It was during this period that she and Bitā Fayāzi Azād (b. 1962), a multimedia artist who lives and works in Iran, enjoyed the privilege of representing the contemporary art of Iran in the 2005 Venice Biennale.

After living two years in Iran, Moghaddam went back to Sweden, although she kept contact with some art galleries there. In 2009 she exhibited her installation *Sara's Paradise* (2009; Fig. 2) at Azad Art Gallery in Tehran. The work, about the pernicious effects of the war between Iran and Iraq (1980–88), also was included that year in an exhibition in Vienna titled "The Promise of Loss," and at the Arario Gallery in New York in 2010. The exhibition introduced the works of nineteen Iranian artists whose works evoke their shattered hopes. That year Mohsen Art Gallery in Tehran hosted the fourth group exhibition of works by some pioneering Iranian artists, including Moghaddam's *Father's Legacy* (2010; Fig. 3), an installation showing several knife tips inserted in a timber trunk, referring to the 2009 Iranian social unrests.

Moghaddam's works, mostly installations, have explored subjects such as communication, alienation, isolation and exile as well as topics related to women's social and cultural constraints. Her first installation, *It's Ringing* (*Der Ringer* in Swedish), was shown in a solo exhibition at Maneton Gallery in Gothenburg in 1999. With the title changed to *Exile*, the work was exhibited the next year in the Barg Gallery in Tehran. In this work, a telephone set rings and randomly connects to a line, providing the one who picks it up with a few minutes of opportunity to talk to an anonymous person in another part of the world. Besides highlighting the concept of communication, Moghaddam was underlining a specific feeling of exiled people that haunts them when they call home to their family and friends.

This idea was further developed for *The Well*, an interactive installation intended for a city environment. This work comprises a circular well that is connected to a similar one installed in another part of the world via a telephone line. Here again, viewers/participants on opposite sides of the world have the opportunity to talk to each other, regardless of language barriers, cultural differences, and political boundaries. Initially, *The Well* (*Chah* in Persian) was to be installed in both Tehran and Gothenburg in 2008, but the project was blocked in Iran at the last minute due to censorship.³ Instead, the artist installed this project at the Incheon Woman Artists Biennial in South Korea. In 2009, *The Well* (*Kichripour* in Hindi) was installed in New Delhi and Bangalore and also in Stockholm under its Swedish name, *Brunnen* (Pl. 8). One of the significant driving forces behind *The Well* was some recent social unrest in Iran during the last



Fig. 2. Mandana Moghaddam, *Sara's Paradise* (2009), plastic jars, triangular pond with red fountain, neon green lights. Photo: Hamid Eskandari.



Fig. 3. Mandana Moghaddam, *Father's Legacy* (2010), timber trunk, mirror, knives, neon green lights. Photo: Hamid Eskandari.

decade, about which—in spite of widespread reflection in the mass media—the truth remains unknown. Hence, *The Well* as a symbolic means of communication meant to delve into the heart of Iranian society to let people express their sorrows was unfortunately curtailed in Iran.

Apart from such significant installations about communication and exile, the Chelgis and Manijeh series exemplify Moghaddam's strong feminist viewpoint. The Manijeh series (2010; Figs. 4, 5, 6), exhibited in the 2010 Women's Biennial Exhibition in Ferrara, Italy, called *Memorie Velate* (Veiled Memories), was dedicated to Iranian women artists who had witnessed the plight of women in a Middle Eastern country such as Iran. Manijeh consists of a sequence of three photographs that represent an imminent drowning of a pregnant woman without intruding on her intimacy. Unlike Niki de Saint Phalle's jaunty and rambunctious Nanas, the Manijeh figure takes the oblivious prone posture of a woman who is, or has become, apathetic about her environment. In addition, she is going to deliver a baby into a world which does not seem significantly different from her baby's pre-birth state: her child is going to be transferred from a suspended



Fig. 4. Mandana Moghaddam, *Manijeh I* (2010), c-print, 59" x 43".
Photo: Mandana Moghaddam.



Fig. 5. Mandana Moghaddam, *Manijeh II* (2010), c-print, 59" x 43".
Photo: Mandana Moghaddam.



Fig. 6. Mandana Moghaddam, *Manijeh III* (2010), c-print, 59" x 43".
Photo: Mandana Moghaddam.

position in its mother's womb to another suspension in the world outside. *Manijeh* also demonstrates a woman who has grown so accustomed to her situation that the creeping danger does not attract her attention.

The *Chelgis* (literally, a girl with forty braids) series consists of four installation pieces which were unveiled during 2003 to 2009.⁴ The common medium in all works of the series is women's hair. *Chelgis I* (2003; Pl. 9) is a female statue completely covered in long black hair and concealed within a glass case. The work was introduced in the "New Art Exhibition" at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in 2003, and was exhibited along with *Chelgis II* in Venice. *Chelgis III* (2006; Figs. 7, 8) is a video installation showing the legs of a woman standing in a bathtub cutting off her dark hair as locks of cut hair float in the water around her feet. *Chelgis IV* (2007; Fig. 9) consists of an octagonal booth with seven walls and one opening. The outer faces of the walls are covered with mirrors, and the inside walls are covered with long, wavy, dark hair.

Chelgis II (Fig.1, Pl. 7) consists of a large block of cement (87" x 75" x 39") that appears to be suspended from four braids of hair, approximately 13 feet long, which hang from the ceiling. The braids are made up of natural dark hair, black and brown, woven together with a bright red ribbon (Fig.10). (The length of the braids may vary



Fig. 7. Mandana Moghaddam, *Chelgis III* (2006), video installation, Photo: Courtesy the artist.



Fig. 8. Mandana Moghaddam, *Chelgis III* (2006), video installation, Photo: Courtesy the artist.

in some installations, depending on the height of the ceiling, in order to suspend the block at a proper distance from the ground.) Unlike *Chelgis I*, in which the braids are enclosed in glass, here they are within the audience's reach and may be touched. The work invites viewers to approach and to experience the feel of both the soft hair and the hard cement. The work stimulates our sense of touch as well as our sense of sight, as hardness and toughness meet delicacy and fragility.

According to John Berger et al. in *Ways of Seeing*, "Every image embodies a way of seeing [within itself]"⁵ (the artist's intention), whereas, "We only see what we look at"⁶ and "the way we see is affected by what we know or what we believe"⁷ (the audience's experience). In this manner, Iranian audiences have an exclusive perception of the unveiled woman's hair in these works; because wearing the veil (Hijab) is mandatory for women in Iran, generally speaking, their hair and body must not be seen, and men are not permitted to look at them. Thus, *Chelgis II* has broken a taboo in the eyes of Iranian audiences: not only can an unveiled woman's hair be *seen* in this work, but the work invites us to *look* at it.

One aspect of this work that draws the attention of Iranian audiences to *Chelgis II* is its relationship to a Persian expression: to say that something is "hanged by hair" means it is very unstable and exposed to imminent failure. It is the opposite of this presumption that is presented in *Chelgis II*. Delicate hairs are gathered, woven, and united elegantly to

hold up the heavy block. However, the work poses a contradictory question: Are the braids supporting the stone-like concrete or they are entrapped by it?

Human hair growing on the head, the topmost part of the body, often symbolizes spiritual forces.⁸ In its various states, it holds various meanings. In many legends and myths (as well as many artworks), powerful characters have a full head of hair. For instance, in the biblical story of Samson and Delilah, the legendary strength of Samson lies in his hair, and when it is cut off, he loses his power.⁹ Bound hair symbolizes subjection and engagement, while flowing hair symbolizes maturity and freedom.¹⁰ Braids are symbols of interdependence in relationships and of continuity, and because of the resemblance between a braid and a knot, it can have knot symbolism as well.¹¹ Knots are symbols of capturing as well as solidarity, and tightening the knot reinforces its strength.¹² Furthermore, knots are symbols of a covenant, connection, fate, and any other element which binds man to his destiny; it is a symbol of predestination.¹³

In *Chelgis II*, the long braids of natural hair—black-brown being the dominant hair color in Iran—represent a possible metonym for Iranian woman, or Eastern woman in general. The concrete block also is symbolic. Its rectangular form, for example, is associated with the number four, the symbol of every well-ordered structure.¹⁴ Among all geometric forms, the rectangle is the most rational, the most secure and regular, which implies tense domination born of an abstract longing for power.¹⁵ And the square symbolizes matter, gravity, and sharp limitation.¹⁶ Additionally, the hardness and coarseness of the cement block can connote aggression, and even prejudice, while cement itself is associated with the building process, which signifies civilization and urban life. Here the block becomes a symbol of constraint and limitation, of a system or structure which is inflexible and unalterable; and by clasping the braids, it signifies hindrances to which Iranian women must conform.



Fig. 9. Mandana Moghaddam, *Chelgis IV* (2007), mirror, hair, 83" x 28", each plate 83" diameter. Photo: Courtesy the artist.

The red ribbon woven together with the hair represents inevitable stipulations. The red ribbon can be a symbol of prohibited areas or boundaries that must not be crossed, as in today's conventions red signifies danger and hazardous situations. Meanwhile, red evokes other significations: vitality, love, and excitement, as well as uprising and revolution.¹⁷ And because of its resemblance to blood vessels, the red ribbon is sometimes a symbol of life spirit and potential energy.

Although the block in *Chelgis II* at first may appear to be suspended in the air, it seems steady and balanced, owing to the way the braids sustain the imposed pressure. In fact, the most obvious method to suspend a rectangular shape, with four ropes, is exactly what is used here. This inconspicuous fact, which does not immediately register with the spectator, alludes to a pivotal connotation of this work: the artist purposely did not apply "defamiliarization," which could have been done by passing all four braids from the center of the concrete solid or using the braids irregularly or even in different lengths, for instance. The apparently simple form used here recalls the definition of "naturalization": "A state of affairs which is a social and historical creation [and] may be treated as a natural event or as the inevitable outcome of

natural characteristics."¹⁸ In fact, as hairs grow from roots, and here the "roots" are joined to the ceiling, the work demonstrates that delicate hairs have faced the existence of the block since they started to grow. Hence, because the cumbersome structure seems "natural" to the hairs (signifying women), they have gotten stronger by gathering together, tied to each other, and dividing the load among themselves in order to endure the pressure, a sort of management strategy. Meanwhile the free ends of the braids, which are not under any pressure, remain untied. In other words, involuntarily adapted braids are trapped into the affixed structure but assume it as an existent reality. Meanwhile this interaction between the braids and the block shapes expectations.

The long length of the braids implies hair growth and can signify time, in that further growth over time will finally lay down the block, which is already quite close to the ground. Therefore, it can be imagined that the work also embodies a positive insight into the future: by laying the block down, the hairs (women) will come to a collective self-realization of what heavy pressure they have been tolerating all their life.

Aside from the connotation of the steady, sustained balance of this installation, which is a conceptual impact, the static form also has a significant visual impact on the observer and arouses a particular response. This feeling, known as "empathy," is a consequence of an aesthetic relationship between audience and artwork in which "the audience projects himself into the form of art and his feelings are determined by what he finds there."¹⁹ In other words, viewers perceive their embodied empathetic feelings based on representational characteristics which are depicted in the artwork.²⁰ By feeling empathy when first viewing this artwork, the collaborative efforts of these natural hairs, which have resulted in an admirable harmony and proper load distribution across the static form, stimulate us to feel a consistent balance and support rather than being stretched and constrained. In other words, as a result of empathy, we see the braids sustaining the block rather than bearing it.

The sagacious title *Chelgis* also imparts consequent illustrative denotations and connotations to the artwork. "Chelgis" is also the name of a well-known Persian folktale; but before examining this story, it is essential to explore some connotations of "Gis" (Persian for braid). In most cultures, including ancient Iranian, or Persian, culture, long hair was a symbol of virtue and decency, and cutting a woman's hair was a punishment for a woman convicted of a moral sin. The phrase "Gis Borideh" in the Persian language means to have cut hair and also refers to a woman who has committed a moral sin.²¹ This phrase is still used, although the intensity of its meaning has decreased.²² Therefore, the long braid in *Chelgis II* connotes a woman who is obedient to social and cultural expectations.

Persian literature is replete with metaphorical and symbolic examples of the use of the word "Gis." One of the most renowned is the story of Zal and Roudabeh in "Shahnameh" (Book of Kings).²³ Roudabeh, a princess whose life is strictly controlled by her close male relatives, falls in love with Zal.²⁴ When one day she secretly calls him to her palace, she uses her

braids to help him climb up the wall and enter her room through the window.²⁵ From a mythological standpoint, the strength of Roudabeh's braids can be a symbol of women's hidden power.²⁶ Comparatively, in *Chelgis II*, the heavy burden borne by the braids can imply the hidden, potential power of Iranian women.

Another fact to be considered is that in ancient Persian literature, specifically in the folkloric realm—which reflects the social and cultural beliefs of a people—although the presence of a female character is important, her role is always secondary. As in the aforementioned tale, despite Roudabeh's being a determined woman who pursues her dreams to be with Zal, her story is only a prelude to the birth of Rostam, who is the main character of most “Shahnameh” epic stories.²⁷

In the brochure for the Venice Biennale of 2005, the author explains that the title *Chelgis* is freely inspired by an Iranian folktale of that name. Chelgis is an attractive girl who is incarcerated in a beautiful garden by a *Div*, an immortal demon who will die only if someone breaks his “bottle of life,” and with it his spell. There are several versions of this folktale, but all have a similar theme, and like most fairytales contain a bewitching girl, a handsome hero, and enchantment. In one version, a prince named Jantiq (one whose life depends on his thorn necklace) falls in love with Chelgis's picture, and after overcoming many hazardous challenges, finds and marries her.²⁸ In this story, Chelgis is also a symbol of generous nature, as all garden plants bloom when her braids touch the river. In another narrative, the prince finds and marries Chel-gisu-tala (a girl with forty golden braids) after breaking many spells and enchantments (in this narrative the number forty plays a main role).²⁹ In yet another version, the hero frees an imprisoned Chel-Gaze-Mu (a girl with forty locks of hair or with very long hair).³⁰ The famous Iranian film director Ali Hatami combined two Persian folktales in his first film *Hassan-Kachal* (The Bald Hassan), made in 1970, in which the main character, Hasan-Kachal falls in love with Chelgis and frees her from a demon.³¹

The common theme among all these narratives is that the girl has been imprisoned for her entire life, and her only hope for release is that a hero will appear, break the demon's bottle of life, and marry her. Chelgis, the beautiful, desirable young girl whose passive character helps her cope with the unwanted barriers of her life, shares characteristics with all female characters in Persian folktales. Her character is limited to her appearance and how she fulfills the socio-cultural expectations, and her only objective is to get married.

Chelgis's situation, in fact, reflects that of Iranian woman, who faces numerous unwanted restrictions in her life that she must accept. Her situation is symbolized in *Chelgis II* by the long braids captured by the block. By choosing this title for her work, the artist is speaking directly to the situation of Iranian woman and her restrictions. What also is patently obvious is that the Chelgis stories attest to the attitudes of a patriarchal and androcentric society from which they originate. These attitudes, which have been dominant throughout a long history,³² have contributed to forming female identity and consequently have impacted views of the character of woman in Iran, as can still be witnessed.



Fig. 10. Mandana Moghaddam, *Chelgis II* (detail) (2005), cement, hair, red ribbon, 87" x 75" x 40". Photo: Courtesy the artist.

The Chelgis series thus comprises a common concept—the Iranian woman—causing all works in the series to become different avatars of this figure, or in other words, different visual images of this “archetype” of Iranian woman. As Carl Jung pointed out, the archetype is a tendency to form numerous representations of a motif, which can be different in details without losing their basic pattern.³³ In fact, these works, especially *Chelgis II*, declare the existence of a particular archetype that resides in the collective unconsciousness of today's Iranian women—and Iranian men—which indirectly impacts their assumptions about woman.

The limitations symbolized in *Chelgis II*, that woman may not necessarily be obedient but is predictable, ensure she will never escape her barriers. By means of its static, familiar, and natural form, this work demonstrates those expectations which are instilled in woman to define her nobility and decency, in direct correlation with her tolerance and patience. The use of natural hairs in this artwork becomes a metonym for the women from whose heads they derived. Hence, every single hair embodies an exclusive memory of being a woman within Iranian culture and society, and the use of natural hair connotes the presence of numerous eyewitnesses who have profoundly experienced the situation which *Chelgis II* reveals.

Furthermore, by posing contradictory questions such as, “is the concrete block held by the long braids?” or “are the delicate braids captured by the tough block?” or “does the red ribbon mean stop moving and stand still, or does it mean passion, excitement, and energy?,” this work reminds us of the contradictions Iranian woman encounter while avoiding a particular judgment. Should she admit the social and cultural restrictions, and like Chelgis hope for the demon's bottle of life to be broken, or should she set herself free by personal growth and self development? While we appreciate the content of

Chelgis II, and feel sympathy with the woman who is passively constricted by her irremediable conditions, being exposed to its visual impact can help viewers empathize with its stable form, thereby finding the braids conquering and powerful.

This is how *Chelgis II* has become such a clear representation of the Iranian woman's situation. Its unveiled natural hair reveals powerful truths about her life: that being a woman in Iranian society and culture means accepting all limitations throughout one's entire life and conforming to all consequences of being a female member of the society; and that woman must accept her constraints as inevitable and reconcile a dynamic adaptation with a passive toleration.

What is signified in *Chelgis II*, through its medium, form, content, and title, is the imposed identity and definition of the Iranian woman. With its feminist perspective and by means of its elements, connotations, and denotations, this work admirably represents what Iranian woman has always been hailed as. It personifies how she has conformed to the immutable expectations of her society, at the same time indicating how this conformity contributes to existing presumptions about her character. •

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Notes

1. As of March 2012, this record still stands. Christie's Salesrooms & Offices, <http://www.christies.com/about/locations/dubai/>. Among the most successful Iranian female artists in Christie's auctions are: Shirin Neshat (b. 1957, photography), Monir Farmanfarmaian (b. 1924, installation, painting), Farideh Lashai (b. 1944, painting), Pouran Jinchi (b. 1959, painting), Parvineh Etemadi (b. 1947, painting), Farah Ossuli (b. 1953, painting), Parastou Forouhar (b. 1962, photography, installation), Shirin Aliabadi (b. 1973, photography), Golnaz Fathi (b. 1972, painting, installation), Simin Ekrami (b. 1948, sculpture) Sara Rahbar (b. 1976, installation), Shadi Ghadirian (b. 1974, photography), Afsoon (b. 1961, painting), Bitta Vakili (b. 1973, painting), Mitra Tabrizian (b. 1959, photography), Nicky Nodjoumi (b. 1942, painting), Bita Fayyazi (b. 1962, installation), Mansoureh Hosseini (b. 1926, painting), Shiva Ahmadi (b. 1975, painting), Leila Pazooki (b. 1977, painting), Shohreh Mehran (b. 1958, painting), Katayoun Rouhi (b. 1965, painting), Tahereh Samadi Tari (b. 1981, painting).
2. For more information, see the personal website of Mandana Moghaddam, <http://mandana-moghaddam.com/>.
3. *The Well* was not installed in Iran because authorities found references to certain religious traditions to be too sensitive for a public work.
4. Apart from Venice, the *Chelgis* works have appeared in other notable exhibitions. *Chelgis I* was shown in "Hautnah," an international exhibition about hair in art and culture at Villa Rot Museum in Burgrieden-Rot in Germany in 2009; and earlier in "Mahrem: Footnotes on Veiling," both in Istanbul in 2007 and in Austria and Germany in 2008, which explored contradictory concepts around the veil.
5. John Berger et al., *Ways of Seeing*, 2nd ed. (New York, Penguin, 1977), 10.
6. Ibid., 8.
7. Ibid.
8. J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (1962), trans. Jack Sage, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1971), 134.
9. Dee Dyas and Esther Scott Hughes, *The Bible in Western Culture: The Student's Guide*, ed. Stephen Travis (New York: Routledge, 2005), 77.
10. Jean C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols* (1978; repr., London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2004), 77.
11. Ibid., 132.
12. Ibid., 92.
13. Ibid.
14. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 235.
15. Ibid., 272.
16. Johannes Itten, *The Art of Color: The Subjective Experience and Objective Rationale of Color* (1961), trans. Ernst van Haagen, 2nd ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), 120.
17. Ibid., 134.
18. John B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication* (California: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990), 66.
19. Herbert Edward Read, *The Meaning of Art* (1931; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 1951), 30.
20. Theodor Lipps, "Empathy and Aesthetic Pleasure," in *Aesthetic Theories: Studies in the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Karl Aschenbrenner and Arnold Isenberg, 403-14 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1965).
21. *The Dehkhoda Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Gis Borideh."
22. Ibid.
23. Literally, Book of Kings, the Persian masterpiece that is a national epic written by Ferdowsi in 11th century AD, consists of about 60,000 verses about the mythical and historical eras of Iran, from the creation of the world until the Arab invasion in the seventh century AD. For more information, see Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *The Persian Book of Kings*, trans. Dick Davis (New York: Viking, 2006).
24. Mehri Talkhabi, *Shahnameh and Feminism* (Tehran: Tarfand, 2005), 124.
25. Ibid., 125.
26. Shahla Lahiji and Mehranguiz Kar, *The Quest for Identity: The Image of Iranian Women in Prehistory and History* (Tehran: Roshangaran, 1993), 97.
27. Azin Hussein-Zadeh, *Ideal Woman and Fatal Woman: A Comparative Analysis of Female Characters in Persian Literature* (Tehran: Nashr-e Ghatreh, 2004), 19-20.
28. Abolghassame Endjavi, *Qesse Hay -e Irani (Contes Persans)*, vol. 2 (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1973), 193.
29. Hossain Mir-Kazemie, *Golden Dreadlocks Folk Stories from Mazandaran, Golestan and Torkaman Sahra* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1998), 114.
30. Ahmad Shamlou, *Qesseha-ye Ketab-e Kuce* (Stockholm: Arash, 1992), 173. In another tale, *Chelgis* is captured by a demon that has banned the water spring, and the king's son frees and then marries her; see Fazlollah Mohtadi, *The Legends*, vol. 2, (Tehran: Jami, 1998), 97.
31. Jamal Omid, *The History of Iranian Cinema 1978-1900*, vol. 1, 8th ed. (Tehran: Negah, 2009), 271.
32. Jalal Sattari, in *The Visage of Woman in Iranian Culture* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1994), says patriarchy in Iran is rooted in the arrival of nomadic Indo European tribes to the Iranian plateau around 2000 B.C. However, some feminist scholars like Gerda Lerner, in *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), are opposed to pointing to a single historical moment for the initiation of patriarchy.
33. Carl G. Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz eds., *Man and His Symbols* (1964; repr., New York: Doubleday & Company, 1988), 67.

MINNA CITRON'S "FEMINANITIES"

HER COMMENTARY ON THE CULTURE OF VANITY

By Jennifer L. Streb



Fig. 1. Minna Citron, *Beauty Culture?* (1933), lithograph, 8" x 11 1/2". Collection of Christiane H. Citron, Denver, CO.

Society's ideas about beauty and women's roles within a developing beauty culture took center stage in several of Minna Citron's "Feminanities," the artist's first major critically acclaimed solo exhibition, held in 1935 at New York's Midtown Gallery.¹ In the words of one contemporary critic, the exhibition provided Citron (1896-1991) with the opportunity to "attack ... the shallowness of the modern woman's vanity [in a way that] should curl the hair of beauty experts and take the wave out of their victims."² Another critic described the artist as "something far rarer: a feminine

satirist troubled not by man's inhumanity toward women, but by the follies of her own sex."³

Through her *Feminanities* series as well as her *Gambling Series* and *Judges and Juries*, all produced during the 1930s, Citron commented on a variety of contemporary social issues. In some cases the artist used her paintings and prints as a way to reference noteworthy news stories; in others, including *Feminanities's Hope Springs Eternal* (early 1930s; Pl. 10) and *Beauty Culture?* (1933; Fig. 1), she depicted self-absorbed women getting manicures and buying makeup, pointing up



Fig. 2. Minna Citron, *Self-Expression* (1932), lithograph, 13 1/2" x 8 3/8". Collection of Christiane H. Citron, Denver, CO.

their obsession with glamour in the face of the Great Depression and the contemporary feminist movement. In all cases, however, and regardless of subject matter, Citron demonstrated a keen awareness of her social surroundings, cleverly infusing her art with satire, irony, and strong personal commentary. "All I try to do," said the artist, "is hold a mirror to the unlovely facets of a woman's mind."⁴

As suggested by the exhibition title, images of women (including a self-portrait) featured prominently in "Femininities." The aptly titled *Self-Expression*, a painting (1934; Pl. 11) and related lithograph (1932; Fig. 2), is a complicated image that depicts the artist working before an easel in her studio and at the same time serves as a clever commentary on the artist's social and physical milieu. In *Hope Springs Eternal* and *Beauty Culture?* the artist caricatures the superficiality and narcissism of contemporary women's culture by portraying the "shallow," trivial, and "frivolous" activities with which some lower middle-class women concerned themselves.⁵ In addition to these self-absorbed characters, Citron also commented on the plight of women and children during the Depression in *She*

Earns an Honest Living and *Grist to the Mill* (1934; Fig. 3). Here she depicts a woman and two boys attempting to earn a living during the Depression by selling newspapers in the subway. These figures are "grist" for the capitalist system that exploits their labor in a society more concerned with sensational stories of celebrity.⁶ In *Subway Technique* (1932; Fig. 4), she called attention to issues of race and gender, capturing an incident witnessed by Citron on her way to the studio. She recalls "I had a feeling that this guy was goosing her...but she was liking it."⁷ The image, however, is not simply about the man's subtle "technique." Drawing attention to current racial tensions, Citron includes a newspaper headline referring to the sensational case of the Scottsboro Boys, in which nine young black men in Alabama were accused of raping two young white women in 1931. To all of these subjects Citron applied a critical eye, creating images that were edgy observations of society; but a closer examination of *Beauty Culture?*, *Hope Springs Eternal*, and *Self-Expression*, in particular, demonstrates that Minna Citron crystallized her ideas about popular beauty culture and contemporary society in a way in that few of her contemporaries were able to do.

Many stylistic developments in American art from the late 1920s until the late 1980s are evident in Citron's lifetime of work. After initially working in a realist style, Citron became one of the first artists to move toward abstraction in the early 1940s. Later, in the post-war era, she experimented with mixed-media imagery, all the while teaching, lecturing around the world, and writing about art. Citing possible reasons why her artistic career has not garnered the scholarly attention received by some of her colleagues, for example, Isabel Bishop or Reginald Marsh, one critic suggested that her "critical attitudes ... are gender biased," continuing that Citron "has never been a woman who has fitted the female stereotype. She has a cutting wit, which she uses freely, and her lifestyle has not conformed to any norms.... Her independence has worked against her acceptance, as it would not have done had she been male."⁸ That "cutting wit" is pervasive in her paintings and prints from the 1930s, especially several in the *Femininities* series. The images are edgier, often more satirical, than those of Bishop, with an underlying social commentary that offers an interesting perspective on contemporary cultural issues. Living and working in New York, Citron drew inspiration from her surroundings—the people, places, and things she encountered every day; the city became grist for Citron's mill as she turned everything in life, including art, to her advantage.

Born in Newark, New Jersey, the youngest of five children, and the only daughter, Minna Wright was raised by her mother following the early death of her father. The family lived in Brooklyn, New York. At the age of twenty she married her high school sweetheart, Henry Citron, had two sons, and settled into a comfortable middle class life. The fierce independence of her youth continued into adulthood, and after several years she felt a pressing need to break away from her dull domestic routine.⁹ She began creating art, first as a hobby, but it became a more serious pursuit as she sought professional training. The twenty-eight year old mother of two



Fig. 3. Minna Citron, *Grist to the Mill* (1934), lithograph, 11 7/8" x 14". Collection of Jennifer L. Streb, Pennsylvania Furnace, PA.



Fig. 4. Minna Citron, *Subway Technique* (1932), reproduced in *Venus Through the Ages*, unpublished manuscript, Minna Citron Archives, Denver, CO.

attended the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences in 1924, then the New York School of Applied Design for Women during 1925–1927, before ultimately studying at the Art Students League during 1928–1935, with notable artists including Kenneth Hayes Miller, John Sloan, Harry Sternberg, and Kimon Nicolaïdes.¹⁰

In the mid-1920s Citron began taking her eldest son to a therapist, and as she became increasingly unhappy with her domestic situation, she, too, sought therapy on a regular basis. This led to her fascination with Freudian theory (which helped prompt her forays into abstraction at William Stanley Hayter's Atelier 17 in the early 1940s). One day her analyst asked if she'd ever had an orgasm. She had never heard the word before and thought "yes" sounded like the best answer. After the session, she asked a friend what the word meant, and not long thereafter asked for a divorce.¹¹ By the mid-1920s, she had thus set herself on a course that was all but "uncharted" for women of her day.¹² Following her divorce, by 1934 Citron had turned her attention full time to art, focusing often on subjects pertaining to women, drawing on her conflicting roles as wife/ex-wife, mother, and professional artist.

Citron's work during the 1930s is difficult to categorize. Her form of social realism was not created solely to bring attention to social or political issues or to critique the capitalist system; although at times she alluded to contemporary socio-political events, her images tended more towards the personal. She chronicled the people and places she confronted every day, rendering them in a way that also calls the viewer's attention to a variety of contemporary social and cultural issues. By the 1930s, the movement for women's rights that had been driven by suffrage was largely broken up. Citron's personal feminism, however, allowed her to take responsibility for the difficult choices she made as a young woman. A feminist at heart, Citron focused on women and women's issues from the start. Hers was a practical feminism, grounded in her experiences and based on her beliefs about independence and equality.

Asked later in life about her views on feminism during the thirties, Citron remarked: "I think I've always been a feminist and fighting women's battles but they weren't organized in those years, you see? And since then [...] women have been more organized [...]. I haven't had time to do much protesting. But my feelings were there."¹³

Independent by nature, Citron desired to make her own decisions, both personal and professional. She wanted to make a name for herself in the male-dominated art world, and *Femininities* became an expression of her search for direction in life as her marriage was breaking apart.¹⁴ Ultimately, her desire for self-reliance led her to divorce her husband and to emerge from the cocoon of upper-middle-class domesticity in which she had been trapped.

In the early years of the twentieth century, women had joined organizations and devoted themselves to political and civil rights reform as a means of expanding their opportunities for advancement.¹⁵ By the 1920s, more women attended university and joined the workforce, but the energy of pre-suffrage feminism was already dissipating and there was less interest in an organized feminist ideology. Although reform issues were still in play during the twenties, according to historian Sheila Rowbotham, a "restricted definition of feminism prevailed," soon to be exacerbated later by the Great Depression, during which there was increased antagonism toward the notion of women entering the workforce.¹⁶ Historian Lynn D. Gordon concurs, noting that "80 percent of Americans told pollsters they opposed employment for married women."¹⁷ This reactionary period during which women were often encouraged to remain at home and focus on family, coincided with Citron's entry into the art world.¹⁸ She became what the writer Dorothy Bromley defined as a "new woman": she "accepts women's rights to work and participate in the democratic process and is interested in self-



Fig. 5. Minna Citron, *Minna Citron by Minna Citron* (1938), pen and ink, 13" x 10". Collection of Christiane H. Citron, Denver, CO.

fulfillment rather than selfless devotion to an idea of duty and submissiveness."¹⁹

Citron depicts her newfound freedom in *Self-Expression*. Unconcerned with matters of beauty that interest the women in some other Femininities images, this figure sits in her studio, working at her easel. Drawing on a long tradition of female self-portraiture—though unlike Judith Leyster or Lee Krasner's canonical self-portraits, for example—the figure here looks at her canvas, not at or toward the viewer. Krasner, who holds brushes and a rag in one hand and reaches toward the easel with her other, looks out in the direction of the viewer; Citron, by contrast, completely ignores the presence of the viewer and instead stares intently, with furrowed brow, at her easel. And while both artists depict themselves working, Citron's is decidedly un-romanticized and unconventional. She sits, perched less than daintily upon her stool, legs spread wide in a position revealing more of her thigh than would be considered appropriate. Nonetheless, the figure is unabashed; and while her task and drawing equipment dictate the posture, the effect remains somewhat risqué. Citron's

biographer describes a 1938 self-portrait, titled *Minna Citron by Minna Citron* (Fig. 5), with words apropos of *Self-Expression*:

...she depicts herself seated on a chair, working. Determination and a sense of humor are forcefully combined. She does not so much sit on the chair as ride it like a horse. The drawing offers a most engaging glimpse of the artist at work. The self-portrait recurs several times as a subject for her drawings, among them some of her most haunting works. Ruthlessly searching for her true identity, she discovers and lets us see her strength, but also her vulnerability and doubts. These are not the drawings of a woman concerned with the attractiveness of her physical appearance, although photographs taken at various times during her life show us an attractive, even chic woman. These portray an artist, a human being in search of her soul. What she shows us is neither 'pretty' nor cheerful. She conveys the precarious condition of our existence, in which death is a fact impossible to grasp fully. [...] These self-portraits might have been disturbingly somber, but Minna's saving grace is her sense of humor. Behind all these lines there might lurk the death mask of a skull, but there is still an ever-so-subtle twinkle in one eye.²⁰

An important element of the two *Self-Expressions* is the window with the view of Union Square, a downtown area of the city where Citron maintained several studios during her career and which was a popular home—and subject—for artists during the thirties.²¹ She draws the viewer's attention specifically to the S. Klein department store, one of several low-price stores that had moved into the area in recent decades as more prominent stores, including Macy's and Tiffany's, relocated uptown. (Situated across from her studio, S. Klein and the S. Klein annex were buildings with which she was intimately familiar.) Nevertheless, Union Square remains a significant compositional element, as evidenced by the fact that nearly half of the image is given over to it. Citron allows the city to enter her studio, especially in the painted version of *Self-Expression* (Pl. 11), where the floor-to-ceiling window is open. By welcoming the hustle and bustle of the city into her creative domain, she artfully places herself within the surrounding community, as if reveling in her newfound freedom and career. Its inclusion also strengthens the artist's representation of a reality based on her personal experiences, as she includes Union Square in her perspective on the world.

The clever ironies infused into many of Citron's witty images during this period appear in *Self-Expression*. The window frame in the painting cuts through the letters of the S. Klein sign so that the only letters seen by the viewer are S and I N. The square, then, she seems to be implying, is about SIN—an allusion made even more obvious when one notices the phallic shaped water towers on top of the building. These references lend a humorous touch to the self-portrait, especially considering the artist's "unladylike" pose. Such elements point to Citron's blending of the professional and the personal with an irony that seems to value wry commentary over a more conventionally flattering portrayal.

In *Hope Springs Eternal* and *Beauty Culture?*, Citron again turns an unflinching eye on women's popular culture. Given the artist's commitment to feminism, it may at first seem uncharacteristic that these early images of women are not more uplifting or empowering. Rather, in line with her personal views described above, she portrays women who fail to take advantage of the new opportunities open to them, women who instead focus on what Citron considered to be trivial and inconsequential pastimes, or inanities. By ridiculing and caricaturing these pursuits, the artist employed satire as a route to empowerment, in an effort to raise the public's consciousness about the state of feminism, women's rights, and larger social issues of the day.

In her review of "Femininities" for the *New York World-Telegram*, staff writer Geraldine Sartain concluded that Citron "believes woman is in conflict, for she's been preoccupied too many generations with the small things and now that the world is opening up to her, her mind doesn't mature rapidly enough to permit her to seize it and bend it to her will."²² These are the women that Citron lampoons in *Hope Springs Eternal*, calling them "silly" for their futile hopes of being transformed into the ravishing figures of stage and screen. Citron told Sartain, "I used the beauty parlor and the cold cream and lotion counter motif because there are those silly women everlastingly hoping against hope that beauty will be theirs. Women are such children; I want to see them adult."²³ Her caricatures are thus meant to chastise the women for pursuing these child-like activities in light of what she believed to be their insignificance.

The use of cosmetics to mimic popular culture images of women was a relatively new phenomenon. In the years following the First World War, a mass market cosmetics industry took root as thousands of women around the country began embracing makeup, responding wholeheartedly to intense advertising campaigns implemented by cosmetics companies; by the early 1930s, according to historian Roland Marchand, advertisements had begun to focus on "typical" consumers in an effort to develop a mass market.²⁴ The result was that upper-, middle- and working-class women began flocking to cosmetics salons and department stores to purchase the new products, perhaps seeking an inexpensive way to lift their spirits while the economic depression was going on around them. What a few decades before was disparagingly called "paint" and associated with prostitutes was now celebrated as "glamour," and it was precisely that which Citron's women were attempting to acquire.²⁵

In *Hope Springs Eternal*, alternately titled *Bargain Basement*, several homely women gather around a cosmetics counter. The location, in the basement of a department store, and the women's outdated clothing styles indicate their lower-middle-class status. After all, women of less modest means could afford to shop at the more expensive, main-floor cosmetic counters.²⁶ Chic fashions of the day included form-fitting coats and head-hugging flapper-type hats seen in contemporary advertisements. The only figure in Citron's painting sporting such a flattering style is the slender, well-proportioned blond clerk, whose long fitted skirt draws attention to her petite



Fig. 6. *Toppers*, reproduced in Jim Heimann, *All-American Ads: 30s*, page 450 (Taschen, 2003).

figure. The customers, by contrast, wear bulky fur-collared coats that are a far cry from the "smart styles" and "smart lengths" seen in a 1930s advertisement for coats (Fig. 6).

Exaggerated facial features further play up the distance between the women seeking beauty and their beauty ideal. The white-haired woman closest to the viewer and opposite the salesgirl has an extremely long, pointed nose, while the redhead's lips are drawn back over two slightly separated front teeth, as if to utter a long, drawn-out "oh" in response to the clerk's sales pitch. Red lipstick worn by the African American customer emphasizes her missing front tooth, while the dour-faced woman beside her has an accentuated double chin. Of the last two "bedraggled female shoppers" (as described by a contemporary critic),²⁷ one wears pop-bottle glasses, and the other is rendered with a crooked nose and an off-center mouth.

Perched atop a pedestal in the middle of the figures, the display model of face cream appears as an icon of consumerism, venerated and desired by the shoppers who worshipfully gather around it. Here again, Citron's sarcasm is in evidence in the name of the fictive cream: La Jolie, French for "pretty one." That, combined with the elegance associated with the classical Corinthian column so prominent in the background, suggests that Citron's figures hope this cream will magically provide them with some of the beauty and class seen in the advertisement images, or the glamour and sex appeal of big screen stars such as Marlene Dietrich or Greta Garbo.²⁸ The role of marketing was central, and a proliferation of advertisements for beauty products encouraged this type of



Fig. 7. Minna Citron, *Cold Comfort* (1935), lithograph, 8" x 5 3/4". Collection of Christiane H. Citron, Denver, CO.

behavior.²⁹ Historian Kathy Peiss argues that young women in the 1920s and 1930s began to emulate the clothes, hairstyles, makeup, and gestures of screen stars because of their perceived desirability to the opposite sex, with men sometimes admitting they chose girlfriends simply based on their resemblance to favorite actresses.³⁰ Sadly, and to Citron's chagrin, the women she encounters on the street—her source for those bargain shoppers with their big eyeglasses, buck-teeth, and double chins—will likely never be glamorous, even with the aid of miracle cosmetic products.

On the wall behind the women, a large gold-framed mirror provides an interesting counterpoint to the open window of *Self-Expression*. In the self-portrait, Citron comments on the world that has been opened up to her by her divorce and new career, made visible through her open window. By contrast, in *Hope Springs Eternal*, the mirror reflects back the bargain basement of the department store and the ordinary women who seek to obtain for themselves the popular image of female beauty. It is to this inanity that the artist objects; and perhaps she even shows herself frowning at the narcissism of the silly women she is painting. As such, *Self-Expression* becomes the key commentary on the larger theme behind many of the works in *Femininities*.

Citron ridicules, writes one critic, not only the "shopping frenzy devotees" of *Hope Springs Eternal* but also the "frivolity

of the beauty parlor habitués" in *Beauty Culture*?.³¹ Here middle-class women scrutinize gossip magazines and peruse their advertisements while enjoying the small luxuries of receiving manicures and getting their hair coiffed; all but one are imprisoned by the hairdryers, locked in their own vanity. Perched next to the conspicuously large foreground figure is the manicurist, sitting on a low stool beside her tray of instruments, polishes, and creams. The act of filing and polishing one's nails, the focal point of this image, reflects the culture of beauty, developing since the 1920s, in which a woman's hands symbolized refinement, attractiveness, and femininity.³² Rough "dishpan hands" suggested not just carelessness in terms of appearance but lower-class social status as defined by a life of tedious housework. The numerous advertisements in inexpensive magazines offered miracle cures—beauty lotions and creams, nail polish and lipsticks in glamorous colors, and even gentler home-cleaning products.

While some other women in the salon are napping or reading while waiting their turn under the hairdryer, at the far right one woman has a surprised look on her face as she reads a magazine whose front cover reads "Mental Hygiene." Asked later whether that woman was reading a gossip magazine, Citron responded, "Oh, I supposed so [...] passing the time, you know," as though agreeing with the interviewer rather than revealing any larger insight.³³ Given the deliberateness with which Citron constructed her compositions, however—nothing was included by accident—one can assume that the magazine represented more than just a typical tabloid, and this headline is a key to unlocking this composition's subtle satire.

Citron first became interested in Freudian psychology during the 1920s, when a number of her friends were studying to become psychiatric social workers. Around that time Citron began undergoing psychoanalysis, spending, as she recounts, "five days a week on the couch for a year."³⁴ Therapy was liberating for Citron, who later said:

I think my period in psychoanalysis freed me. It freed me to break the tie with my mother. Eventually it freed me sexually because I began to wonder whether I was functioning properly with my ex-husband or not. [...] Well I believe that a lot of people are held back by inhibitions or early training or whatever, as I was too. [...] I think psychoanalysis, when it's good, helps people to free themselves from those kinds of restraints and opens them up to drawing on their unconscious. The unconscious mind is a very rebel, you see. We get ideas from inside. And that's what psychoanalysis does [...]. And [...] if the psychoanalysis is successful [...], you begin to understand what is making you tic [*sic*].³⁵

Citron pointedly references her disregard for the "beauty culture" and her interest in psychoanalysis by including "Mental Hygiene" as the tabloid headline. Though a small detail, it is clear that the artist is satirizing the general mindset of a society that was obsessed with mediated images of female beauty. She disparages a culture that promotes activities she considered frivolous and vain, and mocks the women as well

as the society itself that so wholeheartedly accept this questionable ideal.

The figures in *Hope Springs Eternal* and *Beauty Culture?* reach for a standard of beauty promised to them by artificial means, even as the caricatured representations emphasize the distance between them and the ideal to which they aspire. With *Cold Comfort* (1935; Fig. 7), Citron again comments on standards of female beauty, this time as seen from the predominantly masculine point of view expressed in the canon of Western art. Traditionally, classical statuary has represented grace, beauty, and perfection; however, in this image, Citron calls attention to its perceived sensuality and eroticism by rendering the janitor in a way that emphasizes his lurid gaze as he lightly caresses the statue's left breast with a feather duster. Seen within the context of other *Femininities* images, *Cold Comfort* subtly points to the historical roots of such idealized images of women, while satirically calling attention to their artificiality: The statue may express a (male) view of classical female perfection, but in the end it is clearly "cold comfort" to imagine love in the form of a marble figure.

By considering the nature of women's societal roles and the ideologies that helped keep them in those roles, it becomes evident that Minna Citron wove her own personal interests and experiences into her depictions of the larger social context of the early 1930s. Her ability to apply a critical and ironic eye to these experiences and to create images that are refreshingly distinct from the conventions of 1930s social realism led to her unique perspective that would characterize her long artistic career. As Louis Weitzenkorn wrote in the foreword to the *Femininities* exhibition catalog, Citron's "adventures into the dreadful results of modern civilization on human beings have a shattering effect upon ones [*sic*] complacency. In spite of the seeming cruelty of the characters, there is always a transparent tenderness and sympathy for the creatures, that were once men and women, whom she draws."³⁶ Every work in the *Femininities* series, including the self-portrait, contains wry social commentary, not just about the individuals in her surroundings, but also about the values of their culture. That women were increasingly encouraged to set aside their new-won freedoms in favor of pursuing unreachable idealized images was disappointing to Citron. And while, as a student of art, Citron was well aware of the historical roots of those images, her own work from this period reflects an understanding of how the popular consumerism and its cult(ure) of beauty were exploiting women, and how the popular press found countless seductive ways to use those images against women's best interests, with women themselves all too often serving as unwitting participants in the process. •

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Notes

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1. Citron had two earlier shows while still a student, one in 1930 at the New School for Social Research and one in 1932 at New York's Brownell-Lamberston Gallery. "Femininities" was held in 1935, the year she completed her studies at the Art Students League. Roberta Smith, "Minna Citron, 95, Artist Whose Work Spanned 2 Schools," *New York Times*, Dec. 24 1991, B6. Judith K. Brodsky and Ferris Olin, "Minna Citron at 90," Mabel Smith Douglass Library, Rutgers Univ., Oct. 3-24, 1986, unpaginated.
2. Louis Weitzenkorn, "Femininities," Midtown Gallery, New York, NY, April 16 – 29, 1935.
3. "Femininities." *Time Magazine*, May 6, 1935.
4. Geraldine Sartain, "Woman Artist Tries to Ridicule Feminine Silliness with Brush," *New York World Telegram*, April 19, 1935.
5. Karal Ann Marling and Helen A. Harrison, *7 American Women: The Depression Decade* (New York: A.I.R. Gallery, 1976), 26. "Minna Citron as a Caricaturist," *Art Digest* 9 (May 1, 1935): 18. The authors of both use the term "shallow" to describe these paintings.
6. Headlines seen in the newspapers refer to sporting events and notable figures in the news: "GIANTS AND DODGERS WIN," "The Babe gets Salary Reduced to 50,000," "Child Slayer: Hair-Raising Details [of the] Murder" (referring to the Lindbergh kidnapping), and "Officials Pose with Dillinger."
7. Minna Citron, interview by WQED personnel, *Seasons of Life: 711.1-711.3*, unpublished transcript, Minna Citron Archives, Denver, CO., 1986, 5. Portions of the interview, including the passage referenced here, can be found in John Kotre and Elizabeth Hall, *The Dramatic Journey from Birth to Death* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan, 1990), 340.
8. Brodsky and Olin, "Minna Citron at 90," n.p.
9. Young women of Citron's generation were expected to be obedient wives, to support their husband's career, and to raise the children, none of which, recounts her biographer Clemens Resseguier, suited her. Minna Citron and Clemens Resseguier, *Minna Citron: Her Stories—Her Work*, unpublished manuscript, Minna Citron Archives, Denver, CO, 1.
10. Roberta Smith, "Minna Citron, 95, Artist Whose Work Spanned 2 Schools." Influenced especially by Miller and Sloan, Citron's developing realist style led her to the 14th Street School artists with whom she worked in the mid to late 1930s. She also worked for the Works Progress Administration between 1935 and 1937 and was commissioned by the Treasury Section of Fine Arts to paint two post office murals in Newport and Manchester, TN. In the early 1940s Citron broke ties with her realist colleagues when she began working with William Stanley Hayter. It was at his studio, Atelier 17, where Citron began experimenting with abstraction, the style that would dominate the rest of her career.
11. Citron interview, *Seasons of Life: 711.1-711.3*, 5-6.
12. Minna Citron, "The Uncharted Course," Peter Deitsch Gallery (New York, 1950).
13. Citron interview, *Seasons of Life: 711.1-711.3*, 22-23.
14. Marling and Harrison, *7 American Women: The Depression Decade*, 26.
15. Mary Beth Norton and Ruth M. Alexander, eds. "The 'New Woman' in Public Life and Politics, 1900-1930," in *Major Problems in American Women's History*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 246.

16. Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997), 156, 204.
17. Lynn D. Gordon, "Education and the Professions," in *A Companion to American Women's History*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 243. Gordon explains that "Federal, state, and local governments passed laws limiting married women's right to work in various professions and occupations; teachers, in particular suffered from this legislation." She continues, noting that "Some white women professionals did well during the 1930s," citing the social workers who were the "backbone of many New Deal relief programs," and nurses.
18. Barbara Love, ed. *Feminists Who Changed America, 1963-1975* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2006), 289. Love's entry on Alma Lutz echoes Gordon: "A 1932 American anti-nepotism law for government workers...stated that only one spouse could work. Passed at a time when wages were sinking and jobs were scarce, the law did not state that it was the husband who could work but the meaning was clear." During the Depression women were often encouraged to remain at home.
19. Ellen Wiley Todd, *The "New Woman" Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993), 32-33.
20. Citron and Resseguier, *Minna Citron: Her Stories—Her Work*, 113.
21. Citron first worked at 30 E. 14th Street in the same building as Kenneth Hayes Miller, Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Harry Sternberg. She worked at 857 Broadway, in Isabel Bishop's building, for several years before moving to 32 Union Square, where she remained. For a brief history of Union Square, see *The Artists of Union Square* (New York: Associated American Artists, 1987). See also Marling and Harrison, *7 American Women: The Depression Decade*, 26.
22. Sartain, "Woman Artist Tries to Ridicule Feminine Silliness with Brush."
23. Citron, in *Ibid*.
24. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985), xv. In her book on America's beauty culture, Kathy Peiss writes about the development of America's cosmetics industry and the ways in which women in the 19th and 20th centuries used makeup and cosmetic products to express themselves and their roles within society. Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt, 1998), x, 97.
25. Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture*, 199, 151.
26. Confirming this notion that wealthy customers shopped in the department stores, Peiss informs her readers that "for the affluent consumer, department stores brought beauty secrets into a new urban setting of publicity and spectacle. [...] A Macy's executive proudly told perfume manufacturers in 1909 that department stores intentionally 'lured' women 'to the counters by playing on their sense of smell.'" *Ibid*, 51-52.
27. "Femininities," *Time Magazine*, May 6, 1935.
28. Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture*, 103.
29. Mee-Ae Kim, "Defining Womanhood: Images of Women in Advertisements in *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1890-1930" (M.A. thesis, University of Notre Dame, 1992), 67.
30. Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture*, 191-192.
31. Greg, Masters, "From the 1930s-40s, 50 Years Ago: WPA/AAA," *Arts Magazine* 61 (February 1987): 106.
32. Kim, "Defining Womanhood: Images of Women in Advertisements in *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1890-1930," 60.
33. Citron interview, *Seasons of Life III: 713.1-713.3*, 8.
34. Stephen Gayle, "Daily Closeup: Portrait of the Artist," *New York Post*, May 12, 1976.
35. Minna Citron, interview by WQED personnel, *Interview with Minna, Tape #778*, unpublished transcript, Minna Citron Archives, Denver, CO, n.d., 7, 13.
36. Weitzenkorn, "Femininities," n.p.

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THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE TWO MRS. SLOANS

By Alexis L. Boylan

In his biography of the twentieth-century American artist John Sloan, John Loughery begins his acknowledgements section with an anecdote:

Some years ago John Rewald, the art historian and Cézanne biographer, remarked in conversation about the difficulties of what he termed the “artist’s widow syndrome,” that unfortunate practice that some wives of deceased painters engage in when they seek to control their husband’s posthumous reputations, usually to the detriment of that reputation. In such situations, documents are mysteriously edited, material is withheld, questionable information is released, and freedom of thought is impinged upon by various ploys.¹

Loughery contrasts Rewald’s comments with his own experience working with Helen Farr Sloan (1911–2005), the artist’s second wife and widow, who he suggests was syndrome-free. She engaged in no “ploys,” no foolish attempts to trick wily art historians or biographers from the truth. Indeed, in reading Loughery’s 1995 biography—which stands as one of the most comprehensive works about Sloan and provides much of the material subsequent art historians have used to consider Sloan’s life and art—what becomes clear is how much Loughery depended on Helen Sloan’s memory and access to her late husband’s papers, photographs, and letters.

For those who study John Sloan (1871–1951) and the Ashcan circle of artists, this reliance on Helen Sloan and her dedication to building an archive and aiding scholars comes as no surprise. Much of the credit for the reappraisal of Sloan’s career during the past few decades is due to her labors. After the artist died in 1951, his widow steered his sizable, rich collection of art and documents to the Delaware Art Museum and worked with scholars to make his diaries and letters accessible. Her hand can be seen, quite literally, in almost every publication and exhibition concerning Sloan produced after 1951; she authored introductions in many catalogs, is widely acknowledged in books on the artist, and willingly participated in numerous interviews about Sloan and his peers.² Helen Farr Sloan was what Loughery, Rewald, and others might consider the good kind of widow, encouraging and befriending all who sought to promote the importance and talents of her husband and rewarding them with kernels of insight and memories about his life.

Helen’s work is often framed as all the more noble given the contrasts between her and Sloan’s first wife, Dolly (1876–1943). Sloan’s forty-year marriage to Dolly is frequently categorized as distracting at best, and as debilitating to his career at worst. The stories about Dolly are repeated again and again in the literature: that she was a drunk, that she isolated Sloan, and that in taking care of her various health and psychological problems it is remarkable that he had time to paint at all. According to Loughery and others, the artist struggled to stay married to Dolly, and his career paid a price. There is, however, little archival documentation to corroborate this narrative; instead, the most frequently attributed source for most of these stories is Helen Sloan. Scholars have almost uniformly taken her word for things, either ignoring or dismissing divergent evidence, and the result has been the historical disparaging, and at times the disappearance, of Dolly Sloan.³

To simply demonize Helen Sloan for her hand in this historical revision would be very easy, particularly since her role in this triangular story reads like an art world soap-opera cliché. She first met Sloan as a teenage student in one of his art classes and then married him thirteen years later, less than a year after Dolly died. She was thirty-one and he was seventy-two. Helen seems to have deferred her own artistic aspirations to focus her energies on John’s career, a pursuit that intensified after his death.⁴ Yet to embark on an evil second wife narrative is as problematic as the “artist’s widow syndrome” in assessing how women negotiate power and memory. Helen created authority and purpose for her own life and for her husband’s legacy, and her labors in creating an archive for John Sloan’s papers and art are invaluable to the study of early American modernism. Still, the damage done by her—and by scholars who have accepted her accounts without question—is profound, resulting in the historical erasure of Dolly Sloan in ways that reify traditional narratives about women and artistic production and diminish the complexities of sexuality, intimacy, and memory. In this article I am less interested in assigning blame than in mapping the ways this story of three entwined lives provides an opportunity to consider how tenacious and satisfying narratives of normative gender roles in artistic marriages have been to scholars, and what possibilities there are for feminist reappraisals of the place of sexuality and partnership in our research and analysis. If this project is largely about relocating Dolly Sloan, it is also about



Fig. 1. John Sloan, *Memory* (1906), steel-faced (removed) copper plate etching, ink on paper, 7 5/8" x 9". Delaware Art Museum, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan.

recognizing and understanding Helen Sloan anew by highlighting that narratives that sustain focus on the experiences of male artists often ignore the women in their lives and how, additionally, those women contributed to both art and the creation of history.

In a letter written to his friend Sloan after hearing about the death of Dolly, the artist and critic Walter Pach predicted,

Probably the art historians of the future will not dwell on Dolly's share in the work [of those Ashcan years], but all those who saw it take place know that she had an important share in it...Dolly was resolute (as in everything) about not being a painter herself, but was there ever anyone who understood better how to be a help!⁵

While these words turned out to be prophetic, if one considers John Sloan's artistic output, his letters, his diaries, and the letters of his friends, there is no reason to imagine that Dolly's legacy would be so significantly misplaced. As this brief overview suggests, Dolly Sloan was very much an active and central figure in the communities of friends, artists, and colleagues that formed and sustained her husband and his career.

John Sloan was living and working in Philadelphia as an illustrator for the *Philadelphia Press*, and dabbling in oil painting at the behest of his friend, Robert Henri, when he met Anna "Dolly" Wall in 1898. She came from a working-class family, and, according to Sloan, they met when he was out drinking with another friend from the newspaper.⁶ A few days after this initial meeting, John traveled to New York City to see if he could live there off of his work, and Dolly went with him. The trip was not successful, and the two returned to Philadelphia and Sloan resumed his job at the *Press*. This was a step back for Sloan, who would in the next several years watch

many of his friends move to New York, ease away from illustration work, and inhabit more fully their careers as painters. Unable to make this jump initially, Sloan was one of the last of the Ashcan circle to move permanently. This pattern of hesitation and an inability to capitalize on opportunity would characterize his long career. Sloan was, bluntly put, the least successful of the Ashcan circle, and throughout his life would be dependent on friends, who saw and appreciated his talents, for work, connections, and money.

These professional setbacks did not seem to affect the young couple. In Dolly's letters to John she was clearly concerned about how he *felt* about his work, asking him about how paintings were progressing or how meetings with colleagues went, but there is no evidence she ever pushed him to be more successful, take on more work, change his art or professional demeanor. Dolly aided his work life, maintaining correspondences with friends and galleries, paying bills, etc., but this work seems more in the context of maintaining her household financially and socially as opposed to overt handling of John's career.⁷ She was interested in his art and their lives, but Sloan's career was his own business.

The couple married in 1901. Drawings and letters suggest that they functioned immediately as a team and were seen as such by friends and family. Evidence of this intimacy was evident when Henri's young wife, Linda, died in 1905. Henri was distraught, and during this period of flux he essentially moved in with the Sloans, regularly coming for dinner and often spending evenings at the house. As letters between the artists attest, Dolly maintained the home for both men. Her primacy in this circle, and indeed to her husband, can be seen in his gift to Henri, entitled *Memory* (Fig. 1). Sloan began work on the image, according to his diary, on January 14, 1906, almost a month after Linda's death. It is Dolly, however, who becomes the central figure of this group, looking out at the viewer. She is, perhaps, the physical embodiment of memory: in the scene but also with us, the viewers, looking at this past moment. John makes Dolly the linchpin of this group and a guide for the viewer into this intimate view of grief and loss.⁸

A Socialist and activist for woman suffrage, Dolly was also quite busy during this period; Sloan often noted in his diary that she was off to meetings or rallies. A photograph from a 1911 rally behind the New York Public Library (Fig. 2), shows Dolly Sloan onstage, fourth from the right. Her political and social fervor and her attention to the news were much noted in various letters from friends and in remembrances after her death; this commitment to ideas, literature, and the causes of the day are likewise apparent in her correspondence with her friend John Butler Yeats. Time and again John Sloan and his friends would cast Dolly as a crucial, functional, and lively part of their lives, a pattern that continued as the couple began to travel regularly to Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the 1920s. During their summers there, Dolly Sloan established a group of friends and became active in fundraising for Native American arts exhibitions and appreciation campaigns. Their Santa Fe circle included some of the most powerful and

connected people in the country, in particular artists and writers exploring the relationships among modernism, nationalism, and Southwest native cultures.⁹

I belabor these connections in this brief synopsis of their marriage to suggest an alternative account of who Dolly Sloan was—a version that is visible in the archives but that would be significantly edited in subsequent years. To be clear, this was not a perfect marriage; the archives reveal that Dolly suffered from problems with alcohol and anxiety and at various times sought treatment for these issues. There appears to have been a particularly bad patch of trouble during 1909-10, with letters going back and forth between husband and wife that speak frankly about their love and disappointments. John Sloan also drank too much, was plagued with money problems his whole life, and engaged in a series of intense, and probably sexual, relationships with students and models.¹⁰ There was a great deal of hurt to go around. Whatever passed between these two people over time was no doubt complicated, but the archives suggest that mutual caretaking, affection, and shared friends and community defined their marriage.

Helen Farr enters the story in 1927, sixteen years before Dolly's death. A wealthy young woman interested in the arts, Farr first met Sloan when he was her teacher at the Art Students League. Little is known of her personal artistic theories, desires, evolution, or production. Her earliest works are impressionistic landscapes, but her mid-career work, like *Elevated* (1931; Fig. 3), for example, was primarily figural and of a social realist style similar to John Sloan's art.¹¹ It appears that a few years later Farr began summering in Santa Fe and reconnected with her teacher, but the true nature of their relationship during this period is unknown.¹² A 1930 photograph (Fig. 4) of Dolly and Helen sitting together at a meal at the Sloans's home in Santa Fe reveals that, whatever the nature of the relationship at that point, Dolly was a part of it. Helen circulated around the couple for several years both in New York and Santa Fe, although the archives contain spotty documentation about her from this period. Nevertheless, her hand in organizing, writing, and promoting Sloan's book, *Gist of Art* (1939), was significant enough to earn her a credit on the title page: "recorded with the assistance of Helen Farr." While Dolly seems to have had little to do with the book's production, it is dedicated to her: "The little woman who has been my right hand man."¹³ Attention and affection, competition, and cooperation clearly bound these three people together in these years.

Dolly died in May 1943, and it is after that point that Farr's presence in the archives becomes markedly apparent. Her first letters to Sloan are dated shortly after Dolly's death. She speaks to him in a way that is both intimate and tentative:

I am glad you are happy—I know what you mean—you won through the battle of staying with Dolly. She would have died sadly without you and you know that she lived most happily to the end. You have your work and whether you are able to put much on canvas or arouse us to better reading and thinking—we need you as long as you have the strength to stay.¹⁴



Fig. 2. Socialist Party Rally (Dolly Sloan 4th from right)(1911), photograph. John Sloan Manuscript Collection, Delaware Art Museum, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan.

Curiously, the archives hold no letters from Sloan to Farr from this period.

Farr's next letter is even bolder: "Dolly told me that this last year or so it made you ill with nervous strain to paint and she would not want me to say anything to hurt or upset you. But I know that what upsets you most when you work is the feeling that the power is not there which used to be...." A page later she makes a request:

It seems selfish of me to ask anything when my many happy memories of you and Dolly will always be mine to keep—but I should like to have a little drawing of Dolly as a keepsake...It would make me very happy if it were given to me instead of being spoiled by the exchange of money with some dealer...just so it is a drawing and not some print that others can have too.¹⁵

This letter almost topples over with competing agendas. Farr begins by pointing out that she knows Sloan better than Dolly did ("I know... what upsets you most"), but then asks for a keepsake of her. Farr is also clear that she wants something personal from Sloan's hand. While perhaps a manipulative request, it is an attempt to reassure her grieving friend that her intentions toward Dolly's memory are kind. On a more profound level this letter suggests a complex friendship with Dolly and acknowledges Dolly's continuing role in any future relationship between Farr and Sloan. This request, even if based in some kind of manipulation, would leave her with a document not of Sloan's time and experiences with her, but of his marriage to Dolly.

Their decision to get married in February 1944 surprised most who knew Sloan and Farr. His diary records the events in this way: "Helen Farr and I did a lot of considering—to marry or not. I took her home at 10.30 came back and thought it over. Decided if we didnt marry Id be a fool. Felt happy at my decision."¹⁶ If Sloan's mood sounds tentative, his new wife's subsequent letters are romantic and hopeful: "I cherish your every freckle, line and silver hair."¹⁷ While no letters provide Sloan's perspective on the marriage, during the seven years they were together before he died, his life stabilized. It seems

that he turned over to Helen all the details of his life, to the extent of charging her with going through Dolly's personal effects and deciding what to keep and what to give away.¹⁸ Also with her guidance, his career gained some momentum. She encouraged her family friend, Van Wyck Brooks, to start work on a biography of Sloan and helped to organize a retrospective of his art at the Whitney Museum of American Art.¹⁹

It was following Sloan's death in 1951, however, that Helen's role shifted dramatically. If her task as a wife was to cater to her husband, her job as a widow was to build his legacy. While some of this was no doubt an investment in securing her own future, Helen's dedication to Sloan scholarship moved beyond any financial considerations. She became, for all intents and purposes, a scholar on the life and work of John Sloan and the Ashcan circle. She wrote introductions for exhibitions and catalogs, including material on Henri and George Bellows, even though both men were dead before Helen became involved with Sloan's work. In this capacity she provided quotes for scholars, from Sloan's mouth but through her lips.²⁰ Some of this was certainly valid: she was not only married to Sloan but had been his student and had worked with him on his book about art; she had spent most of her life in one way or another studying the man. Helen was meticulous about her knowledge, reading books about the period and writing marginalia contradicting authors or adding quotes from Sloan to support a point.²¹ The slippage between Helen's knowledge, her memories, and the actual experiences of John Sloan become increasingly difficult to parse out, and most scholars had little interest in doing so.

This crafting of history comes most acutely into focus in the archives themselves. Helen began donating Sloan's papers, photographs, and other materials to the Delaware Art Museum in 1961, a collection that now includes almost 5000 documents.²² She often visited the growing archive and began the practice of placing handwritten notes among the papers to "clarify" certain documents, highlighting connections, providing keys to photographs, and interpreting "codes" that she claimed Sloan had embedded in his letters. A little editorial tending seemed neither exceptional nor objectionable, and indeed Helen's keys identifying the individuals in photographs and her suggested dates on letters have provided scholars with crucial information that would otherwise have been lost. Increasingly, however, these reconstructions of memories concerned Dolly's role and participation in Sloan's life.

The starkest example of Helen Farr Sloan's historical intervention can be seen in a 1965 edition of her husband's diaries. No doubt, the book was an attempt to capitalize on growing scholarly and art-market interest in American art and Ashcan painters. Indeed, the diaries offer a fascinating glimpse into life in New York City in the first years of the twentieth century. The book was edited by Bruce St. John, who was then



Fig. 3. Helen Farr Sloan, *Elevated* (1931), lithograph, 9 7/8" x 12 1/2". National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the Studio Group, Wilmington, DE.



Fig. 4. Dolly Sloan and Helen Farr seated at table outside Santa Fe house (1930), photograph. John Sloan Manuscript Collection, Delaware Art Museum, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan.

the curator of the John Sloan Collection and the Director of the Delaware Art Museum. He tasked Helen with writing the introduction, ostensibly meant to guide the reader through the broad strokes of Sloan's biography. It was this introduction that constituted the first detailed recasting of Dolly as, foremost, a woman whose alcohol and mental problems put a strain on her husband and his career. Helen began her discussion of their marriage by explaining that Dolly "had a tendency to drink," going on to note that a physician who treated her said her condition was "chronic" and her "neurosis was 'too deep-seated to be cured.'"²³ Helen's presentation of this information, particularly her use of quotes, gave authority to this diagnosis, yet her documentation was obscure. Was it a

direct quote from the doctor, or the physician's diagnosis as told to her by Sloan, or a memory from some other source? Regardless, there is no archival documentation to support these claims. Helen informed readers that Sloan's diary-keeping served two functions: first, as a mechanism suggested by the physician treating Dolly to resolve some of Sloan's unhappiness, and second, as an opportunity for him to write complimentary things about Dolly because he knew she would read his diary. Through this frame of marital dysfunction, Helen elaborated well beyond the text or time frame of the diary. She explained the couple's initial move to New Mexico, for example, as "a convenient place for Sloan to go in summer because ... it was necessary for them to live someplace where Dolly's drinking problems would not cause so much embarrassment."²⁴ In short, in Helen's retelling, Sloan and Dolly's entire marriage, a great portion of John's career, and many of the diary entries were defined by Dolly Sloan's illness.

Helen never shied away from describing and summarizing events that preceded not only her connection to Sloan but her birth, and, as already noted, without documented sources, the quotations fell somewhere between remembered statements and creative dialogue. In fact, what is most troublesome about her introduction is the way it often undermines Sloan's actual words and language as written in the diary. In suggesting that the diary was either a therapeutic exercise or a series of platitudes aimed at placating a drunk, insecure wife, one might question the usefulness of such a document as a source at all. Helen rightly predicted and sought to ease those very concerns by making herself the "key" to unlocking its "real" meaning. She literally placed herself between the diary and the reader by first diminishing its claims to veracity (i.e., some of the words are merely written to make Dolly feel better) and then reinvigorating them (i.e., claiming to clarify the real interpretation). This editorial curating served to diminish any expressions of marital affection and descriptions of Dolly's vibrancy, and caused readers to question the tenderness and dependency that frequently seemed to characterize the relationship between John and Dolly in the pages of the diary.

Helen's insistence on exposing the "true" meaning of John Sloan's diary thus complicated researchers' use of the diary and other documents in the archive. Locating herself as a necessary gatekeeper and translator of her husband's materials, she assumed a position that provided numerous opportunities for her to contribute to—and to shape—the growing narrative about Sloan and his historical contexts. It is perhaps not surprising that Helen continued to offer new "revelations" about Dolly and her dysfunction. For example, in the 1990s, stories that Dolly had worked as a prostitute emerged, along with additional controversial claims (which Helen "revealed" for Loughery's 1995 biography) of abortions, infidelity, suicide attempts, and venereal disease. Provided by a then elderly Helen, whose "authority" on all matters relating to John Sloan had been established, this new information, without any documentation or verification, found its way into subsequent scholarship on the artist.²⁵ With each retelling and each new "revelation," Dolly's history becomes more murky,

making her a cluster of pathologies instead of a functioning, vital person. Conversely, Sloan's conduct as a husband gets cleansed, as his bouts of alcoholism, his bad behavior, his cheating, are all framed as unsurprising compensation for a horrible marriage. If Helen's life's work was to claim for Sloan the prestige and honor she thought he deserved, her ongoing revelations about Dolly helped that goal along. At the same time, Helen created a role for herself, a rapt audience, and an authority that sustained her intellectual and social life for the sixty years she spent as John Sloan's widow.

What can be taken from this? The easy impulse is to blame Helen. Yet, it is crucial to remember that, while she certainly had a hand in this rewriting of history, she was not alone. What becomes clear from a review of the literature is that many scholars also were desirous of a heroic narrative for John Sloan, who enjoyed limited success during his lifetime. (By age fifty he had sold only eight paintings.) He frequently got into nasty fights with other artists and became increasingly bitter, demonizing old friends and blaming them or denying them credit for his artistic choices. Rather than confront his failures, he (and Helen) blamed them on Dolly, causing scholars ultimately to wonder how someone like Sloan ever was attracted to someone like her.²⁶ Dolly Sloan and her supposed failings accommodated a scholarly rationalization, turning the question, "Why was John Sloan not more successful?" into, "Isn't it amazing that he achieved any success with a wife like Dolly?" Even decades after the rise of feminist art historical practice, there remains a deep-seated impulse to hold onto traditional narratives about the heroic male artist that revel in his heterosexuality and manliness while locating his potential undoing in intimate relationships with women.

Dolly Sloan also is problematic in her husband's historical narrative because she did not conform to traditional ideas about the proper role for an artist's wife. She pursued many of her own political and social aspirations and, while apparently conversant with art and painting, largely stayed out of Sloan's artistic practice. Perhaps even more damning, as is clear from letters and diaries, she made emotional demands on him, objecting when he traveled alone or seemed preoccupied with work. Dolly thus got cast as the bad wife and as an obstacle standing between her husband and his deserved success.²⁷

Helen Sloan, on the other hand, was rewarded for her desire to rescript a heroic narrative for John Sloan and for conforming to a more "traditional" role as artist's wife and widow. When they married, she stepped into his work and "normalized" the story, dedicating herself to her husband's career and legacy. As a wife, she was recognized and appreciated by the (mostly male) art historians and scholars of the 1960s and 1970s, who began the process of re-historicizing John Sloan and his artistic contributions. She assumed a power position the deceased Dolly never had. Forthcoming with access and documents, the second Mrs. Sloan was awarded opportunities to write book introductions and catalog forewords and liberally thanked for her assistance. Her cooperation was further compensated—and perhaps even encouraged—by scholars' almost uniform silence regarding questions about her marriage to Sloan, their forty-year age

difference, and their probable affair prior to Dolly's death. These issues, and the complications they suggest in regard to her role in the narrative, are *never* mentioned, as Dolly is sacrificed in the rescripting of Helen and John's marriage.

Returning Dolly Sloan to this story, in her fullness and complexity, is essential to crafting a more complete history of John Sloan and the Ashcan circle of artists, of the socialist and suffrage movements of the early twentieth century, and of the mid-century art scene in Santa Fe. For example, it is well documented that Sloan himself had a complex relationship with socialism, as seen in the shift from his first supportive writings about the movement in the 1910s to his reflections in the 1940s, when he dismissed and minimized his commitment to socialist activism. Complicating the process of gaining a clear picture of Sloan's political views is the inability to document what Sloan himself said (rather than what Helen said that he said). A scholar today might approach this issue by considering more seriously Dolly's role in shaping her husband's politics and social networks in light of her own activism. At her funeral, Dolly was eulogized by the writer and social activist Max Eastman, suggesting that the Sloans were still in contact with political and literary figures. (Eastman famously experienced a radical political reorientation in the 1930s that resulted in his denouncing his earlier socialism.²⁸) Considering the couple's roles in a larger historical reorientation of the left and right, Dolly could prove to be a key figure in assembling a picture of John's political beliefs and intentions in his art.

Likewise, there is much to be gained from a reconsideration of the relationships among the "three Sloans" during Dolly's lifetime. In understanding the complexities of modern marriage and constructions of heterosexuality, it is crucial to consider the exchanges of power and desire that bound these three people together for fifty years. Helen was John's widow, but she also carried Dolly's legacy, for as much of it as she may have erased, she also archived all that we have about Dolly. These two women have their own story, and it too is worth unpacking, not just for historical clarification or fact finding, but as an attempt to consider the elasticity of that institution as a lived structure (particularly in light of our own historical moment when the definitions of marriage are so fraught). Likewise, this type of investigation can serve to break down the easy categories of "good" and "bad" wives, widows, and women, which continue to shape narratives about family, gender, and sexuality.

Finally, as feminist scholars, it would behoove us to approach archives with some circumspection. For while archives so often are sources of feminist recuperations, they also can be sites of desire, violence, and power. Returning to Rewald's "artist's wife syndrome" that began this essay, a woman who creates an archive seems to be allotted one of only two roles, as either meddling with or accommodating scholars. Given these patronizing options, it is not hard to see why Helen Sloan sought the rewards of playing the "good" widow. There is even something heroic in the way that she rewrote her own history, carved out a career for herself, and wrote witty and often astute commentary on Ashcan circle art. And if there

is a need to resituate Dolly in the archives and histories, there is also a need to relocate Helen. Looking at the two wives of John Sloan helps us see a complete picture of the social, political, and even artistic changes, opportunities, and limitations women (and their husbands) faced in the twentieth century. •

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Notes

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1. John Loughery, *John Sloan: Painter and Rebel* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995), 413.
2. Examples of publications with a substantial contribution by her are: *John Sloan's New York Scene, from the diaries, notes, and correspondence, 1906-1913*, ed. Bruce St. John, intro. Helen Farr Sloan (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); *American art nouveau: the poster period of John Sloan, a selection of hitherto unpublished prints and autobiographical recollections by the artist*, collected by Helen Farr Sloan (Lock Haven, PA: Hammermill Paper Co., 1967); *New York etchings (1905-1949)*, ed. Helen Farr Sloan (New York: Dover, 1978); James Kraft and Helen Farr Sloan, *John Sloan in Santa Fe* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1981); *Robert Henri, 1865-1929, Selected Paintings*, intro. Helen Farr Sloan, essay Bruce W. Chambers (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1986); and *Revolutionaries of Realism: The Letters of John Sloan and Robert Henri*, ed. Bennard B. Perlman, intro. Mrs. John Sloan (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997).
3. Although Loughery's biography is the most recent and frequently cited source for dramatic allegations about Dolly Sloan, including abortions and infidelity, scholarly discussion of Dolly and her "problems" began appearing a few years after John Sloan's death in 1951. For example, Van Wyck Brooks's 1955 biography of Sloan identifies Dolly as "manic-depressive and an alcoholic" but provides no support for either claim; however, his book is dedicated to Helen Sloan, whom he had known since she was a child. The dedication page includes a letter from Brooks to Helen expressing gratitude for her help. Helen expanded the discussion of Dolly's problems in her introduction to *John Sloan's New York Scene* (1965), and from that point on, references to her mental instability and alcoholism are standard. A notable exception is Rebecca Zurier's analysis in *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (2006). Although Zurier considers these stories about Dolly in her analysis of Sloan and his imagery, she acknowledges in the notes both her dependency on Helen as a source and Helen's complicated personal and chronological positioning. Finally, while Sascha Scott, in her study of Sloan and his images of Native Americans, does not discuss Dolly, she does question the extent to which Helen's voice has been collapsed with Sloan's in some scholarly readings of the archives. See Van Wyck Brooks, *John Sloan: A Painter's Life* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1955), 35; St. John, ed. *John Sloan's New York Scene*, xv-xvi; Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2006), 251

- and 361 n4; and Sascha Scott, "Paintings of Pueblo Indians and the Politics of Preservation in the American Southwest," (PhD. Diss., Rutgers University, 2008).
4. In a 1988 interview, Helen Sloan, in response to a question from the audience asking if she had in recent years "take[n] up the brush," replied that her interests were elsewhere; "I've taken up the pen more...I am working on my memoirs." It is difficult to ascertain what Helen Sloan's artistic desires were; in her lifetime she exhibited her work a few times, and while there are several paintings and drawings in collections such as the Delaware Art Museum and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, these works were contributed by the artist herself or her friends. No consistent pattern of her artistic work is evident, but it is a subject worth more study. See, interview of Helen Farr Sloan conducted by Avis Berman, July 17, 1988, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
 5. Letter from Walter Pach to John Sloan, May 24, 1943, in the John Sloan Manuscript Collection at the Delaware Art Museum, hereafter Collection DAM.
 6. There is little concrete information about Dolly's early life and family outside of notes from John and Helen Sloan. I am currently working on a dual biography of Dolly Sloan and Helen Sloan and keep searching for more biographical details of Dolly's early life. For an account of John and Dolly's first meeting, see correspondence from John Sloan to Robert Henri, October 1, 1898. Collection DAM.
 7. Thanks to Betsy Fahlman for her help in thinking through this issue of artistic spouses and labor.
 8. For a more detailed analysis of this image and its role as a marker of the friendship and antagonisms between Sloan and Henri, see, Alexis L. Boylan, "Best Friends Forever? John Sloan, Robert Henri, and the Problem of Memory" in *Seeing the City: Sloan's New York*, eds. Joyce Schiller and Heather Campbell Coyle (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, and the Delaware Art Museum, 2007), 197.
 9. Dolly Sloan was heavily involved in planning the Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts, an exhibition in 1931 at the Grand Central Galleries in New York City that featured work from contemporary Native American artists. Dolly and John also participated in planning fiestas commemorating historical events relating to Santa Fe. See Grant Holcomb, "John Sloan in Santa Fe," *American Art Journal* 10, no. 1 (May 1978): 33-54.
 10. Sloan himself mentions in letters that he drank too much on numerous occasions. Besides his relationship with Helen, who was his student, a collection of intense, intimate letters from 1915 document a relationship with a woman named Jennie Doyle. Helen's note that accompanies the letters states that Doyle was "in love with Sloan [she] 'frightened him' by her queerness he said." Although Helen tries to make the relationship one sided, the letters themselves suggest something more complex. Box 3, Collection DAM.
 11. I hope, in the future, to provide a more complete picture of Helen Farr Sloan's art production.
 12. Loughery claims that despite Helen being in awe of Sloan, when he first made a pass at her, she declined. Loughery is circumspect about when their relationship turned sexual, introducing the fact in a roundabout way by noting that Dolly became aware of the romance in 1935. See Loughery, *John Sloan*, 303-05 and 326.
 13. John Sloan, *Gist of Art* (New York: American Artists Group, Inc., 1939), NP (dedication page).
 14. Letter from Helen Farr Sloan to John Sloan, June 30, 1943. Collection DAM.
 15. Letter from Helen Farr Sloan to John Sloan, November 26, 1943. Collection DAM.
 16. Sloan Diaries, Feb. 4, 1944. His entry the next day, "Helen and I married today. Called for her at Mrs Eckerts then to the County Clerk for License then to Robinson J.P. for marriage. Miss Whites to Dinner with Shusters. At 3.30 AM Helen Sloan started back to N.Y." Collection DAM.
 17. Letter from Helen Farr Sloan to John Sloan, March 3, 1944. Collection DAM.
 18. Letter from Helen Farr Sloan to John Sloan, March 2, 1944. Collection DAM.
 19. Helen describes her relationship with Brooks in *John Sloan in Santa Fe*, 29. Notably, in the catalogue for the retrospective exhibition, Goodrich writes of Dolly: "Vivacious, witty, highly sociable she had Irish charm and an Irish temper." This contrasts markedly with how she will be described by Brooks four years later. Goodrich thanks Helen in the acknowledgements, but the show was in the works before Sloan died, which clearly affected the narrative. Lloyd Goodrich, *John Sloan* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and Macmillan, 1952), 14.
 20. This slippage begins with Brooks's 1955 biography, where, without any footnotes or editorial direction, it is impossible to decipher whether quotes come from Brooks's conversations with Sloan or from his interviews with Helen.
 21. The Delaware Art Museum Library has numerous books from Helen Sloan's personal library, including many containing marginalia in which she argues with authors' statements or offers evidence to support their claims. Her writing reveals that she was in active conversation with the historical narratives being shaped about her husband by various scholars, many of whom had in fact come to her for interviews. I would like to thank Heather Campbell Coyle for pointing the marginalia out to me.
 22. For more on the history of the Helen Farr Sloan Library and her relationship with the Delaware Art Museum, see *Delaware Art Museum: Selected Treasures* (London: Scala, 2004), 10-11, 13.
 23. Brooks's version of this story was that John merely added some complimentary comments about Dolly in the diary because he knew she would read it. He makes no suggestion of any therapeutic function. It is unclear from Brooks's text where he gets his information about the diary and Dolly, but as already noted, Brooks had a longstanding friendship with Helen. See Brooks, *John Sloan: A Painter's Life*, 35-36; and St. John, ed., *John Sloan's New York Scene*, xv-xvi.
 24. St. John, ed., *John Sloan's New York Scene*, xvi.
 25. See Janice Coco, *John Sloan's Women: A Psychoanalysis of Vision* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 2004) and Schiller and Campbell Coyle, eds., *Seeing the City: Sloan's New York*.
 26. See Loughery, *John Sloan*, 51; and Coco, *John Sloan's Women*, 55.
 27. For an insightful analysis of two artistic marriages and similar struggles with gender roles, see Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and the Crisis of Marriage: Edward Hopper and Georgia O'Keeffe* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002).
 28. See William L. O'Neill, *The Last Romantic: A Life of Max Eastman* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978).

PROGRESS ILLUMINATED

TWO STAINED GLASS WINDOWS FROM THE 1893 WOMAN'S BUILDING

By Charlene G. Garfinkle



Fig. 1. Mary Cassatt, *Modern Woman* (1892-93), oil on canvas, 14' x 58'. Location unknown. Photo: from Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair* (1893).

Best known among the decorations of the Woman's Building at Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 are Mary Cassatt's *Modern Woman* mural (Fig. 1), and at the other end of the Hall of Honor (Fig. 2) the mural by Mary MacMonnies titled *Primitive Woman* (see p. 58, Fig. 1). Less well known to historians are several other murals, sculptures, and stained glass windows which adorned the building as well.¹ Of particular interest in this article are two stained and leaded glass windows created for the assembly hall of the Woman's Building which promoted the mission of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union (WEIU) to the thousands of visitors to the Exposition.

To honor the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's arrival in America, Chicago hosted the World's Columbian Exposition. In response to the Exposition's attempt to display the achievements of mankind since Columbus, women in the United States mobilized to present a visual display of the achievements of womankind in industry, science, and art. Toward this end, a Board of Lady Managers was formed and a Woman's Building planned, designed, and decorated entirely by women, under their direction (Fig. 3).² "Even more important than the discovery of Columbus, which we are gathered together to celebrate," stated Bertha H. Palmer, the president of the Board of Lady Managers, "is the fact that the General [Federal] Government has just discovered woman."³

The Woman's Building, designed by the young architect

Sophia Hayden (1868-1953), encompassed in its approx. 80,000 sq. ft. of space exhibits of women's work and practical demonstrations, an assembly room for women's congresses, offices and committee rooms, and a restaurant, along with many decorative works. Since international expositions are intentionally ephemeral, the Woman's Building is no longer extant, and the location of most of its decorations is unknown. However, since publishing an article on the stained glass windows in 1999, I have identified the present home of *Massachusetts Mothering the Coming Woman of Liberty, Progress, and Light* (Pl. 12) and *Seal of Boston* (Pl. 13), two of the three windows commissioned by the WEIU and installed in the assembly room of the Woman's Building.⁴

Requests for "leaded glass windows, in simple designs," were included in the "Suggestions for Donations for Woman's Building" circular distributed in 1892 by the building's director, Candace Wheeler (1827-1923). This perhaps explains why the Woman's Building received a quantity of glass decoration while the other Exposition buildings appear to have had none. The dual nature of the windows—as both functional and decorative—made them an important asset.

The assembly room of the Woman's Building had a seating capacity of about 1,500 and was in continual use during the run of the Exposition: for addresses presented as part of the many congresses, concerts and recitals, and various social and ceremonial activities. In all, seven stained and leaded glass



Fig. 2. Woman's Building Hall of Honor (1893), looking north to mural by Mary MacMonnies. Photo: from *The White City (As It Was)* (1894).



Fig. 3. Sophia G. Hayden, Woman's Building East façade (1893). Staff over wood construction, 199' x 388' x 60'. (Destroyed) Photo: Courtesy Library of Congress.

windows adorned the assembly hall, which “softened the light and added to the attractions of the hall.”⁵ Three windows from Pennsylvania and one from Nebraska were placed in the north wall of the room, while the three from Massachusetts were prominently displayed at the back of the stage at the east end. The only known clear period photograph of a Woman's Building stained glass window in situ shows the stage of the assembly room (Fig. 4); however, only the central glass is

visible, as the flanking windows are obscured by flags.⁶ (No photographs of the north wall have been found.) Additionally, the colorful windows could be seen from the outside (Fig. 5), and due to the building's prominent location at one of the junctures to the Midway Plaisance, the imagery of the glass reached a maximum audience.

The central window panel, *Massachusetts Mothering the Coming Woman of Liberty, Progress, and Light*, the work of three Bostonian women artists, was obtained through Massachusetts Lady Manager Nella (Mrs. Jonas H.) French.⁷ The window installed at stage right, featuring the seal of the city of Boston, was created by Mary Crease Sears (1859-1938). On the other side, at stage left, was a glass designed by Helen Gerrish (1864-?) and provided by the WEIU of Chelsea. Little else is known about this window, which possibly pictured the seal of Chelsea.⁸ These works were obtained by Catherine (Mrs. Rufus S.) Frost.⁹ The three windows were officially presented on April 29, 1893, by Nella French, “on behalf of the WEIU of Boston, and of the women of Chelsea.”¹⁰

Massachusetts Mothering the Coming Woman of Liberty, Progress, and Light (Pl. 12 and Fig. 6), was designed by Elisabeth Cornelia Parsons (1864-1956), Edith Blake Brown (1869-1907) and Ethel Isadore Brown (1872-1944). Parsons and Edith Brown were classmates at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1888. Parsons had been teaching at Oberlin College since 1890, and Brown (accompanied by her sister Ethel) was teaching at the Cleveland School of Art. In 1893, the three women returned to Boston from Ohio, and at the time of the Exposition, Parsons and Edith Brown shared a Boston studio and were working together on various projects.¹¹ Their Dragon plate and a design for stained glass were included in the Massachusetts State Collective Exhibit displayed in the

Woman's Building, while Brown individually contributed a stained glass mirror to this exhibit.¹²

Two figures in a classical type garb are placed in front of a sectioned background in the *Massachusetts Mothering the Coming Woman of Liberty, Progress, and Light* panel. The older, larger figure is meant to personify Massachusetts. Although her age, costume, and coiffure liken her to a Roman matron, the upper part of the background acts as an arch framing her



Fig. 4. Woman's Building, Assembly Room, with the Massachusetts stained glass windows. Photo: C. D. Arnold, from "Secretary's Report," vol. 8, Board of Lady Managers Collection. Courtesy Chicago History Museum (formerly Chicago Historical Society).



Fig. 5. Woman's Building, North Pavilion (detail, east façade). (Boston window shown on second floor, fourth light from the right; Massachusetts window third light from the right; Chelsea glass second from the right). Photo: from *Shepp's World's Fair Photographed* (1893).

head like a Madonna figure. Just behind her stands the flag of the United States topped by a golden eagle, grounding the subject in America in spite of its classical trappings. The younger, smaller figure represents the Coming Woman. She wears a Liberty cap, bears a sword, and raises a torch in her right hand, likening her to the Statue of Liberty, which had been dedicated just a few years earlier, in 1886. An architectural detail is seen to her right, and she steps down, implying forward motion. The two figures join left hands as Massachusetts looks down benevolently at the Coming Woman, who looks to her left, as if gazing out beyond the confines of the glass.

A half-inch magenta band separates the pictorial space from a larger border containing a foliage motif against a yellow background. Written on a series of insets, shaped like scrolls, are the names of famous Massachusetts women. Those along the sides include nineteenth-century progressives (e.g., author and reformer Lydia Maria Child, educator Mary Lyon, actress Charlotte Cushman, and astronomer Maria Mitchell). At the top corners of the main light are the names of women from the mid-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries (e.g., First Lady Abigail Adams). In the center of the transom, an early version of the Seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is flanked by two insets bearing the names of four seventeenth century women, including the religious reformer Anne Hutchinson (Fig. 7).¹³ Finally, at the bottom of the panel is the dedication plaque.¹⁴

Described as "excellent in execution and fine in conception," the Massachusetts stained glass is an important decorative work.¹⁵ One of the few windows in the Woman's Building with a figural subject, it was prominently placed in the assembly room as the central panel of its stage backdrop. Facing east, light would have illuminated the subject during the morning hours, adding to its impact on audiences. And because the Woman's Building's prominent location ensured that the imagery reached a maximum audience, the subject of this glass and its progressive message had a potentially strong impact.

The "Guidelines for commissions and organizations throughout the world for exhibits in the Woman's Building," distributed by the Board of Lady Managers, called for the representation of woman internationally and in all her fields of endeavor in the century of education and progress.¹⁶ The theme of woman's progress was stressed in parallel to the exposition's promotion of the advancements made in industry, science and art by western civilization since Columbus. The image of the nascent New Woman as a product of that advancement, education, and progress, was manifest elsewhere in the building's figural decoration, including Cassatt's *Modern Woman* mural, reflecting women's expanding sphere. This topic is discussed elsewhere in depth, especially by Wanda Corn and Sally Webster.¹⁷

The Massachusetts stained glass can be interpreted in light of both its New Woman subject matter and the Exposition's theme of progress and advancement. Although classically dressed, the two figures are identified as allegories of the modern world. The Coming (or New) Woman's Liberty cap and torch symbolize two of her three aspects—Liberty and Light, respectively—as the title suggests. By extension, Liberty/freedom and Light/enlightenment are necessary attributes of this New Woman. Progress is implied by her stepping forward and by her distant gaze. The arch framing

the Matron/Madonna-like figure supports the mothering aspect of Massachusetts, again from the title. As a whole, the window presents a supportive, progressive Commonwealth of Massachusetts nurturing the New Woman, sending her out to advance woman's progress via enlightenment (education) and liberty (the freedom to venture forward). She will build on the important accomplishments of women in the state who came before her, whose names are found in the surrounding panels. This history, the linked hands, and the image of the state supporting and encouraging the younger generation of women also reflects the WEIU motto, "Union for all for the good of all."¹⁸ In 1892, Bertha Palmer announced that a Woman's Memorial Building would be constructed in Chicago as a permanent museum honoring women's industry and art.¹⁹ A committee was appointed to secure appropriate items from the Woman's Building and to solicit donations from Exposition exhibits for the proposed building.²⁰ The Massachusetts stained glass along with other donations were removed from the Woman's Building before its destruction and placed in storage at the Sibley Warehouse in Chicago.²¹ The Woman's Memorial was never built, and more than a century later, the whereabouts of much of the warehouse contents remains a mystery. Not so, however, with the Massachusetts stained glass, which entered the collection of the Smith Museum of Stained Glass Windows in 1999 and is now on continuous exhibition at Navy Pier in Chicago.²²

The Boston WEIU chapter sent the stained glass window titled *Seal of Boston* (Pl. 13 and Fig. 8) "in the name of the women of Boston to adorn the auditorium of the Woman's Building." As written in the history of the WEIU, it was "secured by the efforts of members of the Union who solicited or contributed money for the purpose ... a pleasing proof of their ability in various directions."²³ In April 1893, *The Woman's Journal* reported that the committee had selected "by the unanimous vote" the design of Mary Crease Sears,²⁴ who also was an alternate Lady Manager from Massachusetts. Sears had studied art at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (1882-1886) and learned traditional book-making in Paris and London. After returning to Boston, she established a studio and became an influential Arts and Crafts bookbinder, known for her book cover designs, hand-tooled bindings, and bookplates. An active member of the Society of Arts and Crafts, she opened the Sears School of Bookbinding in Boston and taught several generations of women the art of book-making.²⁵

The *Seal of Boston* stained glass window was fabricated by the well-known Boston studio, Redding, Baird & Co. (act. 1883-1905), whose name appears in the lower border with that of Sears. In the upper center of the main light, suspended in a stained glass laurel wreath with flowing gold ribbons, is a delicately painted version of the seal of the city of Boston, with a view of its colonial harbor.²⁶ Beneath the seal is a collection of books supported by bookends of an organic motif. Below the ledge is a palm frond against a textured, wood-like brown background. Framing the entire central portion and into the transom is a wide border containing a garland of various Arts-and-Crafts-inspired foliage, a la William Morris. The window



Fig. 6. Elisabeth Parsons, Edith Blake Brown, and Ethel Isadore Brown, *Massachusetts Mothering the Coming Woman of Liberty, Progress, and Light* (c. 1893), stained glass, 7' x 3' (detail, main light). Smith Museum of Stained Glass Windows, Chicago. Photo: Courtesy Smith Museum.

Fig. 7. Elisabeth Parsons, Edith Blake Brown, and Ethel Isadore Brown, *Massachusetts Mothering the Coming Woman* (c. 1893), stained glass, 7' x 3' (detail, transom). Smith Museum of Stained Glass Windows, Chicago. Photo: Courtesy Smith Museum.



comprises various richly rippled and textured glasses and glass “jewels” held together by an elaborate lead matrix. Double-layered glass was used to create subtle shading effects in some areas.

The city seal clearly represented to visitors to the Woman’s Building that those responsible for the creation of the glass were the women of Boston. Henry Northrop, a contemporary chronicler, described it: “The design is suggestive of the erudition of the modern Athens; the row of books, the laurel and the palm. The seal of the commonwealth also appears. The border is a conventional scroll of Renaissance ornament.”²⁷ I believe there may be a more personal association for the artist.

The WEIU was established in 1877 to help women support their families through practical training, social services, and environmental reforms.²⁸ One of its programs provided women the opportunity to create and sell handiwork, predominantly needlework.²⁹ I believe the floral motifs shown in the *Seal of Boston* glass may be based on similar patterns used by the Union’s needle-workers, thereby referencing the industrial part of the WEIU, while the books reference its educational aspect. In addition, the books prominently display the raised bands required in the construction of pre-machine-made books, acknowledging the hand press period whose style and process were being revived by the bookbinder Sears, the glass’s designer. The palm frond, in this case, instead of referring to military or Christian victory, may allude to “an attribute of Fame, the sequel to victory.”³⁰ In this sense, perhaps the close relationship between the books and the palm frond here represented fame or recognition sought by the artist.

The *Seal of Boston* stained glass was not donated to the Woman’s Memorial Building. Instead, at the close of the Exposition it was returned to the Boston WEIU, where it has been on permanent display, currently at The Woman’s Union offices at One Washington Mall, Boston.³¹

This is the first time these windows created for the Woman’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition have been presented together since their de-installation in late 1893, and the first time their imagery and details of commission have been discussed in a contemporary venue. Their beauty in design, richness in fabrication, and meaningful subject matter can be appreciated because they have been preserved and are on public display, and now they have been returned to their historic context as well. Both the visual representation of women’s advancement in the nineteenth century and the progressive work of the WEIU, as illuminated in these works, continue to speak to viewers today. •

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Fig. 8. Mary Crease Sears, *Seal of Boston* (c. 1893), stained glass, 7' x 3' (detail, main light). The Woman’s Union (formerly Women’s Educational and Industrial Union), Boston. Photo: Courtesy Lyn Hovey Studios, Hyde Park, Mass.

States and Europe. Most recently, she was a contributor to *Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition* (2011) by Wanda Corn.

Notes

A version of this paper was presented at the 2009 Southeastern College Art Conference, University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama, and is a follow-up to my original article in *Stained Glass* (Summer 1999) about these windows. I continue searching for other windows from the assembly room of the Woman’s Building and hope to trace more stained glass examples of woman’s progress illuminated.

1. For period literature on the World’s Columbian Exposition, see for example, Daniel H. Burnham Collection, Ryerson and Burnham Archives, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago; Daniel H. Burnham, *The Final Official Report of the Director of Works of the World’s Columbian Exposition* (reproduction by Garland Publications Inc., 1989); Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair*,

An Historical and Descriptive Presentation (Chicago: R. S. Peale Co., 1893); *The Dream City: A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition* (St. Louis: N.D. Thompson Publ. Co., 1893); Moses Handy, *Official Catalogue of Exhibits, World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: W. B. Conkey Co., 1893); Moses Handy, *The Official Directory of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: W. B. Conkey Co., 1893); and Rossiter Johnson, *A History of the World's Columbian Exposition* (New York: Appleton, 1898). For modern studies, see R. Reid Badger, *The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Exposition and American Culture* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979); David F. Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893* (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1979); John E. Findling, *Chicago's Great World's Fairs* (New York: Manchester Univ. Press, ca. 1994); *Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893*, essays by Neil Harris, Wim de Wit, James Gilbert, and Robert W. Rydell (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1993); and *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World's Fair*, essays by Robert W. Rydell and Carolyn Kinder Carr (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art and National Portrait Gallery, 1993).

For a study of the decorations of the Woman's Building, see my "Women at Work: The Design and Decoration of the Woman's Building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition—Architecture, Exterior Sculpture, Stained Glass, and Interior Murals" (PhD diss., Univ. of California at Santa Barbara, 1996). See also, Wanda M. Corn, *Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2011) (see review in this issue on page 57); Sally Webster, *Eve's Daughter/Modern Woman: A Mural by Mary Cassatt* (Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2004); Ethel S. Goodstein, "Classical Ideals and the Representation of Gender in the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition," *Arris: Journal of the Southeast Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians* 6 (1995): 30-45; Wanda Corn, "Women Building History" in *American Women Artists 1830-1930*, National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1987; Frances K. Pohl, "Historical Reality or Utopian Ideal? The Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," *International Journal of Women's Studies* (Quebec) 5/4, (September/October 1982): 289-311; and Jeanne M. Weimann, *The Fair Women* (Chicago: Academy, 1981).

2. The Board of Lady Managers was one of three managing bodies of the World's Columbian Exposition authorized by Act of Congress. The Board consisted of 117 members: two lady managers from each of forty-four states, five territories, and the District of Columbia, eight managers-at-large, nine managers from the city of Chicago, and alternates for each. Its purpose was the supervision of women's participation at the exposition.
3. Bertha H. Palmer, "Address Delivered at the Dedicatory Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition," *Addresses and Reports of Mrs. Potter Palmer* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1894), 119.
4. Charlene G. Garfinkle, "Becoming Visible: The Coming Woman Stained Glass of the Woman's Building, 1893 World's Columbian Exposition," *Stained Glass* 94:2 (Summer 1999): 108-12, 142.
5. "Report of Interior of Woman's Building," Archives of the Board of Lady Managers, Chicago History Museum. Many stained glass designs, screens, and windows created by women were exhibited in the Woman's Building, with approximately fifteen leaded and stained glass windows of varying designs incorporated into the structure of the building itself. Stained glass exhibits or displays were included in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building at the exposition but, except for the Woman's Building, stained glass windows do not appear to have been used to decorate the exposition buildings themselves. In a careful review of photographs providing both exterior and interior views of the buildings, no decorative glass is visible except in the Woman's Building. Since these other buildings were primarily exhibition halls, rather than multi-purpose structures like the Woman's Building, as much clear light as possible would have been desired.

6. See the unpublished "Report of the Secretary of the Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Commission," Archives of the Board of Lady Managers, Chicago History Museum.
7. Nella J. Pearson was the second wife of Col. Jonas Harrod French. Duane Hamilton Hurd, ed., *History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts*, 767.
8. From 1882 to at least 1903 Gerrish was listed in the *Chelsea Business Directory* as an artist, but I found no record of her death. Fig. 5 shows the three Massachusetts windows *in situ* as seen from the exterior of the Woman's Building. The seal of Boston is clearly the one to the far left. In the lower portion of the Chelsea glass, located to the right of the central glass, a circular form (barely visible) is most likely Chelsea's seal.
9. Catherine Emily Wickham Willard became the second wife of Rufus Smith Frost in 1879. Daniel P. Toomey, *Massachusetts of Today: A Memorial of the State, Historical and Biographical* (1892), 379.
10. *Approved Official Minutes of the Board of Lady Manager of the World's Columbian Commission*, Fourth Session, Fourth Day, April 29, 1893 (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1893), 142.
11. For biographical sketches of many of the women involved in the Woman's Building, see my "Biographies" in Corn, *Women Building History*, 189-209. For the entries on these three artists, see pages 190-91 and 202.
12. *World's Columbian Exposition 1893, Official Catalogue. Part XIV. Woman's Building* (Chicago: W. B. Conkey Co., 1893), 63-64. An image of the Dragon plate can be found in *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893*, ed. Maud Howe Elliott (Paris & New York: Goupil & Co; Boussod, Valadon & Co., 1893), 46, and (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1894), 87.
13. The names on the transom are: Anne Bradstreet (1612-72, poet), Mary Dyer (d. 1660, Quaker martyr), Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643, religious reformer), Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814, poet and historian), Abigail Adams (1744-1818, U.S. First Lady), Hannah Adams (1755-1831, compiler of historical data and writer). On the left side of the main light are: Catherine Maria Sedgwick (1789-1867, author), Mary Lyon (1797-1849, educator and founder of Mt. Holyoke), Maria Weston Chapman (1806-85, abolitionist), Margaret Fuller Ossoli (1810-50, author), Maria Mitchell (1818-89, astronomer), and Louisa May Alcott (1832-88, author). On the right side of the main light are: Eliza Lee Follen (1787-1860, children's author), Dorothea Lynde Dix (1802-87, humanitarian and nurse), Lydia Maria Child (1802-80, author and reformer), Abby Kelley Foster (1810-87, abolitionist and women's rights activist), Charlotte Cushman (1816-76, actress), and Abby Williams May (1829-88, reformer).
14. The dedication plaque reads: "Presented by the Women of Massachusetts for the Woman's Building of the World's Fair at Chicago. MDCCCXCIII. Designed by Elisabeth Parsons, Edith Blake Brown and Ethel Isadore Brown. Executed by Ford and Brooks Boston, Massachusetts."
15. Johnson, *A History of the World's Columbian Exposition*, vol. 3, 456. Although in agreement with Johnson about the execution of the work, newspaper writer Teresa Dean took umbrage with the unfortunate effects of the colored glass at the festivities in the Woman's Building on Woman's Day (May 19) at the Fair: "The stained windows at the back of the platform in the assembly-room are lovely in themselves in the way of decoration, but they smashed into smithereens the beauty of face and toilet of every woman on the stage as viewed from the front. The reflected light dimmed all the glory of other colors. It was a pity that the bouquet effect was ruined. The toilets were superb." Teresa Dean, *White City Chips* (Chicago: Warren Publishing Co., 1895), 77.
16. "Guidelines for commissions and organizations throughout the world for exhibits in the Woman's Building, 'The Woman's Building,'" circular. Newberry Library, Chicago.

17. For a study of the early form of the New Woman in the imagery of the 1893 Woman's Building, see Corn, *Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbia Exposition*, and Webster, Eve's *Daughter/Modern Woman: A Mural by Mary Cassatt*.
18. In the later nineteenth century, many social organizations and educational institutions were established in response to growing problems of urbanization, immigration and industrialization. One of these was the WEIU, "formed to increase fellowship among women with the purpose of promoting the best practical methods for securing their education, industrial and social advancement." Act of Incorporation, April 23, 1880, Archive of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, 1877-1974, The Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass., quoted in *Inspiring Reform: Boston's Arts and Crafts Movement*, Marilee Boyd Meyer, et.al. (Wellesley, MA: Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, 1997), 102.
19. *Approved Official Minutes (Official Record) of the Third Session of the Board of Lady Managers*, sixth day, October 26, 1892 (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1892), 75.
20. *Approved Official Minutes of the Fifth Session of the Board of Lady Managers*, twenty-ninth day, August 12, 1893 (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1893), 222.
21. "Gifts to Woman's Memorial Building" in "Report of the Secretary of the Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Commission," and "Report of Removal of Exhibits from the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition by Amey M. Starkweather, Chief of Installation and Superintendent of Exhibits." Archives of the Board of Lady Managers, Chicago History Museum.
22. Thanks to Dave Foote of Chicago for providing the location of the *Coming Woman* stained glass. The Smith Museum of Stained Glass Windows, the first museum in the U. S. dedicated solely to stained glass windows, opened in 2000 with more than 150 windows from Chicago's history from 1870 to the present. The *Coming Woman* window was found in a barn in Michigan by Charles Hind. It entered the Smith Museum in 1999. Thanks to curator Rolf Achilles at the museum, who provided some history of the glass since leaving the Woman's Building as well as details about its fabrication.
23. Records of the WEIU, Annual Report 1894, Schlesinger Library, WEIU Archive. Also quoted in S. Agnes Donham, "History of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union" typescript (Boston, 1955), 36. Schlesinger Library.
24. *The Woman's Journal* xxiv/16 (April 22, 1893): 126.
25. Mary Crease Sears was born August 18, 1859 in Watertown, Massachusetts. She was the daughter of Eben Sears (a real estate broker) and Jane Rebecca (Balch) Sears. Mary Sears never married. She died in Boston in 1938. For a biography of Sears, see Erica E. Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own; Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1940*, with biographies of the artists by Janet L. Comey and Ellen E. Roberts (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 195. Regarding Sears as a bookbinder, see Claire Coburn Swift, "The Fine Art of Bookbinding," *The Outlook*, vol. 90 (October 24, 1908): 433-40. The Mary Crease Sears Bookplate Collection is housed at Western Michigan University Library, Dept. of Special Collections, Kalamazoo, Michigan. *The Seal of Boston* seems to have been Sears's only stained glass window.
26. Latin motto on the seal translates as "God be with us as He was with our fathers."
27. Henry Davenport Northrop, *The World's Fair As Seen in One Hundred Days* (Philadelphia: Ariel, 1893), 323.
28. The WEIU was founded in Boston by London-born physician and women's rights activist Dr. Harriet Clisby (1831-1931). For a brief history, see my "Women's Education and Industrial Union," *American Women's History: An Encyclopedia*, Facts on File, Inc., 2009.
29. Kathleen Waters Sander, *The Business of Charity; The Woman's Exchange Movement, 1832-1900* (Urbana & Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1998), 116. The business in the Sales Shops of the Industrial Dept. increased from \$2,000 in 1882 to \$37,000.00 in 1892. Donham, 10.
30. James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 231.
31. The glass was restored by the Lyn Hovey Studio of Hyde Park in 2001-02 to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the WEIU, and is now displayed in a light-case in the conference room of the new offices of what is now called The Woman's Union, at One Washington Mall, Boston. In 2006 WEIU joined with Crittenton Woman's Union, another nineteenth century woman's support agency, to create The Woman's Union. Thanks to Lance Kasparian, AIA, of Boston, for supplying information about the location of the *Seal of Boston* stained glass. Thanks also to Laurie Tellis (formerly of WEIU), Barbara Trevisian and Janet Ganson of WEIU, for providing information about the Seal of Boston glass and the WEIU, and to Lyn Hovey Studio for generously sharing digital images of the glass as well as its studio report.



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Dancing With the Dark: Joan Snyder Prints, 1963–2010

by Marilyn Symmes and Faye Hirsch
Prestel, 2011

Reviewed by Gretchen Wagner

A prolific printmaker, Joan Snyder receives her due in this illustrated monographic record of her engagement with the medium and its relation to her work overall. The book accompanies the exhibition, “Dancing With the Dark: Joan Snyder Prints, 1963–2010,” organized by the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University.

Best known for her gestural paintings as well as her catalytic activism, Joan Snyder (b. 1940) established herself among the art community in New York as it settled into the iron and cobblestone corridors of Soho and Lower Manhattan during the late 1960s and early 1970s. She is among a generation of American artists influenced by the European avant-garde, many forced by war to establish themselves in the United States and who took up teaching in the universities in and around New York City. As an undergraduate, Snyder attended New Jersey’s Douglass College—the women’s college of Rutgers University—where she was introduced to painting as a form, and with this, printmaking techniques. As Snyder explains, her act of creating was the first time she found voice for the restless anxiety that had plagued her childhood and adolescence. She had located a retreat and chose to pursue the visual arts as the focus of her studies.

During the past four decades, Snyder’s imagery has vacillated between the figurative and abstract, all the while remaining grounded in the bodily reality of life, either by way of the extreme physicality of her gestural surfaces or the referential titles she assigns her compositions. In addition, Snyder treats the different printmaking techniques—woodcut, etching, aquatint, monotype, lithography and screenprint—as a palette to be combined. The resulting compositions verge on the topographic, as different densities of ink sit on the

paper support. This physicality and presence can be difficult to represent in publications, and *Dancing With the Dark: Joan Snyder Prints, 1963–2010* succeeds handsomely in this regard. The oversize—although not cumbersome—format and vibrant color reproductions, which stretch liberally across two-page spreads, successfully convey the varied mark-making, textural surfaces, and fields of color. Illustrations are dispersed throughout the book, which is divided into three sections. An essay by Faye Hirsch, senior editor at *Art in America* and historian of contemporary printmaking, is followed by a chronology of Snyder’s career annotated by Marilyn Symmes, director of Rutgers’s David A. and Mildred H. Morse Research Center for the Graphic Arts and curator of prints and drawings at the Zimmerli Art Museum. The publication concludes with a catalog of seventy prints organized in the format of a catalog raisonné checklist.

Hirsch’s text circles around what she terms “the specificity of Snyder’s engagement” (43), continually returning to the personal experiences as a woman—a miscarriage, the birth of a child, a divorce, sexual rediscovery, and activist awakening, among other life moments—underpinning the compositions the artist creates. Chronological in order, the essay employs various print projects as touchstones to carry the narrative of Snyder’s personal history and how her process and imagery intertwine with life experiences. In one case, Hirsch points out the coincidence of Snyder’s increased involvement with feminist groups, such as Heresies, which she co-founded in New York, to challenge set norms, and her introduction of “impure materials” (28), such as newspaper clippings and cloth, within her painted and printed images. This biographical interpretation at first seems somewhat narrow in scope, until one grasps Snyder’s assertion that her art is “a way to talk about [her] feelings, a way to speak.”¹ As Norman L. Kleeblatt, a contributor to her 2005 retrospective catalog of paintings, posits, “Not least—though least discussed in the literature—the course of Joan Snyder’s art over the last forty years demonstrates how she continually draws upon internal

resources.”² Despite the critical outmodishness assigned during the past half century to the authorial voice, the artist’s intention and perspective robustly assert themselves in the process of historicizing Snyder’s art.

Demonstrating her expertise in the history of printmaking, Hirsch identifies the significance of Snyder’s application of specific techniques, particularly the woodcut. A relief process and one of the most accessible and easily executed, the woodcut has carried with it connotations of vernacular style and direct expression. The German Expressionists picked up on this, as did Snyder, who was initially introduced to such work, including that of Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee, by her undergraduate instructor Billie Pritchard. In the 1980s, Neo-Expressionist painters returned to the medium as well, thanks in part, as Hirsch points out, to master printer Chip Elwell, with whom many artists, including Snyder, produced projects. This awareness of the printer’s workshop and its indispensable, and at times defining, contributions to an artist’s edition testifies to Hirsch’s intimate knowledge of the field and proves a satisfyingly instructive aspect of *Dancing With the Dark*. Both Hirsch and Symmes describe such collaborations in their texts.

In the latter half of the book, Symmes presents an “illuminated chronology” of Snyder’s art and life, followed by a catalog of prints compiled with the assistance of the artist and her studio assistant, Mira Dancy. Symmes smartly opens both to Snyder’s commentary, and quotes from interviews, statements, and personal diaries vivify the entries for each milepost Symmes elects to highlight. Here one learns more about Snyder’s relationship to the concurrent tendencies of Pop, Minimalism, and Conceptualism she encountered during her schooling at Rutgers. Assuming a defiant position, Snyder is quoted, “I took [Robert] Morris’s [her sculpture professor] silly minimal boxes and made them as crazy and decorative as I could. I put a breast in them, [had] things hanging off them, boxes in landscapes, trees and grass in boxes, pieces of bodies in a box under the ground” (73). Considering this maximalist and accu-

mulative approach, one is moved to recall other activities flourishing at Rutgers during this period, specifically the experimentations of Fluxus, as instigated by Robert Watts, and Happenings, as envisioned by Allan Kaprow, both teaching in New Brunswick at the time. Despite their disavowal of expressive painting and the predominance of men in the groups—two factors that likely distanced Snyder—it would be productive to explore the extant resonances with Snyder's own artistic incubation and pursuit of direct experience, child-like candor, and the influence of music in her imagery. Despite any connections, investigated or otherwise, it is a testament to Snyder's resolution of mind and singular vision that, despite this hotbed of activity, she struck her own path, discovering what was necessary to develop a unique and highly personal narrative rather than associating with a scene. Nevertheless, both the exhibition and book reflect the university's rich, if understated, history fostering education in the visual arts and supporting experimental and progressive activities. After her graduation in the 1960s, Snyder stayed connected to her alma mater, initiating academic programs to expand the scope of experiences and knowledge offered to the students, especially women enrolled there.

Dancing With the Dark concludes with an inventory of seventy titles from 1963 to 2010. The book adheres to the format of a print catalog raisonné, although it is not a complete representation of Snyder's work in the medium, which, as of the summer of 2010 totaled nearly two hundred compositions. Most of the early woodcuts, which she printed herself in small editions, are drawn from her personal collection, thanks to the artist's willingness to open her archives to the writer's and curator's documentation. In some cases, Symmes includes descriptions culled from workshop archives, including those of Derrière L'Étoile Studio, Diane Villani Editions, and Jungle Press Editions. The notations provide insight into the complex sequence of steps Snyder carried out during her experimentations on press, which became increasingly involved in her recent projects. For

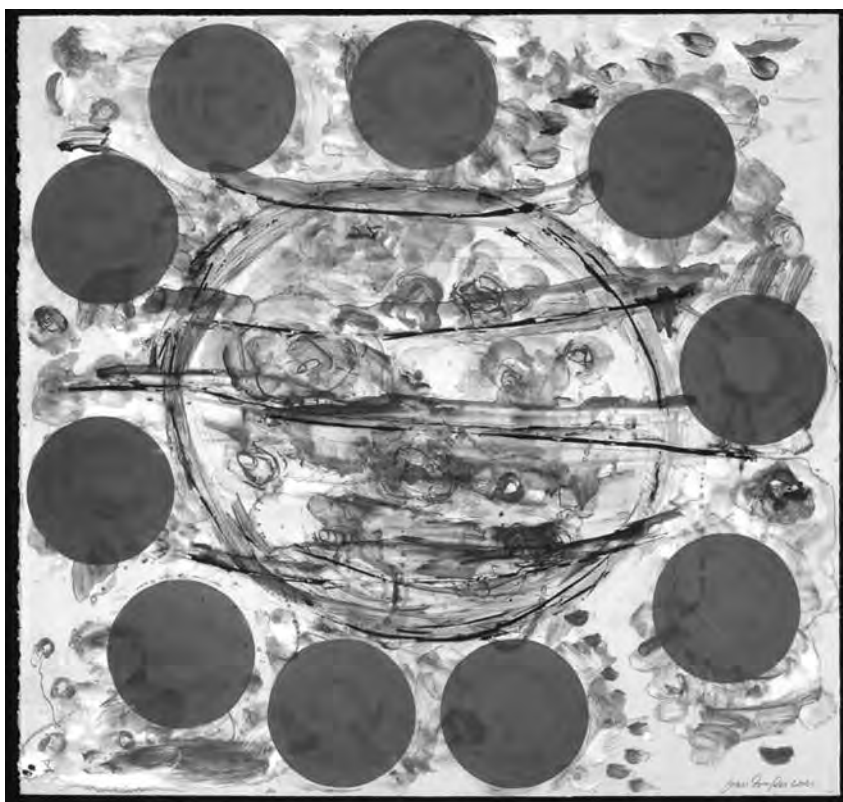


Fig. 1. Joan Snyder, *Madrigal X* (from 33 Madrigals) (2001), monoprint (color lithograph, monotype, and color woodcut), image and sheet 33 1/2" x 35 1/2". Copublisher Jungle Press Editions, New York. Printer: the artist with Andrew Mockler and Tilden Daniels, Jungle Press Editions, New York. © Joan Snyder.

example, the account for the series 33 *Madrigals* (Fig. 1), produced in 2001 at Jungle Press Editions, is as follows:

After [Andrew] Mockler [of Jungle Press Editions] printed the lithography stone with washes of color, Snyder next hand-applied oil paints onto Plexiglas, which was printed as a monotype layered on the lithographic image. The printing sequence involved three more steps: circles and lines were printed via woodcut, followed by a transparent color layer (printed from a Plexiglas matrix), and, finally, a transfer application of pastel from wood block (164).

Such passages are dense records of the artist putting her materials, and no doubt the master printer, through the paces.

In today's post-medium paradigm, a monographic publication featuring prints runs the risk of defining an

artist's practice too narrowly. In the case of *Dancing With the Dark*, the opposite is true, and via the detailed disclosure of her methods as a printmaker one is granted access to the vicissitudes of Snyder's approach overall. This publication serves as a valuable reference for specialists, while opening the scholarship more broadly to examine the verve and ambition Snyder demonstrates as a woman artist and activist. •

Gretchen Wagner is a curator in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Notes

1. Joan Arbeiter, Beryl Smith, and Sally Shearer Swenson, *Lives and Works: Talks with Women Artists, Volume 2* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 182.
2. Hayden Herrera, *Joan Snyder* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2005), 14-15.

Nancy Holt: Sightlines

edited by Alena J. Williams with contributions by Pamela Lee, Lucy R. Lippard, Nancy Holt, Ines Schaber, Matthew Coolidge, James Meyer and Julia Alderson
University of California Press, 2011

Reviewed by Christine Filippone

This comprehensive first retrospective catalog of the work of Nancy Holt brings together incisive interpretive essays, primary photographic and written documents, a thoughtful interview, and a chronology to document the vast range of this singular artist's work and her rigorous engagement with cultural manifestations of science, technology studies, ecology, philosophy, linguistics, and sociology from the 1960s to present day. Themes that recur throughout the catalog include authorship, collaboration, process, and of course, sight and site, which the catalog and its accompanying exhibition argue are integral in the artist's work. The objective of the catalog, edited by Alena Williams, a doctoral student at Columbia University and the exhibition organizer, is to "orient the discussion onto the making of the work itself" (19), a process facilitated by Williams's injunction to the authors to consider the full range of Holt's production, finished and unfinished, including artist statements, poetry, site-specific installation, public art, photography, film and video, and landscape architecture. The result is a collection of essays that effectively broaden the scope of Holt's traditional designation as a Land artist. The book is handsomely illustrated with numerous never-before-seen images of the artist's work.

In her introduction, Williams makes the case for the interrelation of film and site works in Holt's oeuvre, asserting that in both, the viewer's participatory experience of a site is oriented by and completed in collaboration with the artist, who provides structured, discrete perspectives. The argument here is that, just as the viewing devices in site works

like *Missoula Ranch Locators: Vision Encompassed* (1972; Fig. 1), comprising eight hollow metal cylinders mounted at eye level and arranged in a circle along compass points, serve to frame vision, the artist's photography and film accomplish the same end. The locator is akin to the camera lens, and in Holt's work both focus attention on the act of seeing. The term "sightlines" suggests that human sight frames a geographic site, and that for Holt the process of framing is contingent upon both the



Fig. 1. Nancy Holt aligning locator during construction of *Missoula Ranch Locators: Vision Encompassed*, Montana, 1972. Photo: Michael Wheatley.

artist who establishes the parameters and the viewer who "observes" them.

Film and photography were integral to Holt's site works because these media provided a more direct means to connect viewer with site, without the object intervening. When Williams contends, "Holt strove to bring landscape into communication with the viewer through cinematic and televisual means" (27), she

emphasizes the time-based nature of Holt's serial photography, film, and the physical experience of the site. Williams makes a convincing case that Holt's films, including *Pine Barrens* (1975) whose ostensible documentary subject is the heavily forested coastal plain in central New Jersey, are rather a reflection of "the artist's creative hand and her subjective point of view" (28). The film comprises handheld shots of a deer path as the artist traverses it, interspersed with interviews with local residents whose meandering descriptions of this undeveloped region similarly evoke the gradual process of passage.

Williams explains that the artist turned to site-specific work, as did many of her colleagues, as an intentional strategy to consider context and individual perspective. She then argues for the privileging of sight in Holt's work as a viewer- (or artist-) specific phenomenological experience of the landscape and as such marks "a shift away from universal paradigms of vision toward physiologically and historically specific ones" (19). Williams introduces this as a departure from traditional interpretations of phenomenology as employed by theorists like Maurice Merleau-Ponty and by early practitioners such as Robert Morris and Alice Aycock, who sought to problematize vision as a universalizing (read modernist) means of knowledge formation in favor of an individual, multi-sensory, experiential relationship with site. The emphasis of vision in the artist's work at first seems a reaffirmation of its primacy, but Williams's analysis suggests instead that Holt's works thoughtfully interrogate its pre-eminence. Williams convincingly quotes Rosalyn Deutsche to encapsulate Holt's practice, saying that the works "extended the notion of context to encompass the individual site's symbolic, social, and political meanings as well as the discursive and historical circumstances within which artwork, spectator and site are situated" (35).

Pamela Lee, in her essay, "Art as a Social System: Nancy Holt and the Second Order Observer," applies the social systems theory of German sociologist Niklas Luhmann to open up the discourse on phenomenology and perception that has historically provided the interpretive frame for Holt's work. In this construct, the viewer (second-order observer) becomes aware that her/his perception of the site has been shaped by the artist (first-order observer). Lee argues that Holt achieves this in locator pieces like *Missoula Ranch Locators: Vision Encompassed*, which focus on the eye-pieces themselves, the instruments of observation. The viewer who looks through the viewing instrument toward a small section of the landscape is engaged in an "observation of [the artist's] observations" (42), thus bringing "closure" to the system of perceiving. Lee's insights account for the *process* of perceiving and foreground the relational role of the observer, but it is unclear in this scenario whether and how meaning is generated. It seems that for Luhmann, only the artist and viewer participate in the production and reproduction of the work, so that changes in the environment and among viewers do not affect the system. Thus the work functions as a self-maintaining, steady state system. It is an open system, but one not characterized by growth and change through the exchange of energy or information with the environment, which was the common understanding of open social systems in the 1970s and early 1980s. Lee's characterization of the viewer as providing *closure* subtly complicates arguments made by others in this volume regarding the importance of the open-ended process of interpretation via individual viewers and collaborators, as well as the artist's own description of her systems works of the 1980s, which Lee quotes, "are part of open-ended systems, part of the world" (54).

Lee further questions traditional interpretations of Holt's site works that center on the solstice, constellations, and cyclical time by arguing that works like *Sun Tunnels* and *Hydra's Head* (1974), an installation at Artpark consisting of several round concrete pools mirroring the constellation Hydra, are "about" more

than just light. Instead they "provide multiple points for the viewer from which observation itself can be observed" (48), and it is the constructedness of constellations, solstices, etc., as tools for human observation to which Holt calls attention.¹ The constellation is itself relational, dependent on the observer's vantage point. Lee argues that Holt further distances the viewer from these visual constructs by the intervention of her sculptural forms (for example, one sees the constellations Draco, Perseus, Columba, and Capricorn reflected onto the interior of *Sun Tunnels* through holes pierced in the concrete cylinders). The intervention of the first-order observer, the artist, is thus made explicit.

Lucy Lippard's helpful survey of Holt's public works and projects focuses on the importance of phenomenological durational time, to which she subtly attributes a feminist motive—a means to undermine notions of absolute time or the "patriarchal sublime" (59). She explains the ways in which Holt's work is site- rather than place-specific: "She takes the site into consideration in various ways, addressing its topography, its history, its local materials, its placement on the planet in relation to the surrounding universe" (61). Lippard comments that in her public works, Holt manifests an "endless curiosity about how people see, what they see, how she can help them be conscious of what they see" (61). In discussions of works like *Dark Star Park* (1979-84), *Stone Enclosure: Rock Rings* (1977-78), and Holt's later pipe works, Lippard also points to the artist's persistent desire to bring the outside in and the inside out, deriving in part from her interest in Buddhism, which Lippard notes and to which the artist refers frequently in this volume (59, 70, 221).

Holt discusses with Lippard how her land works were meant to anchor the viewer literally and figuratively, "In vast spaces you yearn for containment, orientation, stillness" (59). Her statement evokes eastern philosophies, but perhaps also is a response to the 1969 moon landing, an important influence for Holt (31) and many artists of the period, the vastness of space inspiring as much terror as awe.²

Suggestive of a corollary between the desert and outer space, Holt explains, "You are a small speck in this vast space who experiences a need for orientation in the wide, open desert. You have a vast space, and when you are put out in it you can be overwhelmed" (174).

Lippard's discussion of Holt's *Pipeline* (1982-86), an indoor/ outdoor network of pipes inspired by the \$8 billion Trans-Alaska Pipeline (one of Holt's indoor pipes in this installation slowly leaks oil), is a reminder of the artist's early engagement with ecological concerns. Subsequent works recycle natural resources. Lippard quotes Holt's description of the function of *Waterwork* (1983-84), "From its basins, water flowed into the city system and eventually out to sea, where with evaporation and rain, it returns once more to the rivers and reservoirs to be recycled through the city system and back into *Waterwork*" (69).

Lippard ultimately suggests possible future directions for Holt's public art, inspired by her film *Mono Lake*, edited by Holt in 2004 from footage she shot with Smithson and Michael Heizer for Smithson's *Mono Lake Nonsite* (1968). Lippard explains that Holt has been photographing the Capulin Volcano in northern New Mexico (where she now lives) under different atmospheric conditions and at different times of day, from inside and outside the crater. According to Lippard this is rooted in her formative medium, photography, as well as in her persistent concern with the relation between inner and outer: "As in nature itself, everything connects with everything else" (70).

Holt's 2007 interview with James Meyer provides valuable insights into her relationships with conceptual artists including Carl Andre, Sol Lewit and Eva Hesse, her distinction between public art and earthworks, the importance of site-specificity, and her collaborative work with Smithson. She explains that science was a point of connection in her relationship with Smithson, who "devoured her science books." Holt majored in biology at Tufts University, and after graduating worked in a lab in Manhattan doing drug research. She claims their exchanges influenced his

first 1962 solo show, "Bio Icons, Specimens, Chemicals, Diagrams."

In comments here and elsewhere in this interview, Holt indicates that her interest in place and site-specificity was an outgrowth of her conviction to focus on the ordinary—to draw attention to that which might otherwise remain unseen, a concern seemingly rooted in her Buddhist beliefs as well as in the (John) Cagelan aesthetics of the 1950s. For example, she described her taped audio tour, which accompanied *East-West Locators* at the John Weber Gallery in 1972, as: "A tour where you looked closely at all the cracks and the stains on the floor, and looked out the window at certain things like chimneys, flues, brick walls, etc." (226).

Recollections of her circle of artist friends and struggles with her work in the 1960s help to illuminate the relationships between gender and recognition in the art world in those years. She framed her lack of production in the mid to late 1960s, when she was coming to terms with conceptual art, as doing art by doing nothing—achieving the goal of no end product. She also discussed the difficulty of being a woman in this context. "Back then it seemed one's work was one's reality. I had no product and I was a woman, so I was in a sense nonexistent." She explains further,

Just knowing Eva (Hesse) and Jo Baer encouraged me... Fortunately, I was able to share my experiences and insights with other women artists in two early consciousness raising groups. With so many aspects of reality unseen or unacknowledged by the males who held sway, the art world could be a suffocating environment (221).

Together with Holt, Ines Schaber carefully examines the artist's archive containing more than forty years of material and images, including landscape, survey, documentation, private travel, and photography. In her essay, "The Claims She Stakes: A Reading of Nancy Holt's Archive," Schaber seeks to uncover the relationship between Holt's photography and sculpture and, like Williams, finds that photography has been "a fundamen-

tal tool in her working process" (176).

Schaber's characterization of collaboration and authorship as central to Holt's work is most interesting. She references the artist's use of the video camera during a series of trips made with friends and colleagues between 1966 and 1969, in which group members shared the camera, using it as a tool to explore their surroundings. This includes Holt's trip with Smithson and Heizer to Mono Lake (which culminated in her 2004 film). Also compelling is Schaber's description of the filming of *Swamp* (1971) in which Holt films a walk through a New Jersey swamp with her Bolex camera. Mostly, but not always, she moved the camera at Smithson's direction, even through precarious terrain. Who is the author here, Schaber astutely asks. Is it necessary to identify one?

The authorship/ownership relationship is further elaborated in connection with *Sun Tunnels*. Holt's identification, purchase, and transformation of the site in the Nevada desert, is akin, Schaber argues, to the scientific survey of the Great Basin Desert (1867-69) led by Clarence King and documented by Timothy O'Sullivan, in which Native American designations were overwritten by the survey team, thus mapping the space in white man's terms. Schaber argues that the process of naming, mapping, and photographing sites is a means of staking a claim. She extends this argument to ask whether Holt's purchase of parcels of land in Utah upon which she never built can, through the act of claiming, be a work of art in itself.

Authorship is also a significant thread in Alena Williams's essay, "Concrete Traces: Nancy Holt's Speaking Media." She argues that Holt's concrete poetry of the 1960s was a means to establish an authorial voice (albeit one shared with the viewer), especially in the midst of conceptual art practice that rejected the creation of an enduring object as evidence of the artist-as-creator. Williams asserts that Holt's concrete poems, including *Detach Here* (1967), consisting of a square inscribed on a piece of paper with dotted lines superimposed on all four sides with the instruction "Detach Here," were open-ended forms of communication requiring the participation of

viewer as collaborator. Williams argues that, unlike Smithson, for whom words were material or metaphorical, for Holt, language was entirely referential, for example, referring to the viewer's experiential activity as she or he follows the instruction to "Detach here." The author convincingly demonstrates that Holt foregrounded the *use of language by the viewer*.

Holt's video *Boomerang* (1973), made with Richard Serra, is an important example of the assertion of the female voice in video, writes Williams. As Holt faces the camera, she hears her own voice played back: "I am throwing things out into the world and they are boomeranging back, boom-er-ang-ing, boom-er-ang-ing back. The words bounce and come again" (194). Williams claims convincingly that "the externalized, offscreen voice found in many of Holt's videotapes and audiotapes asserts her authorial position, at the same time that it opens up a communication channel between different speakers" (194).

Williams endeavors to argue that Holt's incorporation of technology, whether in the case of her locators or the camera, is not deterministic—that viewer perceptions are *shaped* rather than *constituted* by technology. In *Going Around in Circles* (1973), for example, Holt videotaped five students simultaneously at different locations on campus. Later, viewing the results and comparing their direct experience of the landscape with that mediated by the camera, they claimed a transformed understanding of the footage. The students' reflections served as the final soundtrack of the work, demonstrating, "the way discourse frames an understanding of the visual" (191). Although she clearly demonstrates that viewer collaboration is integral to the work, I believe this case is harder to make in works like *Missoula Ranch Locators: Vision Encompassed* in which the metal cylinders limit what and how the viewer sees, thereby shaping the experience.

Matthew Coolidge's highly detailed (phenomenological) description of the A-1 landfill site designated for Holt's unfinished reclamation project, *Sky Mound* (1984) in the New Jersey Meadowlands, inadvertently makes the

case for its completion, as he describes the potentially toxic sewage and sludge seeping into the water supply, one of the profound environmental concerns her project was meant to address. Coolidge provides a thorough history of the site: "the human-made mountains of the Meadowlands are the largest cluster of landfills in the nation" (205), and explains that in the 1980s, landfills were closing and alternative uses of the land were being sought, prompting the solicitation and approval of Holt's project. That only a portion of the project is completed is testament, in Coolidge's view, to the project's "liminality." Although this transitional state is as much a testament to the real-life vagaries of public art and the ever-changing whims of state-appointed commissions, Coolidge posits that its non-completion echoes nature's ever-changing cyclical state, a persistent concern for Holt. •

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Notes

1. The creation of works centered on constellations and the solstice as constructs was also practiced by Michelle Stuart, a contemporary of Holt's who exhibited with her in Alaska as well as Artpark. I argue elsewhere that Stuart's works in this vein were part of a feminist impulse to scrutinize Western scientific exploration as a means to order and control and at the same time engage in a cooptation and reimagining of those tactics. See my "Cosmology and Transformation in the Work of Michelle Stuart," *Woman's Art Journal* (vol. 32, no. 1): 3-12.
2. In her interview with James Meyer, Holt discusses the formative role of the moon landing on *Sun Tunnels* and the land she purchased for its installation: "I'm sure a lot

of my land had never been tread by a human foot. So when I would walk on it, it was like being the first person on the planet to walk on this particular piece of earth at this moment. That sensation stirred up thoughts of astronauts walking on the moon for the first time. There was always the sense of being out on the edge and creating something that hadn't been done before. I certainly felt the uniqueness of what I was doing, and it often produced an uneasiness. What am I doing here?" (231). Alice Aycock, a friend of Holt and Smithson in the early 1970s, commented on the moon landing in similar terms, "I think that in fact, for me, the notion of being in outer space is terrifying. It's that terror that I know intimately... I think the notion of being ejected into outer space and having no boundaries, no terra firma, not knowing what way is up, down, left or right, and traveling in that dark, dark, deep, cold space forever and ever and ever is the most terrifying thing I can think of." Christine Filippone, interview with the artist, New York, NY, July 16, 2007.

Michelle Stuart: Sculptural Objects, Journeys In & Out of the Studio

by Michelle Stuart, essay by Lucy Lippard
Charta Books, 2010

Reviewed by Robin Rice

The immediacy and introspective journal source of most of the writing and the almost palpable quality of the illustrations makes *Michelle Stuart: Sculptural Objects, Journeys In & Out of the Studio* feel intimate: a bit like a studio visit, perhaps, with the artist. Stuart's distinctive art practice has evolved for over five decades, and *Sculptural Objects* is a visual and written record of things she has made, journeys, journals, and ideas. It also functioned as a companion catalog of sorts for a 2010 show split between the Leslie Tonkonow Artworks and Projects gallery and Salomon Contemporary in Chelsea's "Michelle Stuart: 'Works from the 1960s to the Present.'"

Most individual pages in the book present an image, usually of an art work identified by title, location and date. Contemporaneous journal entries often

function as captions and commentaries. They describe historical, geological, or mythical elements relating to the location, quote relevant writings, and narrate Stuart's own experiences. Stuart's constant travels have been deeply significant for her on many levels and are essential elements of her work. She does not attempt a comprehensive explication or apologia concerning her approach to art or her overarching philosophy. In particular, although environmental responsibility and the importance of ancient and non-Western cultures are implicit in Stuart's thinking, neither her art nor this book is organized around promoting these causes. The time-transcending ties of humanity and the interconnectedness of things natural and constructed are passionately her subjects.

In an introductory essay, Lucy Lippard, an old friend who "bonded over our common passions for rocks, place, archaeology, landscape, maps, old books, travel, the artifacts and histories



Fig. 1. Michelle Stuart, *Derelict Tracts: An Observatory* (1989-90), 8'8" x 12' x 12' dome structure in 4 units, hand printed rice paper, gold leaf, objects (archeological shards, earth, flowers), metal structure. Photo: Michelle Stuart Studio.

of natural and indigenous cultures, as well as feminism and cultural politics," says that the artist "is able to leap back and forth over the thresholds between nature and culture, past and present. Her sheer delight in the fragments

revealed by nature, history and art has not diminished" (9, 10), something that could be said of Lippard as well.

Like all books *Sculptural Objects* communicates as an object. The reader can pick it up and handle it in ways not allowed with art in exhibitions. It is a pleasing, satisfying book. Each beautifully laid out page and diptych of opened pages is designed to be viewed literally as an individual work. However, images of Stuart's earth-saturated book sculptures inevitably remind viewers of the distance between a manufactured article and one with the satisfying and concrete quality of the hand. Stuart's writing helps to bridge the gap. She can evoke experience through simple precise lists that transport one to "a canvas bed with mosquito netting, a sink with a resident scorpion, and no readily available potable water.... I climbed Temple IV using ropes, chains, vines, and earthen steps. Sounds of howler monkeys, parrots, macaws, and cicadas..." (Tikal, Guatemala, 1978; 51).

Pages are grouped around locations and times, but transitions and relationships between them are not articulated. One small frustration is that the materials used in individual objects are given only in a "List of Works" at the back of the book. Because material specifics are so significant—crucial—to Stuart's work, both in terms of ideas and of experiencing something through the medium of photography, the reader would often like to have these details (readily visible if the object itself were present) without the fuss of paging back-and-forth.

The organization is roughly chronological. Lippard says that before beginning the work documented here,

In the 1960s Stuart moved from plaster sculptures to simulations of the surface of the moon. [A graphite moon drawing was in the Tonkonow show] By 1973—a year she has noted as a turning point—she came down to earth and turned from making marks to a [sic] creating a unified surface with spatial implications far beyond the paper (9, brackets mine).

Stuart began incorporating found materials, often earth and rocks, but twigs, feathers and bones as well, into work made on a specific site and/or later in the studio. This early phase, in the 1970s established her immersion particularly in geology, but also in the natural sciences, myths, and the history of particular places and her intense observational and experiential interaction with them. Stuart took earth as a primary medium. Descriptions of beating, crushing, and fraying can sound almost erotic, although Lippard suggests that the "repetitive, labor intensive techniques of pounding, rubbing, scouring and smoothing can be seen as homage to women's traditional work" (9). Stuart, herself, says that she "beat rocks and rubbed the residue continually until the paper was imbued with the earth. It became like velvet finally and the fragrance of the minerals arrested my senses" (33).

In addition to site-generated, studio-made pieces, often book works, Stuart aimed early on for significant site-specific installations. In journal entries, she says of the important early project *Niagara Gorge Path Relocated* (1975), that it was an "attempt to engender consciousness of the evolution of nature. Distance and time duration communicates the rhythm of the process of erosion" (27). *Path* consisted of a 460-foot muslin-backed paper draped from the top of a cliff to the Niagara River below, recreating the flow of water to Niagara Falls in the last Ice Age. Rocks from the site were impressed into the paper and local shale rubbed into the surface. Held in place by railroad ties, in photographs it is a narrow shining cascade, a calligraphic mark upon the landscape, simultaneously natural and constructed.

The documentation of weathering, erosion, and other geological processes is matched and sometimes almost overshadowed by Stuart's interest in the archaeology and anthropology of lost, neglected, and obscured cultures. Exploring and honoring ancient sites of human society, she researches incessantly and weaves quotations from all kinds of authorities and literary sources around her subjects. In 1975, seeking vanished shrines on the tops of the Frijoles Canyon mountains, structures that were

described by much earlier travelers, Stuart says, "Now there is nothing but a memory of the sacred places" (21). The earth that duplicates in color, and possibly in origin, mud plaster in a reconstructed cliff house nearby is applied to her folded book with a tactility that is almost a caress. Such mute earthen "books" embody everything wonderful and terrifying that we will never understand about the past. When she wrote in Machu Picchu, "It is hard to know what went on in this sanctuary of stone centuries ago, sacrifice being part of the agony of the spirit as well as the ecstasy of belief. It is silent now about a distant yesterday" (108), we feel that she does not set herself apart from that mysterious human pain.

Although she certainly does romanticize the past, Stuart understands that educated guesses and intuitions about vanished places may be erroneous. Nevertheless, she respects a poetic, personal validity. "I found a piece of metal, an old tobacco can top...I saw it on the street smashed by cars and to me it was a boat..." (140). Boats and boat forms often engaged Stuart's interest in diverse locations that included Nantucket, Finland, and Sweden during the late eighties. She is intrigued by "the movements of ideas and how they paralleled and are propelled by the actual movements of ships of men.... [and] the shaping of cultures by their exchange of matter and ideas..." (115). She recalls that her Swiss great uncle Jacques, a seafaring man,

brought with him exotica from distant lands, rare sea shells and coral, embroidered Chinese coats, carved teak fans, satin and lace purses that smelled of sandalwood and strange objects made by South Sea Islanders. As a child I carefully preserved everything that he brought me in a special place in my drawer (133).

This is surely an insight into her own adult activities.

Derelict Tracks: An Observatory (1989–90; Fig. 1) commissioned by the New York Public Library for an exhibition, comprised domed towers lit from within. The luminous walls were networks of papers, diary entries, and photographs.

Commissioned architectural works in which Stuart is not a primary and active fabricator are a recognition of her communicative success. As her travels have become less improvised, rugged, and unpredictable, serendipitous found materials give way to those better suited to a rigorous public life. *Tabula* (1989-92) for the New Stuyvesant High School is a permanent architectural installation incorporating thirty "paintings" in

colored marble. In works like this, Stuart's intimate cabinet of curiosity arrangements of unpretentious twigs, stones, and bones are replaced with the crisp grids of contemporary design. This perspective allows her to juxtapose motifs and concepts from diverse locations in a single place. *Sculptural Objects*, the book, falls appropriately into this continuing phase of Stuart's work. Her experience of the structures and

rituals of societies of the past has enabled her to enrich the society of the present. •

Robin Rice is an art writer. She has authored and co-authored books, catalog essays, and articles for numerous periodicals and currently is at work on the third volume in a series about Philadelphia murals for Temple University Press.

Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedo's Political Art

by Mieke Bal
University of Chicago Press, 2010

Reviewed by Robert J. Belton

Mieke Bal would be the first to admit that readers interested in "standard" art historical approaches to the work of Colombian political artist Doris Salcedo would be wise to look elsewhere. Indeed, she suggests several alternatives throughout *Of What One Cannot Speak*, all of which are more conventionally informative about the art in question (for example, by identifying the original context in which the works were made and by offering different explanatory frameworks).¹ Bal differentiates her approach in several important ways: As in her previous books, she is not particularly interested in the artist's intentions (2-3), she is not interested in recounting the specific details of the violent events that haunt Salcedo (57), and she uses Salcedo's work not as an end in itself but as a means to identify and describe the conditions that make *any* art political. In other words, she is not defining what is political in Salcedo's work but "moving through that work to make visible some features that enhance the chances that art can manage to be political" (246).

Like someone refusing to be pinned down to a fairly obvious point of view, Bal maintains that her book is not a biography, a monograph, or a theoretical treatise (5). Well, it certainly *isn't* a biography—readers interested in the details of Salcedo's life will be completely disap-

pointed—but it very clearly *is* both a monograph (a scholarly work on a single topic) and a speculative exercise concerning what makes political art political. The book is fluidly written and cogently argued, yet it is deeply intersubjective. It escapes me, however, why that would disqualify it from being a theoretical treatise. If nothing else, the frequency of theoretical-forerunner-name-dropping—Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Hubert Damisch, Gilles Deleuze, and Ludwig Wittgenstein loom especially large—marks it unmistakably as a contribution to a postmodern ontology of art, or at least the political subset thereof.

In Bal's view, art is not political because it (a) depicts or is otherwise "about" politics, (b) is sponsored or censored by a state in such a way that the latter's identity colors that of the artist or artwork, (c) makes a statement concerning what she calls a one-issue protest, or (d) represents violent events or their effects (58-60). Instead, art can *become* political if it (1) enables "metaphoring," (2) fosters anthropomorphism, (3) produces an elastic, if not anachronistic, sense of time that flows in both directions, (4) exists in a space whose openness allows intersubjectivity to happen, and (5) cuts across types of memory to produce projective identification with political trauma as a liberating phenomenon. These five themes, each corresponding to one of the five chapters of the book, are so densely argued that they need to be unpacked a little in order to understand how they recombine in the end.

In chapter one, Bal uses what she calls "a non-existent verb, *to metaphor*" to refer to the process in which meaning

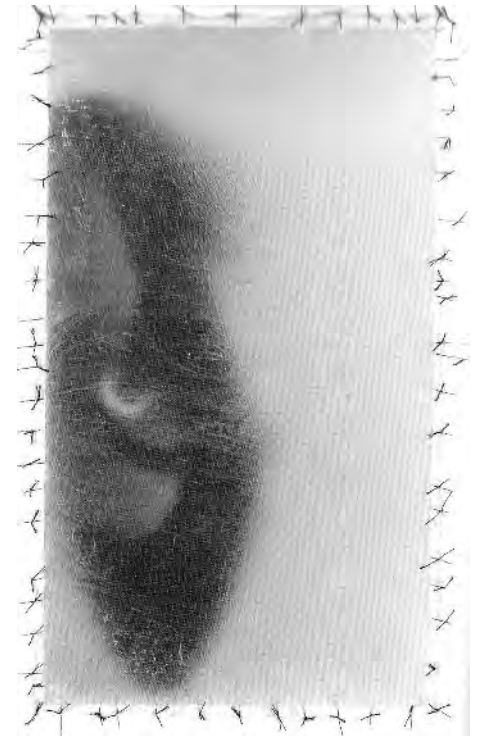


Fig. 1. Doris Salcedo, *Atrabiliarios* (1992-93). Detail of wall installation with sheetrock, wood, shoes, animal fiber, and surgical thread. Collection: Pulitzer Foundation, St. Louis, MO.

moves not in one direction from sender to receiver but back and forth in imaginative exchange. She writes,

[B]etween maker and viewer, something happens that cannot be of the order of understanding only. For art to be politically effective ... its context of emergence, not necessarily knowable to the receiver, must somehow be "translated" into a context from within which the receiver might be sensitive to the work's urgency. This mediation takes place through the activity of "metaphoring" (33).²

In metaphoring, viewers take on the responsibility of generating meaning in collaboration with the work and the various contexts in which both sender and receiver exist. (This, of course, is intersubjectivity.) The Salcedo work that captures Bal's attention in this regard is the very well known *Atrabiliarios* (1992–93; Fig. 1), a variable installation in which slightly worn women's shoes are propped up in niches veiled by animal hides seemingly stitched to the wall with surgical thread. That the shoes are fashionable confounds simplistic thematic comparison to working class shoes (e.g., Vincent van Gogh), as might be attempted by a conventional art historian. Similarly, that the shoes are veiled prevents comparison to, say, Andy Warhol's shoes, thus confounding readings of them as an indictment of consumer culture. However, despite these disambiguating constraints, Bal concludes that the presence and unique context of the viewer *reambiguate* the work in a manner that *increases* its political potential as a site of fluid interaction rather than a fixed depiction of a political event.

Chapter two develops the type of political reambiguation that Bal calls "anthropomorphism." This is an imaginative projection that leads to intersubjective metaphoring by interpreting works as implicitly humanoid. For instance, a portion of *La Casa Viuda II* (1993–94) consists of a door being penetrated by a smallish cabinet that has a zipper in an unexpected place. Despite no resemblance at all, Bal sees it as "a bent-over figure inside the cabinet ... , forever imprisoned in a cruelly confining space ... , a figure in blue jeans bending over" (105). Salcedo herself pointed out this was "'wrong' in terms of the work's genesis and its representational clarity" (106). Bal, however, had earlier concluded that "even ... 'wrong' interpretations can do their political work simply by holding the viewer to her agency" (71). In consequence, she argues that her "wrong" insight "is 'right' in that it did the political work of [moving] me to bring in my own baggage ... [in a] process of affective contagion" (106–07). Bal associates this contagion with Deleuze's "encountered

sign: a sign that enforces thought" (105) but does "not prescribe what to think" (108). In other words, getting the details right is less important than being moved to imagine a performative identification with violence in a manner that the author regrettably characterizes as "homeopathic"—that is, indulging imaginatively in a little bit of violence "cures" us of indulging in a lot (97). Needless to say, we are very far away indeed from any notion of political art as merely something "about" politics.

Chapter three reintroduces one of Bal's older ideas and a new one. The first is her redefinition of the Baroque as not a period in art history but a "visual philosophy or perception through the body" (143). One consequence is that a pair of Caravaggio paintings "seem to change into a post-Salcedo commentary" (148).³ This creative anachronism gives priority to audience over artist, and that's acceptable to a degree. That kind of trade-off is a key part of intersubjectivity, after all. The second idea is a little harder to swallow. She introduces the concept of temporal foreshortening—a kind of collapsing of the past into the present that facilitates the "affective contagion" of the previous chapter: "Foreshortened time is distorted—made wider or thicker—and condensed. It thus comes forward to touch the viewer, so that she experiences the almost tangible pull of time" (149). Bal needs this idea to support her contagion/homeopathy metaphor, so she bolsters it by arguing that the reductive definition of foreshortening in conventional art history doesn't account for its putative existence outside of the realm of linear perspective: "With foreshortening," she writes, "the mode of the artwork shifts away from representation, with all its illusions, into a realm of performance that binds the work to the viewer. I cannot help but see the trick ... [but] I willfully allow it to impose engagement" (143). Well, this is just inane. The whole point of foreshortening is to shift the mode of the artwork *towards* representation, but no educated person is fooled by the device in a way that would give substance to Bal's self-important assumption. Moreover, her assertion that foreshortening is "much older than the perspective it is alleged to serve" is both

reductive—for perspective is much more than the systems described during the Renaissance—and unnecessarily capacious. I suspect that she does this because she is compelled to find ways to disparage art history (which she reduces to caricature on pages 68, 71, 141, 143, and, to a more implied extent, 206) in order to provide ground for an unnecessary and unhelpful metaphor.

Chapters four and five treat installation and memory, respectively. As a formal device, installation creates ample space (both literal and figurative) for the viewer to undertake the kind of idiosyncratic interpretation that Bal associates with political agency. For example, she criticizes an exhibition of works by a number of noted political artists (including Leon Golub) for having been overcrowded to the point of stifling personal, imaginative projection and therefore any hope of real political agency (163). As for memory, the author condescendingly characterizes Salcedo's work as cutting across the "somewhat facile distinctions in cognitive memory theory," by which she means psychology's practice of sharply distinguishing declarative or language-accessible memory from non-linguistic or procedural memory. Salcedo's *Noviembre 6 y 7* (2002), in which a multitude of chairs are very slowly lowered and raised over the side of a building, shows that consigning non-linguistic memory to the domain of physical routine is wrong. Predictably, mainstream psychology's error is never excused and re-established as part of a productive theory in the way that Bal's own errors are.

Bal clearly feels that art that hopes to be political should not simply illustrate violence or trauma. Much less clear and convincing is her deployment of trauma theory deriving from Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud. Janet explained the inaccessibility of trauma to memory as "horizontal" and dissociative, whereas Freud's model was "vertical" and repressive (210–11).⁴ In the latter, trauma is elided—actively forgotten or pushed under the level of consciousness.⁵ In the former, trauma is redistributed by dissociation, which separates the unbearable from center stage and relegates it to the wings. (The image

taps into a mostly unconvincing theatre metaphor that runs through chapter five.) In both cases, “traumatic events elude subjective elaboration and remain rigorously outside the subject’s grasp” (210). The goal, therefore, is to create art that *fosters* subjective elaboration through affective contagion in order to restore political agency to the viewer. By the way, Bal does not allude to any research indicating that trauma is never repressed in the way most trauma-based cultural theory takes for granted.⁶

Of What One Cannot Speak is certainly an amusing, if occasionally challenging read, for it does eventually recombine the five themes—metaphoring, anthropomorphism, time, space, and memory—to create a model of political art as projective identification with trauma as a liberating phenomenon. However, it will not replace works more directly focused on the background and interpretation of Salcedo’s work. Bal respects those sources to a seemingly greater degree here than in her earlier books, but she nonetheless finds it necessary to point out that their emphasis on political violence in Salcedo’s native Colombia is reductive and “just a little too close to an apologetic identity politics” (92–93). The book is beautifully constructed and

quite well illustrated, but I would recommend it only to those fascinated by Bal’s unfalsifiable musings more than by Salcedo’s art. •

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Notes

1. Bal especially notes Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2003); Vera Mackie, “Doris Salcedo’s Melancholy Objects,” *Portal: Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 5.1 (2008): 1–14; Nancy Princenthal, “Silence Seen,” in Nancy Princenthal, Carlos Basualdo and Andreas Huyssen, eds., *Doris Salcedo* (London: Phaidon, 2000), 40–89; and Edlie L. Wong, “Haunting Absences: Witnessing Loss in Doris Salcedo’s *Atrabiliarios* and Beyond,” in Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas, eds., *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), 173–88.
2. Bal seems to be unaware of Kuang-ming Wu’s *On Metaphoring: A Cultural Hermeneutic* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).
3. The term Bal adopts in other writings to describe this interpretative time-warp effect—“preposterous history”—only appears four times in this book, without elaboration. Both it and her rethinking of the Baroque are explained in more detail in her book *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999).
4. Freudian scholars may note that this metaphor contradicts others in which Freud’s characterization of dissociation or “splitting” is described as “horizontal” in one regard—the one involving repression—and “vertical” in another. See, for example, Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self: A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971), 176–77.
5. This is occasionally called “motivated forgetting.” See, for example, Bernard Weiner, “Motivated Forgetting and the Study of Repression,” *Journal of Personality* 36.2 (1968): 213–34.
6. The first major work to make this claim was Elizabeth Loftus and Katherine Ketcham, *The Myth of Repressed Memory: False Memories and Allegations of Sexual Abuse* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1994). More recent work includes Marcia K. Johnson, Carol L. Raye, Karen J. Mitchell and Elizabeth Ankudowich, “The Cognitive Neuroscience of True and False Memories,” *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* 58 (2012): 15–52.

Hannah Wilke

by Nancy Princenthal
Prestel, 2010

Reviewed by Mary Caroline Simpson

For two months in 1969, Hannah Wilke lived in Los Angeles, while her then boyfriend Claes Oldenberg made prints at Gemini G.E.L. During that time she met Judy Chicago, who after seeing Wilke’s terra cotta labial shaped sculptures allegedly “encouraged her to give it up” and then “appropriated,” i.e., stole, her concept (16). Nancy Princenthal’s retelling of this story in Chapter 1 of her impressive monograph helps establish Wilke’s touchy interactions with peers both in and out of feminist artistic circles. At the same time it helps the author put forth the claim

that areas of the artist’s body of work, her earliest sculpture in this case, have been either neglected or misrepresented by scholars and critics. During a 1974 solo show at the Feldman Gallery, for instance, most critics panned Wilke’s single-fold pink terra cotta sculptures, which she organized in a floor grid. Writing for *New York Magazine*, Barbara Rose reviewed the work positively, but situated it only within the context of an emerging feminist aesthetic grounded in essentialism. Believing that her work properly belonged with discussions of Conceptual and Process art, Wilke campaigned hard for recognition. She simultaneously weakened these bonds through a series of provocative stripteases performed at alternative art venues and select establishment spaces; in 1976, for example, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, she stripped behind Marcel

Duchamp’s *Large Glass* in a performance Princenthal describes as, “[a]n elaborate allegory of sensual desire and mechanical depersonalization” (73).

The second and third chapters of Princenthal’s book—there are five chapters total bracketed by an Introduction and a Postscript—focus on Wilke’s performances and the photographic works tied to them. The book is lushly illustrated with color and black-and-white photographs of works, some of which are more central to the author’s argument than others. (Although the book contains chapter notes and comprehensive lists of illustrations, collections, exhibitions, and performances, the absence of an index makes it difficult to locate works.) The sexual revolution begun in the late 1960s provides the context for her discussion of S.O.S. Starification Object

Series: An Adult Game of Mastication (1974-75), made for the 1975 "Artists Make Toys" exhibition at the Clocktower Gallery in New York. Wilke's unique take on the family board game included playing cards and flavored gums for players to chew into vulva shaped, single-fold mini sculptures. When attached to the artist's body, as seen in photographs of Wilke striking fashion and celebrity poses, they resembled tribal scarification, skin blemishes, and jewels. Wilke both traded on and mocked her own beauty, as well as boldly declaring her desire for recognition in this important piece about manufactured stardom. She was all about pushing artistic boundaries and her audience's buttons. "Among her many provoking attitudes," Princenthal observes, "perhaps the most controversial, was her presumption that men were as likely to respond to her work as other women, and that she welcomed their appreciation" (68) of her "feminine—if not actively feminist—iconography" (35) through coverage in *Penthouse* and *Oui*. How these magazine "readers" or the art world broadly responded to Wilke's embrace of pornography remains unexplored. Princenthal does, however, tackle feminist reactions to the artist's participation in her own objectification and, perhaps, her own trivialization, with a focus on the recollections and opinions of Lucy Lippard, who in 1976, had written critically of her work's political ambiguity, attributed to "her confusion of her roles as beautiful woman and artist, as flirt or feminist" (67). Stung, Wilke declared that Lippard and her Heresies Collective were spiteful towards her, "because she was more beautiful than any of them" (147). History has sided with Lippard, and art historian Anna Chave, for instance, believes that she "was completely justified...in charging that Wilke wanted to have it both ways: she did want to be both agent and object" (153).

Nancy Princenthal's excellent introduction summarizes the Wilke scholarship and offers a remarkably judicious analysis of scholarly responses to a "broad change in art-theory paradigms" in the 1980s that resulted in a "shift in

emphasis from the more strictly feminist question of female sensual self-possession to the broader issue of how power circulates through the art world, and through images in the wider culture" (82). This sets up the second and third chapters where she clears a middle path between Peggy Phalen, who views theoretical scholarship as complicit in "the misogynist culture of academia in the early 1980s" that led to a dismissal of "essentialist, body centered work" (12), and theoretical feminists like Amelia Jones, who exalts Wilke "as a pioneer in revealing feminine identity to be a cultural construction" but also makes the author uncomfortable with such declarations as, "Hannah Wilke explores her body/self as always already not her own and enacts femininity as, by its very definition in patriarchy, inexorably performed ... doubly alienated, removed from the lure of potential transcendence" (12).

Wilke, who apparently knew in the 1980s that she was caught between the two, "measured her place in the art world" against old "competitors" (150) like Chicago, and younger post-modernists like Cindy Sherman. She wrote several vociferous letters to the editors of magazines and newspapers, many never sent and most never published, complaining that both Sherman, who had been a student at Buffalo State College in 1976, the year of her exhibition and performance at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and Sherman's supporters had failed to acknowledge a debt to her own innovative photo-performance work. Princenthal does not provide any evidence of Sherman's reactions to Wilke's assaults. Instead, using Sherman as a foil and drawing on Craig Owens's 1983 essay "The Discourse of Others: Femininity and Postmodernism," Princenthal argues that scholarship grounded in postmodernist theory misrepresents Wilke's photo-performances. "Sherman has always disappeared into



Fig. 1. Hannah Wilke, *Exchange Values [Marx]* from *So Help Me Hannah* (1978–84). One of six black-and-white photos, 60" x 40" each.

the characters she enacts for her photographs" (13), observes Princenthal, who deems cowardly the "guardedness about self-exposure" (81) that compelled Wilke's "successors" to "put their clothes back on and [enter] into the series of masquerades with which we're still engaged" (13). Conversely, Wilke courageously and publicly asserted real desire, "whether physical, emotional, or professional" (13), rather than "desire as an elusive cultural construction" (13) through public display of her nude body. "To put it simply, that exposure was inseparably tied to agency, to individual self-expression and personal freedom," writes Princenthal, adding, "the force of will required to take such action is obscured by the shift to a post structuralist critical position—a shift undertaken, ironically, largely under the aegis of feminism" (13).

How Wilke's performances relate to her relationships—professional, platonic, romantic, and sexual—is a focal point of Princenthal's intriguing, but somewhat disappointing, third chapter. Determined

that she “be ranked among the formal and intellectual heavyweights of her generation” (35), Wilke created *Advertisements for Living* (1966-84), a large photographic diptych showing a shirtless Wilke with her body tattooed with the initials of “brand-name” (86) male artists like Carl Andre, Sol Le Witt, and David Smith. Initials also reference three important lovers—DG (Donald Goddard, whom she eventually married), RH (Richard Hamilton, who defended her work), and, lastly, CO (Claes Oldenburg), who shortly after ending his relationship with Wilke in 1977, married Coosje van Bruggen (85). Princenthal skillfully shows how anger and hurt fueled Wilke’s artistic response to this rejection, which involved the use of his name, initials, image, and references to his art. Oldenburg, who was honored with a major exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1978, successfully sued her; claiming, as reported in *Arts Magazine*, “a separate, ‘right of publicity,’ the right to control the commercial use of his name or likeness” (89). This did not deter Wilke, who in 1978, at age 38, performed *So Help Me Hannah* (Fig. 1) and *Snatch Shots with Ray Guns* in the nude at P.S. 1 in Long Island City. “Melancholy, fatigue, and even helplessness alternate with poses that present her, albeit ruefully, as an armed avenger or martial goddess” (90), Princenthal writes sympathetically of a performance she describes as “a frontal assault on a man who had exploited... and then hurt her” (90). Because Oldenburg’s reaction to this threat or his version of the story is missing (perhaps he declined the opportunity to be interviewed), Princenthal creates the perception that Wilke was waging yet

again a vindictive and opportunistic one-sided battle. Another problematic aspect of Princenthal’s argument about agency is the total lack of critical consideration of Wilke’s reliance on several male photographers to document important performances, including Goddard, who photographed *Snatch Shots with Ray Guns*. Conversely, Sherman acts as both model and photographer and thus has complete authorship of her work. Never using her art to publicly air personal issues, Sherman also possesses a confidence and the strength of self-possession that Wilke clearly lacked.

Hannah Wilke’s squabbles over real and perceived slights faded away following first her mother’s and then her own unsuccessful battle with cancer. Princenthal observes in Chapter 4, that the “gallows humor” (118) of the photographs chronicling her treatment and the *Intra-Venus Tapes*, (1990-93), a 16-channel video installation produced with her husband, “allowed a great many people who had previously been leery of Wilke to embrace her in sympathy, pity and, inevitably, schadenfreude” (122). Princenthal cautions against reading the artist’s work and life—she passed away at age 52 in 1993—as “a tidy narrative arc that goes from beauty to decay, pride to a fall” (122). Eager to portray Wilke as inquisitive about the world and “its mechanism of power” (144), Princenthal returns to her pre-illness body in Chapter 5, where she focuses on a nude photograph of “Wilke shaping an image of herself shaping her self-portraits” (144) that is related to her painted plaster and chocolate works known collectively as *Venus Pareve* (1982-4). Princenthal concludes, “Her work in sum is an epic story of felicity and determination, of

drive—the kind of ambition that is particularly suspect in women, and in men is more often simply credited as hard work—and acceptance” (144).

Although I admire this book and encourage others to read it, I simply fail to see or appreciate the “spirit of affirmation” (7) in Wilke’s life and works that Princenthal so values. Two particular passages stick in my mind. The first is, “Wilke invited us to enter her life in its every particular—and, equally, to find our own lives reflected there” (13). The second is, “By the standards of candor and self-determination for which Wilke was such an ardent spokesperson, we look weak and self-indulgent, unwilling to stand out and speak up” (13). How can we look at the films or photographic record of Wilke’s performance work today and not think of the millions of people daily shaping their own identities on-line and sharing perhaps too much information about themselves through tweets, sexting, on-line video, and social networking sites? Explicit nude photographs, confessional content, political statements, publicity stunts, and retaliatory freedom of expression, i.e., the public bullying or exploitation of others, exists in near permanent electronic form haunting both the creator and recipient for life. Wilke’s work and even her anger seem tame, even innocent and vulnerable, in comparison. The world is a very different place than in the 1970s and 1980s. An awareness of a significant shift in the reader’s lifestyle, behavior, and values is missing from what is an otherwise remarkable book. •

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Joan Mitchell, Lady Painter

by Patricia Albers
Alfred A. Knopf, 2011

Reviewed by Virginia Allison Harbin

In her comprehensive biography of Joan Mitchell (1926-92), Patricia Albers constructs a vivid and tragic account of this painter’s life, loves, and

most important, her struggle to be recognized as an Abstract Expressionist of the first rank. The exhaustively researched account of Mitchell’s life depicts her as a complex and troubled person who, while not entirely likeable, is certainly worthy of respect. Mitchell’s life is described in stunning detail, with material pulled from interviews, correspondence, and archives. Albers

makes a convincing argument that Mitchell’s external barriers to success were because of her gender, and that her transgressive behavior was often seen as “masculine” and disagreeable. Albers demonstrates that, in a notable parallel with her male colleagues of the New York School, Mitchell’s life was plagued by addiction. The only difference that accounts for their relatively rapid

success compared with her lifelong—and resentful—struggle for recognition is her gender. What becomes most clear from this deeply personal account are the vast difficulties of being respected as a “lady painter” in the New York art scene of the 1950s and 1960s. While Joan Mitchell might not have characterized herself as feminist, Albers’s account of her life is undeniably feminist.

Mitchell’s mother was a wealthy Chicago socialite and poet, and her father appears as a self-made man with a significant chip on his shoulder. The rivalry between father and daughter can, in many ways, be seen as the foundation for Mitchell’s cultivation of a masculine artistic persona. In the first chapter Albers describes how her parents’ behavior affected their children:

The more subtly she [her mother] patronized him [her father], the more he pushed their daughters, setting standards for them and basking in their accomplishments, but also competing with them and undermining their self-confidence when it threatened his own (15).

Albers’s psychoanalytic approach to the biography is closely aligned with Mitchell’s own preoccupation with psychoanalytic therapy and theory. Mitchell was heavily invested in the opinions and guidance of her Freudian psychotherapist, Edrita Fried. Albers notes that, in times of trouble, Mitchell “promptly handed over every major decision to Fried” (160). While such a straightforwardly psychoanalytic interpretation of Mitchell’s life can at times appear somewhat over-determined, it is nonetheless an accurate reflection of Mitchell’s own dependence on psychoanalysis to describe her life as well as her paintings.

Albers annotates Mitchell’s career trajectory with biography, illustrating their inseparability, beginning with childhood accounts of Mitchell’s unique conception of color. As Mitchell’s career progresses in this biography, one begins to grasp a sense of her marvelous use of paint and the way in which the elements of her life are infused into her canvases (Fig. 1). Beginning in art school in Chicago and

during her times in New York and then France, Albers demonstrates that the only constants in Mitchell’s life were her exhaustive studio practice and alcoholism. Lovers come and go, and at best, characterize Mitchell’s life for brief periods, but the thing that remains is paint. Albers depicts her as a privileged and highly educated artist, whose family wealth gave her the freedom to make art and behave as one of the boys of Abstract Expressionism. Like Willem de Kooning, but contra others of that group, Mitchell had a “rigorous Beaux-arts training, the kind that should belie the skepticism of a certain public quick to label abstract artists as inept, if not fraudulent” (108). In nearly every respect, Mitchell is presented as a thoroughly first wave Abstract Expressionist, from her tumultuous personal life to her art school training.

Mitchell was not interested in supporting other women artists or the feminist movement. Rather, as revealed in interviews, letters, and archives, Mitchell was more interested in climbing over other women, and men for that matter. She longed to be a solitary woman artist among male artists, and throughout this biography the reader sees the fashioning of Mitchell’s masculine/feminine persona.

Albers writes in juicy detail about Mitchell’s love affairs and the ripples they caused within her circle, such as Elaine de Kooning’s resentment towards her, as well as the consequences of her numerous infidelities on her own relationships. For Albers, these scandalous accounts serve to demonstrate just how hard Mitchell fought to be a part of the group and to become “one of the guys.” Albers even connects her affairs directly to her desire to paint, for example,

With feral joy, Joan had rushed blindly into the affair never paus-



Fig. 1. Joan Mitchell at the Paris studio she borrowed from sculptor Day Schnabel (1957). Photo: *Life* magazine.

ing to consider its consequences. She took what she needed. Sex, yes. But also the fact that Mike [Goldberg] was a painter. Joan was drunk on painting, drunk on New York, drunk on Mike—all the same thing (153).

While it may be said that Albers constructs a myth of the artist as a solitary and troubled genius, she does so in a way that challenges a gendered conception of artistic genius. Mitchell is characterized as egotistic and fragile. She could paint, love, and drink just as hard as her male colleagues, such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, and ultimately, she was just as haunted and troubled as they were, if not more so.

A fascinating aspect of the biography is the way Albers exposes just how incestuous and sexist the art world was. In particular, the comments of Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg are sure to ruffle feathers and challenge the way in which Abstract Expressionism’s legacy is seen and understood. Using asides and parentheses in a wonderfully Irigarayan sense, she leaves the reader

shocked and wanting more. For example, in describing the difficulties of women securing gallery representation, Albers drops in "(Clem Greenberg had advised Sam Kootz not to take any women because they'd just get pregnant)" (172).

The group dynamic of the New York School and its satellites is manifested in descriptions of the summer-long alcohol binges in the Hamptons with the de Koonings and Rosenbergs. These accounts also capture Mitchell's embedded position in this hard-drinking, boys' network in such a way as to question Mitchell's demeaned status as a "secondary" Abstract Expressionist. Albers also describes the dynamic of alliances and competition between groups, placing Mitchell firmly in the art historical camp of de Kooning and Rosenberg, though carefully noting that this group was just as skeptical of women artists as the "opposing" Pollock-Greenberg camp. The author complicates Rosenberg's heroic pronouncements for the artist with notions of gender and false-grandeur, and descriptions of ravaging addictions that affected many of the heroic and masculine Abstract Expressionist artists as

well as Mitchell herself. Although Albers paints Greenberg as sexist and an impediment to Mitchell's success, she sees Rosenberg, too, as placing Mitchell out of serious consideration as a legitimate Abstract Expressionist. Rosenberg, she writes, "imposed a gendered conceptual framework upon a painting attitude supposedly based in absolute freedom: the Abstract Expressionist as a hairy-chested, heroically individual he-man doing battle with his canvas" (197). Needless to say, such direct and unhesitating male chauvinism had devastating effects on Mitchell as well as on other female contemporaries who "did not fit the mold of the modern man's confrontation with absolute freedom and existential angst and thus [were], in effect, sidelined by Rosenberg's rhetoric" (198). In her exhaustive detailing of each phase of Mitchell's career, Albers notes the artist's influences, experiences, and states of mind. In a particularly poignant passage, she depicts an older Mitchell, living in France, who refused to let anyone into her studio, not even a repairman, for fear her blurry abstractions would be judged negatively. Albers unflinchingly addresses Mitchell's alcoholism and how it

fueled her paintings; for better or for worse the two were inseparable.

Not an art book but a substantial (over 500 pages) biographical study, it includes dozens of photographs of the artist and her milieu as well as some images of Mitchell's paintings, extensive notes, and a comprehensive index. In sum, Albers paints a picture of a woman haunted by insecurities and feelings of inferiority, beginning with her father and exacerbated by a systematic devaluation of her work because of her gender. While these did not stop her from painting amazing works, they did deny her full entry into the art world until after Abstract Expressionism's crucial moment had passed. Albers presents Mitchell as an indisputable force within Abstract Expressionism, and while it may be too late to soften the bitterness felt by Joan Mitchell the person, it is always the right time to celebrate Joan Mitchell the artist. •

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Double Solitaire: The Surreal Worlds of Kay Sage and Yves Tanguy

essays by Stephen Robeson Miller and
Jonathan Stuhlman
Katonah Museum of Art and The Mint
Museum, 2011

Reviewed by Janet A. Kaplan

Rich illustrations of works by the Surrealist couple Kay Sage and Yves Tanguy, often placed side by side for comparison, offer a unique opportunity to examine intersections of their lives and art and to explore the ways in which each was inspired by the other. This is the focus of both authors in their respective essays: Stephen Robeson Miller's "The Intersection of Art and Fate," and Jonathan Stuhlman's "Double Solitaire." Elaborating on biographical and formal connections of their artistic exchange, the authors make

a convincing case for the influence of the lesser-known Sage on the work of her

far more famous husband, which seems to be a primary purpose of this project.

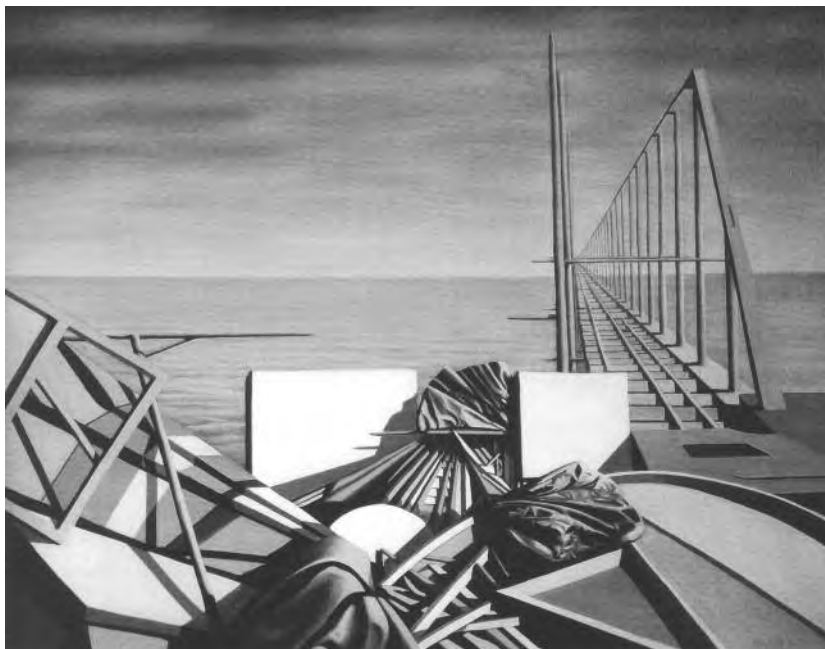


Fig. 1. Kay Sage, *Unusual Thursday* (1951), oil on canvas, 31 3/4" x 38 3/4". New Britain (CT) Museum of American Art, Gift of Mrs. Naum Gabo.

Double Solitaire: The Surreal Worlds of Kay Sage and Yves Tanguy is the catalogue for an exhibition of the same name that was shown at the Katonah Museum of Art in Katonah, New York, and the Mint Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina. Essayist Miller is an independent scholar whose primary research and publication focus has been on Sage, and Stuhlman, a curator at the Mint Museum, wrote his master's thesis on Sage's influence on Tanguy.¹

The image they present is of a rather hermetic world of two artists making work in adjacent studios in a rural Connecticut farmhouse, their isolation mitigated by weekend visits with their many well-known Surrealist friends that are documented photographically and anecdotally. The couple's social connections and their participation in Surrealist exhibitions are discussed at some length, and there is fascinating information about Sage's war-time role in funding Surrealist artists in exile. Their shared interest in the Surrealist work of Giorgio di Chirico is also explored. But there is little substantive examination of the philosophical, political, or psycho-dynamic aspects of

Surrealism that is at the core of each artist's work.

Tanguy and Sage shared an obsession with specificities of location and place stripped of human habitation. His are often light-filled, richly colored, and playful compositions, while hers are frequently dark, broken, and menacing. They are compared in these terms, as are the similarities and differences in their individual vocabulary of forms. There is extensive description but little exploration of the broader relationship of psychic to physical space, the link between the unconscious and the palpable world that enlivens the work of each. For example, the juxtaposition of Sage's *Unusual Thursday* (1951; Fig. 1) with Tanguy's *The Mirage of Time* (1954) is discussed simply in terms of geometrical form. The intense embrace of the oneiric, visionary, and psycho-sexual energy so clearly manifest in each artist's imagery calls out for deeper examination.

This catalogue, designed in service to the exhibition, whets the appetite for a much more fully developed analysis of their work in general and of Sage's in particular. The archive of research material on Sage, gathered over forty

years, that Miller has deposited with the Archives of American Art, offers a rich mine of material for such further work. The new information that has been unearthed and the great wealth of images, including 46 color plates (it is a special pleasure to see so much of Sage's intriguing work here), should serve as valuable starting points for such deeper study and should help to reinforce the position of greater importance and wider visibility that Sage's work so clearly merits. •

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Notes

1. See also Stephen Robeson Miller, *Kay Sage: The Biographical Chronology and Four Surrealist One-Act Plays* (New York: Gallery of Surrealism, 2011); and Jonathan Stuhlman, "Kay Sage's Influences on Yves Tanguy's art of the 1940's," (MFA thesis, Art Institute of Chicago, 1998).

Man Ray / Lee Miller: Partners in Surrealism

by Phillip Prodger with contributions
by Lynda Roscoe Hartigan and Antony
Penrose
Merrell, 2011

Reviewed by Salomon Grimberg

Everyone loves a love story: the complicity of an internal retreat where two human beings share the mirage of a timeless existence. Outsiders, curious about it, can only surmise the internal forces shaping the hearts and minds of lovers. That is, unless both are artists and their art, imbued by how much of one has gotten lost in the other, exposes their passion. Thereafter, the voyeurs' hunger will be fed, and their appetite whetted to no end.

Early in the previous century, Braque and Picasso established an interest in collaborative work after producing

Cubism together and influencing the development of modern art. But they were friends, not lovers. Most recently, the original research by Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtviron, *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership* (1993), focused on the dynamics of creative couples, (writers as well as painters). The following year, Renée Riese Hubert narrowed her research by exploring exclusively partners within the Surrealist Movement, *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism and Partnership* (1994). One couple she included was Elizabeth "Lee" Miller (1907-77) and Emmanuel Radnitzky "Man Ray" (1890-1976).

The chance meeting that transformed the lives of these two American photographers in Paris began in 1929 and ended three years later, when Lee Miller walked away, without turning back. Although eventually they reconciled as friends, for Man Ray, who had become addicted to Miller, it would

be forty-four years before he had worked through his withdrawal. During this time, he continued producing, off and on, works referring to their attachment and separation, including a self-portrait with a noose around his neck and a gun held to his temple.

Knowing their early histories demystifies what made their personal dynamics dovetail and how their relationship developed. At age seven, Miller was raped and infected with gonorrhea by a "family friend," causing her to develop a sense of personal damage, to grow harder and mistrustful of intimate relationships. Whether she and her father became physically involved following the rape is debatable; but it is factual that they were psychologically incestuous. While she was still receiving painful treatments for the infection, he began photographing her nude, and he continued to do so into her twenties. Exquisitely beautiful, Miller was born into privilege and by nineteen

had become a successful *Vogue* fashion model. Tired of living in New York after three years, she moved to France to be on the other side of the camera, saying: "I would rather take photographs than be in them" (17). Edward Steichen, a friend and photographer for whom she had posed, wrote a letter of introduction to Man Ray, then living in Paris and at the forefront of the Surrealist movement. Seventeen years her senior, Man Ray informed her he did not take students, but the unstoppable Miller became one, and in no time, his assistant, lover, and muse.

Man Ray, the oldest son of Russian immigrants never forgot a slight. As a young boy his escape was making art and he daydreamed of moving to France. There, under a new name, he created a new identity for himself, and until the end of his life, he avoided speaking of his family. He attributed the origin of the eventual estrangement from his sharp-tongued mother to her destroying a toy locomotive that he had built with wheels stolen from another boy's toy. He bitterly remembered the day before departing for France, how, when he tried to photograph the family, his mother, bent over the stove, would not join the group. Yet, Ray grew up a romantic, longing to find the one woman with whom to share his life.

Documenting a first and long overdue exhibition of their collaboration, *Man Ray / Lee Miller: Partners in Surrealism* is the beautifully produced, richly illustrated catalogue of an exhibition by the same title at the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem Massachusetts. Unfortunately, there are not as many photographs by Lee Miller as one would hope to see.

Chief Curator Lynda Roscoe Hartigan's essay, "Coupling: Reflections on Bell Jars and Metronomes," explores the significance of the "object" in Surrealist iconography as a source of "surprise, discomfort, poetry or mystery" (14), as well as its relationship

to "the fetish, a metaphor for a belief system" (14). The camera, she explains, objectified Miller doubly, as dependent on it as model, and independent from it as photographer. And she points out that in the case of Man Ray, when he said, "I photograph the things I do not wish to paint, things which already have an existence" (14), that "separately or in combination with one another, people and objects held equal weight for him as things" (14), she believes "Lee Miller was the exception, her presence and absence a catalyst of poignantly obsessive proportions" (14).

Philip Prodger, Curator of Photography at Peabody Essex, contributed an essay titled "Lee Miller and Man Ray: The Ultimate Surrealist Object." Written with racy immediacy, it draws the reader into the lovers' intimate orbit: a letter from Ray to Miller, who was traveling in England, exposes his childlike dependency:

I hope this will be the last trip to London, because I can stand it less and less.... Perhaps my love for you has become an undesirable thing for myself as well as for you... I can't face the idea that every successive day seems to put off your return...I haven't the strength... (26).

Prodger's airtight knowledge and understanding of their individual lives as well as their life together brings meaning to their work as he offers examples that differentiate each one's unique characteristics: "Ray was not often driven to explore the inner character of his portrait subjects. Miller, by comparison, consistently made pictures with psychological charge" (35–36), as for example, her small photograph *Man Ray Shaving* (c. 1929, p. 32). When Prodger unravels their private language hidden in unassuming minutiae, the reader becomes privy to their core truth,

that "Ray's stunning *Arums Lilies* (1930, p. 36), is a visual pun: the French word for lily—*lys*—is pronounced 'Lee'" (36).

Antony Penrose's essay "A Thing of the Heart: Lee Miller and Man Ray," is a welcome text. Penrose is Miller's sole child from her marriage to the British Surrealist painter Roland Penrose, with whom she remained until her death. His essay brings to light childhood reminiscences of the times his parents spent with Man Ray and his wife Juliet. He recalls Miller's joy when Ray came to visit, reflecting on how their early relationship must have been. In becoming a photographer, she had chosen to become her own person—free from being objectified as a model and from the neediness of lovers like Ray. In photographing the savagely war-torn Europe, she confronted the damage she carried within while exposing the damage that other men were causing humanity. The memory of her own rape however, was never too far from her mind. In the prewar *Portrait of Space* (1937; p. 58), Miller photographed a window from inside, focusing on the ripped mesh used to protect it, echoing how the young Lee must have felt thirty years earlier, as her innocence was ripped apart and her childhood abruptly brought to an end.

After the War, Miller left her career as a photographer. The weight of the violence she had witnessed gradually had taken its toll. Broken, she suffered chronic debilitating bouts of depression, which she medicated with alcohol. Ray made art until 1976, when he died, one year prior to Miller. •

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Marie-Louise von Motesiczky 1906-1996: A Catalog Raisonné of the Paintings

by Ines Schlenker

Marie-Louise von Motesiczky
Charitable Trust in association with
Hudson Hills, 2009

Reviewed by Carmen Stonge

In the fin-de-siècle atmosphere of Vienna, Marie-Louise von Motesiczky (1906-96) led a privileged life. She rarely exhibited the still lifes, portraits, self-portraits, landscapes and “fantasy paintings” she produced over seven decades, and was reluctant to part with her work, lacking the confidence that her paintings were good enough. Born into a wealthy family, she had no need to sell her work, and in 1992, four years before her death, she set up the Charitable Trust where her work is collected. In Motesiczky’s own lifetime her work was relatively unknown, although from the mid 1920s until her death she produced approximately 340 paintings and over 1000 works on paper and participated in some three dozen exhibitions.

Ines Schlenker’s lavishly illustrated 560-page catalog raisonné of this artist’s paintings includes a large selection of drawings, letters, and photographs. Commissioned by the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust in London, Schlenker, an art historian and researcher there, builds upon Jill Lloyd’s comprehensive 2007 biography of this Austrian artist.¹ In 2006-07, in honor of the artist’s centennial, Motesiczky’s work was featured in a retrospective exhibition in Frankfurt’s Museum Giersch in cooperation with the Tate Liverpool, the Wien Museum, and the Southampton City Art Gallery. In 2010, the Galerie St. Etienne in New York became the first venue in the United States to showcase the artist in an exhibition titled “Marie-Louise von Motesiczky: Paradise Lost & Found.”

Schlenker’s meticulously researched catalog essay, “The Life of Marie-Louise von Motesiczky” tells a compelling story, with photographs that document the artist’s fascinating biography,

including distinguished ancestors and great wealth. Her maternal grandfather, Leopold von Lieben, was director of the family-owned Vienna bank and president of the Austrian Stock Exchange. His wife, Anna von Todesco, also from a banking dynasty, suffered from mental illness and became one of Sigmund Freud’s first patients. The Liebens amassed a large art collection (from Tintoretto to Böcklin) and produced five children, including Henrietta, who became Motesiczky’s mother, lifetime companion, and frequent subject. Edmund Franz von Motesiczky, the artist’s father, was the illegitimate son of a Catholic Hungarian noblewoman. Both parents converted to Protestantism, and their two children Karl and Marie-Louise were christened in the Protestant church. (Their Jewish genealogy lay dormant until 1938, when the Nazis marched into Austria.)

The Motesiczky family hosted salons attended by intellectuals and artists, including Max Beckmann, with whom Marie-Louise would later briefly study. Apparently, Motesiczky’s formal education ended at age thirteen, although she later attended art classes in Vienna, The Hague, Paris, Berlin, and Frankfurt. At sixteen, while visiting relatives in Holland, she was inspired by the work of Rembrandt, van Gogh, Vermeer, and Jan Steen, and one of Motesiczky’s earliest surviving paintings, *Kleines Roulett* (Small Roulette, 1924), is described by Schlenker as showing the artist’s esteem for van Gogh. The still life depicts a cropped close-up of a chair precariously holding a roulette wheel. The subdued colors and tilted perspective, however, appear to be more reminiscent of Cézanne. In Holland she also befriended Mathilde (Quappi) von Kaulbach, the daughter of the Munich portrait painter Friedrich August von Kaulbach (and Beckmann’s future second wife).

In Frankfurt in 1924 Motesiczky studied at the Städelschule with the academic painters Vincenz Cissarz and



Fig. 1. Marie-Louise von Motesiczky, *Mother in Green Dressing Gown* (1975), oil on canvas, 26" x 22". Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust, London.

Franz Karl Delavilla. While living with her mother’s cousin, whose husband was the editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and an early patron of Max Beckmann, she first met Beckmann and saw his paintings. He invited her to attend his Master Class in drawing at the Städelschule in 1927-28, and throughout the mid to late 1920s Motesiczky’s paintings were heavily influenced by Beckmann, albeit minus his aggressive, confident style filled with personal symbolism and cramped, compressed spaces. One of Motesiczky’s most arresting works from this time is her angular, elongated *Self Portrait with Comb* (1926), painted before her formal studies with Beckmann, but, as Schlenker notes, after Beckmann and Motesiczky together visited the Louvre, where he praised El Greco’s *St. Louis, King of France*, and a *Page* (1590-97), which inspired her painting.

Motesiczky and her mother left Austria in 1938, within days after the Anschluss, and lived with relatives in the Netherlands before emigrating to England in 1939. Her brother refused to leave Austria and shipped his sister’s artworks and the family furnishings. (He was later arrested by the Gestapo for sheltering Jews and died in 1943 in Auschwitz.) Motesiczky was never

interested in politics, and her oeuvre contains no hint of social criticism.

In England, the Motesiczky's continued to live well at their countryside home. The artist Oskar Kokoschka and his wife, who also emigrated to England, were frequent visitors, as were the sculptor Anna Mahler, art historian Ernst Gombrich, journalist Benno Reifenberg, and writer Elias Canetti. Motesiczky carried on a long, tumultuous liaison with the married, Bulgarian-born Canetti, who later won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1981. (Much to Motesiczky's shock, he secretly married another woman after his first wife died, and Motesiczky later referred to Canetti as her "personal catastrophe" [37].)

Schlenker writes that although Motesiczky found her own independent style by the late 1930s, the ongoing influence of Beckmann's style remained in evidence. Motesiczky continued to paint her everyday world, consisting mainly of still lifes, landscapes, portraits, and "fantasy" or allegorical works. For example, *The Travellers* (1940) refers to her exile from Austria. Filled with personal symbolism, it depicts four people crammed into a small boat on a turbulent sea. Although the painting is strongly reminiscent of Beckmann's style and

color palette, her work gradually became more colorful and compositionally less compressed. Always ambivalent about exhibiting and reluctant to sell her work, Motesiczky was fortunate to have others willing to promote her paintings, which were featured in exhibitions both in England and abroad. After the war, Motesiczky moved to London and became a naturalized British citizen. By the early 1950s her paintings were featured in solo exhibitions at The Hague and Amsterdam, and in 1966 her first successful venue at the Vienna Secession resulted in acquisitions by Austrian collections. During the 1960s and 1970s, portraits of Henrietta, which are counted among her best works, dominated Motesiczky's oeuvre. Beginning in 1929, when Motesiczky painted the first image of her mother reclining in bed, she continued to document her mother's decline into old age and death (1975; Fig. 1). Henrietta's continuous presence in Motesiczky's life was both a personal burden and an artistic blessing. Gombrich compared Motesiczky's 'mother paintings' with Albrecht Dürer's sensitive renderings of his mother (50).

In 1980 Beckmann and Motesiczky were once again artistically reunited in

Frankfurt, in the exhibition titled "Max Beckmann's Frankfurter Schüler, 1925-1933," which featured fourteen of her paintings. According to Schlenker, as late as 1987, Motesiczky, in a radio interview, commented that, although she believed her style to be independent, the catalog raisonné of Beckmann's paintings occasionally served as an inspiration (56).

Schlenker's catalog raisonné provides a wealth of biographical information about this artist and makes an important contribution towards building a future reassessment of Motesiczky and her work. (More examples of her work can be seen online at the trust's web site, www.motesiczky.org). There is much room for future research, which can provide a better understanding of the artist in her historical milieu, including more about her art training in Vienna, The Hague, Paris, and Berlin, and any relationship to other women artists. •

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Notes

1. Jill Lloyd, *The Undiscovered Expressionist: A Life of Marie-Louise von Motesiczky* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2007).

Harriet Hosmer: A Cultural Biography

by Kate Culkin

University of Massachusetts Press, 2010

Races of Mankind: The Sculptures of Malvina Hoffman

by Marianne Kinkel

University of Illinois Press, 2011

Reviewed by Jennifer Wingate

Renewed interest in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women sculptors first revived the legacies of Harriet Hosmer and Malvina Hoffman in the 1970s and 1980s. More recent studies have examined their work from different thematic perspectives and in relation to discourses of gender,

professionalism, and race. Kate Culkin's cultural biography of Hosmer builds on these precedents, while deploying a full biographical treatment to allow readers to appreciate the neoclassical sculptor's place in nineteenth-century America and "what her life can reveal about the era" (3). The book, which illustrates all of Hosmer's major works (including one watercolor rendering by the artist Patricia Cronin), offers an engaging cultural history of the second half of the nineteenth century as seen through the lens of the sculptor's life. Culkin fluidly captures the competing impulses that shaped Hosmer's career, showing the fruits of her networking and nonconformity, but also highlighting the frustrations that accompanied brazen ambition.

Culkin's study is strongest when she interprets the reception of Hosmer's



Malvina Hoffman, *Mangbetu Woman*, Hall of the Races of Mankind, Field Museum. © The Field Museum.

work. Though *Beatrice Cenci* (1856) helped raise the artist's public profile by garnering the support of those who used it "as evidence of America's increasing gentility and women's potential," most commentators did not acknowledge how it challenged earlier portrayals of a frail and innocent Cenci (47–49). By contrast, the strength of Hosmer's *Zenobia* (1859) was undeniable. The author and abolitionist Lydia Marie Child published a glowing review in which she quoted Hosmer describing the captured queen as "calm, grand, and strong within herself" (63).

Despite *Zenobia's* power, not only was its reception at the 1862 London Exposition tepid, but an anonymously penned article criticized the sculptor for not carving the work herself. The art community quickly rose to her defense (reliance on Italian workmen was standard practice after all). More telling, though, is the timing of such negative publicity, coming as it did on the heels of Hosmer's move from the studio of her mentor, John Gibson, and the death of

her father. Hosmer's new independence, Culkin claims, made her a target. Ever mindful of her public persona, Hosmer defended herself using a language that appropriated the tone of etiquette manuals, unthreatening exemplars of female authority.

Marianne Kinkel similarly stresses the career benefits of Malvina Hoffman's adroit networking and self-promotion skills. Like Culkin, Kinkel calls her book a "cultural biography," though it is a biography of a sculptural series rather than of the artist herself (4). Kinkel's useful study detangles the complex history of the creation and display of Hoffman's *Races of Mankind* works, which were first exhibited at Chicago's Field Museum in 1933. Made in the name of physical anthropology at a time when race was understood as a biological concept, these sculptures occupied a grey area between anthropology and art. The ethnographers and anatomists who gave the sculptor conflicting advice about the purpose of her project only grudgingly embraced her fine art credentials. Kinkel

unpacks the implications of Hoffman's techniques (both casting and modeling), as well as discussing the anthropological and commercial photographs she based (quite literally) some of her figures on, showing how "the former lives" (60) of those images impacted the finished works, for example, *Mangbetu Woman* (Fig. 1). It is the shifting social meanings of objects that Kinkel's study best illustrates, by addressing how the packaging and reception of the *Races of Mankind* series changed from the 1930s to the 1970s (and beyond), and by looking at how meaning is produced at the periphery of traditional art world boundaries. This wide-angled approach used by both authors results in compelling portraits of the sculptures and the women who made them. •

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Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition

by Wanda M. Corn
University of California Press, 2011

Reviewed by Betsy Fahlman

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition remains a defining event of American cultural history. One of the Chicago Fair's most notable structures was the Woman's Building, which offered American artists an unprecedented opportunity to extensively showcase female achievement. That it was realized was in large measure due to it the organizational expertise and vision of Bertha Palmer, who headed the Board of Lady Managers (not a single woman was appointed to serve on the World's Columbian Commission).

In her excellent new book, *Women Building History*, Wanda M. Corn considers a wealth of new material to brilliantly place the Fair's many female participants

within a rich cultural, historical, and social context. She skillfully explicates "the multiple discourses in play at the Fair" (3) to explore its central themes, including an "exuberant pride in America's technological superiority and progress in the fine arts," the "promotion of a reborn Chicago after a devastating fire," and the "growing campaign for women's rights" (3). To bring it all off took considerable "mind, muscle, and teamwork" (3), and Corn focuses her analysis on "the large group of women who founded, administered, designed, and decorated the Woman's Building" (5).

There is a considerable scholarly literature on the Chicago Fair, and many of the works these women created do not survive, but Corn charts new territory in her monograph. During the American Renaissance, women artists rarely received public commissions, and the Woman's Building gave them their first opportunity "to work on a grand scale" (9). Unfortunately for most it was also "their last and only opportunity to fulfill a public commission" (9), as

during the decades that followed, "very few American women were invited to participate in the mural movement that flourished in the years after the Fair" (188). Violet Oakley was a notable exception. Not until the feminist Woman's Building of 1973 in Los Angeles would women collaborate on this scale again.

The Fair represents a "stunning case study" of the "changing definitions of female identity," enabling us to understand how "visual images and rhetoric contributed to the women's emancipation movement" (10). As New Women, these talented artists negotiated a frequently vexed path between tradition and innovation as they redefined themselves and their social roles.

Corn has organized her monograph into four lucidly written chapters. In the first, "The Fair," Corn considers the cultural paradigms within which these women worked, strictures that reveal "gendered and class-bound discourses about civilization, art, nationalism, civility, and manners" (19). Three interrelated



Fig. 1. Mary MacMonnies, *Primitive Woman* (1892–93), tympanum, oil on canvas, 14' x 58'.

narratives shape her analysis: “evolutionary progress over time, triumph of the modern present over the harsh past, and the emancipatory freedoms of modern democracy” (19). If the male artists emphasized “industrial and technological triumph over the elements and the American wilderness,” the work by women highlighted “the liberation from the confinements of a patriarchal past” (19). Corn smartly contextualizes the work of the male artists at the Fair, revealing the “rhetorical hierarchy” (30) of the gendered nuances of contemporary historical discourse where the central binary narrative of progress revealed a primitive past triumphantly replaced by a civilized present.

Allegory was “the dominant artistic language at the Fair” (36), and works of sculpture abounded throughout its vast acreage. Corn’s discussion of the gendered body is most astute. Statues of youthful women exemplifying virtue and lofty ideals provided a counterpoint to the vigorous, active portrayals of men, whose images were often linked to modern technology such as transportation, electricity, and the telephone.

Daniel Burnham, the Fair’s chief of construction, had to be convinced that a woman was aesthetically and physically capable of designing an important public building, but Bertha Palmer prevailed, and Sophia Hayden won the competition. The handsome structure and its contents were grounded in the values of the middle- and upper-class women who, although progressive, were not interested in promoting the more radical agendas of the suffrage

movement. The inevitably celebratory displays presented all “categories of objects” that were “the result of woman’s labor” (65). The lady managers had considerable experience in women’s clubs and reformist movements, and many had dedicated themselves to improving education and the conditions of working women and children.

For the Hall of Honor, a series of six large paintings were commissioned, and this is the subject of Corn’s third chapter, “The Murals.” Such commissions presented challenges for women who received them: “For the first time in their lives, they had the unprecedented opportunity to make art on a grand scale for large public spaces” (156). In presenting women’s history in two parts—“early times and modern age”—these six murals “constructed a progress cycle for women” (114), a familiar Fair narrative. Mary MacMonnies (*Primitive Woman*) (Fig. 1), Amanda Brewster Sewell (*Arcadia*), and Lucia Fairchild (*The Women of Plymouth*) “painted woman’s bondage in the past,” while Mary Cassatt (*Modern Woman*) (Pl. 15) and sisters Lydia Field Emmet (*Art Science, And Literature*) and Rosina Emmet Sherwood (*The Republic’s Welcome to Her Daughters*, “depicted woman’s emancipation in the present” (114). Their modernity was still couched within the conventions of Victorian visual culture, as they wear dresses “rather than the more radical shirtwaists and skirts” (123) popularized by the Gibson Girl. All portray homosocial environments in which women are pictured without men within a female space. Alice Rideout executed

the structure’s big cornice sculptures (*Woman as the Spirit of Civilization* and *Woman’s Virtues*) and a piece for the pediments (*Woman’s Place in History*).

Mary Cassatt was “the most experienced painter to decorate the Woman’s Building” (133). The figures in her colorful realist allegory eagerly pursuing Fame are more emancipated than the others: “young, single, white, and sufficiently well-off to wear fashionable urban dress” (133).

Corn’s fascinating sidebar, “The ‘Other Decorations at the Woman’s Building,’” presents a less familiar chronicle. Palmer hoped that murals by English and French artists might be included, but their proposals were never realized (they are known through descriptions and studies). The British selected earnest themes. Louisa Swynnerton intended to portray *Three Phases of Nursing—the Young, the Sick, the Aged*, while Anna Lea Merritt proposed a triptych on *Needlework*. Two Parisian artists presented elaborate allegories: Louise Gabillot van Parys hoped to produce *The Arts of Woman: To Love, To Please, and Devote Herself and Influence of Woman in the Arts: She Weeps with the Poet, Consoles Him, and Glorifies Him*, while Louise Abbéma suggested *The City of Paris Carrying to Chicago the Arts of Woman—Fluctant Nec Mergitur and America Receiving the Nations at the World’s Exposition—E Pluribus Unum*. Corn’s final chapter, “The Criticism,” considers the reception of the women artists’ work. The extensive published discourse not surprisingly filtered the art “through the straitjacket of gender.” (168). Sexual essentialism determined

both “one’s options in the home, workplace, or public spaces,” as well as setting “boundaries on acceptable male and female behaviors” (167). Thus the artists participating in the decoration of the Woman’s Building “did not aspire to rid themselves of their femininity but rather to make the feminine a more elastic and inclusive category” (167). In modernizing “outmoded definitions of womanhood that ideologically restricted woman to home and family,” they “sought to recalibrate the feminine, to enlarge woman’s sphere so that future generations could aspire to a broader band of activities and happier lives” (167). Such gendered rhetoric derived from judgments based on an assessment of “inherent femininity” (168), yet for these women working in the 1890s, this was often a careful strategy of negotiation, balancing complicity and resistance regarding their roles. A key challenge was “how to visualize women in the fine arts during an era of intense struggle over woman’s issues” (181). Nevertheless, the Fair “helped launch woman’s quest for artistic parity and equal opportunity”

(188). Cassatt’s mural received the strongest criticism. She was the most successful of all the artists whose work was featured in the Woman’s Building and had aimed the highest. Her critiques reveal “the era’s coded rhetoric for uppity women” (176).

Women Building History is well-illustrated, with seven color plates, and 125 black and white images. Additional support materials expand Corn’s excellent text. Annelise K. Madsen has contributed a series of informative sidebars exploring a range of fascinating period issues that contextualize and illuminate Corn’s cogent discussion. “The Archive” outlines the nature of historical materials relating to the Fair. Others include “The Mural Movement in Paris,” “The Women’s Pavilion at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition,” “Achievements in Paint, Lace, and Numbers,” and “The Impressionists as Antimuralists.” Another group charts the changing gender roles and broad cultural issues: “Women Speak Out,” “The College Girl,” “Writing ‘Herstory,’” “The New Girl and the New Woman,” “The Skirt Dance,” “Feminization of the Banjo,” A final one

relates “The Fate of the Mural Decorations.”

Charlene G. Garfinkle has contributed informative biographies of many of the women who contributed artworks or were associated with the Woman’s Building. The literature on the Fair is immense, and Garfinkle did an exemplary job in distilling a list of well-chosen archival, period, modern, and web sources. (Her research on several of the stained glass windows created for the Woman’s Building by Boston women artists is found in this issue on pages 32–38).

Women Building History is a splendid scholarly achievement, and Corn’s artfully argued monograph is a landmark contribution to American cultural studies. •

Betsy Fahlman, Professor of Art History at Arizona State University, writes on American art. Two of her recent publications are *Kraushaar Galleries: Celebrating 125 Years* (2010) and *New Deal Art in Arizona* (2009).

Empress Maria Theresa and the Politics of Habsburg Imperial Art

by Michael Yonan
Penn State Press, 2011

Empress Eugénie and the Arts: Politics and Visual Culture in the Nineteenth Century

by Alison McQueen
Ashgate, 2011

Reviewed by Olivia Gruber Florek

Portraits of powerful women have long been contested sites in the history of art. This was certainly the case for the Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa (1717–80) and Empress Eugénie of France (1826–1920), whose portraits and artistic commissions are the subjects of recent books. Neither monarch has received the art historical

attention devoted to queens such as Marie Antoinette, Marie de’ Medici, or Catherine the Great, but authors Michael Yonan and Alison McQueen accomplish more than a filling of this scholarly gap. Through visual analysis, political contextualization, and meticulous archival research, they uncover multifaceted networks of political and gendered concerns that shaped the visualization of Maria Theresa and Eugénie.

Maria Theresa was one of the few female sovereigns who gained her throne by heredity. Though she buttressed her authority by establishing a co-regency with her husband, Francis Stephen of Lorraine, and after his death with their son, Joseph II, it was Maria Theresa herself who directed imperial diplomacy throughout her reign. Michael Yonan examines the challenges of embodying this complex political arrangement through case studies that combine to reveal what he calls Maria Theresa’s “monarchical identity,” a “fic-

tive image of the ruler, a construction not necessarily reducible to a single textual reference or painting, but a collective ideological tissue born of various statements, legends, actions, and representations” (6). As archival resources from this period are limited, Yonan pairs biographical information with exhaustive visual analysis to tease out political messages in a wide variety of media.

Yonan addresses foremost the difficulties of representing a female absolute monarch, for the question remained whether a woman could be the direct communicator with God. Maria Theresa answered this concern by producing a multitude of children, whose presence in her portraits demonstrated future Habsburg dynastic strength. While acknowledging these group portraits, Yonan saves his most insightful critique for Martin van Meytens’s *State Portrait of Empress Maria Theresa* (ca. 1750; Fig. 1), in which the empress wears an intricate lace coverlet gifted by her Belgian provinces. Yonan

identifies an iconographic interplay between references to Habsburg territories within the gown's needlework and other symbols of divine authority, all of which combine to project the empire onto the surface of her body.

The depiction of power became more problematic during Maria Theresa's widowhood, as, normally, a widowed empress retreats from public life. Maria Theresa did not yield her position, though the representation of this power manifested itself more subtly. This is evinced by Yonan's analysis of a jeweled snuffbox created by Franz von Mack, Antonio Bencini, and others, which was gifted by Maria Theresa to her brother-in-law. The snuffbox features portraits of her living children, with her two oldest sons and heirs depicted on the lid. Though these men appear initially to possess the most powerful position, the largest portrait is of Maria Theresa herself on the snuffbox's base. This arrangement reveals her as the source of power behind her offspring, many of whom occupied thrones in Europe's most noble houses.

Yonan's remaining case studies examine how Maria Theresa's authority was pictured at Schönbrunn Palace, the imperial country palace in Vienna that received significant expansion under the empress's tenure. At Schönbrunn, even in the absence of explicit portraits, Maria Theresa used visual culture to make visible her role in promoting Habsburg dynastic health. This is particularly evident in the *Vieux-Laque Zimmer*, a rococo fantasy of Chinese lacquered wood alternating with family portraits, including Pompeo Batoni's 1770 copy of his double portrait of Maria Theresa's sons, Joseph II and Leopold. Produced under Maria Theresa's direction, this later version inserts a sculpture of Minerva, a figure associated with the empress that visually asserted her continued control over Habsburg diplomacy.

The empress's power receives a similarly multivalent treatment in the *Millionen-Zimmer*, Maria Theresa's reception room. Decorated with découpaged and collaged Mughal illustrations, this room referenced Vienna's unique diplomatic relationship

with Eastern cultures. Here Yonan examines the visual culture of *découpage*, the practice of cutting up papers that became a system of knowledge. Its presence positioned Maria Theresa as a powerful monarch whose control over the east was demonstrated through the intricately cut images that surrounded her.

In his final chapter Yonan identifies perhaps the most overt assertion of Maria Theresa's authority: a sculpture of Egeria within the gardens of Schönbrunn. Erected above the site of the freshwater spring for which the palace was named, the sculpture references the nymph Egeria, the wife and political advisor to the early Roman King Numa. In addition to Egeria's identity as the political mastermind behind Rome's development, the allusion links Maria Theresa with the kingdom to which her Holy Roman Empire was heir. Yet, even here, her power is indicated indirectly. Removed from the main promenade of the gardens, the sculpture visualizes how Maria Theresa allowed someone else to assume the center position, while she actually maintained power from the sidelines.

In *Empress Eugénie and the Arts: Politics and Visual Culture in the Nineteenth Century*, Alison McQueen also navigates the difficulties of visualizing a powerful female sovereign. Nineteenth-century French anxieties over women in the public sphere appear to have been greater than those of their earlier central European counterparts, and Eugénie's reputation bore the brunt of this distrust in the years following the fall of the Second Empire. McQueen's study does much to rehabilitate perceptions of the French empress. Rather than a political opportunist with archaic artistic preferences, in McQueen's book Eugénie emerges as a leader for women's social justice and a thoughtful patron of the arts. For though Salic law prevented the empress from inheriting the throne, McQueen argues that Eugénie used the visual arts as the primary means to



Fig. 1. Martin van Meytens, *State Portrait of Empress Maria Theresa* (ca. 1750), oil on canvas. Vienna Schönbrunn Palace.

establish an autonomous position beyond that of consort.

McQueen's book is especially noteworthy for her painstaking archival research, by which she reconstructs all of Eugénie's charitable and artistic commissions. This is evident in her first chapter, which is devoted to Eugénie's charitable work. Eugénie was remarkably progressive in her altruism, especially with regard to women's rights; however, artists diminished her role in much of the visual culture depicting her activities. For though McQueen's research reveals Eugénie's active oversight of her charitable societies, artists instead portrayed her as simply accompanying her husband, Emperor Napoléon III. This observation sets up a tension at stake throughout the rest of McQueen's analysis, as Eugénie struggles to balance her own ambitions as a diplomatic figure with the demand that she be suitably submissive.

This tension is particularly evident in McQueen's chapter on Eugénie's portraits. By far the most intriguing study in the book, here McQueen examines how portraits of the empress

satisfied Napoléon III's 1853 promise that his bride would be "the ornament of the throne" (80). Pairing visual analysis with contemporary critiques of painted and sculptural portraits, McQueen uncovers disapproval surrounding representations that did not suitably erase Eugénie's Spanish heritage or that granted her authority independent of her husband. McQueen also studies how Eugénie's private patronage resulted in more nuanced portraits, in contrast to the publicly disseminated images. This is most apparent in Franz Xaver Winterhalter's *Empress Eugénie in an Ornate Chair* (1862; Fig. 2), where Eugénie appears enthroned and engaged in deep thought. Installed in the *hôtel de l'Impératrice*, a private home Eugénie reserved for her Spanish relatives, here the empress could portray herself as an intelligent and authoritative woman. Also analyzed in this chapter are a series of remarkable photographs of Eugénie in costume. Privately circulated, these photographs document Eugénie's apparel at popular costume balls where formal attire was relaxed and guests could assume alternate identities. Photographs may have prolonged this pleasure for the empress, and she appears here in the guise of an odalisque, an eighteenth-century aristocrat, and a Turkish bride, among other costumes. These portraits allowed Eugénie to express her sensuality and free herself from her own traditional cultural boundaries. Such thoughtful interpretations make one wish that McQueen could have devoted as much space to visual analysis in her subsequent chapters.

In her third chapter, McQueen reconstructs chronologically Eugénie's artistic acquisitions during her imperial reign. Eugénie was a significant patron of contemporary art, and her possessions were in high demand for exhibitions both domestically and abroad. Though Eugénie has been criticized for preferring artists like Cabanel in the age of Manet, McQueen notes that political considerations would have prevented Eugénie from collecting controversial artworks. Despite this fact, her collections were progressive, including

landscapes by Corot and Courbet, as well as patronage of Rosa Bonheur and Charles Baudelaire.

McQueen blends diplomatic contextualization with a history of Eugénie's politically motivated artistic commissions to reveal how the empress used the visual arts to promote French aspirations internationally, particularly in Latin America. Of the several case studies in this chapter, the most engaging is McQueen's analysis of Vincenzo Vela's sculpture *Christopher Columbus*, which Eugénie commissioned in 1864 for the Mexican city of Veracruz. By 1867 the French army had withdrawn from Mexico, leaving Emperor Maximilian to be executed by troops led by former President Benito Juárez. Eugénie demonstrated remarkable foresight in 1866 when she altered the destination of her commission instead to Colombia, where her gift would be received as a magnanimous gesture rather than a reminder of failed French colonial interests.

The final chapter analyzes Eugénie's artistic commissions during her long exile, in particular those that honored her deceased husband and son. McQueen begins the chapter with an examination of how Eugénie's reputation was maligned by vitriolic caricatures immediately following her exile. All of her charitable activity, careful visual construction, and political acumen were erased from public memory by caricatures that punished Eugénie's imagined body in the absence of her physical body. McQueen ties these cruel illustrations to a specifically French anxiety over women in the public sphere.

Yonan and McQueen provide important examinations of these hitherto overlooked monarchs, especially in English language scholarship. Their indexed and beautifully illustrated volumes include detailed annotations of their archival resources, which allows future scholars to bring the visual culture of Empress Maria Theresa and Empress Eugénie into greater conversation with parallel artistic activity.



Fig. 2. Franz Xaver Winterhalter, *Empress Eugénie Seated in an Ornate Chair* (1862), Oil on canvas, 90 1/8" x 57 1/8". Madrid, Fundación Casa de Alba.

Yonan's and McQueen's success in linking the patronage of these empresses to the political and artistic currents of their respective ages demonstrates the folly in divorcing such figures from our study of avant-garde artwork in early modern and modern eras. For though absolutism was increasingly retrograde by the lifetime of Maria Theresa and certainly Eugénie, our understanding of social art history and particularly female portraiture is incomplete without a consideration of these monarchs and their peers among the European aristocratic elite. •

Olivia Gruber Florek earned her PhD in Art History from Rutgers University. Her dissertation was titled "The Modern Monarch: Empress Elisabeth and the Visual Culture of Femininity, 1850–1900."

Brunelleschi's Egg: Nature, Art, and Gender in Renaissance Italy

by Mary D. Garrard,
University of California Press, 2010

Reviewed by Marjorie Och

Mary Garrard's contributions to art history are considerable. This fact reveals something of the success and practice of feminism in academia, a feminism that Garrard has championed in her research and teaching. Her work on the Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi¹ established lucidly and persuasively that there have, indeed, been great women artists. What struck a nerve, however, was Garrard's claim that connoisseurship and biography are two sides of the same coin, that the coin is counterfeit if the two halves are severed, and that these two established art historical methods can be applied to serve a feminist and humanist agenda. Connecting these two pillars of traditional art history to feminism forever changed a generation of young scholars who found new ways to study the lives and production of women, and to approach female subjects within visual narratives as something other than victim, beloved, or sexual object. Garrard's attention has been focused equally on modern and contemporary art in numerous projects shared with Norma Broude that deepened the depth and breadth of feminist inquiry in the discipline.² *Brunelleschi's Egg: Nature, Art, and Gender in Renaissance Italy* is, in some respects, a summa of Garrard's explorations of art and its history, a book she began thinking about nearly twenty years ago (ix).

One might suggest that this work is a conventional survey of Renaissance masters, for they are all here: Brunelleschi, Alberti, Masaccio, Botticelli, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Giorgione, Titian, and a few early Mannerists. The works selected for analysis should be familiar to any undergraduate student in art history—Brunelleschi's magnificent dome adorning the cathedral of Florence,

Masaccio's *Expulsion from Paradise*, Botticelli's *Primavera* and *Birth of Venus*, Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi*, Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel Ceiling, Giorgione's *La Tempesta*, Titian's *Danaë with a Nurse*, to name a few. *Brunelleschi's Egg* shares with time-honored surveys of this period the Renaissance artist's delight in the investigation of nature and *his* absolute certainty that nature could be known and *her* secrets revealed in *his* work. It is with Garrard's interpretation of how Renaissance artists understood and worked with these secrets of nature that she parts ways with traditional accounts of Italian Renaissance art.

At the heart of Garrard's study is the shift in early modern Europe from understanding nature as an organic—and feminine—force in charge of the universe to the scientific study of nature's elements and *man's* control over these. Renaissance artists played a significant role in the investigation of nature and the application of discoveries, including developing single-point perspective, inventing new technologies for engineering and construction, and the study of human anatomy through dissection. This story is usually told as one of progress, with the protagonist, *man*, struggling to master nature's secrets and tame *her* chaotic ways. For Garrard, Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*³ was an especially valuable model for showing that

...the critical transition that occurred in the Renaissance, from an organic to a scientific worldview, was accompanied and assisted by the gender metaphor that equated nature with the female. Merchant situated this idea in the histories of both philosophy and science, and explained its dynamic operation. She described the replacement of an ancient cosmology that viewed the earth as a living organism, personified in thought as a nurturing mother, by the mechanistic view of the female earth as passive matter, to be acted upon and controlled by man (2).

Brunelleschi's Egg extends Merchant's

field of study by locating the origin of this development within the visual arts and identifying male artists as the leaders.

Garrard establishes the following themes and examines them throughout her text: "the demonstrable power of Nature to create new life and her competition with God in this respect; the positive definitions of Nature as creative *artifex* and maternal guide; and her negative definition as evil and corruptive feminine matter, inferior to masculine form" (29). Of paramount importance is the issue "whether art can compete with Nature in the creation of beautiful or perfect things" (29). Clearly, the stage is set for a *paragone*, the concept so important to the Renaissance, this time a competition between nature and the artist as the force of creative energy.

Garrard's text is divided into nine chapters in four parts, these parts being "Great Mother Nature," "Nature and Art in the Quattrocento: From Pupil to Equal," "A Balance of Power: Pictorial Metaphors for Nature in Transition," and "Art and Nature in the Cinquecento: From Competitor to Master," together with an Introduction, Epilogue, and lengthy bibliography. I cannot hope to do justice here to the entirety of this 429-page book, and will focus here on the initial chapters where the author presents her argument and addresses the riddle of the title. The large-format volume is well-illustrated throughout, including 241 black-and-white and sixteen color illustrations. In her Introduction, Garrard reminds the reader of the numerous female embodiments humankind has projected onto nature's forces, including Artemis, Aphrodite, and Demeter. She notes the arrival of patriarchy "and the ascendancy of a father god" either before or with Greco-Roman culture, and finally Nature's subordination to the patriarchal God with the advent of Christianity (1).

The single chapter in part one, "The Gendering of Nature as Female: From Prehistory through the Middle Ages," presents an overview of humanity's understanding and interpretation of nature before the Renaissance. This

examination begins with Mother deities from Çatal Hüyük (6000 BCE) to appearances of the medieval goddess Natura in illuminated manuscripts of such works as the *Roman de la Rose*, and concludes with Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Effects of Good Government in the City and Country* (1337-40, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena). Most interesting here is Garrard's discussion of naturalism in painting of the *trecento* and *quattrocento*. Regarded by art historians as "a form of cultural progress," naturalism, as Garrard reconsiders, is "another means of disempowering Natura" (29). The details of nature—hills, plants, animals—that we see in Lorenzetti's *Good Government* fresco, for example, take the place of Natura, both as a symbol and as a power. This fresco also contrasts nature and culture in its juxtaposition of urban and rural environments. Garrard points out that the contemporary viewer saw this landscape beyond Siena's walls as the city's possession, as nature conquered and in the service of the city.

Throughout *Brunelleschi's Egg*, Garrard examines accepted interpretations of Italian Renaissance art, insisting that we question many underlying assumptions we have long held as truths. In chapter two, "Technology and the Mastery of Physical Nature: Brunelleschi and Alberti," this mother of feminist art history considers the work of art history's fathers, including Millard Meiss, Richard Krautheimer, Rudolf Wittkower, and of course Giorgio Vasari. For example, in his assessment of art after the Black Death, Meiss focused on quality and style and suggested that the decline in quality was due, in part, to the ravages of the plague experienced throughout society. Garrard cites recent examinations of the art of this period that have focused less on connoisseurial matters and more on archival documents, revealing that artistic commissions did not decline, but that patrons supported painters, sculptors, and architects in commissions that commemorated their families and supported their community. Garrard's approach to art production after the Black Death is from yet another angle. She urges scholars to consider the psychological dimension of

cultural production in Florence in the century following the plague "to better understand the function of art in a sophisticated society that has been traumatized" (34). In her analysis, she concludes that the artistic response to the plague, specifically the turn to classicism, was an attempt to control and order nature because the plague was evidence of nature out of control. The turn to *renovatio* by artists such as Brunelleschi, Donatello, and Alberti "would shift the balance of power between culture and nature in the physical world" (34).

Indeed, the "restoration and replication [of ancient monuments] would tilt the balance on behalf of culture, which would then be able at least to hold its own against destructive nature..." (34).

The chief center of "culture's defense against nature's unraveling" was, according to Garrard, Florence, with its extraordinary building campaign (34). Construction actually began in the thirteenth century (before the Black Death hit in 1348), with an ambitious plan for urban development and growth focusing on the city's new civic structures—the cathedral, the Palazzo della Signoria (town hall), and Orsanmichele (guild hall). Construction gathered momentum even as the plague struck and the city fought an expensive war against Milan. At least one contemporary, the humanist Coluccio Salutati, despaired of the city's infrastructure and the poor state of its buildings, including the cathedral (34). Florentines would soon find in Filippo Brunelleschi an artist, engineer, and inventor who would restore and complete the city's most astonishing structure, the cathedral.

It is Brunelleschi's dome for this cathedral (Fig. 1) that Garrard cites as the primary example of an artist's conquering of nature, describing it as "the largest creative project of the fifteenth century" (34). For Leon Battista Alberti, who dedicated the Italian translation of his treatise on painting to Brunelleschi, artists of his day surpassed antiquity in their discovery



Fig. 1. Florence Cathedral, begun by Arnolfo di Cambio, 1296; dome by Filippo Brunelleschi 1418-36.

and use of new technology. And it was for Brunelleschi's technological superiority over nature—through his appropriation of meaning identified with woman, the Virgin in particular—that Garrard describes the dome as "the key site of the contest between art and nature, for its history embraces the critical issue of the relative creative powers of nature and the individual artist" (34).

A dome for the cathedral was planned from at least the 1360s, evidence being the evocation of a domed cathedral in Andrea da Firenze's fresco of *The Church Militant* (ca. 1365-68) in Florence's church of Santa Maria Novella. The problem, of course, was how to span the 140 feet of the octagonal drum at the crossing; conventional wooden scaffolding could not be used to span this distance. Florence had to wait for Brunelleschi's bold technical expertise to accomplish this feat. Garrard reviews the various interpretations of Brunelleschi's technical achievement: from Vasari's story in his "Life of Brunelleschi" about the artist breaking an egg just enough to allow it to stand upright, to accounts of Brunelleschi's understanding of Archimedes, parabolas, ellipses, and the *quinto acuto*. One conclusion she draws reads like art history heresy: "Indeed, the terms of [Brunelleschi's] glorification seem excessive for his actual achievement. Though practical considerations were significant, they were surely not insurmountable" (49). For Garrard, it is less signifi-

cant that Brunelleschi knew how to construct this dome than that the construction signifies this architect/engineer's subduing of nature, once gendered female, with a form that evoked a woman's breast.

Why did the Florentines want a dome? Garrard points to several important references: Plato made an analogy between an architectural dome and the human head, thus dignifying domed structures; the Pantheon in Rome was certainly an inspiration for Brunelleschi and his contemporaries; and there were many established associations of the dome with the cosmos and the vault of heaven. But Garrard draws our attention to what has been left out of the literature of Renaissance architecture, and that is "the discourse of Marian civic nurture" (40). The body of the Virgin Mary was considered the tabernacle of Christ, and her identification with Mater Ecclesia (Mother Church) expanded the faithful's understanding of her body as an altar for Christ to include her body as protector of the congregation. Garrard adds, "It cannot have been lost on Quattrocento Florentines that the shape of the Cathedral's dome visually resembled an emblem of the mother's nourishing power, the female breast" (37). Garrard makes the connection between the dome and the Virgin's breast primarily through Orcagna's domed tabernacle of the Virgin (1352-59) and the domed tabernacle over the sculpture group of the Virgin and Child (before 1399), both at Orsanmichele in Florence, where bread was distributed to the poor and the actions of the nourishing Virgin were perhaps nowhere more clear.

Conceived and planned in the midst of economic and social crisis, the projected dome would offer a stable sign of nature's power, solidified in theologically appropriate form, and would provide psychological comfort, through an image that signified, for every Florentine, the nurturing and protective Mother Church (39).

And as Garrard points out, Brunelleschi's creation of this dome, representative of

the nurturing and protective powers of the Virgin Mary, was achieved through technology, through his conquering of nature's forces.

Brunelleschi's Egg is one of several excellent recent studies of the history of science in early modern Europe. For example, *Rome et la science moderne: Entre Renaissance et Lumières* (2008), a volume of essays edited by Antonella Romano for a project organized by the École française de Rome, focuses on the significant role played by papal Rome to control developments in early modern science. And Stephen Gaukroger, in *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of Modernity 1210-1685*, notes that the "West's sense of what its superiority consisted in shifted seamlessly, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, from its religion to its science."⁴ Neither volume examines the extraordinary history of nature embodied as female, the role played by artists as competitors of *Natura*, or the shifting relationship between nature and art; Garrard has been at work on this for some time. A foreshadowing of *Brunelleschi's Egg* can, however, be found in a 1987 article she co-authored with Norma Broude.

Within cultural history, it has been the arts and humanities that have sustained our species' memory, affirming its association with the earth and with nature, and celebrating its rituals, traditions, contradictions, and beliefs. By contrast, the more masculinist disciplines of the applied sciences have had as their purpose not only the understanding of man's relation to the earth, but also the controlling, and, perhaps ultimately and inadvertently, the destruction of it.⁵

Garrard is to be thanked for contributing to the history of science and reminding those who applaud STEM initiatives (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) that visual artists working within a humanities-centered worldview are at the heart of modern science. I have to wonder if, following Garrard's argument, our current focus on STEM isn't the most recent claim of these "masculinist disciplines" over *Natura*? •

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Notes

1. Mary Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989); and *Artemisia Gentileschi Around 1622: The Shaping and Reshaping of an Artistic Identity* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2001).
2. Mary Garrard and Norma Broude, *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact* (Harry N. Abrams, 1994); *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982); *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); and *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2005).
3. Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980).
4. Stephen Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of Modernity 1210-1685*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 12.
5. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, "Feminist Art History and the Academy: Where Are We Now?" *Women's Studies Quarterly* 15/1 and 2 (Spring/Summer 1987): 15.



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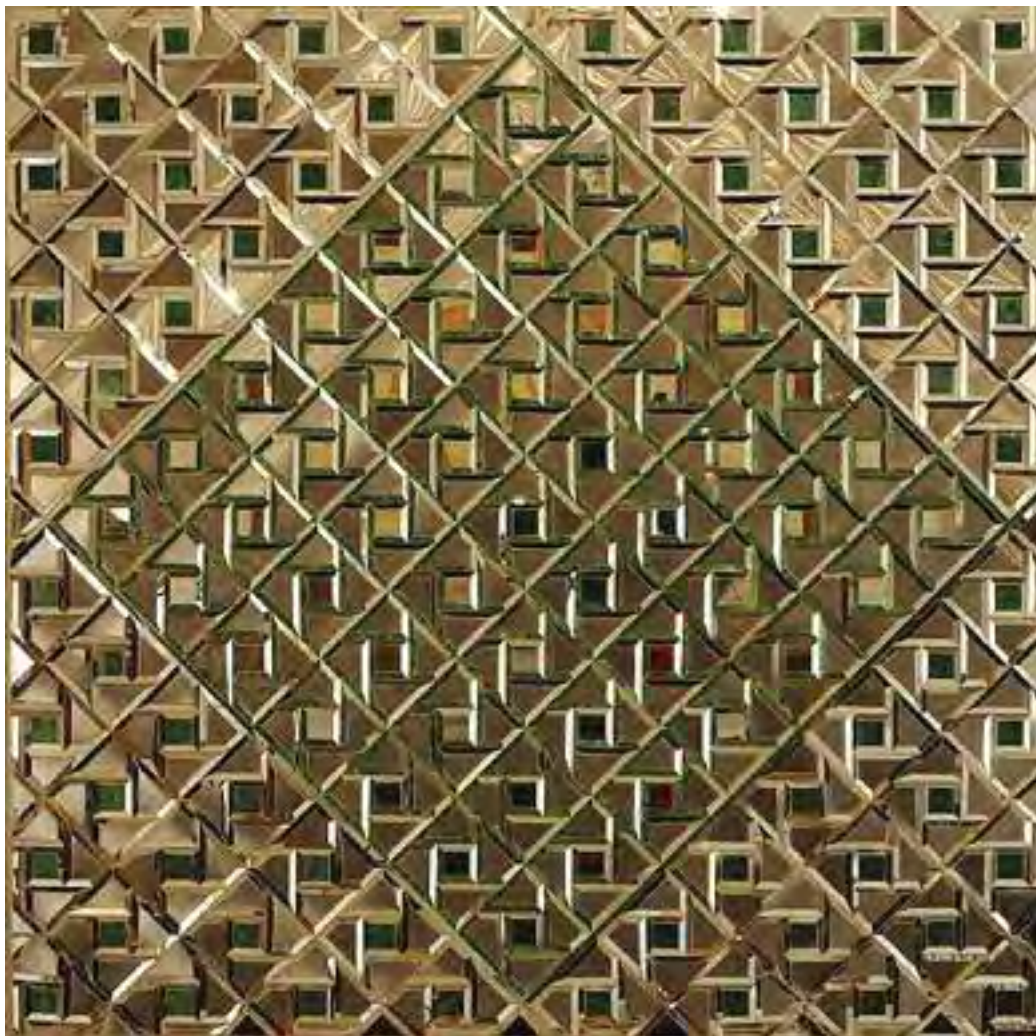
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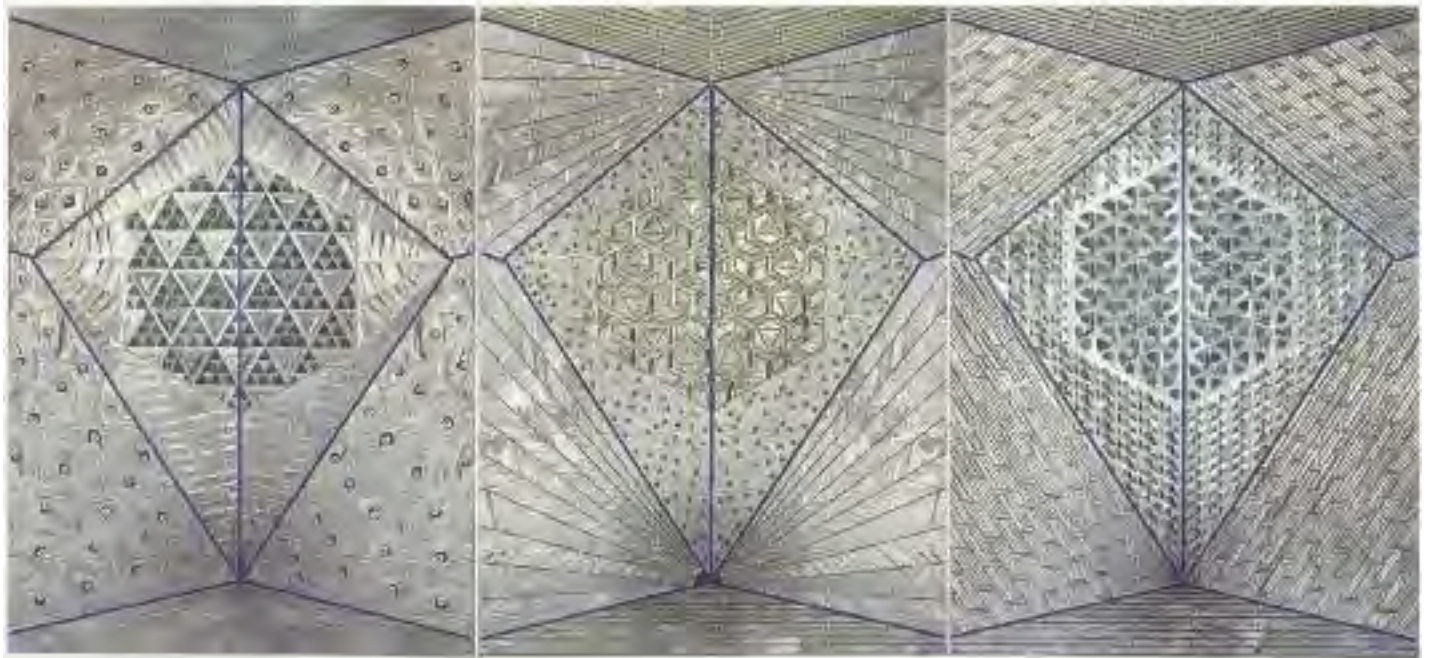
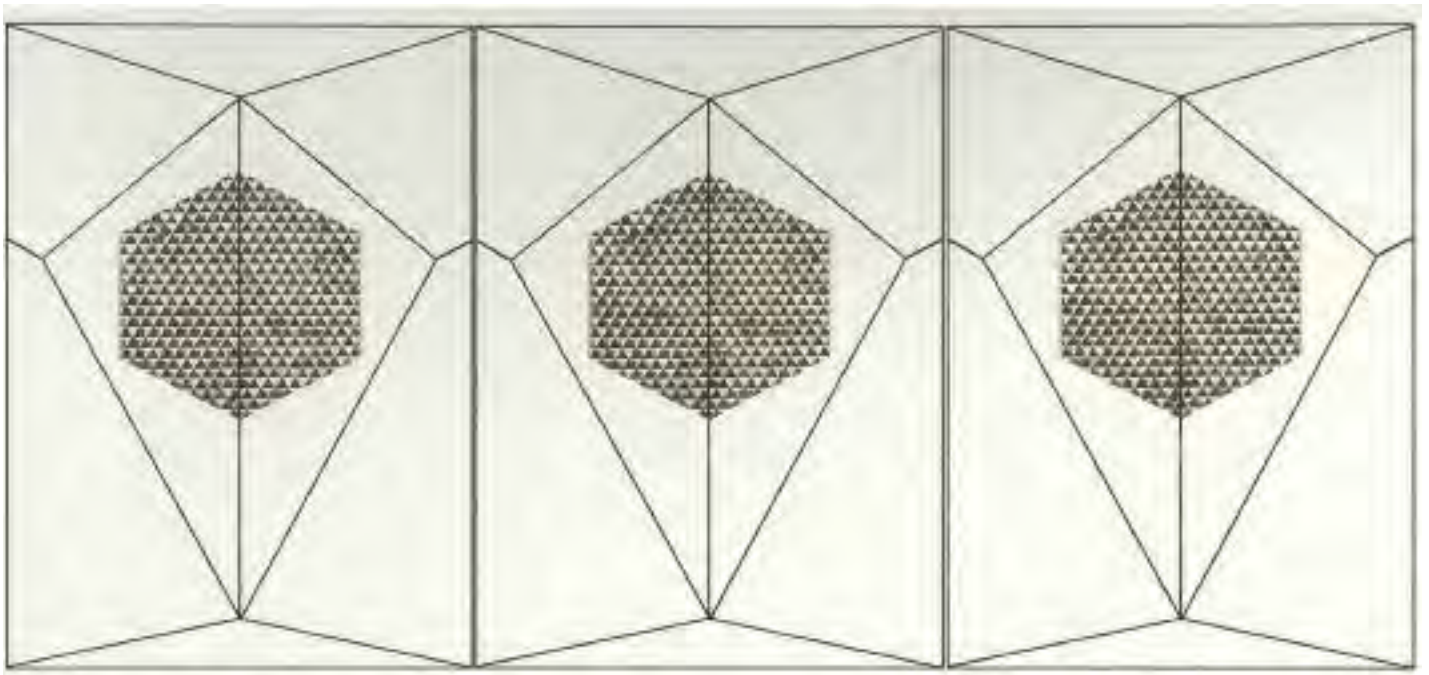
Pl. 1. Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Poetry Books* (1970), mirror, old and new reverse-glass painting and plaster on wood, 68 3/4" x 47". Private Collection, Tehran. Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.



Pl. 2. Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Jewels* (1974), mirror, silver bedouin jewellery, reverse-glass painting, plaster on wood, 39 3/8" x 39 3/8". Central Bank Collection, Tehran. Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.



Pl. 3. Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Geometry of Hope* (1975), mirror mosaic and reverse-glass painting, 50 3/8" x 50 3/8". Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.



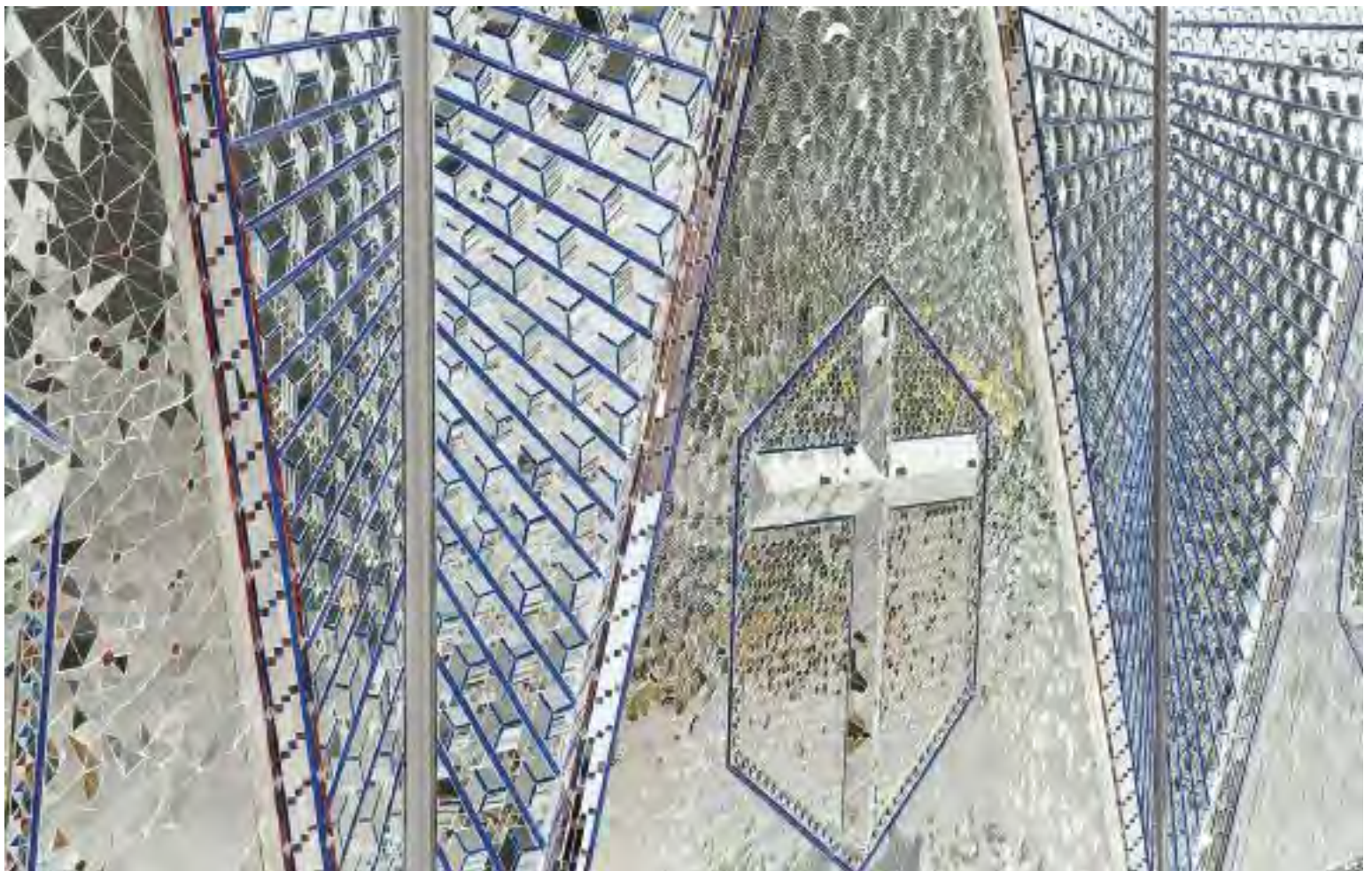
Pl. 4. Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Variations on the Hexagon* (installation 2006), mirror, reverse-glass painting, amulets, aluminum and plaster on wood, six panels, 72" x 51 1/4" each. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.



Pl. 5. Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Square and Triangle* (2010), mirror, reverse-glass painting and plaster on wood, 39 1/4" x 62 3/4". Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.



Pl. 6a. Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Lightning for Neda* (2009), Mirror mosaic; reverse-painted glass, plaster on wood, six panels, 117 3/4" x 78 1/2" each. Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.



Pl. 6b. Monir Farmanfarmaian, detail of *Lightning for Neda* (2009), Mirror mosaic; reverse-painted glass, plaster on wood, six panels, 117 3/4" x 78 1/2" each. Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. Photo: Courtesy The Third Line Gallery, Dubai.



Pl. 7. Mandana Moghaddam, *Chelgis II* (2005), cement, hair, red ribbon, 87" x 75" x 39". Photo: Mandana Moghaddam.



Pl. 9. Mandana Moghaddam, *Chelgis I* (2003), glass case, hair, 68" x 20" x 20". Mandana Moghaddam.



Pl. 8. Mandana Moghaddam, *The Well (Brunnen)* (2009), Brunnsparken, Göteborg, Sweden. Photo: Mandana Moghaddam.



Pl. 10. Minna Citron, *Hope Springs Eternal/Bargain Basement* (early 1930s), oil on board, 52 1/2" x 40".
Collection of Christiane H. Citron,
Denver, CO.



Pl. 11. Minna Citron,
Self-Expression (1934),
oil on gesso panel,
26" x 16 1/2".
Collection of
Wolfsonian-Florida
International University,
Miami Beach, FL.



Pl. 12. Elisabeth Parsons, Edith Blake Brown, and Ethel Isadore Brown, *Massachusetts Mothering the Coming Woman of Liberty, Progress, and Light* (c. 1893), stained glass, 7' x 3'. Smith Museum of Stained Glass Windows, Chicago. Photo: Courtesy Smith Museum.



Pl. 13. Mary Crease Sears, *Seal of Boston* (c. 1893), stained glass, 7' x 3'. The Woman's Union (formerly Women's Educational and Industrial Union), Boston. Photo: Courtesy Lyn Hovey Studio, Hyde Park, Mass.



Pl. 14. Mary Cassatt, *Modern Woman* (detail) (1893). Published in color in William Walton, *World's Columbian Exposition 1893: Art and Architecture*, 1893.

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