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(Front cover) Patricia Johanson, Fair Park Lagoon, Dallas, Texas (1981–85), detail, gunite sculptures. © Patricia Johanson.

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Woman's Art Journal proudly features the work of pioneering women, and we continue this tradition by celebrating the singular works of environmentalist Patricia Johanson and multimedia installation artist May Sun. Both deserve far more recognition than they have received. U.S.-based Johanson has designed and implemented reclamation projects around the world. For four decades she has initiated remediation efforts on ravaged lands and provided new sources of access and enjoyment for visitors to these sites. From Dallas's *Fair Park Lagoon*, featured on our front cover, to recent works in California and Salt Lake City, Utah, Johanson's transformations of troubled lands and solutions for wastewater management bring a renewed engagement with natural history and local traditions. Elaine Slater writes, "Her need to understand how all living things—from humans to ants to the plants and grasses they feed on—having a symbiotic relationship that must remain intact is the very foundation of her aesthetic vision for our planetary survival."

May Sun, a Chinese-American artist working in the environs of Los Angeles, integrates the history of the Chinese immigrants who built railroads and local infrastructure into her renewal projects for today's urbanscape, including her innovative designs for subway stations and public art. Donna Stein tells us, "The themes that traverse her work involve excavating cultural memories, unearthing untold stories of marginalized people, revealing environmental destruction of natural resources, including the safeguarding of animals, and recognizing the importance of social justice."

A remarkable aspect of this issue is the focus on six contemporary artists who were directly interviewed by our authors. Four articles are based on such primary research combined with art historical references. Elaine Slater, for example, has followed the career of Patricia Johanson through many years of association with the artist, while Donna Stein has worked closely with May Sun and other artists in the Los Angeles area.

Joyce Beckenstein, after traveling in Cuba and meeting with artists there, contacted three Cuban women artists. She writes here on Zilia Sánchez, María Magdalena Campos-Pons, and Glenda León as representing three generations, describing how their "collective voice, strong and assertive in its Cuban identity, resonates through the din of [Cuba's] rough history," and how "its feminist refrains find visual expression in the works."

Aliza Edelman worked closely with painter Sandra Lerner to investigate Asian spiritualism as it is expressed in Lerner's art. Edelman writes of Lerner's production as "an unfolding spiritual journey expressing her continual encounter and dialogue with models of wholeness and the nature of reality."

Adrian Anagnost's subject, Teresa Żarnower, a remarkable Polish Constructivist, was active during the first half of the last century. A Jewish artist who escaped the fate of many of her contemporaries in the Holocaust, Żarnower worked tirelessly against all odds in exploring new ideas and media until her death in New York in 1950. "From her early work in sculpture," writes Anagnost, "Żarnower's practice developed to encompass graphic design, typography, architectural proposals, and photomontage … [her] interwar career thus seems to exemplify Constructivism fulfilling itself as an aesthetic pursuit and moving into the social realm."

While the articles in this issue reach back just a century, the reviews cover a broader time span. As women artists, both individuals and groups, garner well-deserved recognition, we receive more books and exhibition catalogues to review than space allows. In this issue, Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell reviews a catalogue of Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun (1755–1842) celebrating a major international exhibition, with essays on her life, as the painter to Queen Marie-Antoinette, and her pursuit of success outside of France, having fled the Revolution. Reviewing the catalogue from a Paris exhibition of paintings by Suzanne Valadon (1865–1938), her son Maurice Utrillo, and her lover André Utter, held in the studio they often shared, Lauren Jimerson writes that "this time Valadon received the spotlight," including seldom-seen works from private collections and museum reserves.

Regarding a major exhibition catalogue of the work of French-American artist Niki de Saint Phalle (1930–2002), Cécile Whiting notes that one of its particular strengths is "that it counters an understanding of Saint Phalle based entirely on her joyous *Nanas*, bringing attention to the early assemblages in which guns, knives, and cleavers abound." Ellen G. Landau reviews an unusual volume titled *"The heroine Paint," After Frankenthaler*, featuring critical writing and a range of biographical materials as well as artists' appreciations of Helen Frankenthaler. Other catalogues under review bring attention to the life and avant-garde photographic work in interwar Paris by German-born photographer Germaine Krull (1897–1985), and include a volume of drawings by the important British modernist sculptor Barbara Hepworth (1903–75), a retrospective of the multidisciplinary performances of Simone Forti, and "a survey of works by Ukranian diaspora women artists spanning a century [1908–2015] rife with political and cultural disruptions."

Helen Langa, who reviews a biographical study of social-activist photojournalist Hansel Mieth, also has her own latest book reviewed in this issue. Her anthology, *American Women Artists, 1935–1970*, co-edited with Paula Wisotzki, "is cause for celebration," writes reviewer Betsy Fahlman. "Their exemplary revisionist volume expands our understanding of the art and careers of a fascinating group of women working in the long middle of the twentieth century, a seminal period that embraces the Great Depression, World War II, the Cold War, and the rise of the feminist movement."

Each issue of *WAJ* comprises a distinctive combination of articles, based on the submissions we receive and the recommendations of readers in the respective fields who generously give their time. We thank our readers, as well as our authors and reviewers whose words fill our pages. We also extend our appreciation to Old City Publishing, and to Rutgers University, and especially to Cathy Pizzi and Geralyn Colvil, for their invaluable support.

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

Patricia Johanson

The Layered Landscape, Discovered and Recovered

By Elaine Slater

Patricia Johanson is an environmental artist, known for art projects created in the natural landscape. A pioneer in ecological art, Johanson has created permanent installations in gardens and parks in the United States, Korea, Brazil, and Kenya.

Born in New York City in 1940, Johanson was a frequent visitor to parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. After graduating from Bennington College where she studied with Tony Smith and Paul Feeley, she completed a master's degree in art history at Hunter College in 1964. (While at Bennington, and later in New York, she became friends with Bennington alumna Helen Frankenthaler.) Her work gained early recognition, being included in the first "Minimal Art" exhibition at the Hudson River Museum in 1964, and in "The Art of the Real" at the Museum of Modern Art in 1968

Given the opportunity in 1964 to help Georgia O'Keeffe catalogue her work, Johanson had the good fortune to be mentored by the older artist. Her early paintings from the 1960s were Minimalist, as she explored the optical effects of colors, and in 1966, Johanson began producing large-scale sculptures that were also Minimalist.

From 1971 to 1973 Johanson found employment at Mitchell/Giurgola Architects as a site planner designing projects for Con Edison's Indian Point Nuclear Generating Facility, the Whitney Colleges at Yale University, and other projects. This would prove an important experience while she was taking architecture classes—she earned a degree in architecture at City College of New York in 1977. Among Johanson's numerous large-scale works during the past decades are major environmental park projects in Dallas, Salt Lake City, Petaluma (California) and Seoul and Ulsan in South Korea.

Looking back on Johanson's career, it is impossible not to reference her da Vinci-esque way of studying environment, its structure and design as a whole, inclusive of those elements for every living thing in its food chain. Her need to understand how all living things—from humans to ants to the plants and grasses they feed on—have a symbiotic relationship that must remain intact is the very foundation of her aesthetic visions for our planetary survival. Certainly, this is a shared idea among all the environmental sciences, but what is hers alone, original and expansive, is at the heart of this essay, as it peels back layers of selected projects that have revitalized wasted areas in the midst of major cities, forging the primal bond between human and all life forms. In a quest for this sensual response that would elicit cognitive connections, Johanson has developed her eye into a lens of microcosmic/macrocosmic perspectives that continues to arc between the living earth and its human inhabitancy.

Her art now covers vast acres on an international canvas. Because all people have a stake in preserving their home, even countries politically at odds are environmentally in agreement as to the crisis at hand. Speaking directly to this, Johanson's reclamation art offers more than a cleansing. By focusing on a sequential selection of her work, it is my intention to give insight into her ever-evolving aesthetic, which continues to adapt to the most vital needs of each place at a level that elicits sheer wonder.

The seeds of Johanson's art were planted in the artist's student years and in an early project, *Cyrus Field*, made close to home in 1970 and 1971. A discussion of four seminal sites follows with the intent to clarify and illuminate the unfolding of ideas that brings Johanson's unique combination of art, science and technology into a fluent and aesthetic reciprocity of holistic power. Full descriptions can be found in some of the excellent scholarship on Patricia Johanson.[1] Rather, I hope to lead readers to what I believe is the heart and breadth found in all of her work. Bridging country, continent, and culture, her strategic attack on what matters, and what will matter for life to continue as we know it, is about healing and surviving with dignity.

The beginnings of Johanson's vision and synchrony can be seen in *Color Rooms*, her experimental student projects for art class at Bennington College. Working with the power of color to impact the viewer's senses beyond the visual, she used a room instead of a canvas, and in its center placed a minimalist sculpture painted in greens, oranges, and blacks with geometric shapes that echoed the room's walls and sloped ceiling.[2] The result was an altered space that offered the viewer an immersive colored experience of mood and sensual connection that arguably birthed a fusion of minimalism, installation art, and color theory projection that would later mature on a massive scale in the artist's multilayered reclamations.

In 1970 Johanson established her home in Buskirk, New York, in a rural and forested area that remains her refuge today. Securing a Guggenheim grant, she built *Cyrus Field* (Fig. 1), creating it as a maze-like pathway through the surrounding woods. In her search for a mediation between the vastness of



Fig. 1. Patricia Johanson, *Cyrus Field*, Buskirk, NY (1970), marble, 16" x 1200' x 4"; redwood, 12" x 2600' x 2"; cement block, 8" x 3200' x 4". © Patricia Johanson.

nature and human scale, she brought her art outdoors as did the earthwork artists of the 1970s.

She positioned marble, then redwood and finally cement blocks to create a maze of lines within the landscape. As it winds around the dense tree growth it continually changes one's awareness of place through the movement of the sun, weather, season, and time of day. By 1972, many parts of the "sculpture path" were moss covered (Fig. 2). This may have given Johanson the first real inkling of how placing something into nature leaves it vulnerable to more than physical change, as human visual perception alters as well. Identical size pieces of marble and wood no longer appear equal when laid onto earth surrounded by trees, leaves, and light. What was familiar is no longer so, and what looked geometric appears otherwise.

Accepting the loss of control over one's art as the processes of nature continue to edit the manmade can bring an artist surprise and delight, and for the observant viewer a revelation. Process art, well known in the 1960s for its demonstration of entropy, was mostly seen in museums and galleries in the work of Robert Morris or Eva Hesse. The early 1970s saw that of Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, and later, Nancy Holt, in vast stretches of western desert, only accessible if deliberately sought. Johanson made her project close to home, creating something subtly beautiful. The artist described it:

> The marble reflects everything that's going on around it—the shadows, patterns of growth and decay, weather and seasons. In autumn the sculpture is dominated by a sea of fallen leaves—yellow, red, purple, then brown. The piece gets covered by snow, but in spring a fragile green world predominates again. When you look at *Cyrus Field* what you see is nature. Yet without the sculpture you may not notice the ecology as much. The lines frame the natural world. They mediate between human and nature without distorting or displacing anything.[3]



Fig. 2. Patricia Johanson, *Cyrus Field*, Buskirk, NY (1970), moss-covered sculpture path in 1972. © Patricia Johanson.

Adding to its beauty is the benefit to the wildlife of the place: "The animals make use of the sculpture; Snakes sun themselves on the marble, chipmunks live under the redwood; and small mammals tunnel along the edges of the cement blocks."[4]

The sculpture of *Cyrus Field* does not disrupt the life around it but rather supports it by providing utility for animal inhabitancy as well as enhancing the serendipitous visuals made apparent by the ever-changing light and seasons. Reflections swim across the marble, moss builds a garden on the redwood, and pine needles gather over the cement to create a tactile rug. As here, in all of her subsequent projects, large and small, materials are in concert with nature, their synchrony a stronger presence with each site.

One cannot help but note how different was her approach from that of some earth artists of the same period, singling out Michael Heizer's 1970 *Double Negative,* which is notorious for its ravaging of the land. A pair of 1500-foot-long earthen trenches are slashed into the side of a mesa that was made by the displacement of 244,000 tons of rhyolite and sandstone in the Moapa Valley of the Nevada desert. It was immediately criticized by environmental groups that monitor wildlife in the desert region for destroying major ecosystems, dislocating the small animals that burrowed in the mesa, feeding off the rodents and bugs that made their homes there.

In the discussion that follows, describing four of Johanson's major environmental projects, it is possible to prefer her vision of the landscape as it unfolds through time and space, and with the human connection. Building successively in each are deeper and more expansive layers of physical, historical and aesthetic import. But it is the final layer—its surface exposed—that holds the power to psychologically impact one's experience in a way that can bond person to place, perhaps altering its future by inserting the past into the present. As the past bubbles to the surface, what each place was before it fell victim to time, neglect, and human indifference is suggested through its direct physicality, making each site a place of reclamation that utilizes more than a knowledge of its soils, water, plants, and creatures. Further reclamation can reveal

forgotten layers and increase the possibility for a sustainable life by evoking a primal human connection. Johanson writes:

> Nature's space goes beyond the visual into a much deeper sensual space. As we move through the landscape all our senses are operating; we recognize sound, smell, touch, shifts in temperature, humidity, light and shade, color, kinesthesia—a "whole body" awareness…. The possibilities of synchrony—for personal connection—are virtually endless and far more compelling because they are operating on a deeper level—not merely "aesthetic," but also "biological." Basically this has to do with the three part structure of the brain. Most of what goes on in the neocortex—the rational, thinking part—has to be learned…. Our most basic responses come from two more primitive areas: the mammalian limbic system and the archaic reptilian core—older, deeper levels of the brain that operate intuitively, instinctively and unconsciously.[5]



Fig. 3. Patricia Johanson, *Fair Park Lagoon* Dallas, TX (1981-85), gunite, Sagittaria platyphylla. © Patricia Johanson.

Sustainable, then, expands to a comprehensive definition of a balanced ecosystem where its rebuilding is enjoined by reclaimed memory and a human capacity to curate it.

For *Fair Park Lagoon* (1981–85), in Dallas, Texas, the artist transformed a deteriorating site by creating large sculptural forms of gunite positioned near the water. All designed forms were in terra cotta colors, and the sculptures formed pathways that were lined with plantings selected to create food and habitats for a variety of wildlife (Fig. 3).. The lagoon became a functioning ecosystem within an urban setting, and as an early project of bio-remediation, it serves as a singular example to urban planners and scientists.

Leonhardt Lagoon is located on the grounds of Fair Park in downtown Dallas. In 1981 it was a polluted eyesore, a dangerous mud hole, where "children had fallen in and drowned."[6] Sitting on land that is home to the Museum of Arts, Museum of Natural History, Aquarium, Science Museum, Cotton Bowl Stadium and Hall of State, Johanson immediately saw that the lagoon was environmentally degraded and a serious detriment to the city. Although her commission was simply to create a monumental sculpture in honor of the Texas Sesquicentennial, Johanson countered with a sustainable design for the entire lagoon that would simultaneously purify the water and create a series of natural ecosystems that would bring back pond life. Two indigenous aquatic plants, Sagittaria platyphylla and Pteris multifida were introduced around the entire rim of the lagoon. Both have shallow, dense rooting systems that help prevent shoreline erosion while creating microhabitats for insects, turtles, fish, and birds. Microbes that live on the plant stems and roots filter and consume toxins, minimizing the need for chemical cleansers and expensive maintenance. Aesthetically pleasing as well, the graceful complexity of the plants and their roots became the model for giant gunite sculptures that echoed their shapes and blurred the lines between art and nature (front cover). Art became infrastructure, as these forms were deployed to break up wave action, halting erosion, and creating bridges, walkways, and cross-overs, inviting people to explore the pond and witness its ever evolving life cycles.

Fern-shaped structures share their reflections with pink, white, and yellow water lilies sitting on green leaves, and myriad brown cypress trees now grown tall after thirty years. Gleaning from Chevreul's nineteenth-century color theory, Johanson used natural sunlight to blend blue sky with the green tint of plant water and clay colored pathways to produce mauve and lavender reflections that dance on the water surface.[7] Walking into the lagoon brings a flooding of the senses—the sounds of bees and birds, the coolness of the water, the smells of cypress, fish, turtles, and flowers both in bloom and rotting.

In 2009 I travelled with Johanson to assess the sustainability of her oldest major site, completed a quarter-century earlier. Photographs from 1985 reveal a palette of maximum color intensity, but on the day of our visit, May 3, 2009, a foggy grey day, the color-scape was muted, evoking a contemplative mood. The once-bright terra cotta gunite walkways have a rusty patina of ground-in dirt made by countless feet traversing the lagoon, and its water canvas effects a more layered range of tones as the growth beneath and above the surface paint it differently each season. Micro-habitats for hundreds of fish and birds gracefully weave an intricate network in the rooted passageways crisscrossing the pond.

Education is a natural result of experiencing this place, and another layer of Johanson's artistic intent. This day two young boys ran into the shallow end of the pond on the "frond" of a gunite fern and sprawled out on its tip so that their faces just

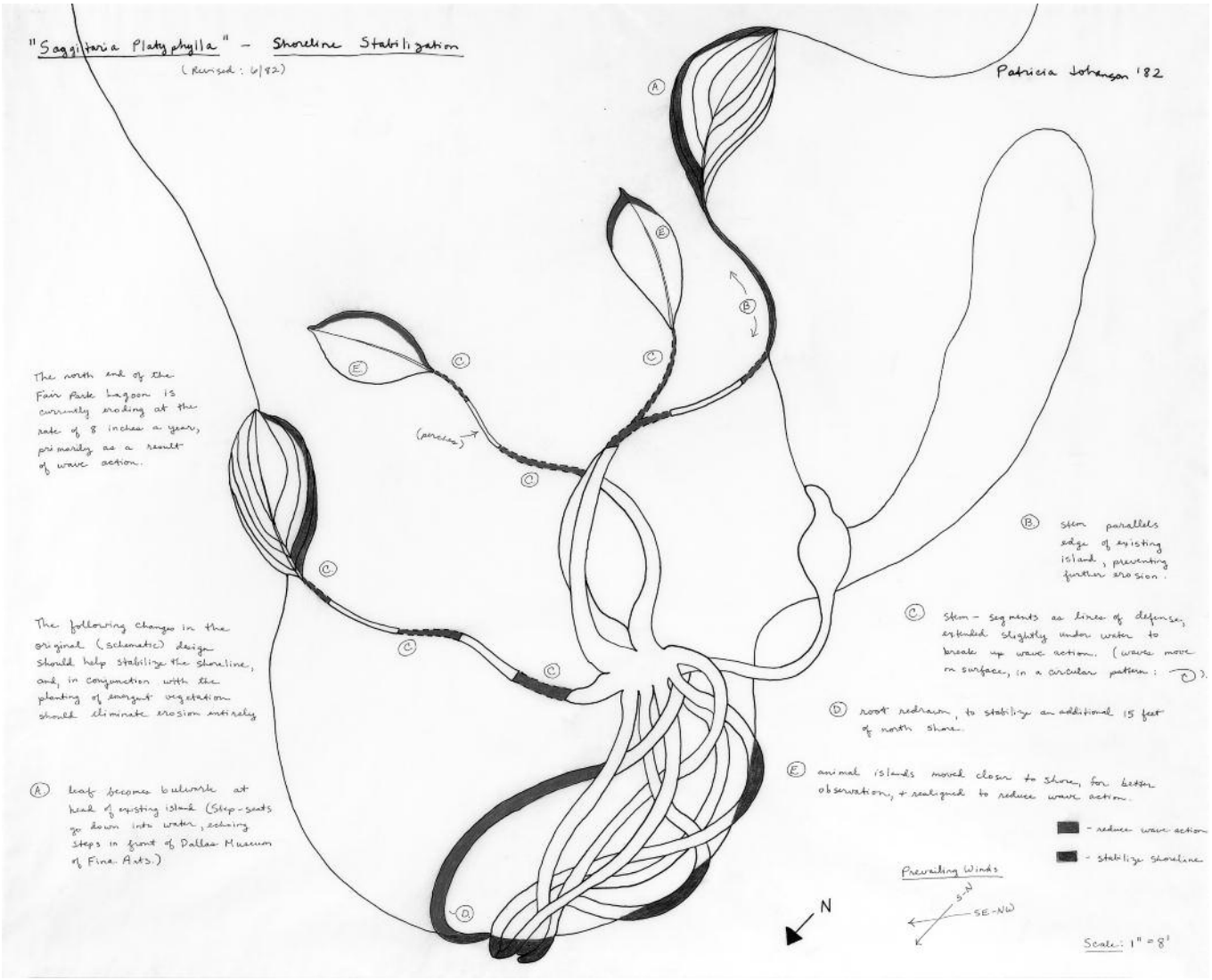


Fig. 4. Patricia Johanson, *Saggitaria Platyphylla*: Shoreline Stabilization (*Fair Park Lagoon*) (1982), ink and pastel on vellum, 30" x 36". © Patricia Johanson.

grazed the water's surface. Their quarry was a giant snapping turtle, part of a family that has lived in this lagoon since its reclamation. The boys informed us that they had a longstanding relationship with this family and visited every Sunday, driving over sixty miles from Montgomery to Dallas. Their father, they told us, had grown up in swampland and was now teaching his children about these delicate environments in this safe and idyllic place.[8]

The rooting systems of Sagittaria platyphylla and Pteris multifida and many other plants that formed ecosystems within the lagoon provided nutrients, nesting materials, and homes for a wide range of wildlife. And the pragmatic use of plant forms was also the aesthetic inspiration for the artist's sculptures (Fig. 4) that gave safe access to the water, allowing people intimate contact with a living lagoon.

The Dragon Park at Ulsan, South Korea (1996–2006; Fig. 5 and Pl. 1) was an enormous project sited in an eroding complex of bio- and cultural diversity. Johanson was commissioned to design a park in its center that would reclaim both the land and local pride for the residents of Ulsan. The extensive history of her integration of cutting edge technology and art in achieving a massive ecological and cultural recovery is thoroughly discussed by Xin Wu in *Patricia Johanson and the Re-Invention of Public Environmental Art, 1958–2010*. Wu describes Ulsan as Korea's leading industrial city, a metropolis with the world's largest oil refinery, and automobile and ship-building complexes that developed in rapid succession following the end of the Korean War in 1953. Over the next several decades, this heavy industrialization led to massive erosion of not only ecological but cultural unity.[9] My focus here, however, is on how Johanson reached into the city's past to uncover layers of a proud and vibrant Korean traditional life. Her pragmatic aestheticism drove an extraordinary design of an aquatic playground, with water cascading off the mountains and flowing over water steps—the scales of the legendary "Carp," where children can dam and control the water. Continuing downstream, the water flows into natural wetlands at the lowest level with a swampy habitat for birds and amphibians, where people can explore various ecological



Fig. 5. Patricia Johanson, *Ulsan Dragon Park* (912 acres), Tiger Eye Spillway, Ulsan, South Korea (overview) (1996–2006). © Patricia Johanson.

communities. Here as elsewhere for Johanson, the spectacle created is aimed at providing an experiential education for all ages, meant to capture our primordial need to be part of nature.

In 1996, smog-infested Ulsan was a place of transient workers and cultural dissent, where poverty abutted wealth but with little to no help for the former. Johanson learned, however, that Ulsan was once a major trading port, with a thriving whaling community, a sound economy, and a strong cultural identity. Guided by her observation of public art that appeared everywhere in the city, she researched its meaning to uncover ancient Korean folklore that provided a base for understanding the belief systems. These ancient ideas have survived through painted imagery, despite the almost total expulsion of a written history. Johanson's intricate, complex design was aimed at restoring Ulsan's civic and national dignity in direct relationship to its ecological rebirth. For a future that looked toward sustainability, one could not happen without the other. The artist saw this as a many tiered project where ancient shamanistic beliefs, still vibrating through the Korean psyche, would be imbedded into the landscape, telling their stories through their imagery.

Weaving art and infrastructure into a 912-acre site where park life would fuse with city life, she linked the city's proud past with a forward-looking present. Park as city and city as park should be synonymous, where life could flow seamlessly from one to the other. However, 912 acres was a vast space, which needed as much diversity in its pathways and playgrounds as it did an ecological foundation. Johanson's strategy (established at *Fair Park Lagoon*) remained in place. The first layer entailed the installation of the indigenous food chain that would call back the insects which feed the fish and crustaceans, which in turn nourish the reptiles and birds, finally providing food for the mammals who could thrive in this urban park. Layer two would meld art and shamanism, because "up to the present shamanism remains the ultimate spiritual base, with folk art the ultimate physical base of Korean culture."[10]

Johanson engaged a serious study of the belief systems of local Minwha folk painting that centers around longevity, good fortune, and luck in the making of a happy life. Five good fortunes—health, wealth, glory, fertility, and peace—are represented by plant and animal forms that were revered by the ancient populace. Most loved and worshipped for its mythic powers is the dragon, a creature of immense energy, whose supernatural ability to mediate between heaven/earth and the underworld has made it Asia's most revered totem. Most significant to this site of transformation from a neglected environment to one of health and vitality is the dragon's capacity to endlessly transform itself as do the clouds in which it dwells (Fig. 6). Further, its gargantuan size relates directly to the vastness of the massive park, which was planned to incorporate a complex network of city museums, exhibition complexes, a promenade and even an IMAX theater. And all of these manmade structures would be sewn into the fabric of natural ecosystems: marsh, pond, creek, floodplain, meadow, wetland, and upland forest, with fragments of the "Dragon" ultimately uniting low wetlands, valleys, and mountaintops with the more urban parts of the park.

Finally, a multitude of animistic totems comprising the rest of the Minwha pantheon, in their dual role as ambassadors for the renewed spirit of all descendants of Ulsan, were installed as guardian designs leading to pathways, bridges and playgrounds.With a long list of positive attributes that overshadow all other totems, the Haetae is a mainstay guardian, typically placed at gates and entry ways to major paths. Johanson also placed protective Haetae, mythical figures thought to guard against fire and natural disasters, at park entrances as another symbol of Ulsan's cultural and ecological renewal.

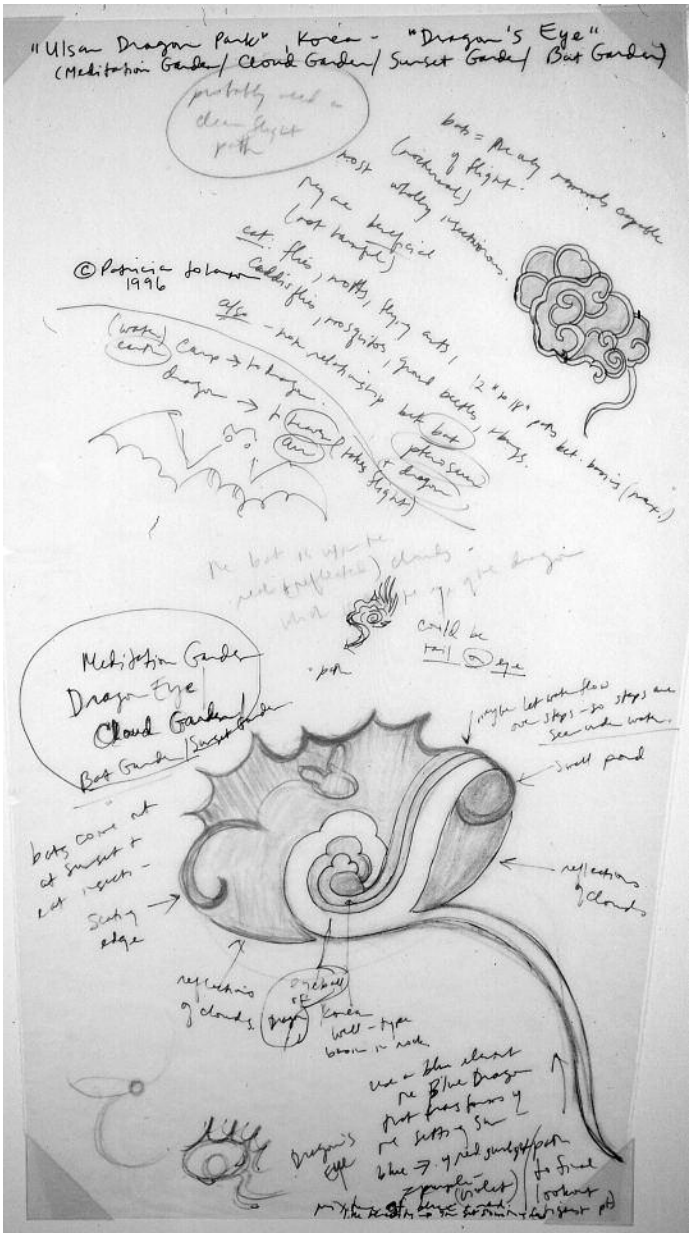


Fig. 6. Patricia Johanson, *Ulsan Dragon Park, Dragon's Eye Meditation Garden/Cloud Garden/Summer Garden* (1996), colored pencil and ink. © Patricia Johanson.

Underscoring the educational presence here are Johanson's five guidelines for visitors to follow should they wish to explore the biodiversity of Ulsan Park:

1. Using the Minwha (folk paintings) as links between past and future animals, insects + flowers our ancestors painted are clearly the ones that attracted + fascinated
2. Seeing the grasshopper in the garden today as a descendant of the grasshopper they painted centuries ago
3. Linking this to the issues of survival>environmental protection + sustainability of plants + animals into the future. Biodiversity + the preservation of Korean culture are intrinsically linked

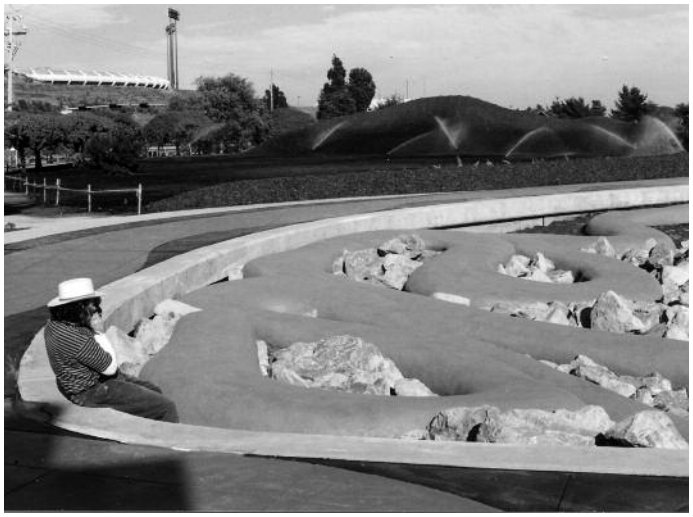


Fig. 7. Patricia Johanson, *Endangered Garden*, Candlestick Cove, San Francisco Bay (1987–97), twisting walkway resembling a coiled snake. © Patricia Johanson.

4. Letting longevity symbols ("emblems of happiness") become gardens that are poetic + transmitting Korean culture but also scientifically + ecologically supportive of preserve plants + wildlife that our ancestors painted so that the genetic material is available to transmit to future generations of Koreans
5. Understanding that if [we] lose the natural heritage we also lose our cultural heritage.[11]

California has been the site of several large projects. In the late 1980s Johanson designed *Endangered Garden* at Candlestick Cove in San Francisco Bay (Pl. 2), a project that was partially destroyed due to the city's aggressive spraying of toxins in the *Butterfly Meadow*, and later restored. She understood the public distaste for drinking recycled sewage water. "Sunnydale Facilities" was, in fact, a transport-storage sewer, meant only to prevent wet weather overflows of sewage into San Francisco Bay. By burying the sewer she was able to create a shoreline walkway, now part of the Bay Circuit Trail, and public access to restored wildlife habitats, using the bright, colorful patterns of the endangered San Francisco Garter Snake to provide visual interest (Fig. 7).

Thirty plus years ago, an approaching water scarcity was starting to become apparent, but today a crisis has made wastewater recycling essential internationally, and with it a need for public education on a grand scale. Johanson is seeing to it that this happens in the midst of the Sonoma Valley, Petaluma, at Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility / Wildlife Sanctuary (1998–2009; Pl. 3).

Here the newest technology in the field of water recycling combines with a giant wetlands garden comprising over 600 acres. The project occupies a site used by Coastal Miwoks, who had lived in this region for over a thousand years when Francis Drake arrived in 1567. Now a seemingly incongruous juxtaposition of engineering, archeological siting, and landscape art has become a creative symbiosis of natural processes and

state-of-the-art science. An elaborate system of oxidation ditches churns and splashes the water supplying oxygen to aerobic microbes that eat waste. Oxidation ponds, treatment wetlands, and polishing ponds allow settling and filter detritus and heavy metals, transforming tainted water into safe habitats for species of birds and fish that historically made their homes here.

As co-designer of the project, Johanson worked with Corollo Engineers to develop a sustainable water recycling facility with multiple benefits for the community. This reimagining of what a sewage treatment facilty could be is more than just the next layer of her developing aesthetic pragmatism. It has produced critically positive results for an area that depends heavily on water and is seeing it disappear at an alarming rate. *Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility* and Johanson have addressed an open door plan that boldly pairs wetlands wastewater treatment with economic development, wildlife habitat, and public access to a public park with more than four miles of trails, while producing a saleable product: recycled water. Visitors are encouraged to hike within the facility before venturing out to the trails pointing toward the Petaluma River. A large, clearly marked map at its entry traces the channels of cleansed water from the plant to farms and wineries all over the county. Sonoma has some of the finest wineries in the country, as well as superior farm products, and this facility helps keep them in production.

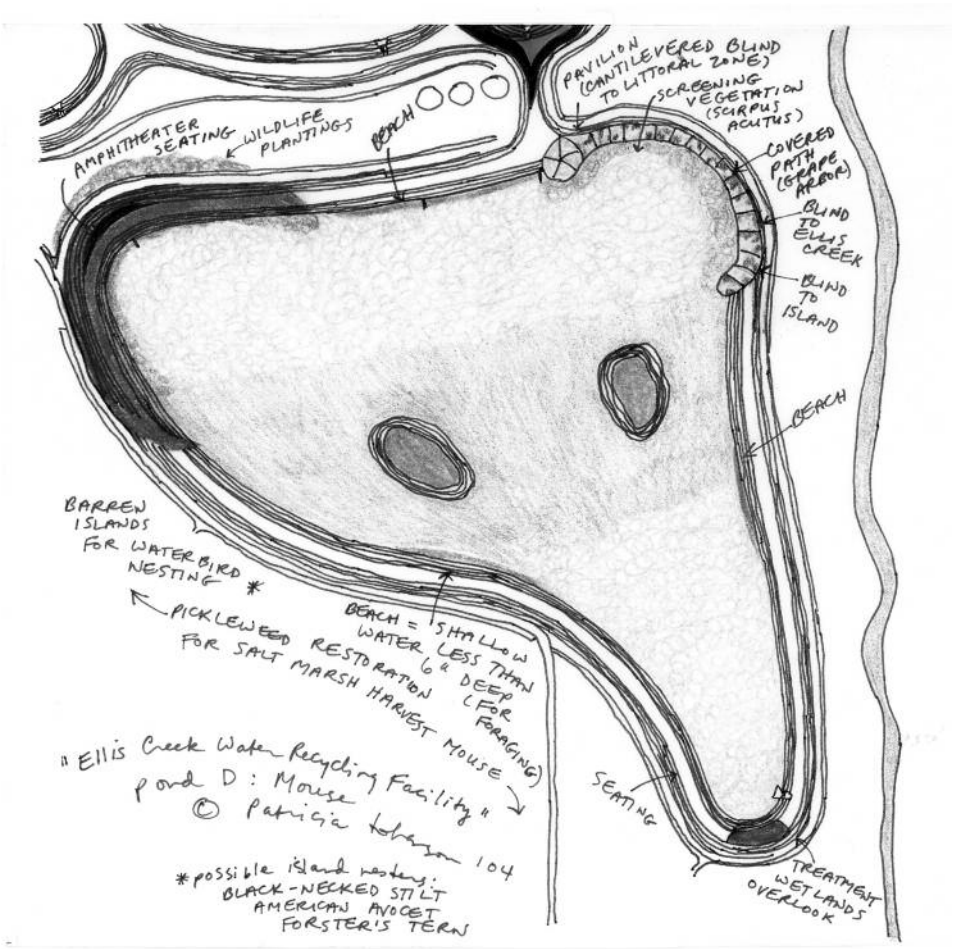


Fig. 8. Patricia Johanson, *Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility*, Petaluma, CA, "Pond D: Mouse" (2004), ink and pencil on paper, 9 1/8" x 8 5/8".© Patricia Johanson.

Understanding the educational implications of the union of art and technology in a world that now demands the most creative aesthetic and scientific innovation, Johanson has embedded detailed signage kiosks throughout the Ellis Creek facility site, providing technical details and opportunities for exploring the natural areas. There are careful explanations of pools and polishing ponds where heavy metals are extracted, cleansing and recycling the water, and maps with specific directions showing the locations where rare birds and fauna make their home. Visitors learn about the abundant wildlife whose existence here is made possible by all that surrounds it, both natural and constructed. The realization that they are often one and the same is stunning, but its inspirational facet spurs the vital educational component layered inextricably in all of Johanson's designs.

Johanson used the image of the endangered Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse as the major framing device for the polishing ponds at *Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility* to make a serious statement about its dwindling ranks (Fig. 8). A small amphitheater is built into one "ear" of the mouse, while its "tail" connects to the recycled water reservoir. Using art to create a habitat for an endangered species succeeded so that today this creature is thriving here. (It is noteworthy that this mouse shares 99 percent of our genome, and that DNA extracted from its tail plays a key role in stem cell research.)

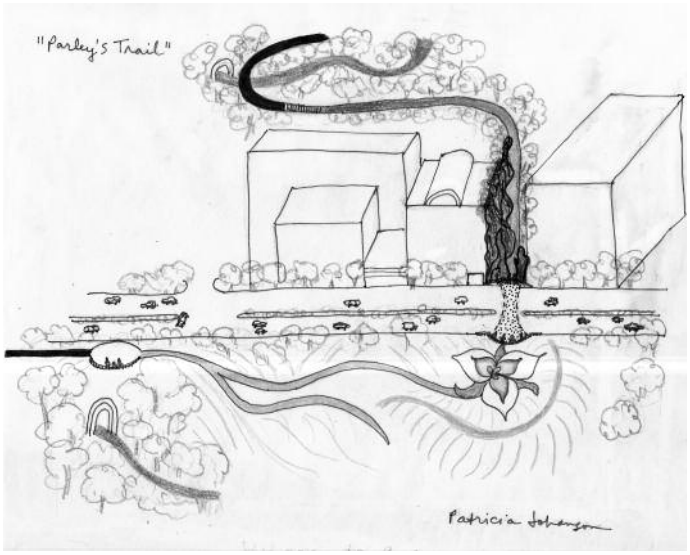


Fig. 9. Patricia Johanson, *The Draw at Sugar House*, Salt Lake City, UT, (2003–present), "Parley's Trail" (overview of Highway, Parley's Creek and Trail, Sugar House Pedestrian Crossing) (2003), ink and acrylic, 5 3/4" x 6". © Patricia Johanson.



Fig. 10. Patricia Johanson, *Sego Lily* (2013) (made from the white clay model of 2003), bronze, 20 1/4" x 20 1/4" x 2 3/4".© Patricia Johanson.

One of Johanson's latest projects involves a trail beneath a busy expressway in Salt Lake City, Utah. Begun in 2003, *The Draw at Sugar House* is partially completed, with the passage under the highway and a narrow slot canyon—Parley's Trail—now open to the public (Fig. 9). In 2004 Johanson won the Utah Governor's Grand Achievement Award for Planning and Design for this project, which combines flood-control structures with wildlife habitat, a public trail, historical narrative and a safe highway crossing.[12]

The Draw at Sugar House is now a registered Utah State dam that channels catastrophic floods under an eight-lane highway, through a narrow slot canyon—the floodwalls and spillway for the dam—and back into an incised creek. Designed as a sego lily (Pl. 4 and Fig. 10), the Utah state flower, floodwater overtopping the retention basin in Sugar House Park pools in the bowl of the flower, with its 30-foot high walls, before flowing by gravity under the road and through a sunken corridor, *Echo Canyon*. Integrated into its structure are geological and sculptural formations creating niches, ledges, and perches for wildlife, with red gunite pinnacles punctured with bat boxes. Plantings throughout support the local wildlife.

What is clearly at work here is the complexity of engineering and aesthetics. A tunnel beneath the highway accommodates three interwoven trails, a bicycle and pedestrian highway crossing, a wildlife migration corridor and a series of landscape features that are meant to "evoke the historical journey of the Mormon pioneers into the Great Salt Lake Valley."[13] The aesthetic soul of this site recalls that entry through Echo Canyon in July 1847.

The artist's projects have all had long gestation, and their forms have great import here, reifying Johanson's understanding of the history and symbolism of this place. The potato-like lily bulbs helped sustain the early settlers,[14] and the rattlesnake, which enters into the imagery, stems from an early document chronicling Brigham Young's entry into the Valley:

> Erastus Snow, one of the two scouts who first saw the valley, reported: As he searched for a path into the valley at the mouth of Parley's Canyon, he recalled: "I crawled for some distance on my hands and knees through a dense thicket, until I was in return admonished to by the rattle of a snake, which lay coiled, a little under my nose, having almost put my hand on it, but as he gave me a friendly warning, I thanked him, and retreated.[15]

Johanson's crystalline interpretation of this story and its significance to Mormon ethical living is explained as a "sign of respect for all living things. The Mormon pioneers considered that wildlife, however dangerous to human life, had a right to live and should not be killed wantonly. They killed game for food, but for no other reason."[16] In essence this idea was paramount to their belief in the purity of this new land of Zion, where respect for all living things was part of an edenic code for living ethically. The rattlesnake symbolized this moment of recognition. The sego lily symbolizes the Mormons' survival of their first winter in the valley, where food was scarce and the Native Americans taught the pioneers to eat the bulbs of these wild lilies. The bulbs contained strong nutrients that prevented their starvation.

How profound these choices of imagery/symbols are is most poignantly understood when connected to the origins of this project. It began in 1990 with teacher Sheri Sohm, who asked her sixth-graders to turn their creative thinking about a social problem into positive action. The students chose a rescue mission of Hidden Hollow, which marked the end of the Mormon Trail and was scheduled to be razed for urban development and to become a parking lot. They formed KOPE KIDS (Kids Organized to Protect the Environment), and with the help of their teacher and citywide support they developed a conservation project, presented it to the City Council, and eventually won their case for making this an official nature reservation for Salt Lake City. That the coming generation saw these needs and turned them from possibilities into realities inspired Johanson. At the core of her every project is her wish to promote a legacy for the next generation of artists.

Johanson continues to invest her art and faith in individuals who, given the opportunity to explore the lagoon at Fair Park,

hike the trails at Ellis Creek, play in Dragon Park, or rediscover their Mormon history on the biking trail through Echo Canyon—or immerse themselves in any number of her design reclamations—will at once respond to their most ancient collective memory of life on, in, and of the land. Once felt, Johanson believes, it cannot be ignored and ultimately will be honored. Having been recognized for her important work by inclusion in some 150 exhibitions worldwide, Patricia Johanson boldly continues to address ecological issues—local and global—in her exceptional works. •

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Notes

1. See for example, Xin Wu, *Patricia Johanson and the Re-Invention of Public Environmental Art, 1958–2010* (Surrey, U.K: Ashgate, 2013), and Patricia Johanson, *Architecture as Landscape* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985).
2. Caffyn Kelley, *Art and Survival: Patricia Johanson's Environmental Projects* (Salt Spring Island, BC: Islands Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies, 2006), 47.
3. Patricia Johanson, *Art and Survival: Creative Solutions to Environmental Problems* (Salt Spring Island, BC: Gallerie: Women Artists' Monographs, 1992), 8–10.
4. Ibid., 9.
5. Johanson, *Architecture as Landscape*, 111.
6. Recounted at http://patriciajohanson.com/projects/fair-park-lagoon.html
7. Two books of particular influence on Johanson are Michel Eugène Chevreul, *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs et de l'assortiment des objets colorés* (Paris, 1839), and Marcel Minnaert, The Nature of Light and Color in the Open Air (New York: Dover Publications, 1954), esp. the Introduction.
8. Patricia Johanson and the author, interview with the Danler family at *Fair Park Lagoon*, Dallas, May 3, 2009.
9. Xin Wu, *Patricia Johanson and the Re-Invention of Public Environmental Art, 1958–2010*, 162–66.
10. Ibid., 165.
11. Ibid., 164.
12. The crossing between Sugar House Park and Hidden Hollow, both iconic places for Mormon history, is known as a dangerous intersection, with many traffic accidents and personal injuries, thus the original impetus for this project was a safe highway crossing.
13. Jasen Lee, "The Draw at Sugar House Unveiled," *Desert News*, March 13, 2014, http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865598626/The-Draw-at-Sugar-House-unveiled.html?pg=all. Ten illustrations reveal the scale of the underpass and slot canyon in construction.
14. Ibid.
15. "We camped on the banks of a beautiful little stream which was surrounded by very tall grass (Parley's Creek)." Thomas Bullock, Thursday, July 22, 1847, LDS Church Archives. Quoted in "Mormon Pioneer Trail Then and Now." http://www.utah.com
16. "Discourse on the Utah Pioneers," reported by George F. Gibbs. Quoted in Xin Wu, *Patricia Johanson and the Re-Invention of Public Environmental Art, 1958-2010*, 202.

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May Sun

Site, Metaphor and Excavated Histories

By Donna Stein

The career trajectory for artist May Sun's (b. 1954) practice has been uncommon. Known for her multimedia installations, a genre that still holds her primary interest, and public art commissions such as *La Ballona* in California's Culver City (1995; Fig. 1), Sun at the same time has continued to draw, paint, and photograph as well as create products, video installations, and billboards. Informed by her emigrant experience, and drawing on her Chinese heritage, especially as it impacted the history of California, her work consistently crosses cultural and political boundaries, questioning outdated assumptions. Her acute cross-cultural sensibility is not nostalgic, but probes the pervasive nature of imperialism and its effect on the colonized and their descendants. The themes that traverse her work involve excavating cultural memories, unearthing untold stories of marginalized people, revealing environmental destruction of natural resources, including the safeguarding of animals, and recognizing the importance of social justice.



Fig. 1. May Sun, *La Ballona* (1995), mixed media. City Hall Courtyard, Culver City, CA. Photo: May Sun.

Shanghai-born, and raised in Hong Kong in a cosmopolitan family,[1] Sun was educated in a British school where French was taught as a second language. By the age of eleven, she was enrolled in private art classes. The youngest of four siblings, all of whom attended college in the United States, she arrived in California in 1971 to study at the University of San Diego.[2] Sun transferred to UCLA as a junior, where she completed her undergraduate degree.[3] "When I was in school," she recalls, "my work wasn't political at all."[4] She took Chinese art history and Chinese language to remember and regain her skills from grade school, along with studies including figurative painting, drawing, and sculpture. She experimented with hybrid sculpture-paintings, sound based work, and room-sized installations that combined her aesthetic interests, which she continued to explore as a graduate student at Otis Art Institute (now Otis College of Art and Design) in Los Angeles. These interdisciplinary ephemeral pieces expressed her vision and lent themselves to a kind of historical intervention through a collaborative process between artists and scholars as a way to unearth new truths about the past, cultural identity, and gender. They are informed by an architectural approach focused on how people move through space as well as her interest in audiences participating instead of just looking at an object.

Sun never felt that she truly belonged in any one community. "Growing up in Hong Kong, there was always talk of politics in my family," she confides. "Politics affect every aspect of life."[5] Much of her early work reflected her ambivalent feelings, alienation, and confusion. "I always start out doing my work for myself," she explains, "as my reality is the only one I know. I have to deal with issues I care about or want to address." For her, "the past informs the present, which informs the future."[6] The impact of her art has been described as "Stroking you with a feather while socking you in the stomach."[7]

In 1979 Sun was invited by the Vanguard Gallery in Los Angeles to join a group exhibition entitled "Pre-80s." She showed "The Conception of the Art Word," a conceptual piece illustrating the birth of the word "art" that consisted of eighteen small paintings triggered by the test tube baby phenomenon.[8] Other early opportunities included showing work at the





Fig. 2 (above). May Sun, *Running Dog/Paper Tiger* (1984), performance, The Woman's Building, Los Angeles. Photo: Todd Gray.

Fig. 3 (right). May Sun, *L.A./River/China/Town*, detail, *Chinese Railroad Workers' Tent* (1988), Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, CA. Photo: David Familian.

Woman's Building Gallery, the seminal feminist space in Los Angeles, and performing at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) and New Langton Arts in San Francisco.

In the early 1980s, she worked at the Los Angeles Actors' Theatre and later as a graphic artist for the Center Theatre Group's Mark Taper Forum, creating theatrical posters. As she became enmeshed in the world of experimental theatre, she furthered her installation and performance work in collaborations with important directors and composers. Combining sound, music, light, movement, and sculptures, Sun was able to express ideas that had both narrative and visual presence. An early performance piece, *Running Dog/Paper Tiger* (1984; Fig. 2) was sparked by the ridiculous questions on the application form for U.S. citizenship and the prejudice she witnessed in the immigration office that was directed towards applicants with limited knowledge of the English language.

For the first time since she was a two-year-old toddler, May Sun returned to China with her mother in 1985. In Beijing she met her mother's oldest sister, Gong Pu Sheng, and in Shanghai, her uncle showed her where the family had lived and the balcony where her father painted.[9]

This eye-opening trip provided a political dimension to her early elliptical installations, resulting in the creation of the multimedia performance *The Great Wall or How Red is My China?* (1986), which developed out of a workshop led by Mabou Mines' co-founder Ruth Maleczech, in conjunction with LACE and Otis College of Art and Design.[10] The narrative explored the Chinese–American psyche and dealt with opposing views of China, from the left and right, in the United States. She used images of Shanghai and Beijing and her immediate family's past as the raw material for an inquiring glimpse back at Chinese history. Sun commented on the government in China and revealed the story of her mother's two older sisters, Gong Pu Sheng and Gong Peng, who joined the Communist movement while attending Yenching University in Beijing and went on to have illustrious careers.[11]

A most memorable installation, *L.A./River/China/Town* (1988; Pl. 5) created with theater director Peter Brosius, artist/composer Tom Recchion, and lighting designer Margaret Ann Dunn, premiered at the recently opened Santa Monica Museum of Art. This work embraced the Diaspora and migration history of the Chinese in California,[12] particularly in the city of Los Angeles, through a series of tableaux that revealed stories both hidden and mythical. Sun offered unbiased narratives of the plight of Chinese railroad workers forgotten for more than a century.[13] Through incidents and images she created lyrical metaphors of the past, showcasing their relationship to contemporary life. Finding little written on the subject, she went into the Chinese community to research and talk to people, to record their memories and resurrect the history. Thus, the Chinese community became part of the audience for her work.

The conceptually complex, multimedia installation transformed the raw space of the cavernous museum into a stylized camp, the kind of living quarters Chinese railroad workers set up along the banks of the L.A. River in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Each of the four white tents (Fig. 3), encircled on all sides by a "mythic" river, recounted a different story, juxtaposing visual elements with sound, text, smells, and lighting that offered ways to construct meaning.

To enter the installation, viewers crossed a narrow wooden bridge that led to a central sandy courtyard, where Recchion's hanging mobile sculpture of Chinese gongs—some evoking



Fig. 4. May Sun, *Who's Right? What's Left?* (1990), mixed media, Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, FL. Photo: May Sun.



Fig. 5. May Sun, *UnderGround* (1993), mixed media, The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles. Photo: Courtesy MOCA, Los Angeles.

cooking vessels, woks, and lids—funneled a constant stream of rice, which suggested moving water and gave sound to silence. Directional lighting provided gentle cues that led spectators from one tent to another. On the tent walls projections of people and places, both historical and contemporary, narrated specific histories: the 1849 flood in China and the consequent wave of immigration to the U.S.; the life of the Chinese railroad workers who lived along the Los Angeles River in the 1870s; the 1871 Chinatown massacre that took place in downtown Los Angeles;[14] the story of Santa Monica resident Homer Lea, who trained troops for the Chinese revolution[15] led by Sun-Yat Sen, the most personal connection to Sun's own family history.[16] A recorded musical score—including sounds of nature, speech fragments, and a narrative of historical events—in concert with well chosen artifacts like the corpse of a duck, pairs of coolie shoes, and a shrine, combined to tell "a series of untold stories of American culture, which is, and has always been, an immigrant culture."[17] "Not everyone knows that the founders of Los Angeles were multiethnic, just like the citizens today," says Sun. "It's good not to always feel like an outsider or an immigrant."[18]

The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles commissioned a radio version of *L.A./River/China/Town* that won a Silver Award from the Corporation of Public Broadcasting in 1990. That same year, Sun completed her first artist's residency program in Miami Beach, Florida, which led to the exhibit "Contemporaries in our Midst" at the Bass Museum of Art. Her installation, titled "*Who's Right? What's Left?*" (Fig. 4), addressed the post-Cold War era fact that Cuba and China were the last two remaining Communist countries. Outsized portraits of Fidel Castro and Chairman Mao dominated the two main walls of the exhibit space. On a sand-covered floor, Sun inserted a large I Ching symbol for "Revolution" made from copper piping. The artist questioned belief systems, the dichotomy between capitalism and communism, and America's eagerness to perceive the world in terms of "us" and "them," when she asked, "Is Capitalism a euphemism for consumerism?" and "Is Capitalism the lesser of two evils?"

Since 1990, the classic *Book of Changes* (I Ching) has figured prominently in Sun's art.[19] Although the ancient bar-like signs of the hexagrams are visually contemporary and minimal, they carry meaning culled from thousands of years of wisdom. In her work she borrows the oracle's strategy and tactics and alludes to the random nature of fate, which, like the tossing of the I Ching coins, determines our destiny.[20]

Invited by Peter Sellars, the director of the 1990 LA Festival, to create a performance installation, Sun produced *The Chinese Chess Piece*. Although there is no queen in Chinese chess, Sun's performance was "a game of Queens only."[21] Held at Hollywood United Methodist Church on a chessboard of basketball court-sized proportions, four real and imagined figures from the past move across the game board of time to claim their place in history. "I set out to challenge the image of Asian women as passive and submissive," Sun said. We wanted to dramatize strong, pioneering Chinese women."[22] Among the iconic characters (the queens) portrayed were the movie actor Anna May Wong, aviator Katherine Cheung, and Gong Peng, Sun's aunt who had been a Red Chinese political figure. May Sun was the narrator/dream figure.

The following year, during her residency at Capp Street Project in San Francisco, Sun developed her next large-scale installation, *Fugitive Landing: A Revolutionary at Sea*.[23] Moved by the pro-democracy rallies at Tiananmen Square, Sun felt compelled to shed some light on Sun Yat-sen's earlier attempt to propose a western-style democracy for China. This fugitive revolutionary leader, a heroic, self-sacrificing man with a vision, arrived in San Francisco in 1896, the first of many secret sea voyages to the United States from China to solicit financial assistance from Chinese-American communities to overthrow the corrupt Manchu Dynasty.

At Capp Street Project's two-story space, a giant image of Sun Yat-sen overlooked the room from a video projection. The walkway/maze derived from an ancient lattice "wave" design that originated in coastal China. Because there was water underneath this platform, visitors felt like they were standing on a pier. A large video screen projected collaborator Jeri Lawson's footage of the ocean (replete with a soundtrack



Fig. 6. May Sun, *Hollywood Boulevard and Western Red Line Subway Station* (1990–99), mezzanine level. Photo: Tom Bonner.

of lapping waves and foghorns): a view of San Francisco harbor taken from a moving boat, interspersed with historic photos of San Francisco's Chinatown, Sun Yat-sen and the S.S. Korea, the ship on which he reached California. Support pillars held long black braids representing the queues defiantly cut off by Chinese rebels, including Sun Yat-sen, as a sign of rebellion against Manchu servitude. A second floor balcony allowed visitors to walk around the room and look down onto the main space. Sun built a bridge, symbolic of crossing boundaries and oceans from East to West, that spanned the two long sides of the balcony and provided a vantage point to view the maze and the large pool of water beneath it.

Downstairs, next to the main gallery, was a smaller room that Sun repurposed as a library, with eighteen books on Chinese history, Marxism, etc., that influenced Sun Yat-sen, and his book, *The International Development of China*, which hung from Chinese sabers attached to the wall. A long silk-screened banner displayed quotations from and images of Sun Yat-sen. A game of Go, invented in China more than 5,500 years ago and the oldest board game continuously played until today, sat on an antique table borrowed from Sun's mother. Metaphors, pervasive in Chinese conversation, were manifest throughout the installation, in the spatial structures and objects that also served as strong visual symbols to build and embody meaning.

Invited to participate in the 1991 Biennial at the Newport Harbor Museum, in Newport Beach, California, Sun returned to a subject close to her heart in "UnderGround," paying homage to Chinese agricultural workers, particularly those working in the orange groves of Southern California during the early 1900s. She excavated the history of agricultural labor, which was literally hidden beneath the topsoil of the present.[24] The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles acquired this installation for its permanent collection in 1993 (Fig. 5). Soon after, Sun stopped creating performance/installations (her preferred collaborators moved from Los Angeles). Her last such work, in 1996, was at ArtPace Foundation for Contemporary Art in San Antonio, Texas.[25]

In the two decades since, Sun has created ten permanent installations for public and civic spaces in Los Angeles, Boston, and San Antonio. These carefully researched public art commissions have taken inspiration from the history and context of each site. Unlike her installations, where she is free to express her vision and create ephemeral experimental works, designing site-integrated art can be a more complicated process. The artist is usually given a short time to conceptualize a project, not necessarily in tandem with an art advisory committee, and the art becomes a permanent fixture of the landscape. Public art commissions require intense time commitments, provide opportunities to use new materials, and demand careful supervision in fabrication. Sun's art is a



Fig. 7. May Sun, *City of Dreams/River of History* (1992–95), detail of Aquarium, Union Station Gateway, East Portal, Los Angeles, CA. Photo: May Sun.

catalyst for individual and group identity by combining classic documentary groundwork with culture-specific symbolism. Even though she strives to protect the integrity of her artistic contribution, her primary role is as a problem solver. Ultimately, these projects are a meditation on the way cultural heritage becomes a vehicle for personal and collective mythmaking.

For her first public art commission, the Hollywood Boulevard and Western Avenue Red Line Subway Station (1990–99; Fig. 6) in Hollywood, Sun began as a member of the design team and later worked on the art installations. Besides collaborating on the overall architectural design with Escudero Fribourg Architects (Los Angeles), Sun was responsible for multiple art elements within the station that included copper photo-etched panels, seating, and floor mosaics (Pl. 6). By chance, Sun read an article about artifacts that had been found by the construction workers at the site. These archeological remains became the centerpiece of her project. She incorporated photographs of prehistoric animal bones excavated from the site and taken to the National History Museum, paid homage to the Native Americans who had their council meeting grounds nearby, and included cultural symbols from the multi-ethnic residents who live and work in the area. It took nine years for the station to be built.[26]

At street level, Sun determined the multi-color palette for the tiles covering the spiral blast relief shaft, the introduction of glass blocks in the architectural design (some of which formed hexagrams from the I Ching), and the use of symbols to represent the classic natural elements (earth, air, fire and water) as well as various cultural groups in the community: Armenian (pomegranates and birds), Chinese (I Ching symbols and tigers), and Aztec (snakes), which appeared at every level in the flooring made out of reconstituted granite. A rider descending the escalator to the main entry level sees framed photographs of neighborhood landmarks inset into the tiled entrance walls. On the main level, pairs of photographs etched on copper with gold paint feature fossils recovered from the site and explanatory texts in English and Spanish. Floating above them is the poetic title for the installation: "Time was measured by the changes of the moon. Summer was initiated by the croak of the frogs," a quote Sun chose from a book about Native American lore.

Past the turnstile, on the left are mural-sized photographs, historical transportation images of workers in sepia tones juxtaposed with those of workers at the actual site printed in black and white on porcelain enamel mounted on steel. Large stylized floor mosaics of a cougar, bird, fish and deer reference the natural elements and are repeated on the train level (Pl. 7). Inset into the wall opposite the escalator going down to the trains are two replicas of the fronts of old Pacific Electric Red Cars. Sun designed benches for the train level so that no one could sleep on them and in colors representing the elements: red for fire in a zigzag pattern; green for earth in contiguous rectangles; and yellow for air in repeated opposing half circles.

Imagining that the same people would be taking the subway on a daily basis, Sun consciously incorporated many different elements into the station so commuters could discover something new each time.[27] In this Metro commission, which provided the city with a revitalized eastern gateway for Hollywood, Sun had the opportunity to test numerous methods of activating space, which served her well in subsequent public art commissions.

In the wake of a series of natural and human disasters in the City of Los Angeles, in October 1992, May Sun became the lead artist for the eastside entry to Union Station in the city's historic core. Working with artist Richard Wyatt[28] and architect Paul Diez, she developed *City of Dreams, River of History*, incorporating aspects of the history of the site. The L.A. River, now encased in concrete and artificially diverted, originally flowed near the Gateway where several Shoshone trails crossed. First settled by Spanish pioneers, the *pobladores*, the original Chinatown was also located there. The Chinese were displaced when Union Station was built, although, ironically, many Chinese workers laid tracks for the railroad. Excavations at the new eastern entry uncovered artifacts from the first Chinatown, which were donated to the public art project by the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California.[29]

On a high western wall above the tunnel leading to the main station, an 80-foot-long mural by Wyatt depicts images of people from different periods of the local history, including Native Americans, early Spanish settlers, Asian nationals, and contemporary Angelenos like his grandmother and cousin. Sun designed all the other elements of the eastern lobby: 200 bronze paving elements inlaid in the terrazzo floor referencing native plants and animals, wagon wheels, and an undulating aquarium (Fig. 7) that holds 7,500 gallons of salt water and is populated with indigenous coastal fish, a tile-decorated "river bench," and a facsimile of the reductive state of the river, where a trickle of water is continuously re-circulated. By embedding historic and prehistoric artifacts and images in each element, *City of Dreams, River of History* provides a way for travelers to become aware of the city's past and the accomplishments of its present, and a place to dream about its future.



Fig. 8. May Sun with Richard Wyatt, *Robert F. Kennedy Inspiration Park* (night view) (2005–10), mixed media, Los Angeles. Photo: May Sun.

Another collaboration with Wyatt is *Ripple of Hope: Robert F. Kennedy Inspiration Park* (2005–10; Fig. 8), for the Los Angeles Unified School District. The long narrow park fronts onto Wilshire Boulevard, a busy thoroughfare that starts in downtown and terminates at the Pacific Ocean in Santa Monica. On the location of the famous Ambassador Hotel,[30] where Robert Kennedy was gunned down in June 1968, this uplifting project, an educational center, pays homage to his life, leadership, and ideals. "We wanted to propose a meditative space that encompasses the themes of day and night. We wanted this to be a place of joy and life," Sun said.[31]

The central image and text on the freestanding stainless steel gateway was taken from the RFK's 1966 Day of Affirmation address in South Africa, in which he said: "Each time a person stands up for an idea … or strikes out against injustice, it sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and … those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

Sun and Wyatt researched RFK's life and searched for an iconic photograph. Ethel Kennedy ultimately supplied a favorite portrait of her husband for the back wall, which was photo-etched on black granite. Inspirational quotes, some related to education, are incised into Jerusalem Gold stone slabs placed symmetrically on either side of his portrait: some are from RFK and others from civil rights leaders he inspired and that inspired him. The experience of the park is a call to action.

Sun designed the random nature of the seating. The pavement, made of blue lithocrete manufactured from recycled glass, is embedded with LED lights in the pattern of the star chart on the night RFK was born and is dotted with mature trees. The star pattern references lines from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* that RFK spoke at the memorial



Fig. 9. May Sun, *Symphony of Bird Cries: Prelude to a Good Bye* (2009), acrylic on unstretched canvas, 58" x 56". Photo: May Sun.



Fig. 10. May Sun, *Icons of My Choosing: Current Journey* (2014), acrylic on unstretched canvas, 105" X 59". Photo: May Sun.

service for his brother, President John F. Kennedy: "When he shall die/ Take him and cut him out in little stars/And he will make the face of heaven so fine/That all the world will be in love with night/And pay no worship to the garish sun." The park received a Certificate of Commendation from the City of Los Angeles, and an Honor Award from the Los Angeles Westside Urban Forum's 2012 Design Awards.

Sun continues to draw and paint in her studio and to engage in photography. Some of the images in Sun's private art have a direct connection to the themes in her public art work, while others remain autonomous and spring from intuition. "Balancing the private and the public," she acknowledges, "makes for an integrated whole." And by linking personal and historical issues, she seeks to establish a conversation "between myth and history… the self and social transformation as examined through geography, history, economics, and gender."[32]

Working across all media, Sun lets the creative idea or concept guide her choice of technique and presentation. *Symphony of Bird Cries: Prelude to a Good Bye* (2009; Fig. 9), a painting on unstretched canvas, for example, was inspired by *A Handbook of Bird Drawings* that had belonged to her father and she found among her mother's papers after her death. Working spontaneously, she held the book with her left hand and randomly painted the noisy birds outside her apartment in Park La Brea, as if they were crying or singing in memory of her mother. In other drawings and paintings executed between 2009 and 2012, Sun captures the essence of her American Bull Dog named Palomino. Each subsequent depiction becomes conceptually more summary and features the dog's unusual heart-shaped markings as a metaphor of the artist's love for her pet. *Icons of My Choosing: Current Journey* (2014) (Fig. 10) is her largest painting. The gessoed, unstretched canvas provides a black field as a backdrop for identifiable yet abstract pictograms, referring to her interest in the soapstone amulets of the Tongva (the Native American tribe from the Los Angeles area the Spanish called the Gabrielinos),[33] and also to her recent work team-teaching Otis students in designing a freedom memorial for the people of Palau, and also Chinese history. The combined allusions to nature, from the forest to the sea, reflect her deep concern for the environment. May Sun's personal art functions as an allegory for the way memory marks a passage from the specific to the general as she moves from the concrete events in her life to timeless poetry. •

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Notes

1. In 1957, five years after the Communists took over, Sun's parents left Shanghai for Hong Kong. According to Sun, they could not tolerate living under Communist rule. Her mother left with the four children, and her father followed six months later. Margo Machida, in *Asia/America: Identities in Contemporary Asian American Art* (New York: The New Press, 1993), 86, talks about certain family members being "instrumental in propelling China out of its introspect and isolation." In the late 19th century, for example, a great uncle was among the first Chinese students to acquire a Western education in the U.S.
2. See Marie Cieri, "May Sun: Fugitive Landing," *19 Projects* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991), 182: For holidays Sun would stay in San Francisco, with her brother Leon, whom she describes as "a typical 'Child of the 60s," with "an affinity for the working class and 'peasants' in China (the people who the young idealist Mao vowed to help)." During that time Sun became interested in the birth of Communism in China. Email to the author, July 22, 2016.
3. In 1973, when Sun entered UCLA, her parents moved from Hong Kong to Los Angeles. Her mother's family was from Shanghai and very westernized. They were upper class, educated, and politically active. Sun's father, who died in 1976, was from Mandarin-speaking Northern China. He received an M.A. in Economics from the University of Michigan and held a series of managerial positions in international business. Throughout his life he did traditional Chinese painting and was a collector of Chinese art—bronzes, porcelain, and paintings.
4. "Dialogue: May Sun and Daniel Martinez," *Visions* (Winter 1990) 18–22.
5. Keiko Ohnuma, "Sun's Art Revolves Around Sun Yat-Sen's Revolution," *Asian Week* (San Francisco) (May 17, 1991), 18.
6. Cieri, *19 Projects*, 183.
7. Suzanne Muchnic, "Art Review: History of Chinatown in a Multimedia Environment," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 25, 1988.
8. E-mail from artist, July 3, 2016.
9. Gong Pu Sheng (1913–2007) was a student activist in China in the 1930s, where she joined the Communist party and opposed the Japanese aggression. She later completed a doctorate at Columbia University in international relations. She was the first Chinese Ambassador to Ireland. Sun was fascinated to learn that she had been good friends with Paul Robeson and kept in touch with his son, who lived in Switzerland.
10. Sun's original script was later amplified with the help of actor Jack Slater; it was staged and directed by Guy Giarrizzo, with music by Tom Recchion.
11. Gong Peng (1914–70) worked for Premier Zhou En Lai and was his main English translator. She was married to Chiao Kuan Hua (Qiao Guanhua), the Minister of Foreign Affairs under Mao who played an important role in talks with Henry Kissinger on the opening of China and the drafting of the Shanghai Communiqué. Gong Peng was Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs in China from 1964 to her death.
12. See Edward Rothstein, "Great Job on the Railroad. Now Go Back to China," *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 2014. In the 1840s and 1850s natural calamities, such as the 1849 famine in Guangdong Province and

floods in many inland areas, created dire poverty in China. As a consequence, tens of thousands of Chinese came to California to mine for gold in the 1850s. One in four miners during the 1860s was Chinese. Concurrently, they were also 80 percent of the labor force for the western segment of the transcontinental railroad. Their success was accompanied by hatred and anti-Chinese riots, resulting in Congress passing the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 that limited Chinese immigration of laborers and was renewed until 1943. Post 1965, immigration laws fundamentally changed and were less discriminatory against people from the Asia/Pacific region.

13. Sun revisited this theme for her second commission, a public art piece installed in 1992, *Listening for the Trains to Come*, an 8' x 18' Corten steel fence commissioned by Adobe Investments Ltd. for Chinatown Professional and Medical Center (now Pacific Alliance Medical Center) in association with the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) of Los Angeles.
14. See Linda Frye Burnham, "Alternative Histories: Artists Challenge the Official Story," *High Performance* (Winter 1992): 55. According to May Sun, "When I researched the Chinatown Massacre, for instance, there were five different versions of how it happened, and everything written about it in those days was racist."
15. Jan Breslauer, "May Sun: L.A./China/Left/Right," *Mapping Histories: Third Newport Biennial* (Newport Beach, CA: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1991), 68.
16. Sun's maternal grandfather, Gong Zhenzhou was a general in Sun Yat-sen's army and one of the patriots who went to Japan to plan the revolution. Sun Yat-sen appointed him commander of the Humen military fortification after establishing the Guangzhou Military Government in 1917. See http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/people/officials/7/3341-1.htm
17. Judith Hamera, "L.A./River/China/Town: May Sun, Peter Brosius and Tom Recchion Collaborate to Shape a Piece of History, *High Performance* (Summer 1989): 23.
18. Burnham, "Alternative Histories: Artists Challenge the Official Story," 54.
19. Email from July 11, 2016: "The first time I incorporated the I Ching symbol in my art was in the installation in 1990...*Who's Right? What's Left?*... Then in 1991, at Capp Street Project's *Fugitive Landing*, I covered the upstairs windows that function like skylights, with translucent red fabric silkscreened with black I Ching symbols, so that a red filtered light entered the space. In 1992, in my solo show at the Robert Berman Gallery, the L-shaped photo light-boxes had anodized steel bars placed in sand in the configuration of I Ching symbols. They were chosen to complement the images in the photos."
20. James Scarborough, "May Sun and her Persistence of Memory," *Visions* (Summer 1993): 49–50.
21. http://articles.latimes.com/1990-09-05/entertainment/ca-441_1_chinese-chess; Ray Loynd, "Festival '90: 'Chess Piece" Fills in Some Lost History," *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 5, 1990. This piece was done in collaboration with Guy Giarrizzo (theater direction), Margaret Ann Dunn (lighting design), and Nathan Birnbaum (musical score).
22. Ibid. Sun also addressed the subject of early Chinese women in Los Angeles in one of the four texts on *Listening for the Trains to Come*.
23. This piece was recreated later that year at the MIT List Visual Arts Center in Cambridge, MA, where Sun incorporated new information about Sun Yat-sen's trips to Boston in 1909 and 1911, and in 1994, a smaller version was included in the seminal exhibit *Asia America*, curated by Margo Machida at the Asia Society Galleries in New York, travelling to several venues across the country.
24. Diana Burgess Fuller and Daniela Salvioni, *Art/Women/California: 1950–2000*, (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 2002), 227.
25. *Trajectory: How Am I Driving?*, 1996 in which 67 questions confront the quotidian absurd.
26. Artist's 2014 Career Narrative.
27. David Hay, "In Los Angeles, Set-Dressing the Subway," *New York Times*, Dec. 20, 1998.
28. May Sun and Richard Wyatt met as students at UCLA, in a life drawing class. They also collaborated on an 1994 exhibition curator Karen Moss organized entitled *Collaborations: Inside the Armory/Out on the Street*, at the Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena.
29. Artist's 2015 Career Narrative: "In 1997, I received a public art commission from the Massachusetts Highway Department in Boston to create a permanent environmental work in front of the Gateway to Chinatown. The Chinatown community was asked about their needs, and "open space" was the answer given. I designed a new public plaza that had a Chinese Chess board as its central focus... In this version of the popular game, played by both adults and children on the sidewalks and parks in Chinatown, a river layered with images of Boston Harbor and a map of the site, divides the opposing sides. This project was part of the Big Dig, and ultimately the Rose Kennedy Greenway; it took ten years to complete."
30. The only building left from the Hotel, the Coconut Grove, is now the school library and is named for Paul Schrade, RFK's campaign manager, who was also shot and later headed the RFK Committee and fought for a school that serves low income students from the neighborhood.
31. Dee Guisee, "Palisades Kennedy Family Awaits Opening of RFK Inspiration Park," *Palisadian Post*, Nov. 11, 2010.
32. Artist statement, 1988.
33. Sun first explored the Tongva/Gabrielino Indians in a public commission from the City of Culver City in 1995 as part of "Heritage Park" in front of City Hall. Entitled *La Ballona*, it pays homage to the Native Americans who lived along Ballona Creek.

FRONTIERS
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Edited by Guisela Latorre and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu

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Zilia Sánchez, María Magdalena Campos-Pons, and Glenda León

Three Cuban Artists, Three Generations, Three Perspectives

By Joyce Beckenstein

"*Es complicado*." It's complicated, say most Cubans when asked about the paradoxes and contradictions that have become the warp and weft of their lives. Gender equality, for example, mandated by constitutional law in 1959, the year of their revolution, is not yet a social or political reality. And while Cuban physicians managing the healthcare of an entire country moonlight as taxi drivers to augment their meager $45 a month earnings, artists selling their works to an international stream of collectors and museums live and work comfortably in well-appointed studios. Women artists sit smack center within these incongruities; they struggle along with their sister compatriots for full gender equality at the same time that many of them achieve enviable financial success.



Fig. 1. Glenda León, *Sueño De Verano (el horizonte es una illusión)* (Summer Dream [horizon is an illusion]) (2012), XI Bienal de La Habana collateral exhibition, interactive installation. Photo: Courtesy Glenda León.

Zilia Sánchez (b. 1926), María Magdalena Campos-Pons (b. 1959) and Glenda León (b. 1976) each came of age during a different historical moment: Cuba as a Pre-World War II Caribbean playground; Cuba as a revolutionary Communist country, isolated economically and socially from much of the world, and Cuba today, an island nation redefining itself in the second decade of the twenty-first century. A collective voice, strong and assertive in its Cuban identity, resonates through the din of this rough history, remarkably so. Its feminist refrains find visual expression in the works of these three women artists who carry Cuban song within themselves, whether they have lived all their lives in Cuba or as expatriates.

All three women matured in Cuba, a country with a three-hundred-year-strong arts tradition that first emulated the European academic model and then took its cues from European modernism. While most today recall Havana of the 1940s and 1950s as "a mistress of pleasure, the lush and opulent goddess of delights,"[1] a sex and gambling playground drawing a lively mash of celebrities, writers, and mobsters—Frank Sinatra, Ernest Hemingway, and Meyer Lansky among them—so did this island nation possess a highly educated middle class seeking relief for the country's underclass and an end to corruption. Artists were very much a part of this effort:

> [T]he *vanguardia* painters, as the first generation is also known, were born about the time that Cuba became a republic in 1902 and were part of an intellectual elite that sought reform, in some cases revolutionary change, in all aspects of Cuban life: political, economic, educational and cultural. Inspired by the ideals of European modernism (scientific and industrial development, representative democracy, universal literacy, artistic license, etc.), they aimed to change their post-colonial society.[2]

Though Zilia Sánchez graduated from the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes in 1947, her role models consisted of the

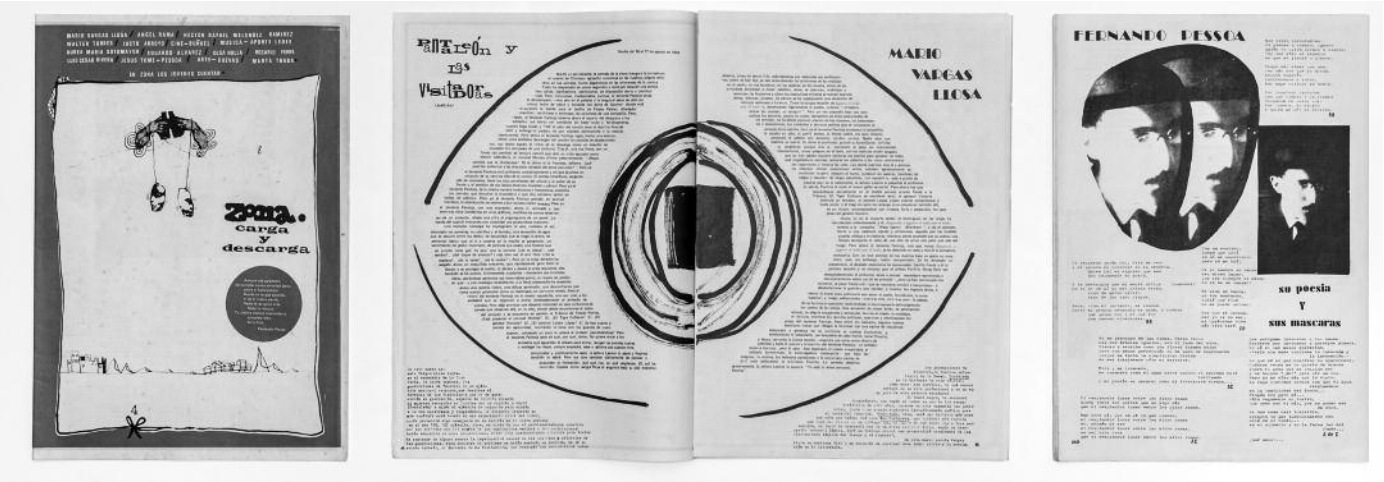


Fig. 2. Zilia Sánchez, *Zona. Carga y Descarga* (Zone of Charging and Discharging), design and photomontage, issue 4, (March–April 1973).

generation of modernist painters who years earlier rejected the then traditional curriculum they had acquired there. Among those who left for France to embrace the bohemian art world were Victor Manuel, who adapted a Post-Impressionist style of painting to his Cuban inspired portraits and landscapes, and two women artists—Amelia Peláez (1896–1968) and Loló Soldevilla (1901–71). Peláez achieved a distinctly Cuban flavor with her cubist-inspired interiors; Soldevilla was known for her groundbreaking geometric abstractions.

By the mid-1940s Cuba "saw the emergence of professional art critics, an increase in private and state sponsored local and international exhibitions, and an uptick in art collecting both at home and abroad. Their strongest support continued to come from the Cuban intelligentsia and professional middle class, mostly lawyers and doctors."[3] Women supporters of the arts served a vital role. In 1942, for example, The Lyceum, a women's cultural organization, exhibited for the first time in Cuba works by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Raoul Dufy. "The 1940s also witnessed the opening of the first professional private art gallery, Galería del Prado (1942–44), specializing in Cuban modern art. Its owner, María Luisa Gómez Mena, and its director, [Jóse] Gómez Sicre, were instrumental in the organization of the renowned [1944] *Modern Cuban Painters* exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in New York."[4]

Sánchez's innovative, often rebellious spirit germinated within this cultural milieu. An early painting, *Azul azul/Blue blue* (1956; Pl. 8), finds her pursuing modernism with a distinctively personal style. This painting's soft, sensuously rounded forms interact with rectangular planes receding and advancing in space, prefiguring her later shaped canvases. In 1957, two years prior to the revolution, Sánchez received a grant to study in Spain. Her parents urged her not to return to Cuba, so she went to New York, where she studied at Pratt Institute, rubbed shoulders with Minimalists, and witnessed the most strident years of the feminist revolution. During 1970-71 she moved permanently to Puerto Rico.

Unlike Sánchez, who was raised in a white, middle-class environment, Campos-Pons, of African, Cuban, and Chinese heritage, is the great-granddaughter of an African slave. Born in Matanzas in 1959, her parents owned a modest farm in La Vega, the former sugar plantation where her great grandfather labored. When Fidel Castro banned private property ownership, the family lost their home to temporary renters who claimed their right to live there. The Campos-Pons family subsequently moved into apartments that were converted slave barracks—where their ancestor once slept after toiling in the hot tropical sun. This left an indelible mark on the young Magda, whose mature works such as *The Seven Powers Come by the Sea* (1992)—a series that includes seven boat-shaped panels inscribed with human figures diagramming the disposition of slave cargo—recalls family tragedy as world history. It is but one example of a rich and dense complex of multimedia work that layers personal and universal themes of cultural, racial, and gender identity, with allusions to this artist's double exile—from both her African and Cuban roots.

Though she lost her family home, Campos-Pons reaped the benefits of Castro's commitment to a free, first-class education. At the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes her interdisciplinary studies included music, art, art theory and criticism, dance, and theatre. She then advanced to the prestigious Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA), where she subsequently taught.

Campos-Pons spent the spring semester in 1988 as an invitee to the Massachusetts College of Art. By the time she returned to Cuba with her American husband, the musician Neil Leonard, Cuba was on the brink of what was euphemistically called the "special period," the years following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and its ultimate exodus from Cuba. Endemic economic hardship made food, fuel, and consumer goods scarce. Pervasive political unrest followed. Life became dangerous. "If you said anything against leaders you might disappear the next day,"[5] recalls Campos-Pons, who, like Sánchez, heeded family advice and left Cuba, as did many of her generation. She is today a U.S. citizen, living and working in Boston.

Glenda León, born in 1976 in Cuba, lived through the "special period." Also benefitting from an education that was thorough, free, and interdisciplinary, she studied dance

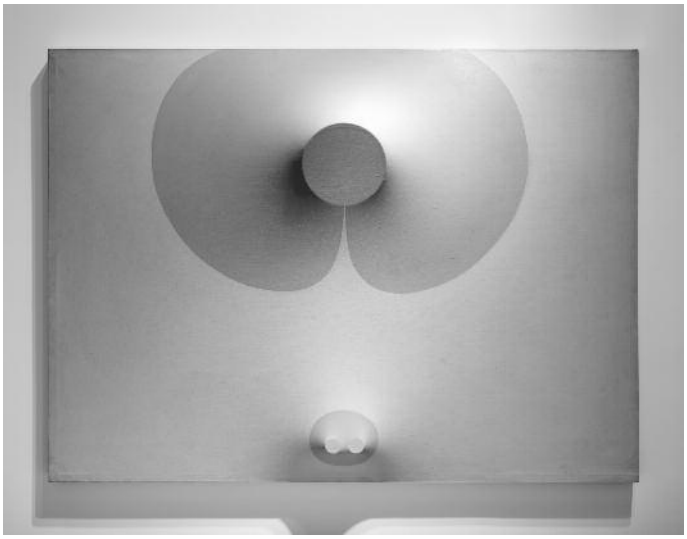


Fig. 3. Zilia Sánchez, *Topología erótica (de la serie las Amazonas)* (Erotic Topology [from the Amazon series]) (1968), acrylic on stretched canvas, 41" x 56" x12". © Zilia Sánchez. Photo: Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York.

(considered becoming a choreographer), then focused on the visual arts, and ultimately received a graduate degree from the ISA. The Havana Biennales provided León with exposure to international contemporary art. Begun in 1984, at first they were: "devoted to artists who found no welcome in heavily subsidized European extravaganzas like the Venice Biennale and Documenta… [They] provided a platform not only to artists from Cuba but also from Asia, Africa, and South America. Working with a minute budget, it was conceived as a kind of anti-spectacle, with a vision of art as a loose and elusive social experiment, not a brand to sell."[6]

Since 2012, León has participated in both the Havana and Venice biennials. Her *Sueño de Verano* (2012; Fig. 1) for the 2012 Havana exhibition consisted of Miami and Havana street maps placed on opposite sides of a swimming pool, a metaphor for the short span of sea separating what has been until now a disparate political divide. In a video of the installation, people walk or swim casually across this space, a suggestion that offers hope for the resolution of long-held animosities, a thaw that has already begun in the art world. The 2015 exhibition, for example, featured "Wild Noise," the first museum exchange between Cuba and the United States in fifty years. Organized by Holly Block, executive director of the Bronx Museum of the Arts, at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, it included works by Vito Acconci, Chakaia Booker, and David Hammons.

The art of Sánchez, Campos-Pons, and León represents chapters in a narrative that follows the role of Cuban women artists in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Though they came of age during different eras, their shared sensibilities, subjects, and insights represent a collective Cuban and feminist consciousness (whether overtly expressed or obliquely implied) that is significant for the ways in which each artist found her personal voice through her extraordinary innovations with art's formal language.

After moving to Puerto Rico, Sánchez worked for the avant-garde publication *Zona de Carga y Discarga*" (Zone of Charging and Discharging) (Fig. 2), a journal as provocative in its design as it was in its support of independence for Puerto Rico, feminism, and gay rights. Sánchez treated the layout of the

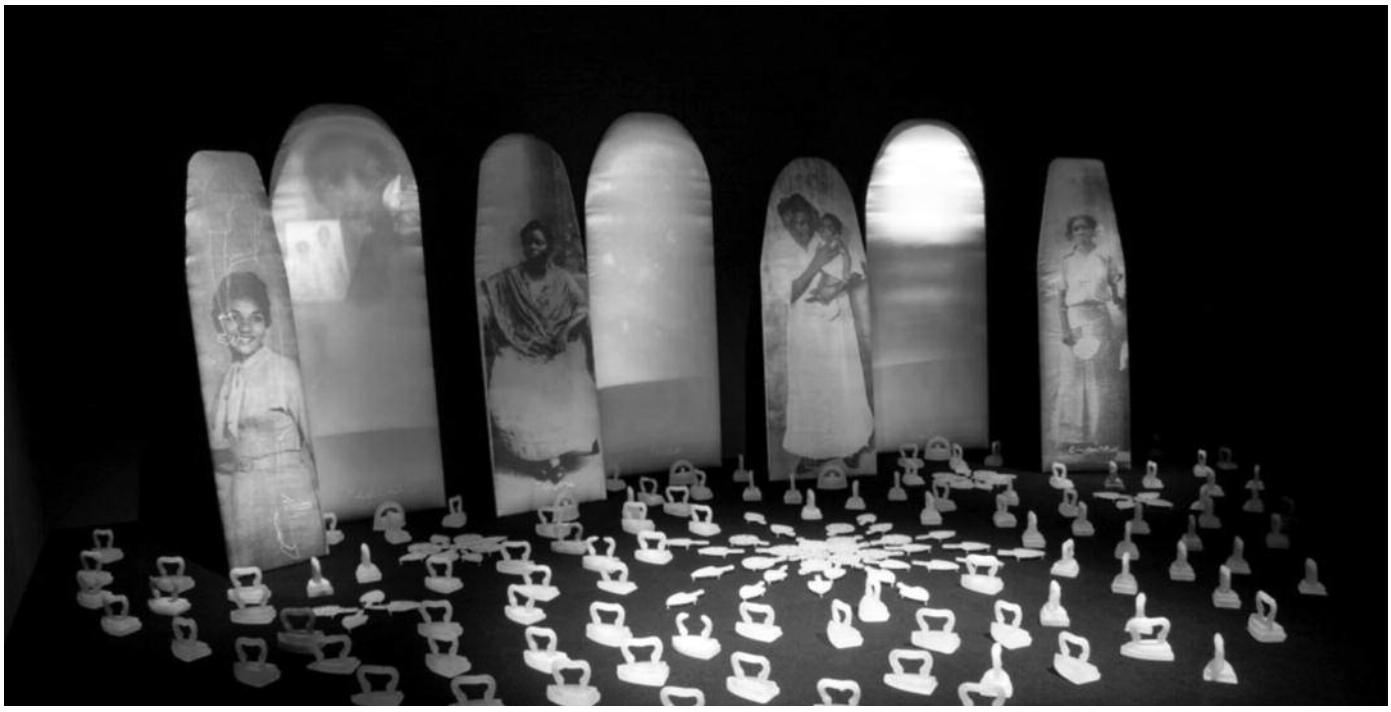


Fig. 4. María Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Spoken Softly with Mama (*1998), mixed media installation, embroidered silk and organza over ironing boards with photographic transfers, embroidered cotton sheets, pâte de verre irons and trivets, Wooden benches, six projected video tracks, stero sound (Neil Leonard), 28' 3" x 38' 5". National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

journal as she would a work of art, the text being but one visual element on a page. Bands of color dividing the page became an arrangement of visual planes operating as they do in painting. Poems and photographs were sometimes positioned sideways, and overlays of color produced the pentimento effects of pre-existing images seeping through the surface. Benigno Trigo refers to Sánchez's "notion of the page as a tactile, sensuous space to be integrated with color and text. The reader of Zona needs to fold and turn the unwieldy pages around in an effort to read the journal"[7]

Sánchez's unorthodox graphic treatments spilled into the frameless shaped dimensional works that she made by stretching canvas over molded wooden forms. She arrived at her unique shaped-canvas process by chance: While sitting on her roof deck she one day noticed a sheet on a clothesline whipped by the wind, wrapping itself around a nearby pipe. The sight inspired her odd shaped canvases, such as *Topología Erótica (de la serie las Amazonas*) (1968; Fig. 3). It consists of a single breast-like form with a separation—suggesting a division into a pair of breasts with a projecting button-like "nipple." Suspended above a small oval with double "buttons," it hovers over the smaller form like a protective biomorphic mother. Such meanings and associations are subject to highly personal interpretations, prompting Holland Cotter to write: "Altogether there is nothing in New York galleries like this work, which has a boldness and strangeness entirely its own. Why we have had to wait so long to have a survey is a mystery."[8]

Campos-Pons came of age when there were few if any constraints on an artist's materials or techniques. She was thoroughly familiar with a broad range of media, including photography, drawing, sculpture, video, painting, installation, and conceptual art. Her uniqueness is in her ability to use most all of these to traverse mythic through present time—often in a single work. She often incorporates her own body within these media, and references her family history as metaphor for humanity. *Spoken Softly With Mama* (1998; Fig. 4), for example, is a complex installation that includes footage of a video performance, ironing boards covered with embroidered silk and organza with photographic transfers, embroidered cotton sheets, pâte de verre irons and trivets, and six projected video tracks. Collectively, this work traces the family history of black women who toiled first in the service of their slave owners, then in the service of men.

If it is at all possible to distill the agony of cultural inhumanity, Campos-Pons has done so with *Alchemy of the Soul, Elixir for the Spirits* (2015; Fig. 5). It honors the grueling lives of all those slaves who labored in sugar cane fields and distilleries to produce sweet gulps of rum. The installation consists of a series of freestanding sculptures made of blown colored glass forms in the shapes of pipes, beams, and siphons that are used for processing the sugar. Campos-Pons describes the impulse for this work that so compellingly symbolizes the fragility of broken lives as having to do with "my personal associations…as part of a larger narrative…. So there is something almost ancestral, in the bones, for me about the implications associated with sugar production. As the quote



Fig. 5. María Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Alchemy of the Soul, Elixir for the Spirits* (2015), blown glass, cast glass, steel, cast resin, silicone, acrylic, polyvinyl chloride tubing, water, and rum essence, dimensions variable, commissioned by the Peabody Essex Museum. Photo: Peter Vanderwarker.

states, every 'lump of sugar' is produced by the sweat of some individual. Producing sugar is a very, very painful process."[9]

Multimedia installations, performance and video art, and a broad spectrum of photography were all part of a core curriculum by the time Glenda León entered art school. But materials were expensive and scarce in Cuba; resourcefulness was mandatory. León learned to make art from most *anything*—even well masticated chewing gum. *Chewed Line from Chewed Ideas series*, a photograph of a wad of gum stretched wide and taut suggests a multicolored painted line. *Las Formas del Instante II/Shapes of the Instant II* (2001; Fig. 6**)** consists of a wall covered with different colored used bars of soap, each with line drawings made from strands of the artist's hair.

Perhaps León's greatest gift is her ability to confound our psychic and sensory expectations. *Música Concreta* (Fig. 7), for example, featured at the 2015 Havana Biennal, consists of an old piano, its keys removed from the keyboard and reassembled onto the sides of a box set upon the empty keyboard space. The keys cannot be played; the piano makes



Fig. 6. Glenda León, *Las Formas del Instante II* (Shapes of the Instant II) (2001), digital C-print photograph, 40" x 78". Photo: Glenda León.



Fig. 7. Glenda León, *Música Concreta* (Concrete Music) (2015), piano, wood, variable dimensions, installation XII Havana Bienal. Photo: Glenda León.

no music. *Música Concreta* hints at suppression, the lock-down of one's thoughts that leaves potentially subversive thoughts to psychically play in silence.

Is this a political work? León explains: "I'm interested in the gaps between visible and invisible, between sound and silence, similar and different, ephemeral and eternal. My art is not an outlet for frustrations or problems but the result of elevating things to a higher plane."[10] In brief, there is in León's work ambiguity on the one hand and a universalizing principle on the other—a dichotomy that keeps the viewer guessing. Much Cuban art shares this mercurial slide from the specific to the general, and it is in this grey area, a-swirl with daily grief, timeless struggle *and* joy that it finds its distinctive identity, alive with pathos, humor, excitement … and almost boundless energy.

What makes this nebulous space—or loophole for want of a better word—so odd is that its guidelines are found in the Cuban Constitution, which allows: "freedom of artistic creation as long as its content is not contrary to the Revolution…[and that] the forms of expression of art are free."[11]

Castro, who prioritized literacy and culture, clearly did not realize when he qualified art's content, but not its form just how powerful form without didactic narration can be. Artists such as Campos-Pons and León, ironically, lived and studied in environments that were simultaneously politically repressive and artistically liberal. Over time, an entire generation of artists living spare economic but intellectually rich lives came to accept limitations as part of life's struggle. They took them in stride and found in the stuff of art ways to embrace the human condition. It is thus almost second nature for artists raised within this culture—even when they work in non-restrictive environments, as does Campos-Pons—to seize the potential of form and create art that largely ignores imposed borders of any kind.

This phenomenon likewise characterizes feminism as it unfolds in the art of Sánchez, Campos-Pons, and León. While never shy with their female voices, their feminist strains assume a more universal tone than those of their feminist sisters in the United States, where "like many insurgent movements, the women's movement emerged with an intransient hostility to mass culture, denouncing, satirizing and criticizing the popular paraphernalia of the feminine—beauty pageants, fashion, Hollywood cinema and advertising."[12]

Feminist sensibilities more than social-political discourses inform the works of Sánchez, Campos-Pons and León. There is no explanation, however, for how and why these three artists, largely uninformed about each other's lives and works, have so uniformly managed to channel their contemporary female psyches through primal archaic forms.

Enter woman and the moon—the Venus of Laussel, the 6500 B.C. relief carving of a wide-hipped, pendulous breasted female figure holding a crescent moon in her hand. The moon with its monthly cycles marking a woman's menstrual cycle is a primal form linking womankind to her archaic, ritualistic beginnings, and a time when mystical connections to earth and sky were inseparable from everyday experience. This lunar form with its magnetic powers entering the feminine consciousness throughout time is uncannily, almost mystically omnipresent in works of these three artists.

Sánchez's *Luna con Tatuaje* (Moon with Tattoo) (1968–96; Pl. 9) attests to the artist's lifelong lunar dialog. It consists of joined semi-circle forms with projecting rounded mounds. These erotically throbbing projectiles are covered with "tattoos"—calligraphic scribbling that abstractly alludes to Sánchez's personal past. This delicate "writing" on a Minimalist form, combined with a complicated architectural substructure hidden beneath the canvas, taunts the proverbial purity of Minimalism's cool, aloof, and impersonal psyche. In *Lunar V* (1973; Fig. 8), a shaped grey canvas bisected down the middle is conjoined by two gentle overlapping mounds that appear to hug one another. Here the chiaroscuro play of shadow on the white and soft grey surfaces suggests a swelling lunar form, undulating between Minimalist austerity and feminist sensuality.

Asked about the impact of 1960s feminism as she experienced it while living in New York, Sánchez replied, "I

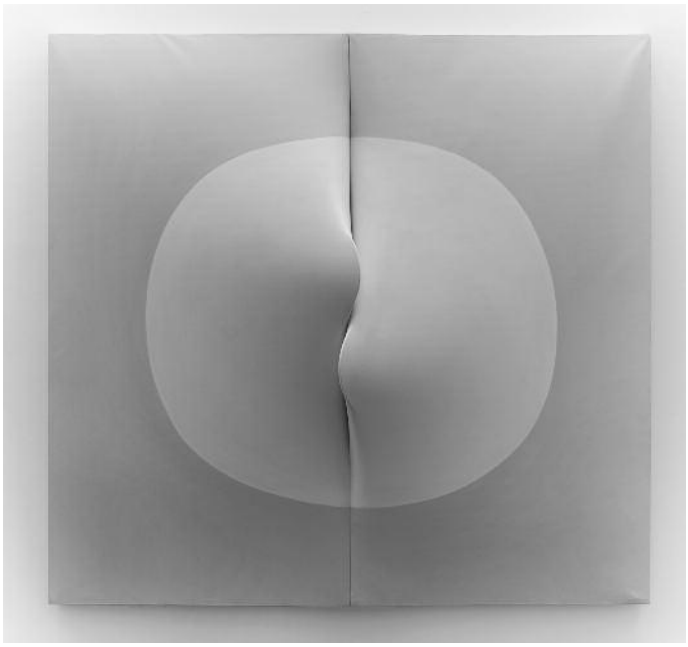


Fig. 8. Zilia Sánchez, *Lunar V* (Moon 5) (1973), acrylic on stretched canvas, 74 3/4" x 79 1/2" x 10". © Zilia Sánchez. Photo: Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York.

was exposed to the movement but was not following it closely."[13] Her relative distance from the politics of the moment may have much to do with the differences separating the role of Cuban women from their American counterparts. Ingrid Elliott explains: "Beginning in the 1920s, middle- and upper-class white women argued that their traditional removal from public life and their assumed moral virtue as mothers positioned them to make unique, and better, contributions in the quest to enact badly needed reform in the public, and corrupt, realm of government."[14]

As for her experience regarding Minimalism, Sánchez says, "I'm not sure if I was influenced, but I did like the work of Eva Hesse and Lucio Fontana…. I don't think my work falls within the style of any artist."[15] She refers to herself as a " Minimalist Mulata"—one who adopts her cultural and gender history to the spare and pared down geometries that dominated the six-ties.[16] But in doing so, she underscores that her own work always included imagery related to the female body. As Elliott points out, "It's a good guess that the contact with Minimalism and feminism in the sixties influenced her. The work embraces both. It's also worth noting that Zilia Sánchez has said she main-tains a close relationship with the eroticism of Cuban culture."[17]

There are many incarnations of the lunar landscape in Sánchez's work, from *Amazonas*/*Amazons* (1993; Fig. 9), a series of white breast shapes on panels, lined up like warriors' shields, a reference to female empowerment, to the dimpled knobby façade she designed for an apartment house in 1971. Shadows in the form of breast and moon shades creep within the crevices of this facade as light playfully teases the architectural surface.

Campos-Pons's moon rises in La Vega, the hamlet where she grew up that shares its name, Vega, with "the brightest star



Fig. 9. Zilia Sánchez, *Amazonas* (Amazons) (1993), acrylic on stretched canvas, 52 1/2" x 42 1/8". © Zilia Sánchez. Photo: Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York.



Fig. 10. Glenda León, *Recortando la Luna, limando las estrellas, Series I, N.2,* (Cutting Out the Moon, filing stars) (2009), finger nail and nail filings on black photographic paper, 6" x 7". Photo: Courtesy Glenda León.

in the small constellation of Lyra, the harp, visible in the northern hemisphere from spring through autumn."[18] Unlike Sánchez, whose works rarely reference her personal world directly, each work by Campos-Pons represents another marker on her lifelong journey to locate her feminine identity within the cosmic scheme of things. *Interiority (or Hill-Sided Moon*) (2003; Pl. 10), an installation inspired by César Vallejo's moon-poem, *Deshojacion Sagrada* (Divine Falling of Leaves),



Fig. 11. Glenda León, *Música de las Esferas* (Music of the Spheres) (2013), sound installation; music box, motor, glass, lambda print, plexiglass, lightbox, wood, sound amplifying system, Cuban Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennial. Photo: Courtesy Glenda León.

sits within a landscape ablaze with Vallejo's poetry incised on the shell of an illuminated orb set against a black sky. The moon in the poem reminded Campos-Pons of a body in exile and adrift, as she has often felt, in an elusive space. Music composed by Neil Leonard mimics the sound of the lyre—symbolic of home—as it emanates from the glowing orb, then evaporates into the night.

Elevata (2002; Pl. 11) is one of a series of gridded works, a format that underscores themes of fragmentation and displacement. This arrangement comprises sixteen photographs of painted, drawn, and collaged panels that "associate parts of the universe with planetary constellations, globular clusters, swirling nebulas and unpredictable spatial relationships."[19] Here a moon-like orb sinks to or rises from watery depths, embraced by hair streaming from the figure of Compos-Pons, her head and shoulders poised upside-down in an upper panel. This dislocation of sky and sea, with braids seeking to connect to lost worlds, is but another expression of this artist's search for her roots.

Campos-Pons's odyssey traversing sea and sky often summons the Santería deities worshipped by her Yoruba

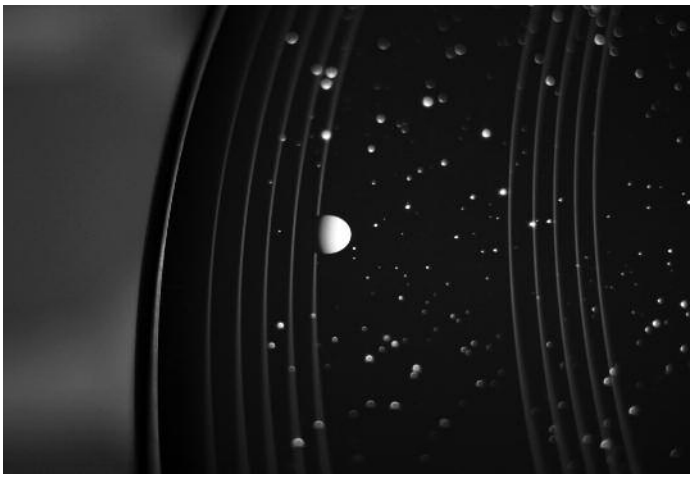


Fig. 12. Glenda León, *Música de las Esferas* (Music of the Spheres) (detail) (2013), sound installation; music box, motor, glass, lambda print, plexiglass, lightbox, wood, sound amplifying system, Cuban Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennial. Photo: Courtesy Glenda León.

family. These deities engage her heterogeneous world, as in *When I Am Not Here/Estoy Allá* (1994), portraying the artist nude, her body painted blue with white streaks representing the sea and the fertility goddess Yemaya. She stands with two plastic baby bottles around her neck dripping milk into a carved canoe. What a journey! cries this image: from a place of faith in ritual and a mother's milk to a trip in a fragile vessel to be nurtured by a culture of plastic.

"I was born in the seventies, and though I was aware of the black, gay, and woman's rights movements, they didn't influence my work," says Glenda León. "But at the beginning of my career I was too naive to feel affected by the fact that I am a woman … time taught the nuances of being a woman in a masculine world; it is usually masculine work that triumphs. It's difficult for the feminine voice, many decibels lower, to be heard."[20] Though she experiences the inequalities of a stubbornly male-dominated culture, León was raised with a strong utopian sense of a level playing field, something she has in fact realized in large measure: She is a remarkable woman and artist who today enjoys an impressive international reputation. It allows her the freedom to pursue her art all over the world. So does she enjoy an elite status that most American artists would find enviable: Cuban artists receive strong government support, especially when their works sell well (the government gets a portion of their sales), and are among Cuba's emerging entrepreneurs, now permitted to own their own homes and studios.

These circumstances make the feminist content in León's works less direct and more obliquely referenced than that of her older compatriots. Nevertheless, the feminine principle as a celestial phenomenon provides a link between León and her kindred spirits, Sánchez and Campos-Pons. *Recortando la Luna, limando las estrellas/Cutting-out the Moon, filing stars, Series 1, N. 2* (2009; Fig. 10), a minimalist rendering, consists of a crescent moon made from a sliver of León's fingernail mounted on black photographic paper covered with a "star-studded" universe of

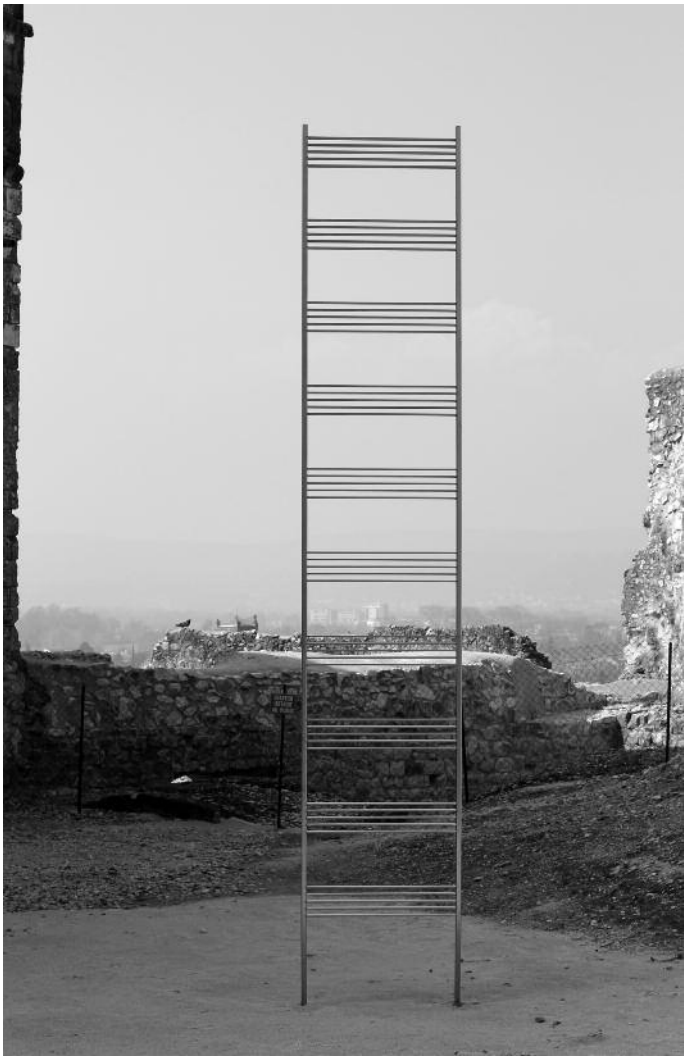


Fig. 13. Glenda León, *Ascensio Silencieuse* (Silent Rise) (2013), stainless steel, 236" x 35" x 2" inches. Photo: Courtesy Glenda León.

fine nail filings. *Música de las Esferas/Music of the Spheres* (2013; Figs. 11, 12) resonates with the mystery and song of Campos-Pons's *Interiority*. León's work, featured at the National Archeological Museum in Venice in 2013 as part of the 55th Venice Biennale, consisted of an image of the solar system projected on a round disc incised with bands replicating those of an empty musical score. Wherever a planet matched the lines of this empty score it was assigned a note. León sent the nine-note "composition" to a Swiss music box maker who created a music box to play a looping 30-second tune. The music box, powered by a motor, was set in a glass sphere dangling from the ceiling and positioned above the solar disc. A silent sculptural entourage of Greek gods, including Apollo, the god of light and music, surrounded the work.

León similarly locates the music of the spheres in countless forms of nature. She has superimposed empty score sheets on fallen leaves, on an array of body "beauty marks," and on droplets of water clinging to a ladder, its rungs arranged like a bare music score set on a beach against open sky, as in *Ascensio Silencieuse/Silent Rise* (2013; Figs. 13 and 14). In each case, she

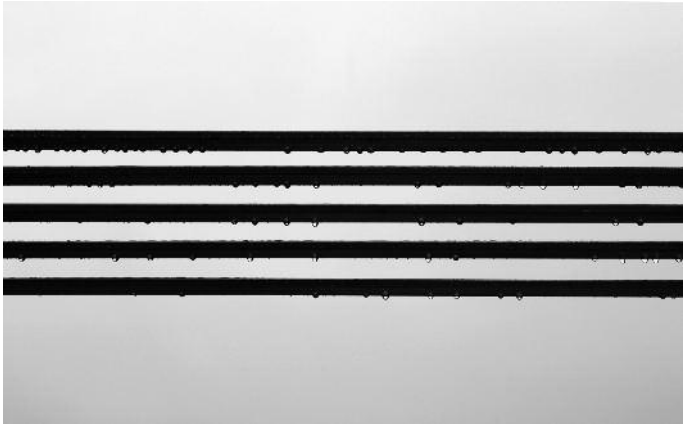


Fig. 14. Glenda León, *Ascensio Silencieuse* (Silent Rise) (detail) (2013), stainless steel, 236" x 35" x 2" inches. Photo: Courtesy Glenda León.

translated the serendipitously planted "notes" into musical compositions.

Sánchez, Campos-Pons, and León do at times more directly engage the idea of female empowerment. We've noted Sánchez's Amazon series in this respect. Campos-Pons, early in her career, erected Castidad/*Chastity Belt* (1984–85), an inverted triangle several feet tall and wide bisected by a horizontal wooden band and bordered by two phallic African ceremonial staffs. "Displayed on the wall in full public view, the large scale painting presented a new way to approach the topic of female sexuality in Cuban society. Because it did so abstractly, without having to resort to clichéd social realist conventions, the work opened up a rich new area of investigation for future projects."[21] That early construction connects thematically with *The Warrior Reservoir* (2010–11; Pl. 12), a three-panel multimedia work consisting of a series of woodcarvings and swords juxtaposed with a painting of a small black female, dressed in green, emerging from a leafy plant. "The woman is a warrior, not (with) martial meaning, but in the sense of someone who fights on behalf of core convictions and values. It's about being rooted and knowing who you are," remarks Campos-Pons.[22]

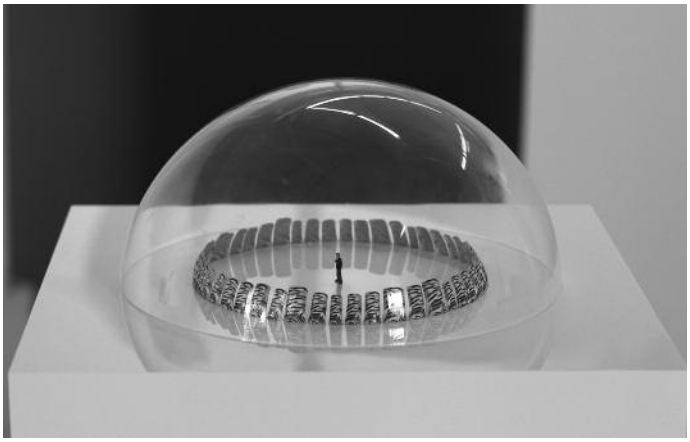


Fig. 15. Glenda León, *Ritual (n.2) Detalle* (Ritual object) (2014), fake nails, figure, acrylic, 12" x 15 1/2" x15 1/2". Photo: Glenda León.

Two works by León humorously critique traditional notions of female power. *Ritual (n.2) Detalle /Ritual Object* (2014; Fig. 15.) features a plexiglass dome placed over a small male figure surrounded by fake fingernails painted with tiger patterns, while in *Ritual II* the male stands trapped within an inverted glass surrounded by fake female eyelashes. León explains the nails and lashes in these respective works as "extensions of feminine beauty, an exaggerated effort to attract the male and trap him; the men in these works, portrayed as vulnerable, have no escape."[23]

Though at times Sánchez, Campos-Pons, and León may have been disillusioned by the upheavals and failures in Fidel Castro's Utopian dream, they have never despaired, at least not in their art. Each one represents a heroine-warrior who holds fast and holds dear to who she is as a woman, as a Cuban, and as an artist. None of them identifies herself as a feminist in a manner consistent with those who defined the seminal moments of the movement in the United States—artists Carolee Schneemann and Lynda Benglis, for example, who sought in feminism's early days to reclaim the female body and to confront its objectification through the male gaze.

Rather, each approaches the woman's movement from the perspective of her own era and cultural experience: Sánchez from the perspective of early twentieth century modernism, Campos-Pons from a search for identity spurred by a family history of exile, and León from a new generation's belief that the gender battlefield has been largely cleared of explosives. Their insights add a new chapter to feminist history, one that informs us about Cuban life and also cautions us against chauvinistic interpretations of art and art movements.

Globalization of the art world has forced a reckoning: Critics, curators and writers now realize that the New York art world did not throughout the latter half of the last century own post-modernism; that movements such as Minimalism and feminism had their own definitive moments throughout the world, especially in Latin-American countries. Minimalist experiments were in fact practiced by women such as Gego (Gertrude Goldschmidt) (1912–94) in Venezuela and Lygia Clark (1920–88) in Brazil, before Minimalism as a movement got its name! Zilia Sánchez, María Magdalena Campos-Pons, and Glenda León represent the important contribution of Cuban artists to contemporary art. Their achievements—well documented outside the United States, and now reaching our shores, thanks to a political thaw—have much to teach Americans about Cuba, about women, and about the power of art to sustain cultural identity through the vagaries and crises of political change. •

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14. Telephone interview with Ingrid Elliott, consulting curator for "Dialogos constructivas en la vanguardia cubana: Amelia Peláez, Loló Soldevilla & Zilia Sánchez," April 28–June 25, 2016, Galerie Lelong, New York, July 8, 2016.
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18. Esther Allen, "Constellations in Sugar," in ed. Basseches, *Alchemy of the Soul,* 84.
19. Lisa D. Frieman, "Everything is Separated by Water," in *María Magdalena Campos-Pons; Everything is Separated by Water* (New Haven and London: Indianapolis Museum of Art in Association with Yale Univ. Press, 2007), 55.
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Sandra Lerner

The Particle and the Wave: Metaphysical Landscapes, Taoism, and the Calligraphic Impulse

By Aliza Edelman

Look, it cannot be seen—it is beyond form.
Listen, it cannot be heard—it is beyond sound.
Grasp, it cannot be held—it is intangible.
These three are indefinable,
Therefore they are joined in one.
. . . .
Stand before it and there is no beginning.
Follow it and there is no end.
Stay with the ancient Tao,
Move with the present.

Knowing the ancient beginning is the essence of Tao.

–Lao Tsu, passage from the *Tao Te Ching*[1]

Sandra Lerner's (b. 1936) engagement with Asian art and Eastern ideas and philosophies has framed her artistic practice since the early 1960s. The spiritual dimensions of Taoism have guided her development as a person and as a painter, in particular the revelatory teachings of Lao Tsu, the esteemed ancient Chinese philosopher (and "official archivist") credited with the founding of Taoism. By historical accounts Lao Tsu lived around the same period as some of the greatest classical figures in China, in the sixth century B.C., and Confucius (551–479 B.C.) allegedly consulted with Lao Tsu, who was deemed the older master. The renowned volume of verses, or eighty-one chapters known today as the *Tao Te Ching* (*Daodejing*), was a widely circulated compilation of texts attributed to Lao Tsu conveying the fundamental precepts to attain self-transformation and self-equilibrium in the *tao*—the Way. Of the many spiritual directives offered in Taoism, Lerner has spoken repeatedly of an interrelationship between the "oneness" in the order of the natural world and the multiplicities in our rudimentary existence: "There are multiplicities that we find in everyday life, yet I seek to explore a oneness that permeates everything. I am after this oneness in the universe, whether I am working on a landscape, a thangka, a hanging, or an abstraction. This is the underlying philosophy in my art."[2]

Lerner's artistic production may be understood, then, as an unfolding spiritual journey expressing her continual encounter and dialogue with models of wholeness and the nature of reality. By drawing upon this vast Oriental tradition and correlating her own aesthetic syncretism of East and West, Lerner reveals, as if through a door or gate, the metaphysical relationships of our universe with the spatial scope of painting's gestural and calligraphic impetus. Japanese calligraphy—another key influence on Lerner's art—is also in part a hybridized and ancient form of communication that gave visual expression to language and poetry as it was first developed in China and later adopted and transformed in Japan.[3] Whether utilized for religious, vernacular, or aesthetic purpose, calligraphy's broader potential to express "dialectical relationships to the past" and at the same time respond to modern times certainly parallels Lerner's underlying approach to her art.[4] More directly, the calligrapher's spiritual capacity to transcend formal discipline is manifest in the "creative rendering of characters" equally determined by compositional and rhythmic variations, shape, balance, asymmetry, and use of empty space.[5] Expanding upon these malleable spatial and temporal relationships, Lerner's later abstractions interrogate the synchronicity between the modern theoretical sciences, particularly research in quantum mechanics, and the East's longstanding mystical explorations of the physical and cosmic realms as an undivided universe. Lerner's oeuvre may thus be considered a devoted meditation—a term engaged by the artist to describe her practice—on the rhythmic flux between abstraction's complementary polarities: biomorphism versus geometry; texture versus non-texturality; male versus female; emptiness versus fullness; and science versus spirituality.

On the surface these investigations may seem oversimplified, yet another Western assimilation of Eastern ideas. Rather, Lerner's practice stems from a long and significant tradition in postwar American art and Abstract Expressionism of turning to the East for the sake of exploring spirituality in abstraction. As J.J. Clarke writes on manifestations of difference in the Western interpretation of Eastern texts and religions, "It is thus a way of experiencing ourselves from the outside, as other; a point of departure which can lead to an enhancement of self-understanding."[6] Indeed, many artists in the postwar era, including Ad Reinhardt, Robert Motherwell, Mark Tobey, and

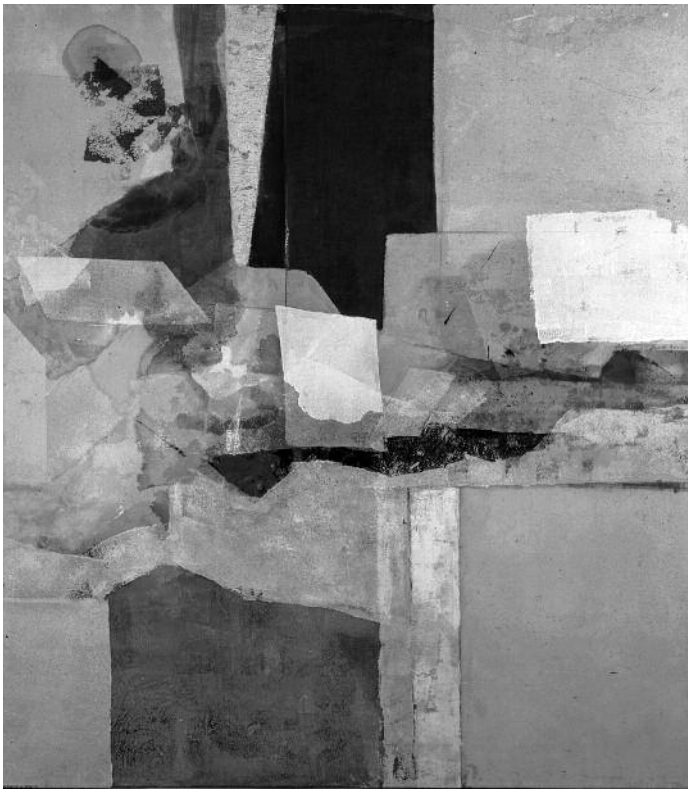


Fig. 1. Sandra Lerner, *Transcendent Landscape* (1972), oil and mixed media on canvas, 44" x 48". Private Collection.



Fig. 2. Sandra Lerner, *Tao Series XV* (1973), paper and sumi ink, c. 20" x 20".

Charmion von Wiegand, readily embraced in a Westernized context the contemporary cultural fluency of Buddhism, Zen, and Jungian theory.[7] In 1957, von Wiegand proposed that the "centrifugal movement of East and West" brought Western painting closer to the "metaphysical speculations of Oriental thought: Vedantism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism."[8] The frequented circuit and readings in the fifties included popular lectures at Columbia University by Daisetz T. Suzuki, Zen's Western authority, celebrated books by Alan W. Watts and German philosopher Eugen Herrigel, and the seasoned and playful use by artists, including composer John Cage, of the *I Ching, or The Book of Changes*, an ancient Chinese divination text on the interconnections of nature, chance, and self-realization.[9] Lerner, along with many of her own contemporaries in the late sixties and seventies, attended seminars by Dr. Fritjof Capra, author of *The Tao of Physics*, workshops on mysticism and shamanism at The New School, intensive journal writing sessions at The Dialogue House with Jungian scholar and depth psychologist Dr. Ira Progoff, and courses in calligraphy at the Japan Society.[10]

Lerner's Tao Series is a formative group of small and medium-size collages together with expansive paintings executed throughout the 1970s. For Lerner, then known as Sandra Gross, this was a fertile decade to explore structural and compositional problems on the calligraphic line in relationship to color values, and to experiment in painting on raw and stained canvas. On the compact surface of *Tao Series I* (1973), a rivalry for space entails amongst the aggressive swatches of jagged forms, with mottled and frayed edges and subtle contrasts of tan and gray swathes; similarly, *Transcendent Landscape* (1972; Fig. 1) integrates a centralized and accumulated mass of rough and smooth brushwork patterns and distended planes pushed to the canvas's edge.[11] Lerner's rigorous attention to the surface's intricate construction and layering of diverse materials assumes a morphological expression of the ground or landscape as a deeply rooted and ever-shifting archeological presence. She was greatly influenced by her early travels in 1967 to prehistoric sites in Mexico, where she also studied wall paintings, and a 1971 collecting visit to West Africa. Smaller collages exploit the properties of crumpled papers, sand, thread, spray paint and sumi ink, rice paper, pastels and conte crayons. The ruptured and folded planes of the earlier collages, such as *Tao Series XV* (1973; Fig. 2), fusing wrapping paper, corrugated cardboard, and brown paper bags as well as other found and quotidian materials, appear as decayed and excavated manuscript fragments that have endured the progressive onslaught of centuries. Summarizing the breadth and range of Lerner's Tao Series, critic Malcolm Preston posited a gendered observation based on the technical distinction between the smaller assemblages, considered "strong and masculine, even burned and brutalized, in comparison with the more pastoral paintings," understood here, arguably, as an indirect reference to the more "feminized" calligraphy employed in her large scale canvases.[12]

Displaying her Tao Series in 1975 at the noted cooperative Pleiades Gallery in New York City, followed in 1976 by another exhibition at Central Hall Gallery, a women's cooperative space on Long Island, Lerner presented

typewritten sections on rice paper from the *Tao Te Ching* next to each work of art, with titles corresponding to specific passages called chapters.[13] For both exhibits the invitation featured the artist in her paint-stained smock standing dynamically in front of *Tao Series II* (1975; Fig. 3). Moreover, the imposing scale of Lerner's Tao Series, with paintings measuring over 7 x 9 feet, shifts the artist's priorities to the distribution of space across the surface. In *Tao Series I* (1975), the visual lexicon of free-form calligraphic marks and ink brushwork—sharp curvilinear inscriptions and meandering lineaments—explicitly propel movement across the plane sequentially in counterpoint to the triad of rectangular shapes anchoring the space. Calligraphy, in turn, operates temporally in *Tao Series IV* (1975; Pl. 13) as a historical conduit or carrier bridging time and place—transnationally and transhistorically—to unearth, for Lerner, "echoes and resonances of the universe and other cultures that existed."[14]

Critic John Canaday drew attention to the reverential undercurrents of *Tao Series IV*, noting the presence of "ancient trumpet-shaped Chinese bronze ritual vessels called ku, [which] invest the painting with echoes of ceremonial functions," evoking the methodical concentration of an ancient scribe or religious scholar at work on an illuminated manuscript aged in terracotta washes and stains, "more like a page from a book, in spirit, than the wall-sized composition."[15] Lerner's capacity to move forward and backward through history, a seemingly cosmic or quantum leap through time and space, takes flight again in *Omega*, *Villa of the Mysteries*, and *Echoes* (all 1989; Pl. 14), on view in "The Sensibility of Transcendence," her first exhibition with June Kelly Gallery in 1990. Writing on this series, art historian Donald Kuspit stressed the transcendent implications of the material structure itself, veering towards an aggressive reconciliation between surface (matter) and spirituality illustrated in the atmospheric grandeur of *Echoes*: compressed and encrusted rice paper and blockish script foray amongst a ghostly palimpsest of timeworn columns and fans.

More than anything, it is the disciplined application of rice paper on canvas in all of its graphic and haptic materiality—torn apart or fastened on—that furthers this impression of Lerner's paintings permeating the terrestrial and celestial landscapes of ancient cultures, as observed in *Tao Series VI* (1975; Fig. 4**)**. The facture embodied in Lerner's fluid calligraphy, combined with the layered collage of fragile and coarse materials burgeoning off the surface, generates a particularly subversive and feminist voice in the 1970s, and one that may be further understood as a calibrated response to the patrilineal histories of gestural Abstract Expressionism. Certainly, Lerner recognized the extent to which the limited black and white loose renderings of Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, and David Smith, among others, insinuated a "calligraphic reading," whether acknowledged or disavowed, respectively.[16] Yet a calligraphic reading of Lerner's work also presupposes a deeply personal discursive space, one that may in turn suggest an exploration aligned more closely with the authorial feminist ideas of *écriture féminine* taking shape in the1970s. This approach surmises the artist's own calligraphic

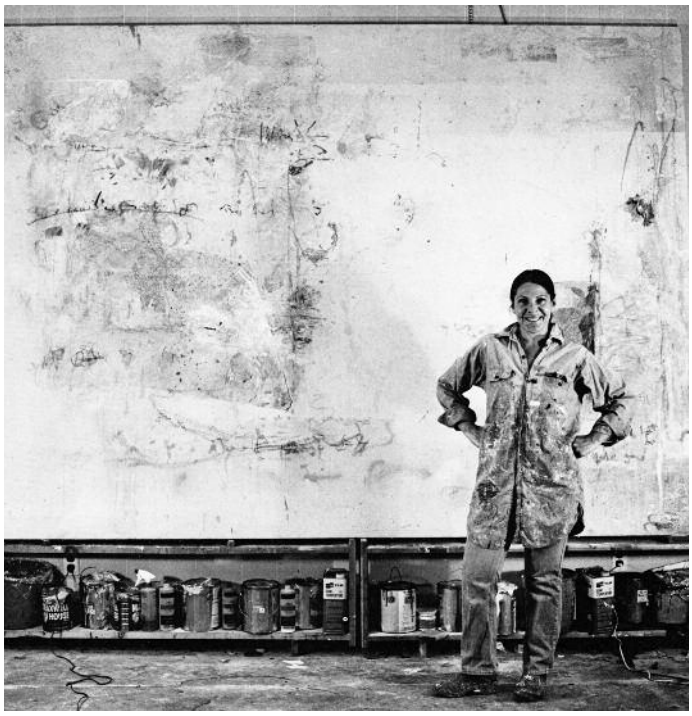


Fig. 3. Sandra Lerner posing in front of her painting *Tao Series II* (1975), 90" x 120", for a gallery announcement.

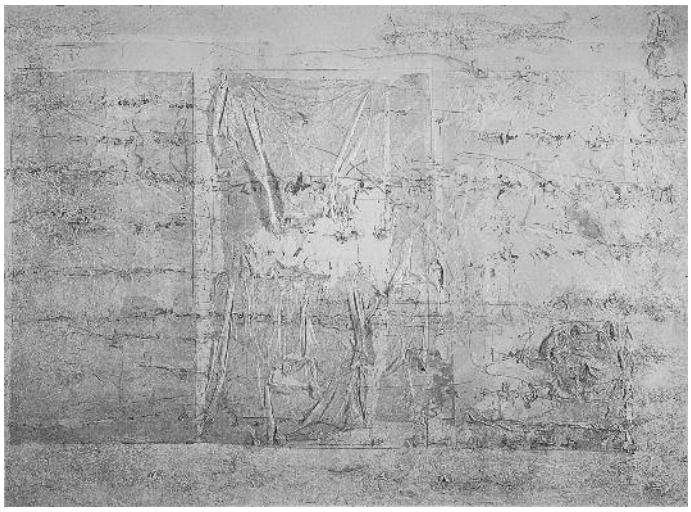


Fig. 4. Sandra Lerner, *Tao Series VI* (1975), oil and mixed media on canvas, 72" x 96". Private Collection.

insertions in the form of fragmented, decentered, and ambiguous "texts" into the underlying languages of abstraction, expressionism, and East Asian art while simultaneously offering her own metonymic and indexical "sign-language," one with the implicit purpose to evoke, in the artist's words, "the recall of calligraphy in paintings just short of its actual use."[17]

Lerner further negotiates her own aesthetic relationship with the gestural and the decorative through a physically laborious and technical process that constantly shifts between ground and wall (Fig. 5): laying raw linen canvas directly on the floor, Lerner builds painterly layers via pouring, staining



Fig. 5. Sandra Lerner painting in her New York City studio in 2016.

and spraying, applying sized rice paper and collaged elements as needed, and proceeds to "deconstruct" her process through cutting or décollage, reassembling combined sections to hang accordingly. Not only does Lerner conceive her practice as a meditative process in direct counterpoint to Pollock's assertiveness and directness, but also the ornamental patterning of her surfaces exposes the gender paradoxes of Abstract Expressionism's purity of vision, or "fuliginous flatness," espoused by Clement Greenberg.[18]

Significantly, Lerner discovered her potential as a visual artist relatively late and had limited contact with the fine arts growing up in Brooklyn, New York. As a child she was exposed to music and trained as a concert pianist. At Brooklyn College she was a philosophy major but, like many of her generation, married young, at age twenty. Interrupting her studies, she joined her first husband on an army base from 1956 to 1958 near Nuremberg, Germany; while in Europe and pregnant, she traveled extensively and was exposed to architectural history and antiquities. Upon her return to the United States, having moved to Long Island, Lerner began formal painting classes, with, among others, Harry Sternberg, Leo Manso (an influential teacher and collagist), and Jerry Okimoto. She raised two children, but found herself in the constraints of a conventional marriage, one that did not encourage her development as an artist.[19] The sweeping cultural changes of the Women's Liberation Movement and the widespread growth of women's cooperatives in the 1970s provided fundamental support for Lerner's incipient career. Likewise, the pivotal friendship and mentorship of artist Dorothy Dehner (1901–94), whom she befriended in 1964, emboldened her progress. Lerner returned full time to New York City after divorcing her husband. Appropriately, Lerner acquired her primary copy of the *Tao Te Ching*, which she still faithfully uses, at Dehner's gallery, Marian Willard, a formative dealer supporting artists concerned with abstraction and the Far East. In 1978, Lerner eventually completed her B.A. at Hofstra University, where she also took pre-Colombian art classes, and wrote a thesis on the subject of "Parallels in Taoism and Physics."[20]



Fig. 6. Sandra Lerner at the Kampo Museum, Kyoto, Japan (1981), as an honored guest of the master calligrapher Kampo Harada.

In 1981, Lerner's aesthetic maturation was fostered during a four-month residency in the ancient capital city of Kyoto, Japan, where she was the honored guest of Kampo Harada. A master calligrapher and celebrated teacher, Kampo was largely responsible for the postwar dissemination of the art of calligraphy and the promotion of Japanese culture internationally through the development of the Nippon Shuji Educational Federation (now Japan Calligraphy Education Foundation).[21] Lerner was initially introduced to Kampo in 1971 when he taught his first extensive calligraphy course at the Japan Society in New York. While residing in the old Sumera region near Kyoto, connected to the Kampo Museum (Fig. 6), Lerner participated in classes and earned a distinguished license to teach calligraphy, even as she could not speak the language well or properly read it. This was of little concern to Kampo, whose global teaching methods emphasized not the "meaning" of the letters, characters, and ideographs but rather their pure spirit found in the different stylistic scripts of Japanese brush writing or cursive, as shown in the *hiragana* and *katakana* syllabaries. In the interest of cross-cultural exchange, Lerner lectured on various American art subjects under the auspices of the United States International Communications Agency (USIA). She had solo exhibitions on two subsequent visits: in 1984, at the Kampo Kaikan Museum, Kyoto, and Gallery Don, Fukuoka, Lerner presented three-dimensional screen paintings, such as the sweeping five-screen *View of Southold* (1983-84; Fig. 7), as well as a collaborative painting with Kampo

who applied brush-and-ink calligraphy, and works evocative of ancient hanging scrolls, including the vertical hanging *Tao IV* (1980); and in 1993, she exhibited again at the Kampo Kaikan Museum as part of a fortieth anniversary exhibition. Tellingly, Kampo bestowed upon Lerner a Japanese stamp bearing her name in characters akin to "Great Mountain."

This transformative experience soon materialized in an important group of paintings titled The Inland Sea Series, on view at the illustrious Betty Parsons Gallery in 1982.[22] Parsons was an adamant supporter of Lerner's work and had been an intrepid presence on the postwar New York scene, not only cultivating the careers of many Abstract Expressionists but also Japanese-born artists, such as Kenzo Okado and Toko Shinoda. The title of Lerner's exhibition was a poignant reference to Japan's Seto Inland Sea (a historic body of water surrounded by islands), from which Lerner observed Japan's breathtaking topographical vistas of mountains and sea, trees and sky, from the port at Kobe en route to Miyajima. Such panoramas undoubtedly crystallized in her art the Taoist principles of an all-pervading natural world hinging on the elemental and circumambulatory relationships of heaven and earth. At the same time, she could draw upon her acute knowledge of Taoism as the touchstone of heroic and monumental Chinese landscape painting, as realized by Sung Dynasty painters from the late tenth to the early twelfth century, an influential stylistic period for Lerner.[23] This vital artistic exploration in Chinese painting broadly expressed the "metaphysical basis of heavenly principles" in tandem with the mundane reality of the "principles of things (*wu-li*)," as scholar Wen C. Fong summarized; identifying the natural landscape orientation in hanging scrolls by the eminent Kuo Hsi (ca. 1000-ca. 1090; Fig. 8), for example, the integration of vertical and continuous planes, parallel perspectives, and shifting vantage points "invite the viewer to roam freely through a space that is infinite and evocative because [it is] unmeasured and unmeasurable."[24]

The fiery-brown combustive cluster in Lerner's *Matsushima* (1981; Pl. 15)—a title conjuring the eponymous ancient islands covered in black and red pines—radiates the creative and primordial sources of the world, a "mysteriously formed" and interchangeable realm relating heaven, earth, and man, and the cycles of birth, death, and rebirth, on which mutable striations and swift brushwork score the canvas. *Matsushima*'s nebulous body has metamorphosed into an archetypal door, gate, or bypath in *Uji* (1981) and in the epic *Tao II* (1981; Pl. 16), an eternal and unknowable realm unveiled in the *Tao Te Ching*: "The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth / The gate to all mystery" (Chapter 1).[25] *Tao II*'s unfolding, centripetal movement embodies the universe's dialectical tensions on a sharply planar field of action: the lowermost areas of densely inked geometries and spatters ascend to a lightened field of penciled calligraphies and amorphous patterns on raw and stained canvas. Elaborating, Lerner has described her calligraphy as a "door going into another realm," inviting the

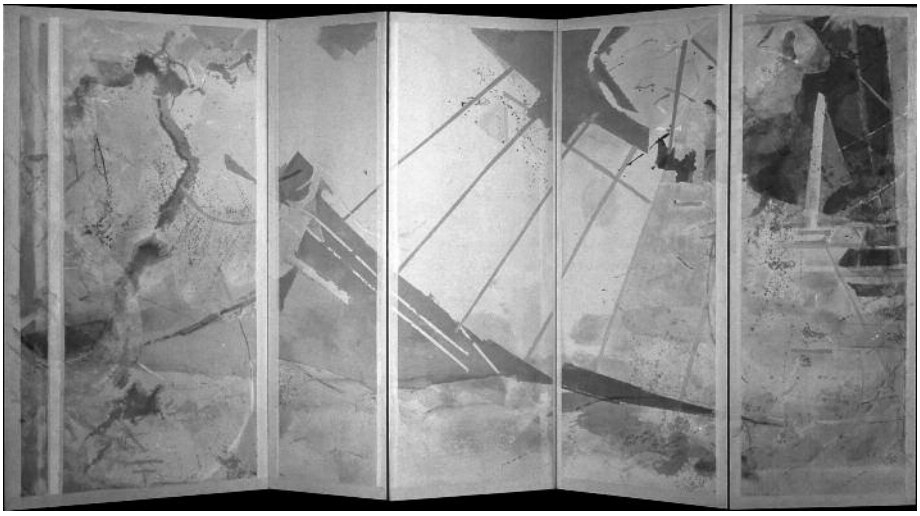


Fig. 7. Sandra Lerner, *View of Southold* (1983–84), five panel folding screen, oil and mixed media on canvas, 79" x 144". Private Collection.



Fig. 8. Kuo Hsi, *Early Spring* (signed and dated 1072), hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 62 1/4" x 42 5/8", National Palace Museum, Taipei.

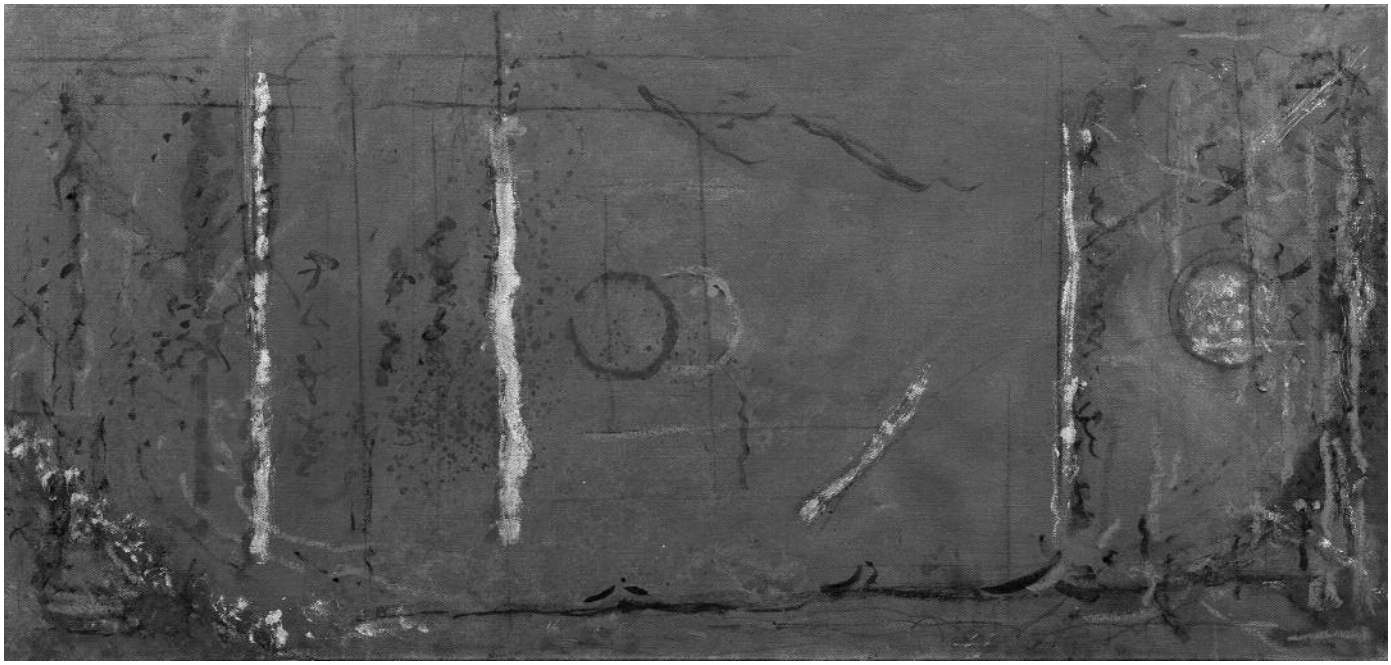


Fig. 9. Sandra Lerner, *Distant Universe* (2010), oil and mixed media on canvas, 28" x 59".

viewer to transcend individuality toward a universal interconnectedness.[26] This painting caught the attention of curator Barbara Rose, who then included it in a major exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in 1984. In a separate publication, Rose wrote on the relationships between Japanese calligraphy and Abstract Expressionism, in particular underscoring the affinities of postwar artists drawn to the act of so-called "mastering" a non-European ancient tradition while inventing a new "archaic sign language without specific literal meaning."[27] In *Tao III* (1980), a painting that hung independently over Betty Parsons's desk in an earlier exhibition, Lerner reversed the image of *Tao II* by placing the architectonic form in the uppermost right section, metaphorically completing the spiral; the symbolic door reappears on the lower right corner in the later *Infinite Realm* (1987), as two centrally-positioned "windows" once again absorb the viewer in empty space while heavy surface impasto accumulates around the painting's edges.

Addressing her own intuitive emanation of creativity in relation to structure and space, Lerner wrote: "I leave untouched the ghost of what was there, but add the reality of the present."[28] Here, in The Inland Sea Series, and in her later series, Breath, Lerner realized the dynamic aesthetic and cosmological relationships underlying the philosophical systems of Chinese landscape painting and Taoism, poetically explained as the notion of emptiness in the semiotic study by François Cheng called *Empty and Full*.[29] Cheng's pictorial analysis considers emptiness as an intermediary or reciprocal link between the circulatory poles of nature, or transitional elements and phenomena, such as mountains, waters, or clouds, and as an integral embodiment of the "unifying action of breath-spirit."[30] In Lerner's scroll-like *Breath VI* (1999), emptiness's role is akin to calligraphy's engagement as a temporal and spatial conduit bridging floating spheres and winding lines.[31] As an active participant, moreover, emptiness's dependency on the rhythmic flux of the yang (light) and yin (darkness), and by extension the active (male) and passive (female) principles, is equally measured by its corollary opposite, fullness. Cheng writes: "Emptiness introduces discontinuity and reversibility into a given system and thus permits the elements composing the system to transcend rigid opposition …. At the same time, emptiness offers … the possibility of approaching the universe at the level of totality."[32] Yet emptiness is also signified in the Taoist ontological search for origins as a state of non-being or nothingness before the creation of heaven and earth.[33] In its discontinuous and misshapen segments of rice paper and indexical traces of calligraphy, Lerner's *Breath VIII* (1999; Pl. 17) infers the possibilities of an impending journey through time and space. Inextricably formless and imageless, coming into existence and returning to nothingness, *Breath VIII* conjures once more Lao Tsu's *Tao Te Ching* (chapter fourteen, above).[34]

Lerner's yearning to intuitively communicate the unfolding mysteries of the universe informed her supplementary research into the scientific language of particle physics and quantum mechanics. These theoretical investigations quantify the perception of reality and the order of the universe, from its macrocosmic boundlessness to its subatomic depths, by means of the compelling search for an "unbroken wholeness" in our understanding of time and space relationships, or what scientific philosopher David Bohm designates the "implicate or enfolded order."[35] Just as Lerner sought to "recall" the language or art of calligraphy without formally putting it to use (even as she was well-trained in its techniques), Lerner's own comprehension of the language of quantum theory was not explicitly mathematical in nature (although she attended scientific lectures on the subject). Again, Lerner intended her landscapes to extract the underlying ideas in modern physics'

presentation of structural matter—fundamental and universal laws (special relativity and general relativity)—and its complementary dialogues to Eastern mysticism and Taoism. *Particle Dance* (1986; Pl. 18), from the exhibition "Intimations of Infinity," envisions the complex choreography or waltz of elemental properties or quanta at an atomic and subnuclear scale—neutrons, electrons, protons, quarks and gluons—as a dynamic field of forces, vibrations, interactions, repulsions and, most importantly, probabilities.[36] In essence, the term *intimation* broadly correlates with Einstein's overriding research into a unified field theory of the universe to mutually relate Newtonian laws of the physical world, our predictable, measurable, and controllable observations of external matter and reactions, for example in gravitational force, and the incompatible and contradictory mechanics of structural phenomena on both cosmic and ultramicroscopic realms.

The probabilities, uncertainties or "hidden variables" implicit in quantum mechanics are touched upon in Lerner's monumental triptych *The Particle and the Wave* (1993–96; Pl. 19), vertically hung as a scroll, from the series Particle Physics. Lerner's suggestion of oscillating energy traversing separate spatial fields or spheres may be loosely characterized as the dualistic properties of light (photons) as both particles and waves: the motion of light is manifest through an articulation of constantly jostling wavelengths, frequencies and interference patterns, equating the maximum amplitude or height of its peaks, and depths of its troughs. Lerner's undulating patterns, flat, roughened and exaggerated, animate wavelength's modulations. Yet the primary mysteries on this subatomic level further intimate that the discontinuous routes or "infinity of trajectories" embodied by particles in motion might be in fact extrapolated as "conscious" behavior on the part of the subatomic elements in response to environmental factors or observation.[37] Analogous to Lerner's interest in the precept of emptiness, such probabilities or "tendencies to exist" relate the metaphysical "study of the structure of consciousness" to quantum physics, correlating our observations of reality and our inability to observe the world objectively without influencing it.[38]

Lerner's enduring exploration of the fabric of the universe gave rise to her series Mystic Realms (2004) and Parallel Universes (2010), paintings whose titles and compositions, for example in *Cosmic Realm I*, *Ripple I*, and *Distant Universe* (all 2010; Fig. 9), offer expansive visual models of the vibrational patterns, "loops of energy," and multi-dimensions encompassing string theory, research which stemmed, partly, from Einstein's continual search to find an "all-encompassing" framework to express the unified workings of time and space.[39] *Regeneration*, *Causation, Ultimate Reality*, and *Membranes and Strings* (all 2004; Fig. 10) pensively invoke string theory as it directly builds upon Einstein's formulation that both space and time warp and curve in relation to the presence of matter and energy, according to physicist Brian Greene, positing a picture of the "microscopic landscape" replete with "distortions," folded or "tightly curved" strings, oscillating, twisting, vibrating, and resonating, and affecting the "evolution of the cosmos."[40] For Lerner, physics provided the theoretical tools to envision time and space as an illusory matrix, without divisions or empty spaces yet filled with parallel universes.[41] Extending these inherent concepts of physics to Buddhist meditational systems, her geometric and architectonic images also mirror mandalic expressions of sacred space, rendering once again her symbolic lexicon of doors, gates, thresholds, fixed points, yantras, and stupas, to achieve a oneness and wholeness of reality through what appears to be an antithetical process of "emptying" everything.[42]

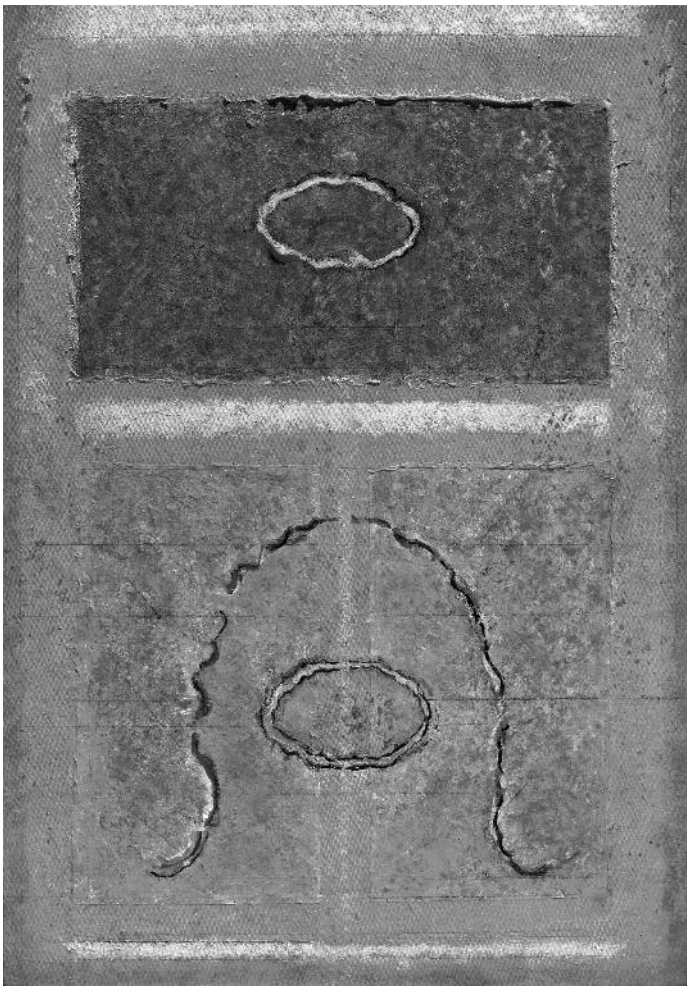


Fig. 10. Sandra Lerner, *Membranes and Strings* (2004), oil and mixed media on canvas, 44" x 32".

Lerner's most recent landscape series Flux/Space (2015; Pl. 20) parallels her own creative flux and that of the universe in its ever-changing patterns, surging waves, and horizontal vistas. She conceives of her art as a journey—spiritual, psychological and physical—that begins with a simple calligraphic line in space; the line develops to take one to a purer realm of being. The viewer's role is to finish the journey and the narrative. Referring to the repetitive elements in her landscapes as the "mystic spiral," Lerner's own hybridized language, merging metaphysics and Taoism, calligraphy and gesturalism, has continually evolved throughout her career. Her singular contribution to abstraction and spirituality that

began with her Tao Series has since developed into a comprehensive visualization on the echoes and resonances of the universe. ●

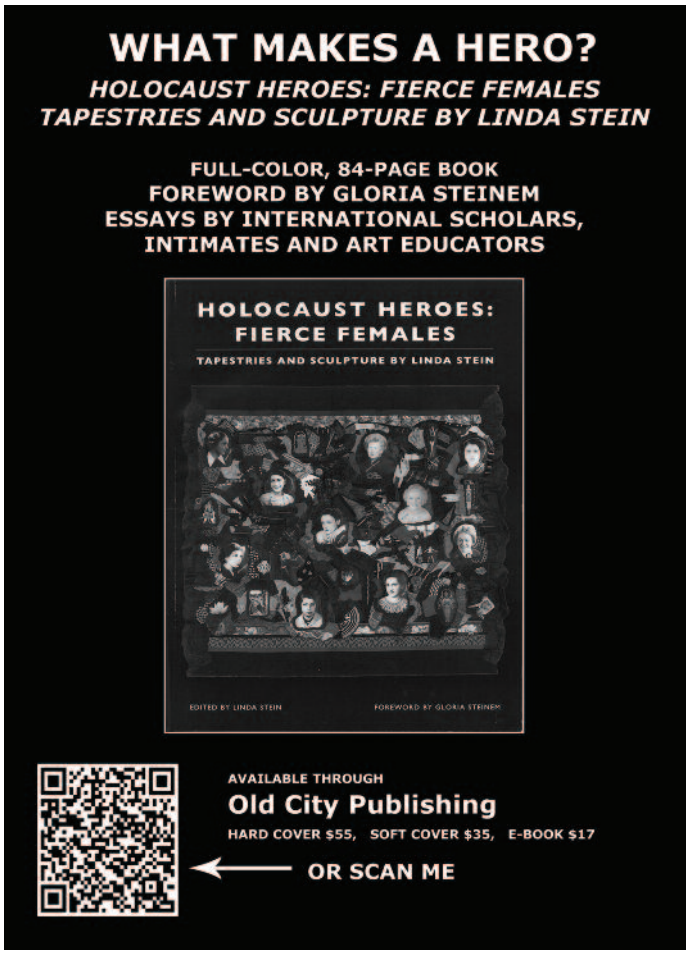
Aliza Edelman's recent publications include "Departing the Plane: Charmion von Wiegand's Otherworldly Abstractions of the 1950s," in *American Women Artists, 1935-1970—Gender, Culture, and Politics,* edited by Helen Langa and Paula Wisotzki, and artist biographies in *Women of Abstract Expressionism,* edited by Joan Marter (both 2016).

Notes

1. Lao Tsu, "Chapter Fourteen," *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English (1972; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1997), np. The *Tao Te Ching* has innumerable translations and commentaries, but Lerner has referred primarily to the earlier version above.
2. Lerner, interview with the author, Jan. 22, 2016, New York. In her discussion of "oneness" and "multiplicity," Lerner was informed early on by the philosopher W.T. Stace, known as a "perennialist," whose controversial writings on mystical experiences across cultures and historical periods was defined though an *extrovertive* and *introvertive* approach to achieve pure consciousness and unity in the world. See Walter T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1961).
3. Calligraphy arrived in Japan from China in the fifth and sixth centuries, and over time was adapted and expanded to accompany a complex grammatical and phonetic writing system, incorporating forty thousand Chinese characters and two Japanese syllabaries (*hiragana* and *katakana*). Fundamentally, however, there are five basic styles of Chinese script utilized by traditional calligraphers (Seal, Clerical, Standard, Semicursive, and Cursive). Lerner has discussed her interest in the eminent Japanese Zen calligrapher and teacher Hakuin Ekaku (1685–1768).
4. See Yoshiaki Shimizu and John M. Rosenfield, "Introduction," in *Masters of Japanese Calligraphy: 8th–19th Century*, exh. cat. (New York: Japan House Gallery and The Asia Society Galleries, 1984), 11.
5. Distinction between artistic calligraphy or *sho* and formal calligraphy is discussed in Aoyama San'u, "Sho—Artistic, Creative Calligraphy," in *Words in Motion: Modern Japanese Calligraphy,* exh. cat. (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbun, in association with The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., (1984), 26–29. In his essay "The Role of Calligraphy in Japanese Society," Stephen Addiss writes, "Although many of the characters were originally derived from a pictorialized shape, they do not have a direct representation function, but serve as abstractions, requiring their own sense of balanced movement within the confines of a predetermined configuration of lines and empty space." Ibid., 30.
6. J.J. Clarke, *The Tao of the West: Western Transformation of Taoist Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 12.
7. See also David J. Clarke, *The Influence of Oriental Thought on Postwar American Painting and Sculpture* (New York: Garland, 1988); and Alexandra Munroe, introduction to *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, ed. Alexandra Munroe (New York: The Guggenheim Museum, 2009), 21–33.
8. See Charmion von Wiegand, "The Oriental Tradition and Abstract Art," in *The World of Abstract Art*, ed. American Abstract Artists (New York: George Wittenborn Inc., 1957), 55–67.
9. See Alan W. Watts, *The Spirit of Zen: A Way of Life, Work and Art in the Far East* (New York: Grove Press, 1958); Eugen Herrigel, with an introduction by D.T. Suzuki, *Zen in the Art of Archery*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (1948; repr., New York: Pantheon, 1953).
10. See Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (1975; repr., Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2010). Lerner followed the teachings of religious thinker Jiddu Krishnamurti, and in the 1990s attended courses at the Tibet House with Indo-Tibetan scholar Robert Thurman.
11. Lerner won the Benjamin Altman (Landscape) Prize from the National Academy of Design for *Transcendent Landscape* in 1972, and the Anne Eisner Putnam Memorial Prize from the National Association of Women Artists in 1973.
12. Malcolm Preston, "Review: Tao and cubism," *Newsday* (April 10, 1976), II.
13. See Jeanne Paris, "Review [Pleiades Gallery, NY]: Oriental philosophy inspires artist," *Long Island Press* (Oct. 26, 1975), 20. An earlier exhibition of paintings and collages held at Central Hall Gallery in 1974 was called "The Ambiguity of Subconscious Vision," and included works with titles such as *Primal Beginnings III* (1972).
14. Lerner, interview with the author, Jan. 22, 2016.
15. In his review "It's Spring in Connecticut, and New Talent Blooms," *New York Times* (May 9, 1976), critic John Canaday clearly prized *Tao Series IV* (1975) in the group show "Contemporary Reflections" at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Ridgefield, CT. Consequently, the Aldrich Museum purchased for its collection *Tao Series III* (1976), shown in "Selections from the Collections 1978: New Acquisitions, Gifts and Loans."
16. On the relationships between Abstract Expressionism and Far Eastern influences, see Stanley K. Abe, "To Avoid the Inscrutable: Abstract Expressionism and the 'Oriental Mode,'" in *Discrepant Abstraction*, ed. Kobena Mercer (Cambridge: The MIT Press 2006), 52–72; Bert Winter-Tamaki, "The Asian Dimensions of Postwar Abstract Art: Calligraphy and Metaphysics," in *The Third Mind*, ed. Munroe, 145–57; and Jeffrey Wechsler, ed. *Asian Traditions, Modern Expressions: Asian American Artists and Abstraction, 1945–1970* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, in association with the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1997).
17. Sandra Lerner, "Statement of Plans," unpublished notes, p. 2, n.d., Sandra Lerner Archives. On the ambivalent relationships between women's creativity and authorship in connection to power and sexuality, see Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. B. Wing (1975; repr., Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986), and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney and Carol J. Singley, *Anxious Power: Reading, Writing, and Ambivalence in Narratives by Women* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1993).
18. It is interesting to note here Greenberg's rejection of the Oriental mode of painting in Morris Graves and Mark Tobey versus the technical and urban prowess of Pollock arguably derived from Cubism in his "The Present Prospects of American Painting and Sculpture," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 2*, ed. John O'Brian (1947; repr., Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), 160–70.
19. The tragic loss of her third child in 1964 was a pivotal factor in her decision to devote herself to her art full-time. Lerner, interview with the author, Jan. 22, 2016.
20. From 1976–86, Lerner advocated for the arts in New York State as a Consultant for the New York State Senate Special Committee on the Arts.
21. In New York City, Kampo Harada established the Kampo Culture Center, a primary resource for students to learn calligraphy techniques and Eastern philosophy. See Kampo Harada and Nihon Sh jiky iku Renme , *Calligraphy: The Art of Kampo Harada* (Fukuoka-City, Japan: Nippon Shuji Educational Federation, 1973); and M.J. Sullivan and Kampo Harada, *Japanese Calligraphy: Practice, Learning and Art, A General Instruction* (Kyoto: Japan Calligraphy Education Foundation, 1989).
22. See Lowery Sims, "Sandra Lerner: A Review," in *Sandra Lerner—*

Inland Sea Series, exh. cat. (New York: Betty Parsons Gallery, 1982). See also, Valerie Natsios, "Gallery Reviews," *New York Arts Journal*, no. 24 (Jan. 1982); Renée Phllips, "The Artist's Long Journey Into Himself," *Artspeak* 3, no. 15 (Feb. 4, 1982); and David Shirley, "Glimpses of What's Current," *New York Times* (June 20, 1982).

23. Lerner expressed an interest in the landscapes of the Southern Sung painter Ma Yüan (active ca. 1190–1225), in addition to those by Japanese artist Sessh T y (1420–1526), famous for his use of monochrome ink, who was also influenced by Sung dynasty painting. Lerner, interview with the author, June 15, 2016.
24. As Wen C. Fong writes, "In landscape painting, the governing principle of the universe may be intuited, or divined, through the perception of correlative patterns and archetypal forms." In Fong, "Monumental Landscape Painting," in *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei*, ed. Wen C. Fong and James C.Y. Watt (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., in association with The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and National Palace Museum, Taipei), 124, 130.
25. As the Daoist scholar Chang Chung-yuan reflected, "When Lao Tsu calls *Tao* the Great, or Mother of All Things, he means that *Tao* is the primordial source of every beginning and every end. It is the realm from which all birth issues forth and to which all death returns. It is all embracing, far reaching, never ceasing, yet it is the realm of the unknown; so it is called nonbeing;" Chung-yuan, *Creativity and Taoism: A Study of Chinese Philosophy, Art, and Poetry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 35.
26. Lerner, interview with the author, Jan. 22, 2016.
27. Curator Barbara Rose included *Tao II* (1981) in the important group exhibition "Miró in America," held at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (April 21-June 27, 1982). See also, Rose, "Japanese Calligraphy and American Abstract Expressionism," in *Words in Motion: Modern Japanese Calligraphy*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbun, in association with The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1984), 39.
28. Lerner, cited in press release, Betty Parsons Gallery, "Inland Sea Series," Jan. 26–Feb. 13, 1982.
29. François Cheng, a Chinese-born, French academic writer and poet, wrote the popular book *Empty and Full: The Language of Chinese Painting*, trans. Michael H. Kohn (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1994).
30. These ideas are formulated in the guiding principles of the ancient Chinese text *The I Ching, or The Book of Changes*, which uses hexagrams and trigrams to express the complex interplay of natural elements and male and female forces. See Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching, or Book of Changes*, trans. Cary F. Baynes, with foreword by C.G. Jung, Bollingen Series 19 (1950; repr., Princeton, NJ; Princeton Univ. Press, 1967).
31. The series Breath was shown in the exhibition "Empty and Full" at June Kelly Gallery (Dec. 2, 1999–Jan. 4, 2000).
32. Cheng, *Empty and Full: The Language of Chinese Painting*, 36.
33. Ibid., 43.
34. Lerner has created large paintings on canvas utilized as sets by the renowned Japanese avant-garde performers Eiko & Koma, whose extensive body of work encompasses dance, theater, sculpture, installation, and video. See Joan Ruthfuss, ed., *Eiko & Koma: time is not even, space is not empty* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2011).
35. David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London and New York: Routledge, 1980) was a seminal book for Lerner that discussed scientific parallels between physics and philosophical systems.
36. Lerner's exhibition *Intimations of Infinity* was held at the Peter Fingesten Art Gallery, Pace University (Oct. 6–30, 1987).
37. Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, 12–14. Another important book for Lerner was Brian Greene's *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 110.
38. Carl Jung's articulation of the principle of synchronicity was a new way of "conceptualizing reality" beyond Western ideas that complemented modern scientific theories on relativity and quantum physics, and suggested further parallels to Eastern thought. See J.J. Clarke, *Jung and Eastern Thought: A Dialogue with the Orient* (London: Routledge, 1994). See also the classic book by Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics* (1979; repr., New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 31–35.
39. Greene, *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*, viii, xi.
40. Ibid., 18, 135, 143.
41. See Donald Kuspit, "Mystic Realms: New Paintings," exh. cat. (New York: June Kelly Gallery, 2004), 1–2.
42. See Martin Brauen, *Mandala, Sacred Circle in Tibetan Buddhism* (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, in association with the Arnoldsche Art Publishers, Stuttgart, 2009).



Teresa Żarnower

Bodies and Buildings

By Adrian Anagnost

Enlightened peasant:
He has a car, a motorcycle, a bicycle / A
House of reinforced concrete
(Designed by Miss Żarnower) / An
Electric kettle,
Shiny-cheeked children,
A library with thousands of volumes,
And a canary that sings the *Internationale*

– Julian Tuwim, 1928

Polish artist Teresa Żarnower (1895?–1950) is recognized as belonging to the utopian strand of the interwar avant-gardes, those artists, architects, and writers whose works evinced a faith in technology and progress. Writing in the catalogue for the Constructivist-oriented *Wystawa Nowej Sztuki* (New Art Exhibition), held in the Polish-Lithuanian city of Vilnius in 1923, Żarnower described a new collective "delight" in the "simplicity and logical structure" of machines, "the equivalent of which is located in the simplicity and logic of artworks."[1] The following year, Żarnower co-founded the Warsaw avant-garde group Blok, active from 1924 through 1926, and she co-edited the group's journal. Along with the groups Praesens (1926–30) and a.r. (1929–36), Blok was one of a number of avant-garde artistic constellations in interwar Poland that encompassed Cubist, Suprematist, and Constructivist tendencies.[2] What these groups shared was not style alone, however, but an investment in architecture as a guiding principle for aesthetic production. Formal experimentation in various artistic mediums was a way to reflect upon a future built environment and, by extension, a future relationship of art and daily life. However, as art historian Andrej Turowski points out, diverse approaches to this problem would soon cause the dispersion of the Polish Constructivist avant-garde.[3] Architect Szymon Syrkus, who left Blok to form Praesens, would go on to play an active role in Warsaw urban planning during the 1930s and 1940s. Sculptor Katarzyna Kobro, a fellow member of Blok and Praesens, spoke of her work as "laboratory experiment(s) that will define the architecture of future cities."[4] However, Kobro and her partner, painter Władysław Strzemiński, split from Praesens in 1929 because of its functionalist aesthetics and "excessive" focus on architecture. In forming the a.r. group, Kobro and Strzemiński remained committed to art as an experimental practice that influenced, yet remained autonomous from, instrumentalized design.



Fig. 1. Teresa arnower. Untitled (late 1910s), medium and size unknown.

Żarnower herself occupied a middle point on this continuum. Though she collaborated on modernist building designs with her partner, Mieczysław Szczuka, and with various architects, these designs went unbuilt.[5] But, in contrast to Kobro, her artistic production was not an essentialist investigation of the medium of sculpture.[6] From early work in sculpture, Żarnower's practice developed to encompass graphic design, typography, architectural proposals, and photomontage, those mediums Szczuka described as "utilitarian art."[7] Żarnower's interwar career thus seems to exemplify Constructivism fulfilling itself as an aesthetic pursuit and moving into the social realm.[8]

Yet rather than Constructivist formal experimentation, machine logic, or rationalist architecture, Żarnower's works remained engaged with the arbitrary, the bodily, and the indeterminate. And in their impure Constructivism, Żarnower's works manifest the ambiguous position of Polish artists vis-à-vis the better-known artistic avant-gardes both East and West: her Constructivist ethos belongs to neither Vkhutemas nor Bauhaus, her forms resemble neither Tatlin's Counter Reliefs nor Kurt Schwitters's Merzbau. Across a variety of media, Żarnower's works display tensions between monumentality and fragility, between rupture and the persistence of tradition, between annihilation and renewal.[9]

While these tensions can be seen as fundamental to the fraught project of the historical artistic avant-gardes, Żarnower's works were rooted in the particularity of interwar Warsaw, in the problematics of architecture and urbanism for a city in flux. What characterizes Żarnower's works over the early decades of the twentieth century is not simply vanguardist formal investigation, but an aesthetic and thematic engagement with the cyclic destruction and visionary rebuilding of Warsaw's urban fabric during the political turmoil of the 1920s through 1940s. Żarnower's was a Constructivism of ambiguity, of forms that refused to resolve as purely geometric or corporeal. In her art practice, buildings were like bodies, and bodies like buildings, in that both occupied states of perpetual construction and perpetual ruin.

Interwar Poland was a crucible for aesthetic practices suspended between East and West.[10] Though art historical narratives of the twentieth century have focused on Constructivism as the key field of innovation for interwar Polish artists, their careers demonstrated considerable aesthetic diversity.[11] After a long nineteenth century (1795–1918) spent partitioned among Austria-Hungary, Prussia-Germany, and Russia, the newly independent Second Polish Republic (1918–39) saw its artistic avant-garde working with elements of Russian Constructivism, Viennese and German Expressionism, Dutch Neo-Plasticism, and the transnational syntaxes of Cubo-Futurism and functionalist architecture.

Żarnower's works display this stylistic heterogeneity, while demonstrating her persistent concern with problematic monumentality across styles. Compare an early sculpture of a seated female nude from the period just following her study at the Warsaw School of Fine Arts during the late 1910s (Fig. 1), with the small, materially ambiguous *Architektur-Plastik* (Plastic Architecture) sculpture exhibited at Berlin's *Der Sturm* gallery in 1923 (Fig. 2).

The earlier figure departs from the model of Żarnower's teacher, Vienna- and Paris-trained Polish sculptor Edward Wittig, and reflects the indirect influence of French sculptor Aristide Maillol. As Rosalind Krauss has described, in Maillol's works, "compression of the separate parts of the body occurs, resulting in an adjustment of the body toward a simplified, compact geometric volume," as in the cuboid nude of Maillol's 1902 slouched bronze *Study for "Thought."*[12] Żarnower's figure assumes a pyramidal form: a Brancusi-like head is tucked underneath the triangular bend of an elbow, whose angle is doubled in the heavy fold of the upright knee and echoed in the solid triangular base of the folded bottom leg. But rather than suggesting an idealist "consonance between the internal structure of the body and its external form," the angular composition of Żarnower's figure occupies a transitional phase between the roughened Neoclassicism of her teacher and the abstract geometries of Constructivist sculpture.[13] That is, instead of Maillol's classical proportions, Żarnower's work displays a mismatch between the more delicate forms of the figure's head, neck, and bosom, and the behemoth, more purely abstract limbs of the lower body. This is not the psychologically coherent figure of Maillol's neoclassical nude, with her inwardly directed gaze. But nor does Żarnower's work exhibit the theatricality found in the draped limbs and exposed body of Wittig's most famous work, *Ewa* (1912), which suggests a Northern Renaissance Rape of Europa painting.[14] Lacking the psychologizing of Maillol and the sexualized drama of Wittig, Żarnower instead demonstrates detachment through a mode of abstraction in which the human body is schematized in basic geometric forms.

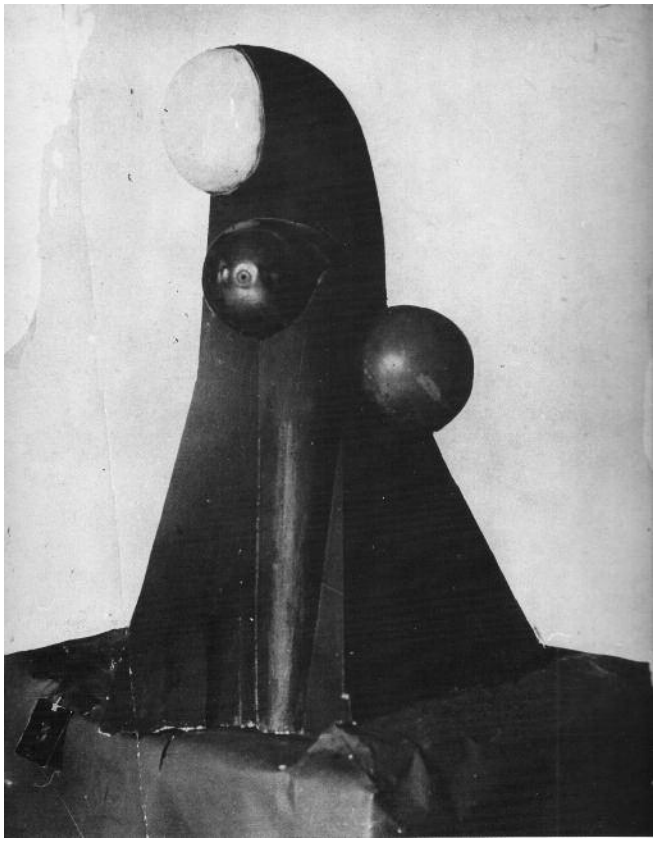


Fig. 2. Teresa arnower. *Architektur-Plastik* (Plastic Architecture) (1923), medium and size unknown. Reproduced in *Der Sturm* [Berlin] (June 1923).

At the same time, Żarnower's figure also formally engages with the problem of indeterminate settings for artworks: would sculpture sit in the interior of the gallery or in a public space? Maillol's early sculptures typically rested on bronze or marble bases whose geometric shapes defined the outer edges of the figure's volume.[15] In contrast, Wittig draped his female nude across a craggy solid resembling geological features.[16] Where Maillol's neoclassical figures sit on orderly volumes in the cozy interiority of the Beaux Arts museum or gallery—the space of culture—and Wittig's seem to inhabit the natural world, Żarnower's female nude gestures toward a nascent Constructivist space. An abstracted human form unfolds from a geometric base, suggesting one way that human bodies might come to inhabit a built environment being reformulated on Constructivist lines. Indeed, early in her career, Żarnower would exhibit at the Corso Cinema in Vilnius (1923), and the inaugural exhibition of Blok (1924) was held at the Laurin & Klement automobile showroom in Warsaw, rather than in an art museum or a salon. Constructivist artworks were assimilated

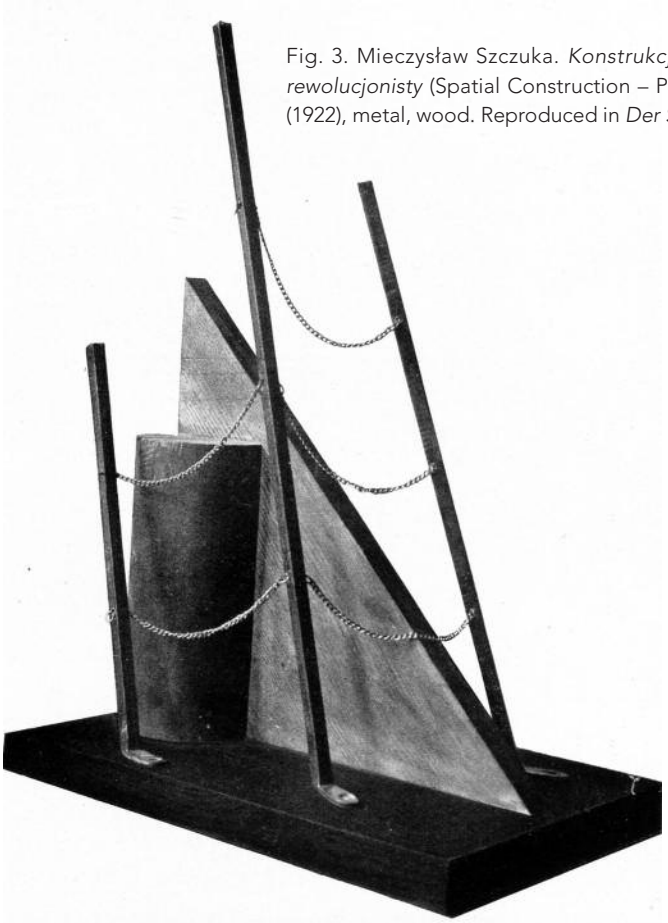


Fig. 3. Mieczysław Szczuka. *Konstrukcja przestrzenna – portret rewolucjonisty* (Spatial Construction – Portrait of a Revolutionary) (1922), metal, wood. Reproduced in *Der Sturm* [Berlin] (June 1923).

into spaces for display of new technologies, i.e., the medium of film, or industrial design objects like new automobiles. Within these mechanized spaces of contemporary urban society, Żarnower blurred the division between sculpture and base, as well as between human body and constructed environment.

At Berlin's Der Sturm gallery in 1923, Żarnower exhibited various nudes, a model for a movie theater project, a sculptural *Monument* in concrete, and a watercolor *Mechanical Man* (all now presumed lost). The juxtaposition of architectural proposal and monument, Cubist nudes and a (Léger-like?) mechanical figure suggests that Żarnower was working through variations of answers to the question: how would the human body assimilate to a modern cityscape? In the only extant text attributable to Żarnower, written that same year, she spoke of an engagement with urban space through monumental sculpture.

> If we introduce into sculpture (which is a solid, pushing off the air that surges upon it from all sides) materials requiring large surfaces, like concrete, iron and glass, it is only on the streets, squares etc. that we can find sufficiently great masses of air. There it will find its uses as a monument that is not in discord with its surroundings.... Elements introduced by the NEW ART eliminate randomness and provide MONUMENTALITY, which is determined by CONSTRUCTION using equivalences whose interdependences give a sense of balance.[17]

In its discussion of balanced construction, this text resembles the rhetoric of de Stijl theorist Theo van Doesburg, who wrote in 1918, "The consciousness of the new plasticism implies cooperation of all the plastic arts in order to attain a pure monumental style on the basis of balanced relationship."[18] One might expect that, moving forward, Żarnower's works would come to resemble the agglomerative architectonic structures of van Doesburg, Vladimir Tatlin's tautly balanced corner reliefs, or the tensegrity of works by Latvian-Russian sculptor Karl Ioganson.[19] However, even as Żarnower's sculptures became more resolutely abstract, they did not visually evoke these precedents.

Żarnower's 1923 *Architektur-Plastik* continues her earlier explorations in merging geometric volumes and human form, suggesting a body crossed with a building.[20] While this sculpture is often held up as exemplary of Żarnower's Constructivist practice, it does not share the architectonic character of Constructivist sculptures by Tatlin, fellow Blok artist Katarzyna Kobro, or even Żarnower's partner, Szczuka (1922; Fig. 3). Rather than defining volumes with planes of wood or metal and linear filaments of wire, Żarnower's sculpture is a monolithic, irregular pyramid of indeterminate materiality featuring a single eye on its "face." This composition, as well as other sculptures from the mid-1920s illustrated in *Blok*, display vague formal affinities with Cubist figures such as Alexander Archipenko's *Frauenfigur*, illustrated in the May 1923 issue of *Der Sturm*, and Jacques Lipchitz's *Man with Mandolin* (1916–17).[21] A more local reference is Polish sculptor Xawery Dunikowski: the silhouette of Żarnower's *Architektur-Plastik* echoes that of Dunikowski's 1917 copper sculpture *Tchnienie* (Breath). However, the 1923 *Architektur-Plastik* fits oddly in this lineage. Like all these models, Żarnower's sculpture is only incompletely abstract. But where the Cubist precedents are basically upright human figures composed of geometric forms, *Architektur-Plastik* retains its sense of a humanoid presence via the odd eye protruding from its pyramidal "face." The overall silhouette remains that of a building or monument, and a tiny vertical rectangular depression at "ground-level" seems to suggest a doorway, as if the sculpture possesses an interior. This fits the claim of Żarnower's 1923 text in the catalogue for the New Art Exhibition in Vilnius, in which she wrote that "a technical raising up of a monument made of concrete and iron produces empty space inside which can be used for practical purposes."[22] Finally, also like a building, Żarnower's sculpture meets the ground directly, without the mediating form of a pedestal or base. Even as it rejected a traditional sculpture-base relationship, Żarnower's *Architektur-Plastik* retains the seemingly retrograde form of the monolith rather than the contingent, agglomerative, discontinuous, worldly character of modernist sculpture.[23] In this, Żarnower's works diverge dramatically from those of her colleague Kobro, whose open plane sculptures demonstrate that, "The organic law of sculpture is to unite with space, to be intimately related to space, to meld into and absorb space."[24] Rather than the modernity of Tatlin's ever-changing *Monument to the Third International* (1919–20), with its inner structure displaced to the exterior, Żarnower's work formally mimics the weighty volumes, the rootedness, that historically characterized nineteenth-century

monumental sculpture. However, the seeming retrograde character of her work—its belated monumentality—occurs in relation to the medium of sculpture, while Żarnower was in fact thinking about artworks in relation to their urban surroundings, where "sufficiently great masses of air" would counterbalance the large swathes of concrete and iron made possible by recent technological advances.[25] The balanced composition endorsed by both Żarnower and van Doesburg would be achieved not within a particular artwork, but through artworks in relation to their surroundings. This was an artwork whose Constructivist character was always contaminated by bodies.

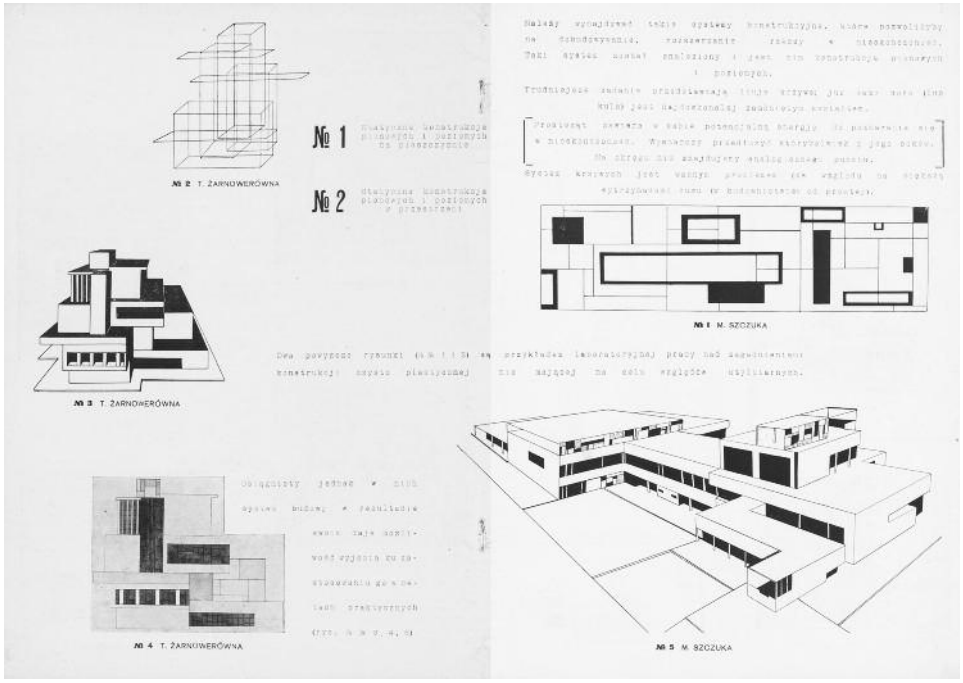


Fig. 4. Mieczysław Szczuka and Teresa arnower. 1 & 2: Static Constructions, 3, 4, & 5: Practical Applications, *Blok* 8-9 (November– December 1924).

As Poland emerged from over a century of partition in the late 1910s, the newly independent state paradoxically saw a nationalist reinvigoration of architectural tradition alongside radical visions of tabula rasa urbanism.[26] In part, these dueling commitments respond to the city's recent history of destruction. World War I saw departing Russian and German armies leave a trail of destruction in their wake; they sabotaged transportation networks and elements of urban infrastructure, even stealing tramway tracks.[27] Rejection of the city's partition-era past meant that many buildings evoking Russian rule were intentionally razed during the 1920s, creating gaps in the cityscape.[28] At the same time, with the end of its role as a Russian garrison city, Warsaw dismantled nineteenth-century fortifications and expanded its territory by around 250 percent during the 1910s.[29] As a frontrunner for capital city of the newly re-created Polish state, Warsaw became the focus of a number of urban planning schemes.[30] Despite having the highest population density of interwar Europe—or perhaps because such density made the inadequacies of its urban infrastructure all the more palpable—Warsaw was the focus of modernist urban planning by architects such as Szymon and Helena Syrkus, who were involved with the *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM).[31] Both planned and unplanned, sweeping urbanization governed life in interwar Warsaw.

Amidst the 1920s urbanization of Warsaw, Żarnower's circle of artists—those of the Blok, Praesens, and a.r. groups—were steeped in discussions of architecture and urbanism. Several members of the Praesens group, including its leader, Szymon Syrkus, were themselves architects, while Katarzyna Kobro of a.r. imagined her sculptures to project the forms of "future cities."[32] Żarnower herself occupied a middle ground between practical work in architecture informed by aesthetic concerns and artistic practice as a visionary projection of future life. Throughout the mid-1920s, the pages of *Blok* juxtaposed images of paintings, sculptures, and graphic design with formally congruous designs for architectural projects, both Polish and international. The final issue of *Blok* even served as a catalogue for the 1926 International Exhibition of Modern Architecture in Warsaw. However, even as Szczuka and Żarnower pivoted Blok towards architecture, their own architectural designs were largely projective rather than pragmatic solutions to Warsaw's interwar housing problems.[33] Drawing upon the precedents of Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg as well as Russian Constructivists El Lissitzky and Kazimir Malevich, Szczuka designed Constructivist spaces in which geometric areas of color covered interior surfaces. Also during the 1920s, both Szczuka and Żarnower produced "spatial compositions" or "spatial studies" that segued into architectural designs (Fig. 4).[34] Five images in a 1924 issue of *Blok* show Żarnower and Szczuka working through examples "of laboratory work on issues of purely plastic construction, not aimed at utilitarian consideration,"[35] as well as potential applications of these spatial compositions as buildings. These designs are, ultimately, paper architecture that remained in the realm of the bourgeois interior and the elite single-family residence, rather than a vision of collective housing that was sorely needed at that time in Warsaw. Of course, this is a well-trod path for the historical avant-gardes, one that encompasses the seeming retreat from the world of Piet Mondrian's de Stijl environments and the fantastical forays into world-making proposed by certain Soviet artists such as Malevich.[36] At this point, then, these artists' architectural designs played with modernist forms but offered no solutions for modernity's problematic urban milieu.

Even as Żarnower's architectural practice remained theoretical, her designs for buildings were permeated with a logic of the human body. A 1926 project for a cinema, jointly

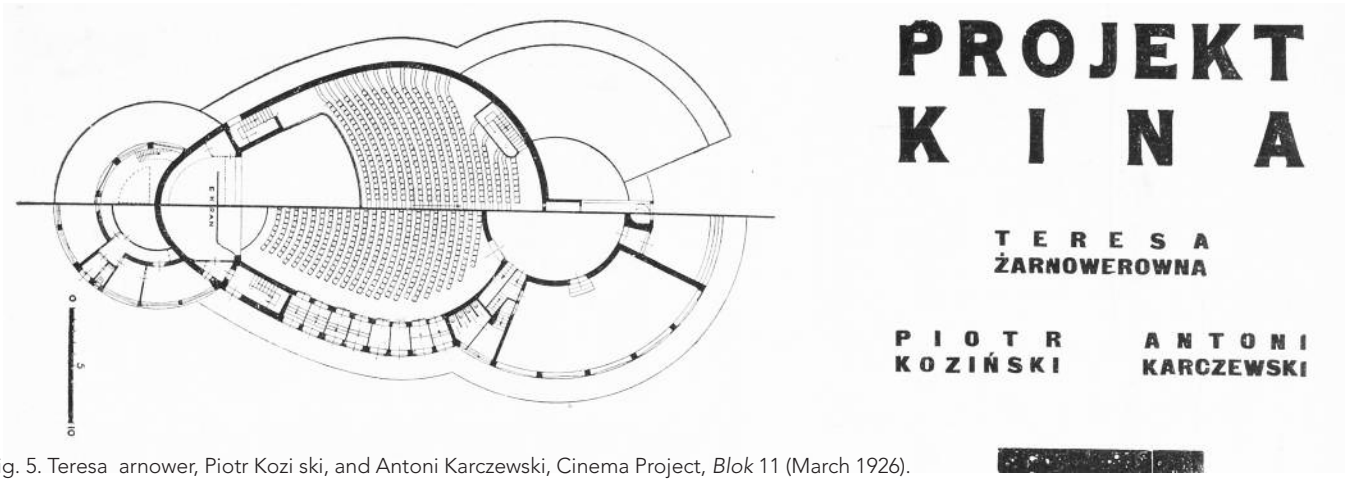


Fig. 5. Teresa arnower, Piotr Kozi ski, and Antoni Karczewski, Cinema Project, *Blok* 11 (March 1926).

designed with architects Piotr Koziński and Antoni Karczewski, was deeply anthropomorphic. The symmetrical facade of the entrance resembled a face, with two small dark windows for eyes and a setback suggesting the shape of a human cranium. The floor plan of the theater itself looked like a human eyeball (Fig. 5), with the film projection paralleling the process of human vision in two ways. For one, the projection room sat at the top of a narrow spiral staircase centered over a circular lobby, whose shape resembled that of a cornea, iris, and pupil in relation to the seating space as an eye's vitreous body. The film projector sent light through the pupil—here, a small hole in the projection chamber wall—which passed through the vitreous humor of the theater space and was projected onto the screen, which acted like the retina of an eye. But there was a doubling of this optical process as the audience members received the images. Like the entrance lobby, the backstage area resembled the circular cornea, iris, and pupil of an eye, with the light entering the cinema "eye" towards the audience members. In this model, the audience members would act like an eye's rods and cones, receiving visual information and transmitting it through the optical nerve to the brain—perhaps standing in for a larger social body. This is a slightly different take on the kino-eye than the famed rhetoric of Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov: "I, cinema-eye, I, the mechanical eye. I, the machine, show you the world as only I can see it."[37] As Żarnower had written in 1923, "Impressions received via technology replace *us*—or further mediate received experience from nature. Machines delight *us* [emphases added]."[38] Żarnower's was not the autocratic stance of the (male) filmmaker's singular vision, augmented by the technical support of the camera. Instead, her "cinema-eye" consisted of *collective* viewing by a film audience, an audience acting as optical nerves for a social brain. And where Żarnower's earlier sculptures made bodies architectonic, here one can see a building becoming bodily.

This shift, from bodies as buildings to buildings as bodies, happened not in three dimensions but in two, via a series of graphic experiments in which Żarnower played with abstractions of human bodies and the built environment. Her graphic compositions deployed solid and dashed lines in a variety of thicknesses and orientations, overlapping wedges or planes, curves that seem to dance upon the page, dots marching in orderly rows, and assorted geometric shapes delineated or suggested by discontinuous lines. Many resemble the diagrammatic, fragmented pseudo-machines of French Dadaist Francis Picabia's 1910s mechanomorphs or Swedish Dadaist Viking Eggeling's pre-cinematic abstract studies.[39] Żarnower made explicit the cinematic character of her formal explorations, even denoting one of her graphic compositions *Konstrukcja filmowa* (Film Design) (1923/4; Fig. 6).[40] Long, staggered wedges, stacked waves of curved lines, and concentric bulls-eyes suggest patterns of angled light and movement. But even as these graphic design layouts evoke abstract film, there is a sense of lights bouncing off, upon, and through objects in a built environment. "Light waves" bounce against a building corner formed of thick perpendicular lines, with a few of the waves transformed to wedgeslike light passing through a window.[41] This sensation becomes explicit in the relationship between untitled graphic compositions in *Blok* 1 of March 1924 (Fig. 7) and *Blok* 5 of July 1924 (Fig. 8) and a maquette for a theater set in *Blok* 10 the following year (1925; Fig. 9). The lines emanating from a circular form become, in the theater set, three dimensional

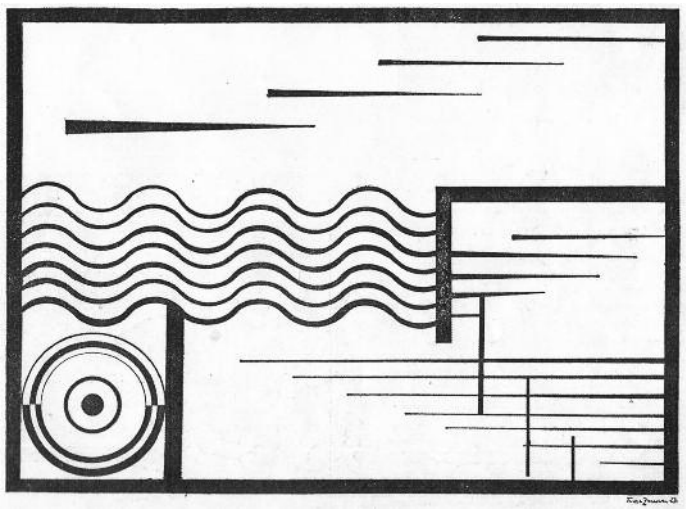


Fig. 6. Teresa arnower. *Konstrukcja filmowa* (Film Design), *Blok* 8–9 (November–December 1924).

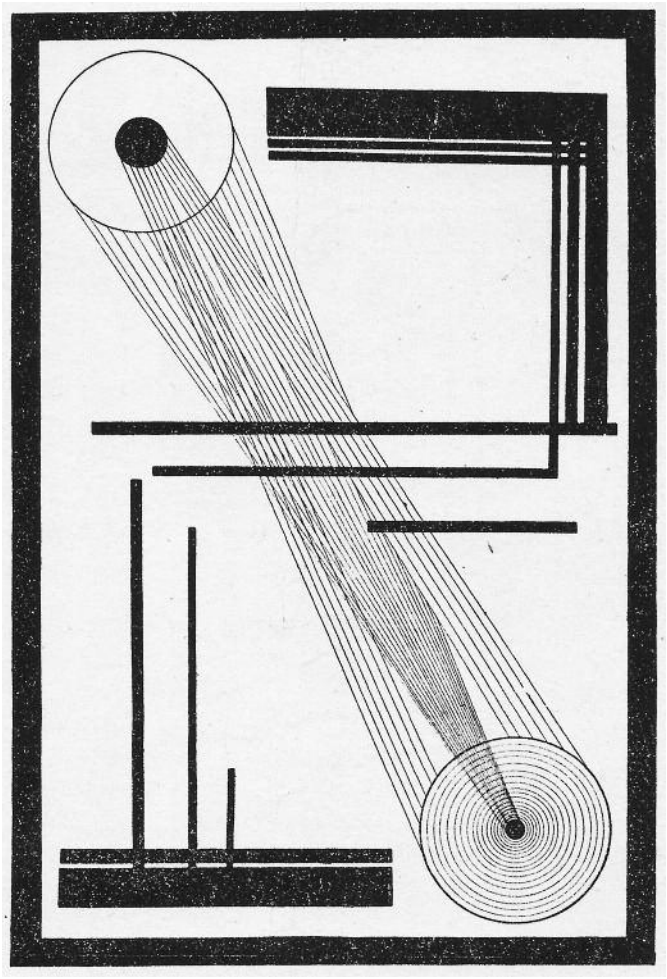


Fig. 7. Teresa arnower. Untitled, *Blok* 1 (March 1924).

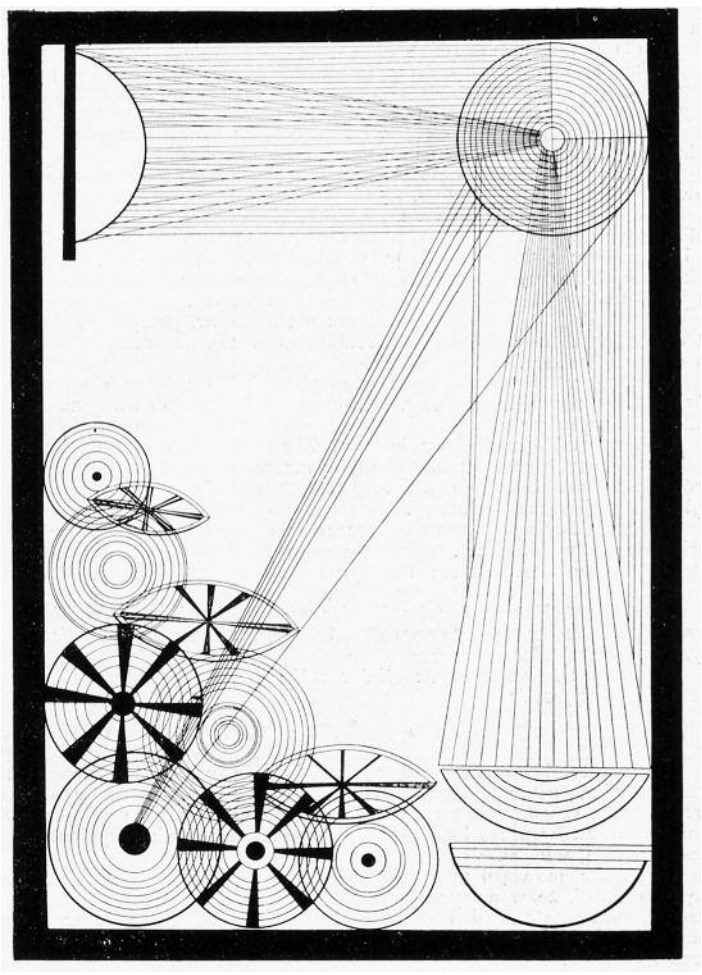


Fig. 8. Teresa arnower. Untitled, *Blok* 5 (July 1924).

strands stretching from one side of the stage to the other, as light cast upon tiny model structures and a human form atop a pedestal, ambiguously occupying a role between statue and living being.

Żarnower's most intriguing graphic composition, and one where she departs most convincingly from the graphic precedents of Picabia and Eggeling, is a work that embeds graphic design in the realm of architecture and urbanism, not via mimetic representation, but diagrammatically, in a work titled *Typografja* (Typography) (1924; Fig. 10). Throughout the 1920s, urban planning in Warsaw responded to a city that had already experienced damage to buildings and infrastructure, in an intellectual climate that promoted radically functionalist planning approaches. As urban planners worked to envision a new Warsaw, they designed new buildings and restored damaged ones, tearing down others to make way for wider boulevards or new structures. And as each proposal or change occurred, a new map of Warsaw emerged. In her 1924 graphic design work, Żarnower drew upon patterns found in these cartographic representations, from the darkest wood grain of dense urban agglomerations, to repeated crescents marking stands of trees, to the linear blue pattern of the Vistula River. The 1924 map of Warsaw (Fig. 11) that seems to have provided the direct inspiration for Żarnower's *Typography* displays the tiny gridded city center of Warsaw against a larger region of irregular topography, presenting the streets of Warsaw as a minuscule detail within a continuous, improvisatory flow of different textures on the map—representing water, vegetation, and an older built environment. In contrast, Żarnower's *Typography* plucks out fragments of each texture and rearranges them orthogonally into a grid, using typographic conventions to produce a wry commentary on the possibilities of tabula rasa planning. Żarnower's composition—fragments of river and earth, house and street, corralled into orderly rows—repurposes the conventional symbols of mapmaking in the non-referential framework of the grid.[42] While this abstract pictorial language is an avant-garde strategy, it simultaneously references the local reality of attempts to remake the physical plant of Warsaw with radical urban planning schemes.

In the late 1920s, Żarnower's practice shifted away from architectural designs, and her involvement in avant-garde exhibitions ceased. This occurred around the same time as the untimely death of her personal and artistic partner; Szczuka's death has thus been seen as the major impetus for Żarnower's artistic shift. More convincing explanations can be found in the professionalization of architectural practice in a newly independent Poland, and the growing militancy of Poland's left following the 1926 May Coup. By the 1930s, trained architects

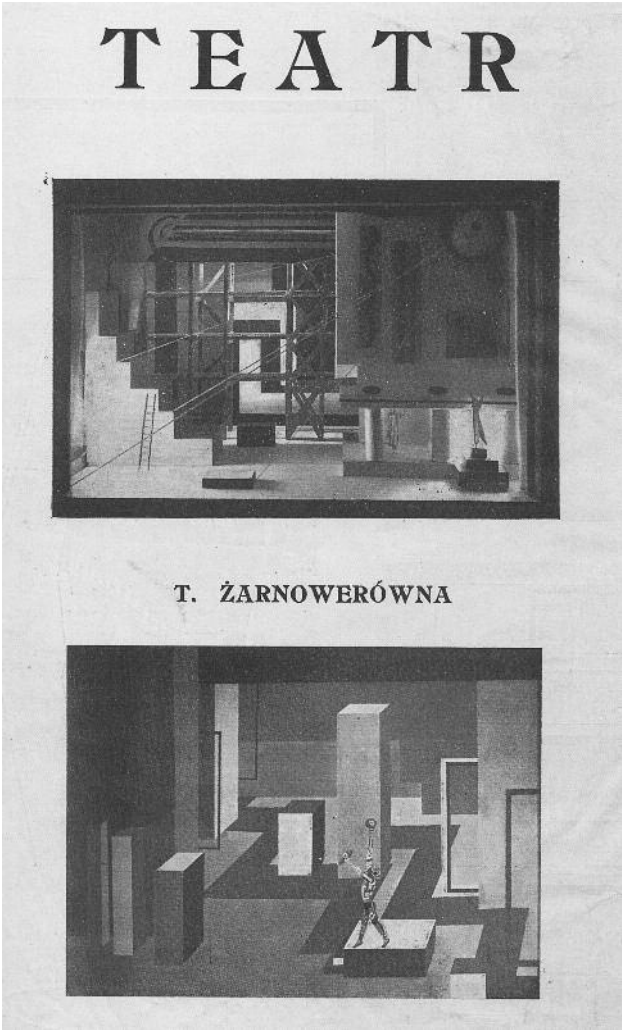


Fig. 9. Teresa arnower. Untitled (Theater design), *Blok* 10 (April 1925).

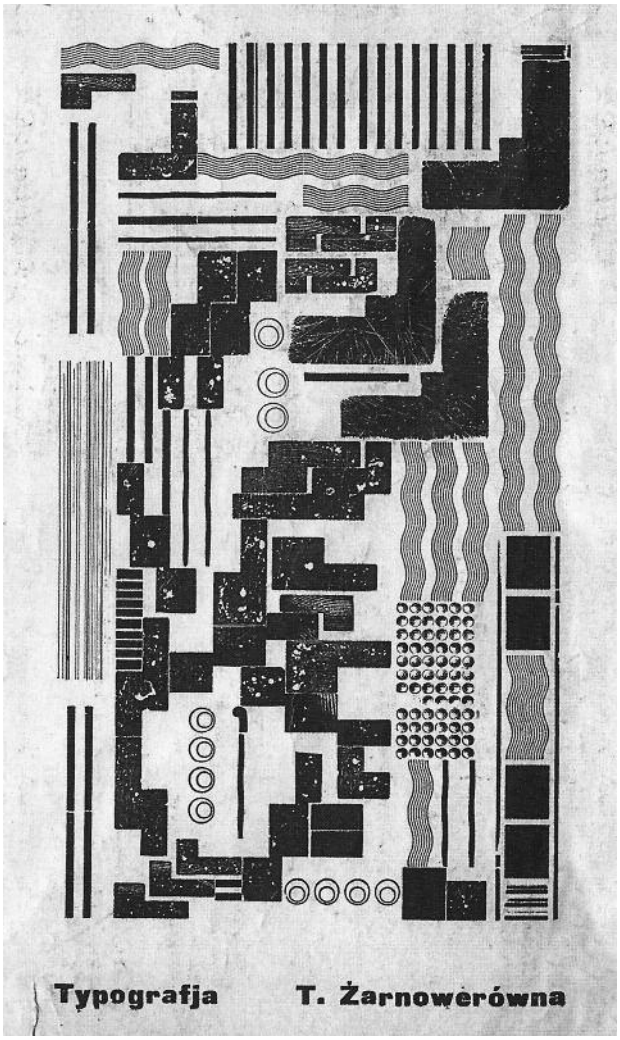


Fig. 10. Teresa arnower. *Typografja* (Typography), *Blok* 2 (May 1924).

like Szymon and Helena Szyrkus, who participated in CIAM meetings, could design buildings that were actually constructed.[43] As avant-garde utopianism met concrete reality, artists like Żarnower were either unequipped or not inclined to follow through on construction of their visionary designs.

In lieu of architecture, the medium of photomontage offered a mode of world-making independent of the social applicability of such designs; and in place of avant-garde artistic journals, Żarnower's works were increasingly featured in political publications. During the late 1920s and 1930s Żarnower produced photomontages and graphic layouts for the Hebrew-language press, leftwing political posters, and socialist publications such as *Czerwony Sztandar* (The Red Banner), published by the Central Committee of the Polish Communist International.

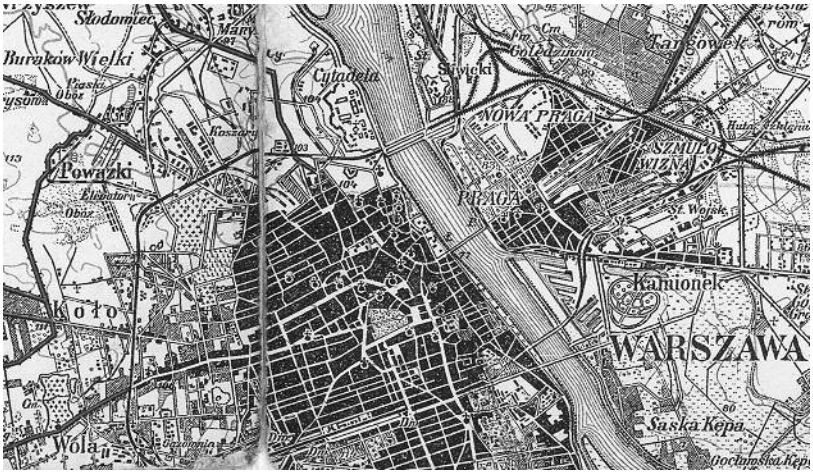


Fig. 11. Detail from *Mapa Topograficzna okolic Warszawy* (Topographical map of Warsaw) (1924). *Wojskowego Instytutu Geograficznego* (Military Geographic Institute), Warsaw.

On a 1931 cover of *Czerwony Sztandar*, a statue of Lenin emerges from a vertiginous mash-up of buildings and figures at various scales, including a photographic image of Stalin, a nameless female agricultural worker, and faceless masses filling the streets. These montage works continued Żarnower's intertwining of architecture and the human body. However, in place of aesthetic solutions to social issues (e.g.,

the challenge of comfortable and affordable housing in rapidly urbanizing cities), Żarnower's photomontages addressed explicitly political problems of the day with the melodrama of a theater scene.[44] If architecture was a slow and perhaps ineffectual way for artists to remake contemporary life, propaganda had the appeal of immediacy. To reshape cities, perhaps one must first reshape the ideas of the people who inhabited them. The 1930s saw Żarnower's artistic output diminish, perhaps in response to the increasing precariousness of her position as a Jewish Pole and her eventual departure from Poland. The 1926 May Coup, supported by leftist organizations including the Polish Socialist Party, the Peasant Party, and the Polish Communist Party, had ushered in a period of relative stability for Poland's Jewish population. However, the death of moderate military leader Józef Piłsudski in 1935 saw a rising atmosphere of anti-Semitism, propelling Żarnower's flight through Western Europe to North America from 1937 through 1942.[45] There is evidence that Żarnower attempted to paint small-scale works while in Paris (1937–40), in Lisbon (1940–41), and in Montreal (1941–42), though her letters from this time express creative frustration; artworks from this time period are presumed lost.[46] Yet, as the situation in Central Europe grew increasingly dire during the 1940s, the exiled Żarnower would return to the medium of photomontage in order to express anger and sorrow over the decimation of Warsaw.

The photomontage in Figure 12 (1942) shows a city in ruins. Young girls stricken by misery, or perhaps the scent of corpses, can be glimpsed through the bars of an upturned cart heaped with bundles. Impossibly, Warsaw Castle still stands in the distance, framed by a cataract of hay, a lifeless arm hanging from the cart, a rubble-filled square and a small child's corpse. Thrust against the picture plane, a downcast youth in a striped shirt crouches upon a pile of bricks before the shell of a destroyed building. Beside him, bare earth gives way to a single house among rows of isolated chimneys along a burnt-out street. Above, between hay cart and ruin, another child's cherubic blond head juts out at us, his stunned visage offering an accusatory rebuke to viewers.

This image is one of five photomontages Żarnower created for the book *Obrona Warszawy* (Defense of Warsaw), published in 1942 by the left-wing Polish Labor Group in New York.[47] The book was intended to publicize Polish suffering during the bitterly fought 1939 Siege of Warsaw, when German aerial bombardments razed thousands of buildings, paving the way for the German army to take over the city.[48] Żarnower had already left Poland for Paris, in 1937, and by 1940 she was struggling to leave Europe via Lisbon; over fourteen months in the Portuguese city, increasingly desperate letters show her seeking money and travel documents. Turned back on her initial attempt to enter the U.S., she spent over a year in Montreal before settling in New York City in 1943. It was during this turbulent period that Żarnower completed her designs for *Obrona Warsawy*. Żarnower's experience of the siege was thus mediated through the very mass media whose images served as material for her photomontages.[49]

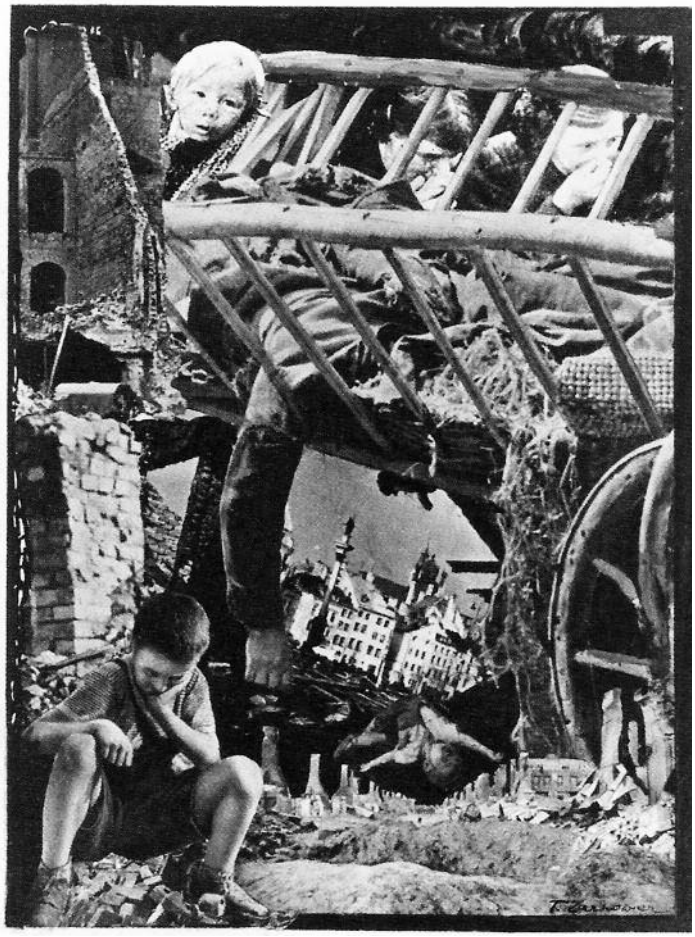


Fig. 12. Teresa arnower. *Obrona Warszawy* (Defense of Warsaw) (1942), photomontage (back cover of book).

In *Obrona Warsawy*, Żarnower turned the fragmentary nature of modernist photomontage to the task of representing literal fragmentation—of humans, of a city. For art historian David Crowley, this is "a bitter irony."[50] Żarnower, "like many avant-garde artists in the 1920s, had seized on the fragment as both a kind of metaphor for Modernity and a revolutionary device to hasten the modern world into being.... But by 1942, the fragment, in the form of broken bodies and shattered buildings on the cover of *Obrona Warszawy*, was a tragic demonstration of the destructive power of modernity."[51] That is, in the 1920s, Żarnower's employment of montage disjunction invoked a modernist revolution in perception as a utopian project. By 1942, Crowley asserts, the fragmentation of Żarnower's *Obrona Warszawy* merely reflected the nefarious reality of a violent modernity.

It would be a mistake, however, to understand Żarnower's use of photomontage as simply a naturalistic representation of the destruction wreaked upon Warsaw in 1939. For one, the fragmentation that gives these images their emotional force resulted from Żarnower's alteration of the documentary source photographs through clipping and assembly.[52] She did not, that is, simply reprint images of destroyed buildings. A film of the siege by U.S. documentarian Julien Bryan showed "restraint" by displaying "no blood or close-ups of corpses ... and no severe brutality."[53] Żarnower's images, created for the necessarily

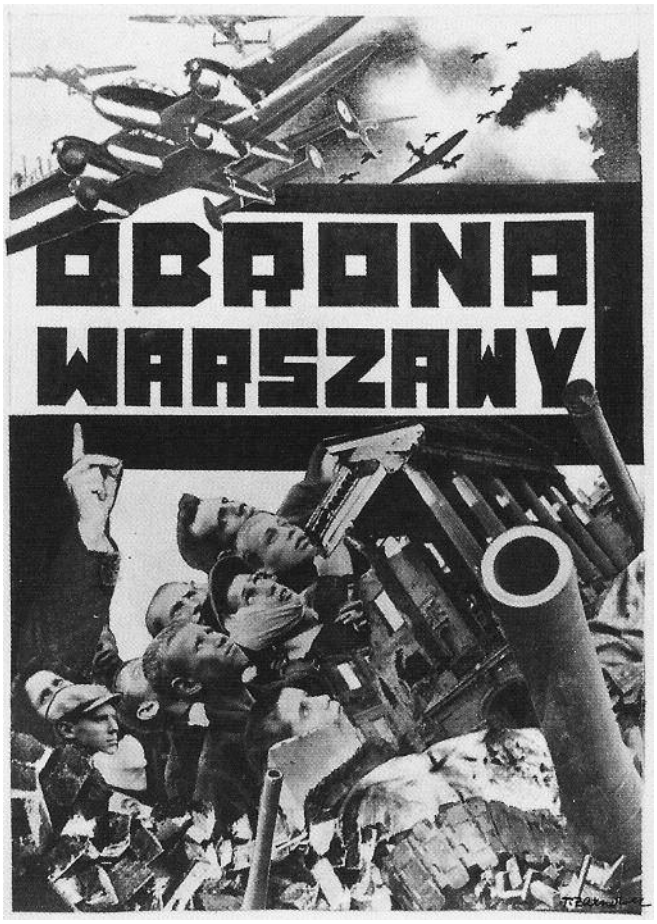


Fig. 13. Teresa arnower. *Obrona Warszawy* (Defense of Warsaw) (1942), photomontage (front cover of book).

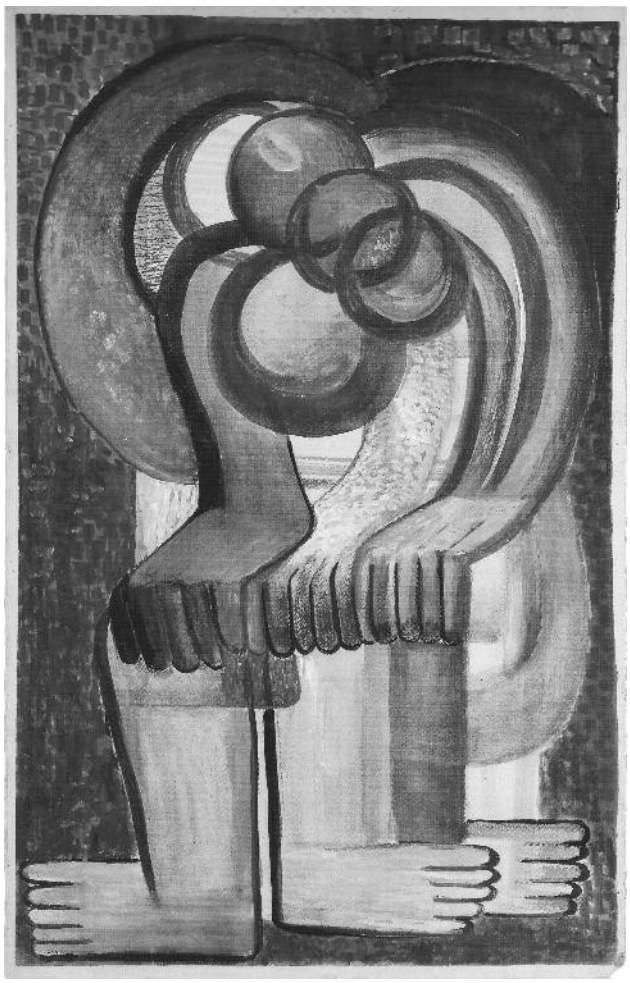


Fig. 14. Teresa arnower. *Expectation* (1946), gouache.

restricted audience of a Polish-language volume published by an organization linked to the Polish Socialist Party in America, needed no such restraint. Her emphatic intertwining of bodies and buildings, limbs and rubble, were indeed calculated to draw upon a visual and embodied memory of Warsaw to achieve maximum emotional effect.

In image after image of *Obrona Warszawy*, the characteristic architecture of Warsaw is invoked not simply as backdrop, but in formally significant ways. What Crowley characterizes as "broken bodies" on the cover of *Obrona Warszawy* (Fig. 13) are in fact the upturned heads and pointing fingers of Warsovians alert to encroaching warplanes overhead. Their directed gazes and gesturing arms parallel the barrels of tank cannons, turned defensively skyward in front of the columns of Warsaw's *Pałac Komisji Rządowej Przychodu i Skarbu* (Palace of the Government Commission of Revenue and the Treasury). Though the tank seems to surmount a pile of rubble, the backdrop of the image is the dynamically oriented Palace, whose fractured facade has been partially mended by Żarnower's collage work. Poignantly, in the source photograph for this image, which postdates the 1939 Siege, this section of the façade is revealed to be all that remains of the structure.[54] In Żarnower 's photomontage, the mangled ruins of the building are concealed by a crowd of faces. Melding bodies and building, the photomontage implies that the Palace is still whole, metonymically asserting the continuing legitimacy of a fragile Polish nation and a defiant city of Warsaw.

Żarnower's approach did not foreground the disjunctive qualities of the medium of photomontage, as practiced by the Berlin Dadaists. Instead, Żarnower's images fulfill the "need to construct *iconic* representations for a new mass audience," that Benjamin H. D. Buchloh ascribes to late Soviet practices emerging from photomontage.[55] However, the very narrowness and specificity of Żarnower's audience, centered on Polish exiles in the U.S., meant that the suturing tactics she employed were jarring precisely because exiles' memories of Warsaw were put to the test. Moreover, such suturing continues the formal explorations she began in the medium of sculpture. Just as avant-garde photomontage would make use of the fragment, so modernist sculpture was deeply invested in the logic of the human form dispersed, disintegrated, or deformed, from Cubist figures to Giacometti's attenuated figures. But Żarnower's centripetally oriented sculptures rework the avant-garde logic of the fragment in favor of an agglomerative mode of composition, something akin to a city rebuilding itself in stages, in pieces and parts.

By marshaling the evidentiary power of photographic documents in order to conceal present realities, Żarnower's

work does in fact participate in the strategies of iconic image-making described by Buchloh—but to what end? Several photomontages inside the book include dramatic images of violence, bodies, and rubble; however, Żarnower began and ended the volume with images of intact and recognizable buildings. On the front cover, Warsaw's Commission Palace still stands, despite the fact that it lay in ruins by the end of the 1939 Siege. And though it is located in the background and glimpsed through a tunnel of horrors, it is an image of Warsaw Castle, intact, that closes the volume. The city of Warsaw, Żarnower suggests, will return.

Written into art history as a pioneering Constructivist in interwar Warsaw, Żarnower's subsequent career has largely been forgotten. Settled in New York City in the late 1940s, she returned to making "art for art," leaving behind her Constructivist and agitational past in favor of biomorphic gouaches that would be exhibited at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery in 1946. How can one understand these works in light of her earlier practice? Following Benjamin Buchloh's claim that postwar Constructivist practices were merely watered-down, depoliticized, and aestheticized versions of the true avant-garde work of the previous generation, it makes perfect sense for a politically committed artist to leave behind Constructivism as mere fashion in the postwar period.[56] However, in a text to accompany Żarnower's 1946 exhibition at Art of This Century, painter Barnett Newman offers a slightly different account of Żarnower's shift away from Constructivism: [Żarnower] now, in her first exhibition of work done here [in the U.S.], feels that purist constructions in a world that she has seen collapse around her into shambles and personal tragedy are not enough, that an insistence on absolute purity may be total illusion."[57] Newman's characterization of Żarnower centers on the ideological emptiness of Constructivism following the tragic end of the modernist and avant-garde projects, as they found themselves perverted or realized—depending on one's point of view—in totalitarian politics, or the postwar corporatization of avant-garde aesthetics.[58] But unlike Buchloh's accusations, that former Constructivists devolved to corporate shills through strategic self-fashioning, Newman explains Żarnower's postwar career in response to personal losses, psychologizing her artistic trajectory in terms of individual sorrow and post-traumatic withdrawal.

One should be particularly wary of such psychologizing in the case of female artists. As Yve-Alain Bois points out with regards to Żarnower's fellow Polish avant-garde artist Katarzyna Kobro, the "abrupt halt" of her career must be understood to emerge from the internal progressive logic of her work, "and not, or not only, as the result of circumstances" ranging from childbirth to war to depression to Stalinist persecutions.[59] Żarnower's identity, both as a woman and as an Eastern European Jew, has subsumed her work to an overdetermined narrative of intimacy, loss, trauma, and caesura that takes the death of Szczuka and her exile from Poland as the keys to understanding her artistic development.[60] But rather than understanding the heterogeneity of Żarnower's practice as a result of a peripatetic life, this essay has argued for a practice unified by aesthetic engagement with the built environment. Even her biomorphic gouaches, in the end, are concerned with the coherence of the human figure as something both fragile and monumental. The ambiguous pyramidal form of Żarnower's youthful sculpture (Fig. 1) is echoed in the figure of her 1946 gouache, *Expectation* (Fig. 14), whose colossal feet and legs are surmounted by a head and shoulders flickering from position to position. The bodies-cum-monuments of Żarnower's early works find here their shadow twin, in the stilted movements of a colossal form caught between stillness and movement, in expectation that must ultimately go unfulfilled. For Żarnower, in the end, the avant-garde tension between world making and world destroying was embodied in the material experience of the city of Warsaw and, ultimately, the wartime fate of its people. •

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NOTES

1. "*W maszynach zachwyca nas prostota i logika konstrukcji – równowa nik swój znajduj ca w prostocie i logice DZIEŁA SZTUKI.*" Teresa arnower, "*Ch zbadania niezbadanego...*" [The Desire to Explore Uncharted...], *Katalog Wystawy Nowej Sztuki* (Vilnius: Lux,1923), 22–23 (hereafter, arnower (1923). In the pages of the journal *Blok*, mechanical items such as cars, zeppelins, and typewriters were frequently illustrated alongside artworks.
2. *a.r.* stands for "*arty ci rewolucyjni; awangarda rzeczywista*" [revolutionary artists; real avant-garde], while *Blok* means "block," and *Praesens* is Latin for "present" or "immediate."
3. Andrzej Turowski, "*Autour du constructivisme: L'art organisant la vie et ses fonctions*," in *Présences polonaises: l'art vivant autour du Musee de Lodz* (Paris: Centre George Pompidou, 1983), 142.
4. Katarzyna Kobro, "*Rze ba stanowi...*" [A Sculpture is...], *Głos Plastyków* 1-7 (1937), quoted in *Katarzyna Kobro, 1898-1951* (Łód : Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 1999), 169.
5. S. Syrkus, M. Szczuka, and T. arnowerówna, "Villa project. Plans, elevations and cross-section," *Blok* 10 (1925). Teresa arnowerówna, Piotr Kozi ski, and Antoni Karczewski, Cinema Project, *Blok* 11 (March 1926): 15. T. arnowerówna, M. Szczuka, P. Kozi ski, A. Karczewski, "First Project," *D wignia* [Lever] 1 (March 1927): 48–50.
6. On the medium specificity and, thus, the modernism of Kobro, see Yve-Alain Bois, "Strzemi ski and Kobro: In Search of Motivation" (1984), *Painting as Model* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 123–55. Yve-Alain Bois, "Kobro and Strzemi ski Revisited," *October* 156 (Spring 2016): 3-11.
7. See Szczuka's flowchart distinguishing "*sztuka dla sztuki*" (art for art) from "*sztuka utylitarna*" (utilitarian art) in the Marxist-leaning journal he edited, *D wignia*, nos. 2–3 (1927): 36–37. "Art for art" was illustrated by neoclassical architecture and paintings by Kazimir Malevich and Fernand Léger. "Utilitarian art" included photomontaged stamps, posters, newspapers, and books. The chart accompanied Szczuka's essay, "Obituary for Suprematism, a review of Malevich's 1927 exhibition at the Polish Arts Club in Warsaw.

8. An exemplary claim by art historian Stanisław Czekalski reads, "With his famous poster *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* of 1919, El Lissitzky brought Suprematist abstraction to propagandist concreteness." Stanisław Czekalski, "The Internationale of Automobile Salons and the Hagiography of Revolution. Mieczysław Szczuka at the Crossroads of New Art" [1998], *Art in Translation* 4, no. 2 (2012): 213. See also Turowski (1983), 142. "The first phase of Polish constructivism asserted structural laws characteristic of painting, sculpture, the poster, typography, architecture, ... rejecting an art of reproduction and a 'decorative' aesthetic." Subsequently, "we can speak of the coexistence of two trends: the tendency to deepen the structural knowledge of classical art forms, such as painting and sculpture, and the tendency to expand the scope of [Constructivism] to set design, photography, photomontage, film, typography, etc."
9. As art historian Ralph Ubl has traced, "the [interwar] avant-garde took up this problematics [a tension between artistic originality and automatic procedures] and radicalized it by giving equally urgent emphasis to both technicity and originality." Ralph Ubl, *Prehistoric Future: Max Ernst and the Return of Painting between the Wars*, trans. Elizabeth Tucker (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2013), 4.
10. Stanisław Czekalski notes that Jewish artists often served as hubs in this international artists' network, citing Jerzy Malinowski's study, *Grupa Jung Idysz i ydowskie rodowisko Nowej Sztuki w Polsce, 1918–1923* (The Young Yiddish Group and the Jewish Context for New Art in Poland, 1918–1923) (Warsaw: Polska Akademia Nauk, Instytut Sztuki, 1987), 50–51.
11. See, for example, a recent key art historical text developed by scholars surrounding the journal *October*, in which the only entry devoted to Polish artists reads "1928a – The publication of 'Unism in Painting' by Wladyslaw Stzreminski, followed in 1931 by a book on sculpture he coauthored with Katarzyna Kobro, *The Composition of Space*, marks the apogee of the internationalization of Constructivism." *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2011).
12. Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), 90. The angular composition of arnower's figure also resembles the exaggerated bodies and folded postures of Picasso's *rappel à l'ordre* bather paintings from around 1920.
13. Ibid.
14. The splayed body of Wittig's *Ewa* also presages the torsion of Maillol's *Air* and *River* sculptures from circa 1939.
15. As Rosalind Krauss has described, "the function of [the] pedestal is to bracket the sculptural object from natural space, declaring that its true ambience is somehow different from the randomly organized world of tables, chairs, and windows." Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 55.
16. These are closer to the Hellenism of Maillol's late works, which play with the drama of a body contorted and limbs extended outward beyond a rectangular base to intrude upon the space of viewers; such works are often situated in a landscape or garden setting.
17. arnower (1923).
18. Theo van Doesburg, "Notes on Monumental Art with Reference to Two Fragments of a Building (Hall in Holiday Center at Noordwijkerhout)" [1918], trans. Hans L.C. Jaffé, in *De Stijl* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971).
19. See Maria Gough, "In the Laboratory of Constructivism: Karl Ioganson's Cold Structures," *October* 84 (Spring 1998): 90–117.
20. Another of arnower's sculptures with a similarly bodily/built character is illustrated in *Blok* 3–4 (June 1924), in which the work is dated to 1921.
21. Archipenko's work had previously been illustrated in Polish avant-garde publications including *Zdrój*, by the Pozna -based *Bunt* (Revolt) group, 1917–20, and the Krakow-based *Formi ci* [Formists] journal, 1919–21. On the role of Cubist precedents for Polish sculptor Kobro, see Bois, "Kobro and Strzemi ski Revisited," 5.
22. arnower (1923).
23. See Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (Spring 1979); and Krauss, *Passages*, 113–14.
24. "*Ł czno rze by z przestrzeni , nasycenie przestrzeni rze b , wtopienie rze by w przestrze i powi zanie jej z przestrzeni - stanowi prawo organiczne rze by.*" Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemi ski, "Composing Space/Calculating Space-Time Rhythms," *October* 156 (Spring 2016): 14.
25. arnower (1923).
26. Or, as Anna Jozefacka puts it, "nationalism grounded in the veneration of one's pre-modern past, and urban reform (or urban renewal) informed by interest in modernization." Anna Jozefacka, "Rebuilding Warsaw: Conflicting Visions of a Capital City, 1916-1956" (PhD diss., New York Univ., 2011), 8.
27. Ibid., 50. See also Harold H. Worrell, Jr., *The Battle Of Warsaw, 1920: Impact On Operational Thought* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1994), 28. Estimates of wartime damages suggest that around 1,837,000 buildings were destroyed in Poland between 1914 and 1921. See Katrin Steffen and Martin Kohlrausch, "The Limits and Merits of Internationalism: Experts, the State and the International Community in Poland in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies *EUI Working Papers* 41 (2009): 10n63.
28. Jozefacka notes that onion-domed Russian churches were especially targeted for destruction. Jozefacka, "Rebuilding Warsaw," 118.
29. This expansion occurred in 1916. Ibid., 48–49, 86.
30. See, for example, the 1916 *Szkic Wst pny Planu Regulacyjnego m. st. Warszawy* (Preliminary Sketch for Regulatory Plan of the City of Warsaw). On urban planning in Warsaw during this period, see David Crowley, *Warsaw* (London: Reaktion, 2003); Stanisław Ró a ski, "*Planowanie przestrzenne Warszawy* (1916–1939)" (The Spatial Planning of Warsaw [1916–1939]), *Studia Warszawskie* 1 (1968): 321–46; Martin Kohlrausch, "'Houses of Glass': Modern Architecture and the Idea of Community in Poland," in *Making a New World: Architecture & Communities in Interwar Europe*, ed. Rajesh Heynickx and Tom Avermaete (Leuven, The Netherlands: Leuven Univ. Press, 2012), 93–104; and Chapter 1, "Embodying the Capital City (1916-1939): National Independence and Warsaw's Re-designation as the National Capital," of Jozefacka, "Rebuilding Warsaw."
31. Martin Kohlrausch, "The Communication of Architecture as Transnational Experience: Poland in the Interwar Period," in *Le Centre canadien s'études allemandes et européennes* (CCEAE) Working Paper Series, no. 16 (2008).
32. Szymon Syrkus, "*Preliminarz architektury*," *Praesens* 1 (1926): 7. Katarzyna Kobro, "A Sculpture is…," *Głos Plastyków* 1–7 (1937), cited in *Katarzyna Kobro, 1898-1951* (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 1999), 169.
33. At the same time, *Blok* remained a venue for showcasing a pan-European artistic avant-garde; in addition to texts and artworks by Polish avant-gardists working in both visual arts and architecture, issues of *Blok* reproduced paintings by artists including Polish-Russian Suprematist Kazimir Malevich and French Cubist Henri Laurens, sculptures by artists such as Paris-based Lithuanian Cubist Jacques Lipchitz, and translations of avant-garde texts by figures such as German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters and Dutch de Stijl artist Theo van Doesburg.
34. arnower's *Static Construction of Vertical and Horizontal Space* resembles Cornelius van Eesteren's *Anti-Construction*, reproduced in the July 1924 issue of *Blok*, while the building designs by both arnower and Szczuka in *Blok* 8–9 (Fig. 4) are similar to Theo van Doesburg's *Construction*, also illustrated in the July 1924 *Blok*.
35. "*... przykladem laboratoryjnej pracy nad zagadnieniami konstrukcji*

czysto plastycznej nie maj cej na celu wzgl dów utylitarnych" Blok 8–9 (1924), n.p.

36. On "de Stijl's environmental utopia [as] no mere ideological dream," see Yve-Alain Bois, "The De Stijl Idea," *Painting as Model* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 101–21. On Rodchenko's 1925 design for a workers' club not as "interior design in the utilitarian style of international modernism ... but rather an entirely new kind of *art* object," see Christine Kiaer, "Rodchenko in Paris," *October* 75 (Winter 1996): 3–35.
37. Vertov, "Cinemas: A Revolution," *Lef* 3 (June–July 1923): 141.
38. "*Zanik lasów, dziko wegetuj cej ro linno ci – na to miejsce fabryczne i mieszkalne kuby – druty telegraficzne – regularno szos – elazo mostów i sluz – pobrzeza betonowe – ruch maszyn komunikacyjnych itd. Wra enia odbierane od techniki zast puj* nam *– a mo e s poniek d i bli sze od wra e odbieranych od natury. W maszynach zachwyca* nas *prostota i logika konstrukcji – równowa nik swój znajduj ca w prostocie i logice DZIEŁA SZTUKI* [emphases added]." arnower (1923).
39. Relevant works by Picabia and Eggeling were published in the pages of the Zürich-based *Dada* journal during the late 1910s, in particular the May 1919 *Anthologie Dada*. The formal congruences between works by arnower and those by Picabia and Eggeling point to the Polish Constructivist avant-garde's interest in Western European Dada.
40. See *Blok* 8–9 (1924). arnower's 1923 essay in the "New Art" exhibition catalog had already asserted the *cinematic* character of "new art" across a variety of mediums.
41. One wonders if arnower was aware of recent developments in quantum physics. In its simultaneity, arnower's film design is strikingly different from the two film projects illustrated by Szczuka in issues of *Blok*, which show sequences, i.e., "five moments of an abstract film." *Blok* 1 (March 1924): 2.
42. Rosalind Krauss has noted that the grid is simultaneously abstract and concrete, an inherent tension that made the grid an ideal formal strategy for the avant-garde. Rosalind Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 157–61.
43. Helena Szyrkus did not complete an architecture degree, but took architecture classes at Warsaw's Technical Academy. Czesława Frejlich, Janusz Antos, et al., *Out of the Ordinary: Polish Designers of the 20th Century* (Warsaw: Adam Mickiewicz Inst., 2011).
44. In fact, these photomontages formally resemble the arrangements of bodies and stage sets in photographs of "workers' theater" published in *D wignia*.
45. See Joshua D. Zimmerman, *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews During the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2003), 19-20.
46. Milada lizi ska, "Teresa arnower: An Artist in a World That She Has Seen Collapse around Her into Shambles" (paper presented at Lost Avant-Garde. Teresa arnower and the Artistic Left, Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, Łodz, Poland, May 16–17, 2014), available in Polish at http://msl.org.pl/static/upload/teresa-zarnower.pdf.
47. The Polish Labor Group was linked to the Polish Socialist Party in America. In 1938, it registered as a publishing agent of the Polish government in exile. Iwona Dr g Korga, "The Information Policy of the Polish Government-in-Exile toward the American Public during World War II," *Polish American Studies* 64, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 35.
48. On the material effects of the siege, see Steven J. Zaloga, *Poland 1939: The Birth of Blitzkrieg* (Osceola, WI: Osprey, 2002), 70–78.
49. The image of the boy in the striped shirt was taken by U.S. documentarian Julien Bryan in September 1939. Geoff Alexander, *Academic Films for the Classroom: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2010), 32. Several of Bryan's photographs were published in *Life* and *Look Magazine* in late 1939; none of these published images are the source of arnower's clipping. Julien H. Bryan, *Siege* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1940).
50. David Crowley, "Shadows over Poland," *Eye: The International Review of Graphic Design* 21, no. 83 (Spring 2012): 91.
51. Ibid.
52. On the uses and misuses of Julien Bryan's Warsaw Siege photographs, see Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence* (New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004), 34–39.
53. Critic Daniel Eagan argues that it was the "precise and damning" nature of Bryan's images that rendered his film *Siege* so effective at mounting an argument against Germany. While Bryan had photographed and filmed scenes as graphic as those arnower clipped, his film did not foreground these images. Daniel Eagan, *America's Film Legacy: The Authoritative Guide to the Landmark Movies in the National Film Registry* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 314.
54. One area of the building that arnower "mended," a corner of the triangular pediment, was not damaged in bombing, but cropped by the photographer.
55. On the Soviet shift from montage techniques that emphasized texture and fissures to strategies of iconic representation, see Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," *October* 30 (Autumn 1984): 95.
56. Benjamin Buchloh, "Cold War Constructivism," in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal, 1945–1964*, ed. Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 85–112.
57. Barnett Newman, "Teresa arnower," *Teresa arnower: 16 Gouaches* (New York: Art of This Century Gallery, 1946), reprinted in *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1992), 103–05.
58. On the relation of modern ideals and the Nazi state, see Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* [1969] (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2009). On Stalinism as the analogue to the Soviet avant-garde's remaking of society, see Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* [1988] (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1992). On the corporatization of the avant-garde, see Buchloh "Cold War Constructivism."
59. "It is obvious that these factors are all relevant. I simply do not believe that they explain everything." Bois, "The De Stijl Idea," 131, 298 n29.
60. lizi ska. Turowski (1983), 143. Andrzej Turowski, *Budowniczowie wiata: z dziejow radykalnego modernizmu w sztuce polskiej* (Builders of the World: The History of Radical Modernism in Polish Art) (Krakow: Universitas, 2000). Aleksandra Idzior, "Response to a Catastrophe: Mixing 'High' and 'Low' by Teresa arnowerówna in 'The Defense of Warsaw'" (paper presented at *High and Low*, conference of the European Network for Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies, Department of Art History, Adam Mickiewicz University, Pozna , Poland, September 9–11, 2010). Monika Król, "Collaboration and Compromise: Women Artists in Polish-German Avant-Garde Circles, 1910–1930," in *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson (Cambridge: MIT Press), 354. Cf "In Memory of Teresa arnower," by Polish poet Czesław Miłosz: "Without friends, with no relations, in a great big city / A graveyard of lunatic ships / Teresa died, she had no strength / To overcome the past's already icy hand / ... Teresa died - over years, not hours."

Vigée Le Brun

By Joseph Baillio, Katharine Baetjer, and Paul Lang
Yale University Press, for Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016

Reviewed by Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell



Fig. 1. Élisabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun, *The Marquise de Pezay, and the Marquise de Rougé with Her Sons Alexis and Adrien* (1787), oil on canvas, 48 9/16" x 61 3/8". National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Gift of the Bay Foundation in memory of Josephine Bay Paul and Ambassador Charles Ulrick Bay.

Élisabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun has long been familiar to feminist art historians while remaining virtually unknown to the general public, even in her native France, which had never hosted a retrospective of her work until last year. This is partly due to her close association with the Bourbon monarchy and specifically the loathed Queen Marie-Antoinette, whose reputation is still recovering more than two centuries after her death. But it also speaks to the logistical difficulties of reassembling and reassessing Vigée Le Brun's oeuvre, which has been scattered around the world; the painter and many of her clients were forced to emigrate during the French Revolution, and Vigée Le Brun spent long periods of her career wandering between Italy, Austria, Switzerland, England, and Russia, supporting herself by painting portraits of the crowned heads of Europe as well as the French émigré diaspora.

Happily, the Grand Palais in Paris rose to the challenge of rehabilitating Vigée Le Brun in 2015. An abbreviated version of that show—retitled *Vigée Le Brun: Woman Artist in Revolutionary France*—traveled to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Gallery of Canada, accompanied by this English-language exhibition catalogue.

The book stands alone as a much-needed scholarly resource, if not exactly a catalogue raisonné; of the nearly 1,000 works by Vigée Le Brun that survive in public and private collections, only 87 are represented here, and nine of those—housed in Russian collections—did not travel to the Met, although they could be seen in Ottawa. (The Grand Palais installation included 160 works, many of them seldom-seen pieces from private collections; Vigée Le Brun's portrait of the actress Madame Dugazon had not been exhibited in public since 1932). Also included are a few works by other artists, such as Augustin Pajou's terracotta bust of the artist and her husband Jeanne Baptiste Pierre Le Brun's urbane self-portrait of 1795, by which time he had been forced to divorce his wife in order to avoid having his property confiscated by the Revolutionary government.

The catalogue is traditional to a fault: arranged chronologically, with mostly full-page images facing mostly full-page entries for each painting. These entries combine capsule biographies of Vigée Le Brun's sitters (often truncated by the fall of the guillotine's blade) with scholarly analysis and liberal quotations from the artist's *Souvenirs*, her lively if not entirely trustworthy memoir.

A substantial essay by Joseph Baillio covers Vigée Le Brun's biography—a tale worthy of romantic fiction, full of glamour, ambition, and dramatic reversals of fortune. "To read the story of her life before and after the French Revolution ... is to enter a world that would have intimidated artists less disciplined, confident, and determined than she," he observes (3). While the biographical essay is an important introduction to the artist for the uninitiated, it dwarfs the two that follow, both in size and in narrative scope.

Met curator Katharine Baetjer contributes a succinct but useful history of women in the Académie royale before Vigée Le Brun's time, detailing how pioneers like Madame Girardon, Elisabeth Sophie Chéron, Dorothée Massée, Catherine Perrot, Anne Marie Renée Strésor, and the Boullogne sisters fought their way into an institution more welcoming to foreign artists than female ones. Many of these early women artists were the wives or daughters of academicians, like Vigée Le Brun herself.

National Gallery of Canada curator Paul Lang briefly outlines the artist's emigration and its effects on her craft and career. "Vigée Le Brun's flight from France in October 1789, far from leading to her banishment from the realm of the arts, would allow her to find a sociocultural context in which she could thrive for more than a decade" (55). The artist improvised a career outside of institutional legitimacy while simultaneously pursuing "a belated education in the arts" during what she imagined to be a temporary sojourn in Italy; however, while Vigée Le Brun absorbed the artistic spirit of the Revolutionary age, "it

must be said that her style had little lasting impact in the countries she visited" (47, 55). Both essays are good enough that one wishes they were longer.

The catalogue is supplemented with a map, chronology, and bibliography. It is the first major English-language work on Vigée Le Brun since the 1982 Kimbell Art Museum exhibition catalogue, also by Baillio. What it lacks in fresh revelations and reattributions compared to that landmark text, it makes up for in accessibility and full-color images. But while non-specialists will enjoy this seductive reintroduction to a neglected artist, art historians may find it overly simplistic. Prevalent theories are dismissed without explanation, and technical analysis is minimal.

Vigée Le Brun's image crisis is nothing new. She was criticized in her lifetime by John Hoppner, among others; dismissed by the Goncourt brothers; and disparaged by Michael Levey, who granted her ambition but not talent. In *The Second Sex,* Simone de Beauvoir complained that the self-absorbed artist "never wearied of putting her smiling maternity on her canvases" (30), though, as Mary Sheriff has pointed out, Vigée Le Brun only painted two self-portraits with her daughter, Julie, both of them homages to Raphael's Madonnas (30). As recently as 1971, Linda Nochlin asked: "Why have there been no great women artists?"

A better question might be: Why isn't Vigée Le Brun considered a great artist? After all, Anthony Van Dyck's reputation survived his association with the doomed Charles I. Conversely, Vigée Le Brun's female rival in the Académie, Adelaïde Labille-Guiard, is not a household name today despite her politically correct, pro-Revolutionary sympathies. "They call me Mme Van Dyck, Mme Rubens," Vigée Le Brun boasted in her correspondence (48). The authors of *Vigée Le Brun* make a strong case for once again elevating her to the ranks of those masters.

Her first subjects were her family. An early portrait of her brother, three years her junior, as a draughtsman recalls similar compositions by Jean-Baptiste-Simeon Chardin and François-Hubert Drouais. She claimed to have painted the portrait of her mother that launched her career between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, although the authors point out that it was likely actually done a decade later, when her technique had matured. A companion portrait of her stepfather, Jacques François Le Sèvre, "belies the intense dislike" she felt for him. In her memoirs, Vigée Le Brun left a damning portrait of the penny-pinching jeweler, who "appropriated my father's wardrobe and wore the clothes just as they were without having them altered to fit him" (64). Her father, a painter, had encouraged Vigée Le Brun's talent, though he did not live to see her professional success.

She had the good fortune to find her most important client early in her career. "Painters are the death of me and drive me to despair" (72), the newly crowned Queen Marie-Antoinette complained in 1774. Her heavy Hapsburg features were difficult to flatter without rendering her unrecognizable. Vigée Le Brun first painted the queen—her exact contemporary—in 1778; the full-length portrait in court dress now is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. While "the composition was still quite conventional and the execution not without awkwardness," it clearly pleased the Queen (72). As "the principal propagandist of Marie-Antoinette in art," Vigée Le Brun cultivated a gift for injecting personality and spontaneity into the formal conventions of the *portrait d'apparat*, or official portrait (vii).

Despite her success, Vigée Le Brun's marriage to an art dealer almost kept her out of the Académie royale, until the queen herself intervened in 1783. Oddly, her *morceau de réception* was a history painting, a genre more prestigious than portraiture but less suitable to her gifts. (Later, she would describe her portraits of Emma Hamilton *en gréque* as history paintings.)

Her first exhibition as an Académicien was marred by scandal; the catalogue includes both the infamous *Marie Antoinette in a Chemise Dress* and the sanitized, silk-clad version that replaced it when it had to be withdrawn from the Salon of 1783. Years later, Vigée Le Brun had to repaint her double portrait of Catherine II's granddaughters when the empress objected to their "slightly Greek" costumes. By giving them conventional, long-sleeved gowns, the artist later wrote, "I had ruined my entire painting" (176). But her flexibility in a time of rapidly changing political alliances and social mores would ensure her success and, indeed, her survival.

She had better luck at the Salon of 1787, when her portraits of children—including her own daughter and Marie-Antoinette's offspring—won acclaim. Her portrait of the Marquise de Pezay and the Marquise de Rougé with her two sons (Fig. 1) celebrates female friendship as much as motherhood; the artist may have been inspired by the conventions of the English conversation piece, positioning the two young widows to convey "family intimacy in a monumental composition" (125). The poignancy and verisimilitude of her group portrait *Marie-Antoinette and her Children* may have indirectly saved it from destruction during the French Revolution. "After the dauphin's death in 1789, Marie Antoinette could not walk past the painting … without crying, and it was therefore removed from the apartments of Versailles" (123). But it remained a draw for curious visitors. When Vigée Le Brun returned from exile, "she went to view the portrait again, and the guard thanked her for all the tips it had earned him" (123).

Though she is best remembered as a painter of beautiful women of the French court, Vigée Le Brun's paintings of men are revelatory, if comparatively few in number. The very notion of a woman painting a man's portrait was so problematic in the eighteenth century that the artist's mother remained by her side in her studio, to discourage sexual advances. If that did not quash rumors of love affairs with the comte de Vauderuil and the vicomte de Calonne, perhaps it is because Vigée Le Brun painted them so sympathetically. Jacques-Louis David could give her portrait of composer Giovanni Paisiello no higher praise than to say that it looked like it had been done by a man.

The authors trace Vigée Le Brun's borrowings from Old Masters, particularly Rubens, whose work she

studied on a trip to the Low Countries in the 1780s. His influence is evident not just in her preference for oak panels but in her soft color palette and penchant for straw hats, so compatible with the contemporary fashion for pastoral simplicity. Though they may adopt the poses of Renaissance Madonnas and Greek goddesses, Vigée Le Brun's sitters are clothed in the latest Paris fashions, which the artist depicted with unsurpassed virtuosity, capturing feathered hats, fur trimmings, lace cuffs, gleaming satins, and rich velvets dusted with hair powder, framed by the soft and unified plain gray backgrounds she preferred. Costume is such an important part of the portraits that it's especially unfortunate that the authors misidentify many of the furs, fabrics, and garments.

The exhibition's title is similarly misleading; Vigée Le Brun fled Revolutionary France as quickly as possible, in October 1789, her young daughter in tow. A wistful, hastily sketched pastel, *Self-Portrait in Traveling Costume,* testifies to the psychological hardships of her nomadic existence after the Revolution. In Rome, she found herself in competition with another female painter, Angelica Kauffmann, whose Arcadian style nevertheless influenced her; Vigée Le Brun increasingly turned to landscape and portraits painted outdoors, aiming for the picturesque rather than topographical accuracy.

In Naples, she was warmly received by Marie-Antoinette's sister, Queen Maria Carolina. By the time she got to Vienna, however, the city was overrun with impoverished French émigrés and she had difficulty securing prestigious commissions. In 1795, she moved on to Russia, where she already had a following; indeed, the trip was lucrative enough that she prolonged her stay, not returning to Paris until 1802. Then, she found the city so changed that she soon left again for England, partially "motivated by a desire to duplicate the success she had enjoyed during her years in exile" (52). During her two years there, she was said to have charged three times Sir Joshua Reynolds' prices (54). Thanks to her forced exile, Vigée Le Brun left a legacy of portraiture across Europe; Jean Laurent Mosnier and Henry William Beechey both emulated her prettified style, among others.

The quintessential painter of the *ancien régime* was surprisingly attuned to the feminized masculinity and heroic individualism of the Romantic era. Her 1823 portrait of dashing young Count Emmanuel Nikolayevich Tolstoy, who died just two years later at the age of 23, makes one regret that her portrait of Lord Byron has been lost. It's astonishing to realize that the artist herself lived until 1842, surviving Marie-Antoinette by four decades. As Vigée Le Brun told a friend in her old age, "I'm not of this century" (20). Unexpectedly, this divorced, working mother who found success in a male-dominated field and as an immigrant proves to be perfectly suited to our present century. •

Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell is the author of *Fashion Victims: Dress at the Court of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette* (2015).

Picturing Marie Leszczinska 1703–1768: Representing Queenship in Eighteenth-Century France

By Jennifer Germann.
Routledge (Ashgate), 2015

Reviewed by Tara Zanardi

In the last decade queenship studies have generated lively debate and innovative scholarship. Complementing recent work devoted to kings, scholars have advocated for evaluating queens not simply by appropriating kingship studies, but by offering alternative methods to consider the ways in which queens functioned as part of the monarchy; how they facilitated political alliances, promoted cultural projects, embodied fashion, and forged taste. Theresa Earenfight argues, for example, that a failure to consider queens as integral to the mechanisms of monarchy is to be blind to the real gendered forces that shape political culture. Thus, she considers queenship and kingship as interlocking, interdependent, and dynamically relationship institutions.[1] The unique way in which queens negotiated their power, whether as rulers in their own right or by their spouse's side, is a question central to this new body of literature.

As an art historian specializing in eighteenth-century French art and as a scholar deeply interested in early modern portraiture, Jennifer Germann argues in *Picturing Marie Leszczinska* that fundamental to the construction of the monarchy was the production and dissemination of the queen's image. Germann's study investigates artistic depictions of a specific (understudied) queen, recuperates Leszczinska's contributions to the arts—typically overshadowed by discussions on the patronage of Louis XV's mistresses, and provides thoughtful analysis of objects as points of departure for understanding



Fig. 1. Jean-Marc Nattier, *Portrait of Marie Leszczinska, Queen of France (1703–1768), Reading the Bible* (1748), oil on canvas, 54 3/4" x 42 1/8". Photo: Christophe Fouin. Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

the construction of queenship in early modern France. She demonstrates the primary role of the visual in communicating complex ideas about female sovereignty and identity. Acknowledging that queens experienced similar struggles across Europe, Germann also points out their unique position in France—as 'wives' to their kings, but never sovereign in their own right. Such a liminal situation, as one close to absolute power but without any real political authority, is central to this investigation, and while Leszczinska did not exert any tangible authority, her images, Germann contends, carried significant weight and influence.

Picturing Marie Leszczinska is organized thematically and chronologically into an introduction, five chapters, and an epilogue. The book traces three distinct moments in the representation of the queen and examines various portraits that highlight the different roles she performed. Germann looks at primary and secondary sources, uncovering information about portrait commissions, contemporary perceptions of the queen, and Leszczinska's writings about her 'sense of self.' Germann argues effectively about the power of portraits—in propagating the queen's image, attempting to fashion her as French despite her Polish origins, and buttressing the monarchical family. She makes significant formal and thematic connections among works of art and provides insightful commentaries about individual objects and their larger part in crafting specific ideas about the queen.

The introduction establishes the thematic thrust of the book: despite her marginalized status within the French monarchy, Leszczinska performed the role of ideal queenship in her portraits, lending them great symbolic power. Germann suggests that she was regarded as a model for women, respected for her modesty and Christian values. Piety, in fact, became central to Leszczinska's public identity and a quality she embodied in her portraits, which "stressed naturalness and simplicity" (11–12). Leszczinska's portraits, often distributed and viewed publicly, expressed the potential power of a female sovereign "and this potential produced anxiety" (4). Germann explains that the image of the queen not only raised questions of the queen's function at court but was also used to demonstrate the king's power. Such questions were particularly apt since before Leszczinska married Louis XV in 1725, there had been no queen for more than four decades. Germann suggests that during the absence of a female sovereign, the role had thus "contracted," and cogently argues,

> [H]erein lay a key tension in queenship: once the queen fulfilled her duty to give birth to a dauphin, there was nothing left for her to accomplish…. if they survived childbirth, they continued to perform a role that was an essential element in the representation of the monarchy. Close to the center of power, but with no formal claim on it, queens presented the specter of powerful womanhood (3).

Portraits of Leszczinska, Germann argues further, negotiate the queen's relationship to the king and heir and also her status as both French queen and foreigner.

In Chapter four, Germann foregrounds the Crown's use of the queen's image to negate courtly scandals and to promote an image of kingly devotion during a critical juncture at court when the French were engaged in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48) and when criticism of the king peaked. She establishes the relationship of four portraits commissioned to the denigration of the king's adulterous behavior, and investigates the roles the portraits played at this time, especially in raising the queen's public profile, which she aptly reads as significant. She contends that Carle Van Loo's 1747 portrait in particular helped to promote royal reform and create a sense of ease as a work of celebrated critical reception that was situated in the king's apartments to complement a 1730 portrait of Louis XV by Hyacinthe Rigaud. Pendants of the monarchs by Maurice-Quentin de la Tour (1748) "extend this message" of a harmonious couple "in the public arena of the Salon" (133). Despite the presentation of domestic solidarity, Germann argues that the public was well aware that Madame de Pompadour yielded power at court. In this context, she suggests that Van Loo and La Tour present the queen as "regal, but deferential, and devoted to her spouse" (133). While ultimately, this project failed, it provided "an avenue through which ideologies of domesticity could enter the monarchy's visual culture," writes Germann (134).

Advancing the discussion about the queen's public image and the usefulness of such imagery, in Chapter five Germann examines the one known image the queen herself commissioned. The portrait by Jean-Marc Nattier (1748; Fig. 1), depicts Leszczinska as a "good and wounded wife *specifically* for public consumption," with the artist and sitter together presenting an "image of queenship that was critical of the king, his romantic liaisons, and his religious practice" (157). The portrait, Germann argues, fashioned an innovative identity the queen performed that was not only viewed at the Salon, but also was circulated at court in the form of copies. It is with this commission that Germann suggests the queen exerted agency. Nattier presents her as the Queen of France and borrows from pictorial motifs of bourgeois portraiture that favored a more 'natural' portrayal. It is in Nattier's combination of traditional state portraiture and a new informal style that Germann contends is central to the image's modernity that had contemporary political importance and ramifications for depictions of future queens and elite women. The portrait is highly constructed to promote the queen's agenda, especially considering the factionalism at court in the 1740s—conflicts, including Pompadour's rise, Germann asserts, which have been largely ignored in the scholarship on this portrait, which makes this book essential for the study of eighteenth-century French court history.

As a welcome addition to the recent body of work on queens, Germann offers sophisticated analysis of one queen's portraits and situates them in their local, international, and aesthetic contexts. No previous scholar has provided such a compelling study of Leszczinska. Germann makes specific claims

throughout the book that support her new reading of individual works and Leszczinska's significance at court. While these points are helpful in guiding the reader to understand the revision she provides in evaluating this queen, one wishes the book's introduction had included a succinct summary of previous scholarship and a more structured presentation of the historiography in the field to date. This would only serve to amplify how important her work is on this understudied queen, how her discussion participates in this larger critical dialogue on queens, and how it offers novel ideas on the subjects she studies. Indeed, Germann remedies the scholarly neglect on Leszczinska.

The book is well-suited for undergraduate study and advanced research in art history, queenship studies, and gender studies. It is also accessible to a broad range of students who will benefit from Germann's critical examination of portraiture. The book will certainly prompt scholars to reexamine the portraits of Leszczinska and encourage future study on early modern French queens. •

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Notes

1. Theresa Earenfight, "Two Bodies, One Spirit: Isabel and Fernando's Construction of Monarchical Partnership" in *Queen Isabel I of Castile. Power, Patronage, Persona*, ed. Barbara F. Weissberger (Woodbridge, UK: Tamesis, 2008), 3–18.

Valadon, Utrillo & Utter: in the Rue Cortot Studio: 1912-1926

Edited by Saskia Ooms, et al.
Sogomy Editions, Musée de Montmartre, 2015

Reviewed by Lauren Jimerson

In celebration of the sesquicentennial of Suzanne Valadon's birth, Musée de Montmartre gathered some of her most notable paintings, prints and drawings along with works by her son, Maurice Utrillo, and her partner, André Utter, displaying them in the very space where these artists once lived. While numerous exhibitions have featured the so-called "Infernal Trio," this time, Valadon received the spotlight, affording an unusual opportunity to see many of her works, normally tucked away in private collections or museum reserves. Valadon's studio was also displayed to the public for the first time, refurbished as it appeared in 1925 (scenography designed by Hubert Le Gall).

Born the illegitimate child of a charwoman from a small Limousine town, Suzanne Valadon (1865–1938) moved with her mother to Montmartre, a prime location for observing the revolutionary artistic changes of fin-de-siècle Paris. At the age of fifteen, she became a model for Puvis de Chavannes. Her beauty won the attention of others, and she modeled for numerous artists, including Toulouse Lautrec and Renoir. After mingling with and learning directly from the masters, she made the rare transition from artist's model to artist, focusing on the subject that she knew best, the nude. Before long, her sketches fell into the hands of Degas, who, on seeing them, exclaimed, "You are one of us!"[1] Valadon spent the rest of her life exploring this predominantly male genre. Her oeuvre, which encompasses hundreds of drawings, paintings, and engravings, reveals an intense experimentation in the representation of the human form. She did not limit herself to one type of model, but instead depicted bodies of all ages and sizes, both male and female.

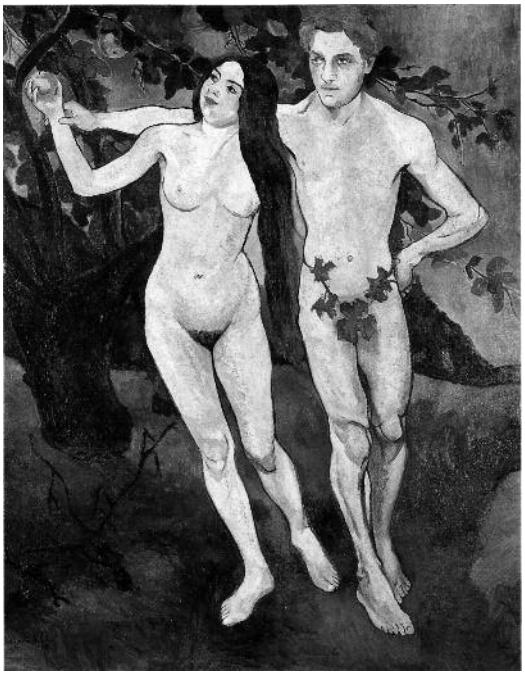


Fig. 1. Suzanne Valadon, *Adam and Eve* (1909), oil on canvas, 63 3/4" x 51 1/2". Centre Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne/Centre de Création Industrielle, Paris.

The catalogue, available in both French and English, consists of four essays (including one on Utrillo by Bridget Alsdorf) and is lusciously illustrated. Jeanine Warnod, an esteemed art critic and author of an important monograph on Valadon, traces the life of the artist in Montmartre from the début of her career to her death. As a child, Warnod personally knew the trio, since her father, the critic André Warnod, was a close friend and neighbor. She recounts, "I can still hear her husky voice and outbursts of laughter that attested to her energy and determination to succeed" (16–17). She describes the rise and fall of Valadon's success, from moments of luxury to poverty, as well as her relationship with Utrillo and Utter, which sadly deteriorated during her final years. Warnod's rare firsthand account adds a deeply personal touch to the publication.

Saskia Ooms, curator at Musée de Montmartre, provides further biographical background while also touching on issues of class and gender. Unlike the upper-middle class painter, Berthe Morisot, Valadon came from the lowest echelons of society and had to work doubly hard to attain recognition. Ooms notes this, yet she does not mention that Valadon's class also allowed her greater freedom to explore subject matter that was off-limits for bourgeois female

painters. Valadon's *Le Lancement du filet* (1914), a depiction of Utter nude from three angles, is a poignant example. This work, Ooms asserts, "was one of the first times in the history of painting that a female artist had represented a male nude" (25). Jacqueline Munck, curator at Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, provides the most comprehensive stylistic and historical analysis of Valadon's work. Considering Valadon's treatment of the nude, Munck discusses various sources for her work. Munck posits that Valadon's *Adam and Eve* (1909, Fig. 1) reflects the theme of The Garden of Eden, which proliferated in avant-garde painting during the 1880s until World War I. Yet unlike the treatment of this subject by Maurice Denis, Henri Matisse, and others, Valadon's work "combined the emancipation of the female painter with her renaissance as a new Marian Eve" (34). The painting daringly features two full-scale nude portraits of Valadon and her lover, Utter, twenty years her junior. Oddly, Munck does not mention that in the original version there were no fig leaves. Valadon added them in order to exhibit the work at the Salon des Indépendants in 1920.[2] With its unidealized nudity and forthright realism, *Adam and Eve* lies far outside the boundaries of female propriety.

Valadon, Utrillo & Utter is not without flaws—the art historical analyses are underdeveloped, the essays are somewhat repetitive, and there are minor inconsistencies regarding facts and dates. Nevertheless, the publication is an important addition to the literature on Valadon, which to date is still limited. The catalogue rightly presents Suzanne Valadon not just as an artist's model or the mother of an artist "genius"[3] but as an accomplished and visionary artist in her own right.

Lauren Jimerson is a PhD candidate at Rutgers University. She is currently a Fulbright Scholar in Paris, completing research for her dissertation on female artists and the nude in early 20th century Paris, focusing on Valadon, Émilie Charmy and Marie Vassilieff. •

Notes

1. Daniel Marchesseau, et al. *Suzanne Valadon.* Exhibition Catalogue (Martigny: Foundation Pierre Gianadda, 1996), 9.
2. Ibid., 47.
3. "Car si nous aimons Valadon ce n'est pas seulement parce qu'elle est un grand peintre mais aussi parce qu'elle nous a donné ce fantasque génie qui, pour rendre à sa mère un quotidien hommage, signe ses toiles: Maurice Utrillo V." *"For, if we like Valadon it's not only because she is a great painter but also because she has given us a fantastic genius who, to give his mother an everyday homage, signs his canvases: Maurice Utrillo V."* Georges Charensol. "Suzanne Valadon," *L'Art Vivant* 3 (1927): 75–76.

Germaine Krull

By Michel Frizot,
Editions Hazan (distr. by Yale University Press), 2015

Reviewed by Ann Albritton

Germaine Krull's (1897–1985) photography in Paris in the 1920s was often compared with that of Man Ray, Brassaï, André Kértesz, and Eugène Atget, though for the remainder of the twentieth century her work was hardly known. This can be attributed to the marginalization of female artists and photography prior to the 1970s, and especially a woman photographer who worked for magazines. Curator Michel Frizot's catalogue for Krull's one-person exhibition at the Jeu de Paume in Paris (June 2 to September 27, 2015) reestablishes the importance of this artist in her time and in the history of photography. Frizot skillfully weaves biography throughout the catalogue in thematic chapters followed by plentiful, excellent photographs that correspond to each chapter or essay. Here, biography works for the reader, especially since the artist is not well known to the general art public. Krull was also a prolific writer of memoirs and many of her photographs come out of her experiences, desires, and subjective reactions to them.

At age eighteen, Krull began her only formal training, studying photography in Munich (1915 to 1917) at the Lehr-und Versuchsanstalt für Photographie, Chemigraphie, Lichdruck und Gravüre. In an early chapter, entitled "Mad Dog" (*Chien fou*), after a teenage nickname for Krull, Frizot discusses her strange and radical early life, based on one of her first memoirs. Her use of experimental self-portraiture in fashion and magazine photography (1926; Fig. 1) is an early example. Other work from that time, influenced perhaps by Kértesz, along with several sensitive portraits, shows her formative style.

Some of Krull's best-known photographs are of female nudes, including those of her younger sister, Berthe. Poses are sometimes very straightforward, and those of the very thin Berthe are not at all provocative. Other nudes later in the catalogue suggest possible lesbian relationships and show more intimate poses of the models. Here, Frizot's biographical notes deepen our understanding of the art.

One particularly interesting chapter, "1928: *VU* and My 'Fers,'" explores



Fig. 1. Germaine Krull, Advertisement design for Paul Poiret (1926), double exposure, gelatin silver print, 8 5/8" x 3 3/4". Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée National d'Art Moderne/Centre de Création Industrielle.

Krull's photography for the Paris magazine *VU*, an association that lasted until 1934. Frizot credits Man Ray and

Kértesz with *VU*'s unusual format for the time: page after page of photographs not as illustrations but as art. Krull's "fers," photographs of iron structures, include radically cropped, disorienting views of the Eiffel Tower, along with other views of machines at work. Frizot also calls Krull the "great poet of iron structures, of cranes, and by extension, machines, turbines, steel, and even more generally, metal" (43). By 1930 magazine work became her main source of income. Krull's friend Walter Benjamin used not only Atget's photographs in his *Short History of Photography* (1931) but also two images of shop windows by Krull—prints that belonged to Benjamin (82).

The strengths of this catalogue are not only the images—200 strong, beautiful photographs—but also the way in which Frizot uses Krull's memoirs to illuminate her career. At times biography is not appropriate; here, it is. Krull's cinema work is also discussed but not as fully as the photography.

In an essay by Griselda Pollock for a 2014–15 Sonia Delaunay exhibition (Krull worked for Delaunay and some of her photographs of Delaunay are included in the catalogue), Pollock points out that in early twentieth century Paris women had more freedoms but have since been marginalized in modernist art history. She argues for a new, complete story of modern art created by women and men together. This catalogue contributes to this idea in bringing the life and work of Germaine Krull into this new history of modernism. •

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Women, Workers, and Race in LIFE Magazine: Hansel Mieth's Reform Photojournalism, 1934–1955

By Dolores Flamiano,
Ashgate, 2016

Reviewed by Helen Langa

Hansel Mieth (1909-1998), the subject of Dolores Flamiano's ambitious biographical study, was the second woman hired to the photographic staff of LIFE magazine in 1937. Between that date and 1943, when she left the position, the editors published more than 120 photo essays using her images, although some of those stories included works by other photographers. Flamiano's book takes a widely inclusive perspective, weaving together a critical narrative of Mieth's work for LIFE within a full, detailed biography intermixed with contextual social history. She also explores the differences between ideal social documentary photography and LIFE's version of photojournalism.

Flamiano is a historian of journalism rather than art, and she emphasizes the complex issues Mieth faced as a documentary photographer hoping to move from recording injustice to fomenting social change. The author considers Mieth's career in four segments: "Hungry Years" covers her early images of migrant workers in California; "Labor" addresses her photographs in the mid-1930s focusing on working-class unionists and labor organizers in San Francisco; "Gender, Race, and Nation" lays out the struggles Mieth faced as an idealist interested in social reform while working for a publication dominated by white, mostly privileged, and often racially biased men; and "Cold War Years" reflects on her late work as an independent photographer and artist when she endured surveillance by the FBI.

Although identity issues are specifically cited only in the title of her third section, Flamiano is alert throughout this study for the tensions provoked by Mieth's identity as an immigrant woman from an impoverished family in Germany and a quiet person of small stature, yet someone who was also courageous and committed to foregrounding social reform values. She emphasizes that Mieth constantly faced challenges to her vision of what reform photography could accomplish, and these challenges were intensified when she went to work for LIFE, whose exploitative editorial program did not match her ideals.

Flamiano describes Mieth's career as profoundly shaped by her empathy with those whom society viewed as outsiders because of their class status or racial identity, while she herself had to deal with varied forms of gender discrimination. She praises Mieth as a "border crosser," not only literally, in her move from Germany to the U.S., but also figuratively, in her efforts to understand and connect with people from diverse racial and social backgrounds. In both her work and personal relationships, Flamiano argues, Mieth sought to "bridge (or obliterate) the boundaries that divide people" (4).

In ten chronological chapters, each focused on one or two photographic projects, Flamiano explores Mieth's struggle to mesh her idealistic social reform values with the realities of work as a documentary photojournalist. She begins with Mieth's early experiences as a run-away and vagabond who mixed with all sorts of poor people while travelling across Eastern Europe. Mieth could undertake this challenging life on the road in part through her comradeship with Otto Hagel, her childhood friend and later lover and husband, but Flamiano notes that she also cut her hair short and changed her name from Johanna to Hansel to pass as a boy and avoid gender harassment.

When Hagel emigrated (illegally) to the U.S. in 1929, Mieth followed him in 1930, using her relationship with an aunt in Philadelphia to gain legal entry. After a risky solo drive cross-country in a broken-down car (she spoke very little English), she reconnected with him in California. They found work as migrant fruit and vegetable pickers, and while traveling up and down the state, both began to make photographs of workers

and their families, a practice that Flamiano views as an important early instance of participant-observer photography. Mieth portrayed communal activities and children's experiences in the labor camp environment, but they also photographed the 1934 cotton pickers strike and other protests.

In 1933, their two-year-old daughter was killed by a drunken truck driver, and Mieth struggled for almost a year to recenter herself. She and Hagel moved to San Francisco, and in 1935 Mieth was hired by the Recreation Department of the Works Progress Administration to document playgrounds. She had sufficient free time to develop two independent projects, one depicting Chinese women sweatshop workers and another portraying transient unemployed young men. Mieth and Hagel also photographed the violent dockworker strikes on the San Francisco waterfront in 1934, and Mieth shot portraits of important union organizers such as Harry Bridges. They contributed some of these works to a radical documentary on West Coast labor organizing and began to gain some recognition.

In 1937, Mieth was offered a position at LIFE magazine, first as a stringer and then as a staff photographer. At first she was hesitant to work for a capitalist-oriented publication that she feared would misinterpret her interests, but she accepted the job and relocated with Hagel to New York City. In chapters 5, 6, and 7, Flamiano discusses a series of Mieth's assignments, which addressed a wide array of subjects ranging from a celebratory photo essay on International Ladies Garment Workers Union members on vacation to projects exploring medical and scientific research topics, African American culture in Harlem, and a rural health clinic in Alabama. She was particularly admired for her skills in depicting scientific subjects and published "almost a dozen" science-related stories between 1937 and 1941 (154).

Typically, LIFE photographers had almost no say over how their images would be used. Flamiano argues that Mieth's photographs were often editorially manipulated so that their themes took on humorous, sensationalist, or in some cases, racist and misogynist perspectives totally at odds with her intentions. The sympathetic connections she created with people she photographed were undone by editorial choices that emphasized the power of white male authorities rather than the interests of working or poor people of varied ethnicities. While lack of aesthetic control was a common complaint among LIFE photographers, according to Flamiano, for Mieth these decisions undermined the values of accuracy, empathy, and solidarity with the poor that she prioritized.

After repeated instances of intrusive editorial undermining, Mieth left New York in 1941 while still on the LIFE payroll, and she and Hagel bought a farm in Santa Rosa, California, just north of San Francisco. This handicapped her career at LIFE, as she could no longer lobby for interesting assignments, and she quit in 1943. She and Hagel did complete one further project, photographing Japanese-American internees at the Heart Mountain internment camp in Wyoming, which LIFE refused to publish. Flamiano points out that Mieth also faced other difficulties after the U.S. entered World War Two. Her strong German accent made the public view her with suspicion, and LIFE's editorial focus shifted away from even marginal acceptance of social reform themes to an emphasis on positivist wartime stories and unquestioning patriotic values. During the war, although Mieth and Hagel both insisted they had never been members of the Communist Party or other leftist groups, they were put under surveillance by the FBI and by the 1950s, according to Mieth, they were essentially blacklisted. Flamiano gained access to their FBI files, and details their more than ten-year harassment by federal agents. Mieth herself said "We were always, I'm sorry to say, bystanders, we never joined anything because we could not take the discipline that was required" (254). During the 1950s, such disavowals did not stop government efforts to tar anyone as a Communist sympathizer whose ideas seemed to resonate with leftist values.

Flamiano's study of Mieth's accomplishments and difficulties offers the reader an informative overview of her career as a photographer committed to social reform photojournalism. However, her biographical discussion seems at times overly dependent on Mieth's memoirs and interviews (1953 to 1998). She observes that "Mieth's recollections pose the classic dilemmas of oral history interviews: exaggerations, omissions, and inconsistencies" (18), yet she tends to use Mieth's statements without further commentary in the text. Flamiano's narrative strategy, which interweaves discussions of Mieth's work with sections that provide contextual background or information on comparative projects by other photographers, enriches the reader's knowledge but can also at times seem disruptive.



Fig. 1. Hansel Mieth, *Cotton Picker Kid in California Valley* (1934). Collection of Center for Creative Photography 1998. © Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona Foundation.

Working from the standpoints of both biography and journalism history, Flamiano effectively articulates the challenges Mieth faced, emphasizing in particular the risks of working for a major news and entertainment magazine that had to please advertisers as well as the public. LIFE's institutional structure, with white men (often shockingly biased) in positions of authority and few women in mid-level

professional roles, frequently obstructed the goals of its staff photographers. By positioning Mieth as a professional who sought, not always successfully, to resist the racial and gendered oppression that was condoned by LIFE's editors and administrators, and exploring her unwarranted oppression by the FBI, Flamiano's study contributes a unique perspective on her career and values. •

Helen Langa is Associate Professor of Art History at American University in Washington, D.C. Her anthology *American Women Artists, 1935 to 1970: Gender, Culture, and Politics* (2016), co-edited with Paula Wisotzki, is reviewed in these pages. Her current research focuses on American lesbian artists active before 1970 and American leftist artists during the 1930s and 1940s.

The Ukrainian Diaspora Women Artists, 1908-2015

Essay by Adrienne Kochman
The Ukrainian Museum, 2015

Reviewed by Bojana Videkanic

> "Sometimes we feel we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools."
>
> —Salman Rushdie,
> *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991*

As Salman Rushdie so eloquently stated, life in diaspora is always a life in-between, straddling two cultures, or falling between them. The task of representing the life, customs, politics, and culture of peoples in diaspora is doubly difficult because it always involves translation and mediation between different, and sometimes opposing cultures. "The Ukrainian Diaspora Women Artists, 1908-2015" exhibition, for which this catalogue was produced, attempted to do just that by presenting a survey of works spanning a century rife with political and cultural disruptions. The exhibition was organized by the Ukrainian Museum in New York to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the formation of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America. This ambitious project was a fitting homage to the work of Ukrainian women who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, fought for national interests and identity in the wake of the Soviet repression in Ukraine. With forty-four artists and more than a hundred artworks on display, guest curator Adrienne Kochman attempted, in the words of the Museum's board of trustees, to "salute the creative strivings of all women, particularly those talented in the field of visual arts" (6).

The catalogue gives readers an overview of the show and some of its narratives. Its handsomely designed pages offer insights into the variety and richness of the artists' works. Although relatively small for such an extensive survey exhibition (112 pages), the catalogue contains illustrations of each artist's work, and more importantly, gives biographical details—an immense resource, as little has been written on diaspora women artists. Adrienne Kochman's bilingual essay (Ukrainian and English) establishes a formal historical and political context for how the works fit both within the exhibition and the larger history of Ukraine. Kochman discusses the waves of Ukrainian diaspora, elaborates on some of the curatorial decisions made (for example, to include mostly works from the North American continent), and elucidates the formal and thematic variety of included works. And this is where, perhaps, the most difficult task lay for Kochman, as the span of time covered (1908–2015) encompasses many and various artistic movements, ideas, techniques, and materials. Thus, to make a clear and cohesive connection between, for example, the early modernism of someone like the iconic painter Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979) and the late postmodernism of the painter Ilona Sochynsky (active since c. 1980) or multimedia artist Olia Mishchenko (b. 1980) is a feat in itself. Kochman has thematized and arranged the works in chronological order and attempts to link back and forth between the artistic production and the sociopolitical backdrop of various immigration waves from Ukraine to North America and elsewhere.

The women artists included are engaged with two- and three-dimensional media and concepts, from painting of icons, textile work and embroidery, to abstract non-representational painting and sculpture, to narrative, conceptual, and even minimalist methods. Kochman acknowledges the tension between recognizing the importance of women's art (both in their adoptive country and in Ukraine proper) and its importance within the diasporic community in keeping alive the national identity, culture, language, and customs. Artists, of course, should not shoulder that burden alone and should be free to interpret how they see their community and identity.

The chronology of the works follows the narrative of the feminist movement in general, as Kochman signals in her essay. Beginning in the 1960s, while North American women artists were fighting the institutional patriarchy of museums, galleries, and art schools, diaspora artists had to fight on two fronts. As part of the second wave of feminist art of the 1960s and 1970s, they also had to negotiate the patriarchy within their own diasporic community, which was often even more resistant to change than their adopted societies. This struggle is most clearly visible in the way that the Ukrainian artists attempted to renegotiate their relationship with traditional media such as embroidery, textiles, or ceramics, and fight to remove the stigmas attached to such media in the mainstream artistic narrative. It is also visible, Kochman states, in the way that some of the artists "celebrated themes often associated with the women's artistic practice … incorporating autobiographical experiences and personal states" (20). Works by painters Nina Klymovska (b. 1940), Sophia Lada (b. 1941), and Natalka Husar (b. 1951), and sculptors Aka Pereyma (1927-2013) and Liliana Berezowsky (b. 1944) are all representative of the feminist move to

interrogate, trouble, question, and shift ideas of womanhood, gender, sexuality and identity in diaspora.

Another important narrative strand is the assertion and continuation of the Ukrainian national identity, which was greatly assisted by the Ukrainian National Women's League being celebrated here. Its members fought to assert Ukrainian identity and to educate the American public on the plight of Ukrainians at home. This dual role—continuing culture, language, and art in diaspora, and political advocacy—is reflected in the curator's choices, where we see represented works that address various aspects of Ukrainian life at home and abroad. For example in the works by iconographers such as Kateryna Krychevska-Rosandich (b. 1926), Roxolana Luczakowsky Armstrong (b. 1938), Lidia Piaseckyj (b. 1941), Yaroslava Surmach-Mills (1925-2009), or Halyna Tytla (1935-2013), cultural symbols, language, and customs predominate and form an overarching aesthetic and conceptual narrative. Other artists, namely multimedia artists Valya (b. 1966) and Christina Kudryk (b. 1940), who address the burden and importance of heritage, deal with the idea of diaspora and the negotiation of everyday life and identity in their adoptive country. Finally, the new generation of young women, including the installation and multimedia artist Yulia Pinkusevich (b.1982), whose *Silencing the Cacophony* (2015; Fig. 1) is a direct comment on the events of Euromaidan (protests in favor of closer ties with the European Union) and recent clashes with Russia, struggle with current political tensions in Ukraine.

However ambitious *The Ukranian Diaspora Women Artists, 1908–2015*, it cannot possibly encompass or fully represent all the aspects of women's art during this long period. That said, I believe there could have been a stronger representation of the younger generation of Ukrainian women artists. There are but four younger artists, only two of whom were born in the 1980s, and the exhibition and catalogue would have been historically and conceptually richer had it included a more fleshed-out perspective on life and art in the twenty-first century. This is especially important given the recent conflict with Russia. Younger women such as photographer and video artist Yelena Yemchuk (b. 1970), painter Alisa Margolis (b. 1975), multidisciplinary artist Kinga Araya (b. 1966), or sculptor Tanya Rusnak (b. 1968) are some of the diaspora artists doing interesting and critical work. The emphasis on painting, sculpture, fiber, and textile work, and the lack of newer media such as video, installation, performance, and new media artworks takes away from fully appreciating the variety of ways in which the Ukrainian diaspora community and its artists have moved away from the more traditional cultural paradigms and are now in tension, or even outright conflict, with those cultural ways. Also missing is a discussion of the significance of how these amazing women artists have fought to present their works—in the art world at large and in their community. Kochman hints at this, but spends too much time contextualizing American feminism and not enough time considering Ukrainian diaspora feminism. The reader is left wondering how have artists' feminist interventions shifted the inner workings of the Ukrainian diaspora.



Fig. 1. Yulia Pinkusevich, *Silencing the Cacophony* (2015), acrylic, spray paint, oil, vinyl, marker on linen, grommets, rope, burlap, and sand from Coney Island; canvas 69" x 161"; overall 110" x 417 1/2".

Having said all this, this exhibition and catalogue constitute an important contribution to the study of diaspora art, Ukrainian modern art history, and East European modern art history in general. To date, there is very little critical art historical discourse on diaspora art in general, and East European in particular. The current catalogue provides those who study this area with a starting point from which to pursue additional research on the development of diaspora artistic production. Above all, the catalogue highlights the tenacity and vibrancy in the work of the women artists, and their ability to sit on two stools without falling in-between them. •

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American Women Artists, 1935–1970

Edited by Helen Langa and Paula Wisotzki
Ashgate, 2016

Reviewed by Betsy Fahlman

The publication of *American Women Artists, 1935–1970*, a collection of thirteen essays thoughtfully co-edited by Helen Langa and Paula Wisotzki, is cause for celebration. Their exemplary revisionist volume expands our understanding of the art and careers of a fascinating group of women working in the long middle of the twentieth century, a seminal period that embraces the Great Depression, World War II, the Cold War, and the rise of the feminist movement.

In her introduction, "Challenges, Tensions, Accomplishments," Helen Langa observes that "a surprisingly large number" of the many American women artists from this period "are still relatively invisible in mainstream art historical literature" (1). The reason may be found—unsurprisingly—in the negative gender stereotypes of entrenched art world sexism, racism, and homophobia. Situated dually "within and against the flow of dominant art world movements" (1), they have been ignored and marginalized, remaining "there," but unseen. Challenging such an exclusionary canon has been hard work for feminist scholars. Hobbled by essentialist reviewers, demeaned by sexist "compliments" that they "painted like a man," and rendered invisible by marriages to other artists, women had a hard time gaining recognition.

The anthology is divided into four thematic sections, the first of which is "Exhibitions: Opportunities and Resistances." Both essayists are alert to the critical role exhibitions have played in conferring a professional imprimatur on their participants. Siobhan M. Conaty considers Peggy Guggenheim's legendary gallery in "Art of This Century: A Transitional Space for Women," which presented two woman-only exhibitions in 1943 and 1945. Although she was not known as a particular supporter of female artists, Guggenheim's gallery was a place where the European and American surrealist and abstract artists mingled,[1] and those she showed gained considerable professional exposure through her efforts.

"Gender, Modern Art, and Native Women Painters in the First Half of the Twentieth Century" by Cynthia Fowler focuses on "Indian Art of the United States," an exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1941. Native American artists generally were nearly invisible amongst Euro-American modernists, with women enduring further prejudice from their male peers (only two women were included). While it was a significant milestone in bringing Native American artists into the mainstream, the show emphasized craft production rather than painting, which served to diminish the broader acceptance of contemporary Native artists.

The four essays in Part two, "Survival, Politics, and Gender," are focused on a quartet of individual artists who found themselves marginalized as a result of their leftist politics. Their commitments to representational styles and socially engaged art put them at odds with an art world that privileged abstraction. Paula Wisotzki has contributed "Dorothy Dehner's Early Career: Leftist Politics and Complicated Myths." Despite the artist's "apparently neutral subject matter" (59), Dehner forged a subversive vision in which she mixed the personal and political in a fascinating series titled "Life on the Farm" (1941–45). Despite being traditional in style and "domestic in focus" (64), her rural work did not represent a "flight from politics," but rather it was a way for her to "live out her radical views" (64) outside of New York City.

Melanie Anne Herzog has contributed "Elizabeth Catlett in Mexico at Mid-Century: Navigating Gender and Visual Politics Across Cultural Borders." Working "at the center of Mexico's most politically active artists' community" (74), Catlett explored the intersections of gender, race, and class. For a socially engaged artist, residence in Mexico meant she was not subject to the intense scrutiny that her leftist colleagues experienced in Cold War America.

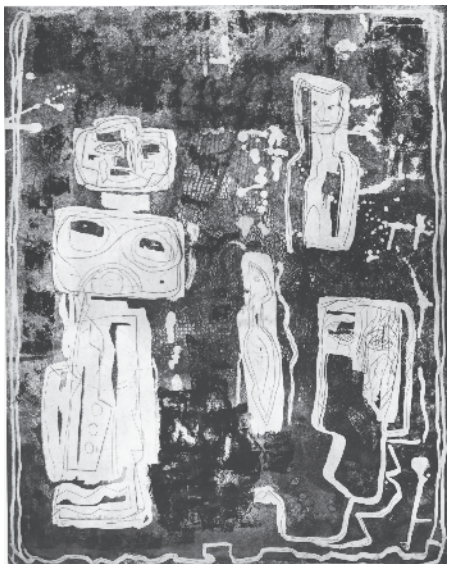


Fig. 1. Louise Nevelson, *The Ancient Garden* (1952–54), etching, plate: 27 1/4" x 21 7/8". Brooklyn Museum, Dick S. Ramsay Fund, 58.44.1. © Estate of Louise Nevelson/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

M. Melissa Wolfe's "Honoré Sharrer: A Cold War Reception" considers her painting *Reception* (1958), an intriguing artifact of the Cold War that critiques upper-class empowerment political power by portraying fictional types as well as several specific individuals: Senator Joseph McCarthy, Francis Cardinal Spellman, J. Edgar Hoover, and Clare Booth Luce.

"Strategies of Artistic Survival: Julia Thecla's Science Fictions of the 1960s" by Joanna Gardner-Huggett explores an artist whose work presented fantastical visions inspired by science fiction and the American/Soviet space race. Based in Chicago, regional bias contributed to her marginalization as a midwestern Magic Realist.

A trio of essays comprise the third section, "Alternative Media, Alternative Visions," on women artists who challenged the rigid binaries of high and craft art by employing innovative materials and craft-based techniques. Best known as a sculptor, Christina Weyl contributes a fine essay, "Innovative Etchings: Louise Nevelson at Atelier 17," examining the first prints Nevelson made between 1952 and 1954. Her "aggressive mark-making and thematic content of frenzy, disorder, and chaos"

(127) was challenged as unsuitable for the "delicate" sensibilities of a women artist. But Nevelson's powerful etchings, such as *The Ancient Garden* (Fig. 1), had all of the "bravura and self-expression" (127) typical of the work of her male contemporaries. Boldly experimental and unconventional, Nevelson transgressed both gender and technical expectations as a female printmaker and produced work executed with exceptional technical bravado.

The use of craft-based media to create expressive abstract sculpture is seen in the work of three Japanese Americans, the subject of Krystal R. Hauseur's fascinating chapter, "The Crafted Abstraction of Ruth Asawa, Kay Sekimachi, and Toshiko Takaezu." Asawa's woven hanging wire sculptures recall the barbed wire fences of her World War II internment. Their transparency—they are "both material and the space around it" (149)—is grounded in Zen spiritual traditions. Kay Sekimachi, who also was interned, is a weaver who created "three-dimensional art on the loom" (151). When ceramist Toshiko Takaezu discovered that her kilns "limited the size" of her pieces, she began throwing large sculptures "from a single block of clay" (155).

The final essay in this section is Mary Caroline Simpson's "Withstanding Entanglement: Clare Zeisler and the 1960s." Zeisler created monumental fiber pieces, subverting "established weaving practices" (169), and employing "unorthodox materials" (171) and knotting techniques to create colorful abstract sculptures.

"From Formalist Abstraction to Feminist Agency" is the subject of the final section. The first essay is by Langa, and in "A Rose by Other Names: Lesbian Artists, Formalism, Coded Representation," she considers three artists—photographers Berenice Abbott and Ruth Bernhard, and painter Nell Blaine—"whose lives were romantically linked with other women" (183). By employing "formalist or abstracted imagery" (183) and modernist stylistic innovations, they self-protectively muted a "personal identity that was viewed in mainstream society as culturally unacceptable" (183). Using "coded forms of imagery" (186) enabled them to transgress the dominant "heteronormative femininity" (183). Confronted with the hyper masculinity of "the prime years of abstract expressionist dominance" (186), lesbian artists chose self-silencing as a means of surviving professionally. Langa reveals how important it is to question "more deeply" how "formal and thematic choices" (196) can both reveal and conceal complex queer identities.

In "Departing the Plane: Charmion von Wiegand's Otherworldly Abstractions of the 1950s," Aliza Edelman presents an artist who blended concepts derived from both the East and the West to resist gesturalism's "novel means of expression to the exclusion of meaning" (201). The artist's search for "spiritual models of reality and enlightenment" (202) resulted in otherworldly prewar geometric abstractions that connected her more to Mondrian rather than to the New York School.

Seth Feman's chapter, "What Alma Thomas Teaches: The District as Art Lesson," imaginatively contextualizes her painting *Watusi* (*Hard Edge*, 1963) less within the visual tradition of Henri Matisse's late cutouts, but instead within the urban spaces of Washington, D.C., where Thomas spent her career. The work thus becomes a metaphor for the changing visual culture of the city as a result of school desegregation and urban renewal. Mapping the topography of a city in flux, she suggests both dancing as a means of "constructing a particular sort of racial and gendered space" (224), as well as urban mobility.

Mary McGuire asserts that women's use of their own bodies in performance art was "one of the most effective ways in which women artists would break out of the male-centered avant-garde to define their own artistic practice" (247). Her essay, "Performing Agency in Carolee Schneemann's *The Queen's Dog* (1965)," analyzes a transitional work by one of the most important feminist performance artists. Initially Schneemann worked collaboratively with other actors, exploring "her dream world and psychosexual development" (239). But she discovered that changes they made obscured "her vision for demonstrating female sexual agency" (238). By the seventies, she found working solo gave her more control.

The essays in *American Women Artists, 1935-1970* bristle with smart insights that make for both inspiring and discouraging reading. Collectively, the volume represents a complex account of the varied strategies these artists deployed, even when "gender-based criticism frequently derailed understanding of their goals" (28). Despite marginalization, these figures persevered. But how much more could these women have achieved had they not had to navigate a withering climate of sexism, racism, and homophobia? For the female artists struggling to establish themselves in New York in the years after World War II, this volume serves as an indictment of the toxic masculinist art machine that supported the rise of the abstract expressionists—dealers, collectors, curators, critics, scholars, and museums—who steadfastly privileged men over equally talented women.

The accomplishments of groundbreaking feminist scholarship are abundantly evident in the bibliography: of the some 200 sources listed, 150 were written by women. I can't think of another volume so thoroughly supported by the work of female scholars. But perhaps it also suggests that feminism should not just be a women's project.

American Women Artists is a reminder of the hard work that remains to be done to continue to infuse the rich legacy of women artists into the broad history of modern American art; many figures remain missing in action. In reclaiming and reassessing the contribution of these women, Langa and Wisotzki have made a considerable contribution to the study of American art. •

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Notes

1. I disagree with Conaty's assertion that the Art of This Century gallery "provided the locus for America's first avant-garde" (27). That status belongs to Alfred Stieglitz's "291," which operated between 1905 and 1917.

The Drawings of Barbara Hepworth

By Alan Wilkinson
Lund Humphries, 2015

Reviewed by Jennifer Griffiths

> "All sensitivity to landscape is in one's ability to feel within one's body: to feel with a primitive humility a response to life and location, a response to form, textures, and rhythms, and a response to the magic of light, both sun and moon ever changing… I rarely draw what I see— I draw what I feel in my body" (12).[1]

Describing her artistic process as highly intuitive, in tune with nature and embodied, Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975) did not recoil from the kind of essentialist language that has divided feminist opinion. But it is perhaps as a result of such language that she has not always been a popular figure of feminist critique.

In this publication, designed to coincide with a major retrospective at London's Tate Britain in 2015, Alan Wilkinson takes a biographical and chronological approach, tracing the artist's life in four chapters, from her early schooldays in Yorkshire, through her European travels, and to her Trewyn Studio in Cornwall, where she lived and worked for twenty-five years before dying in an accidental fire at age 72. Having published his first book on the drawings of Henry Moore (1984) and curated a Hepworth retrospective at the Tate Liverpool in 1994, the former Art Gallery of Toronto curator is a specialist in the subject. In this, his fourth book dedicated to Hepworth, he returns to the medium and offers the first survey of her drawings since the 1966 publication, *Barbara Hepworth: Drawings from a Sculptor's Landscape*, by Alan Bowness. Lund Humphries, formerly part of the Ashgate Publishing Group, specializes in richly illustrated books on British modernism, of which this volume constitutes a fine example.

In a brief first chapter, Hepworth is pictured in her childhood and teenage years. As a young person at the Wakefield Girls' School she took a keen interest in anatomy, dance, and portraiture, interests that were encouraged both at home and at school, and that followed her throughout her career. She spent a year at the Leeds School of Art, where she met Henry Moore and prepared for entrance exams to the Royal College of Art. Although she apparently dedicated a lot of time to drawing at Leeds, no works are extant. Attention then turns to Hepworth's years at the Royal College of Art in London, and her journey to Italy on a travel fellowship after losing the Prix de Rome to her future husband, John Skeaping. Only five drawings—all portraits—survive from the artist's two-year stay in Italy, during which she studied direct carving with master carver Giovanni Ardini, and she and Skeaping married. The third chapter is dedicated to the 1930s and the artist's shift toward abstraction, with key defining episodes being *Form with Hole* (1932) and *Drawing (for Darkwood Spheres)* (1936). Hepworth appears to have made use of the motif of an abstract hole a year before Moore (38). As in John Richardson's narrative of Picasso, Wilkinson portrays the stylistic shift in her art as being mirrored in the affairs of her personal life, coming at the end of her time with Skeaping and the beginning of her relationship with fellow abstractionist Ben Nicholson. If the 1930s was Hepworth's most prolific decade of sculptural production, it is during the 1940s that she apparently concentrated on drawing (59). Drawings such as *Three Figures* (1951; Fig. 1) illustrate how a dearth of sculptural materials during the war prompted the artist to return to the medium. The fourth and final section of the book, by far the longest, begins with Hepworth's relocation to Cornwall at the outbreak of the war in 1939. She would remain in the south of England for the remainder of her life.

The book is a well-deserved tribute to Hepworth's pivotal role as a protagonist in the story of British modernism, Wilkinson carefully emphasizes her close ties to mainland European modernism, providing

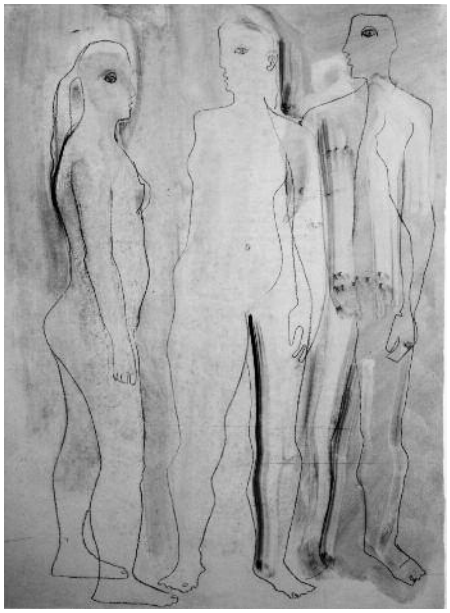


Fig. 1. Barbara Hepworth, *Three Figures* (sepia on wood), (1951), thinned oil and pencil on gesso-prepared panel, 15 1/2" x 11 1/2". Hepworth Estate.

further evidence of her place at the forefront of its developments. As in his other publications,[2] the author is primarily concerned with the artist's formal development and with identifying her artistic influences—interests he clarifies up front. As he explains in the introduction,

> I have long considered that Hepworth's creative dialogue with Moore in the 1920s and 1930s, and with Nicholson in the 1930s and 1940s, with the close, interlocking stylistic linkages among their drawings, sculptures, and paintings, was as revolutionary and as important to the emergence of British modernism as the dialectic between Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque and Juan Gris during the heroic years of pioneering Cubism from 1907–14… (7).

Later he asserts that Hepworth's "first-hand exposure in the spring of 1933 to the work of two great sculptors, Jean Arp and Constantin Brancusi, and of the very great sculptor/painter, Picasso… cement[ed] her allegiance to the mainstream of modern European art" (47). While heavily invested in the traditional

mythos of the modernist canon, the book's focus on the collaborative nature of artistic development was, for this reader, a highly appealing facet of the account. Hepworth's long relationship with Nicholson, for example, is understood as a "two-way cross-fertilization of ideas and forms" (36).

Yet, the allegiance here to modernist philosophies and the artist's personal vision truncate deeper considerations of her art in social, political, and ideological contexts. The text is punctuated with poetic passages from Socrates, Rainer Maria Rilke, Shakespeare, and John Donne, further romanticizing an already idealized tale, and the artist's testimonials are used uncritically. Oft-repeated quotations, like "I, the sculptor, *am* the landscape. I am the form and I am the hollow, the thrust and the contour" (58), reiterate Hepworth's preferred narrative about her intimate connection with the natural world. Her use of strings in woodcarvings of the 1940s is explained, in the artist's words, as representative of, "the tension I felt between myself and the sea, the wind or the hills" (71). Her closeness to nature notwithstanding, there is only passing interest in Hepworth's mother-and-child imagery, and while the hard-edged and unrefined experience of motherhood is eschewed, there is the apparently requisite (and irritating) moment when "drawing and carving" by the woman artist is understood to "reflect a stylistic refinement and a quiet, gentle feminine sensuality" (33). In her essay for the accompanying catalogue to last year's Tate retrospective, Lucy Kent discusses the importance of Hepworth and Nicholson's shared religious commitment to Christian Science, a branch of Christianity distinguished by an understanding of reality as purely spiritual, yet there is no mention of that here.[3]

By underscoring particular narratives about the interconnectedness of the human form and the natural world, Hepworth was linking her art to Britain's most celebrated aesthetic tradition. Her sentiments echo those of Wordsworth and Turner and tap into a historical romance between the English artist and the country's inspirational "green and pleasant lands." It is worthwhile remembering that, having written extensively about her own work, Hepworth represents that rare example of the woman modernist who successfully shaped her own story. ●

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Notes

1. Alan Bowness, *Barbara Hepworth: Drawings from A Sculptor's Landscape* (London: Praeger, 1966), 10–11.
2. Penelope Curtis and Alan Wilkinson, *Barbara Hepworth: A Retrospective* (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1994).
3. Lucy Kent, "An act of praise: Religion and the work of Barbara Hepworth," in *Barbara Hepworth: Sculpture for a Modern World*, eds. Penelope Curtis and Chris Stephens (London: Tate Publishing, 2015), 36–49.

Niki de Saint Phalle 1930–2002

Edited by Camille Morineau
FMGB Guggenheim Bilbao, 2015

Reviewed by Cécile Whiting

In a well-known photograph of a now legendary exhibition at Stockholm's Moderna Museet in 1966, visitors can be seen lining up between the enormous, brightly colored legs of Niki de Saint Phalle's *Hon-en katedral* (She-A Cathedral), waiting to enter this outsized female through a gaping vagina. Many a joyous *Nana* appeared in *Hon's* wake, all of them painted with gay colors, many towering above their admirers rather than being entered. These sculptures are Niki de Saint Phalle's most famous works, and they have long overshadowed the great breadth and depth of her art. Because of the seeming frivolity of the *Nanas*, the artist has received scant scholarly attention to date, a lacuna now impressively filled by the catalogue *Niki de Saint Phalle 1930–2002*, published on the occasion of the exhibition curated by Camille Morineau for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Grand Palais in Paris.

As this catalogue amply demonstrates with 368 pages of text and color plates, Saint Phalle enjoyed a long, prolific, and complex career. Three opening essays by Morineau, Bloum Cardenas (Saint Phalle's granddaughter and Trustee of the Niki Charitable Art Foundation), and Catherine Francblin (author of a biography of Saint Phalle) are followed by four sections—"The Beginnings," "Shootings," "Feminine Imagery," "Sculpture and Public Art"—each with three essays by various art historians and curators from Europe and the United States. Quotations from the artist's writings and interviews as well as superb color reproductions are interspersed with the main essays. The detailed timeline, which concludes the catalogue, includes numerous photographs of the artist as well as short quotations that further reveal Saint Phalle's own perspective on her life and work.

Cardenas and Morineau recount that the project for the monographic exhibition and catalogue began when they met by happenstance at the opening of the landmark exhibit of twentieth-century women artists, *elles@centre pompidou*, curated by Morineau and held at the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Beaubourg. At the entrance of that exhibition stood three works by Saint Phalle: *The Bride* (1963), *Leto or The Crucifixion* (1965; Fig. 1), and a *Tir* (1961), the name Saint Phalle used for paintings she finished by shooting them with a gun. The maimed *Bride*, her face smashed on one side, and the armless *Leto or The Crucifixion* both have bosoms covered by toy baby dolls often missing limbs, along with miniature soldiers, toy rifles, and plastic knives. Their physical damage together with the toys suggestive of violence with which they



Fig. 1. Niki de Saint Phalle, *Leto or The Crucifixion* (1965), various objects on wire mesh, 93" x 57 7/8" x 24 1/4". Centre Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

are decorated highlight the injuries inflicted on them by their social roles as stereotypical bride and whore. Violence is also implicit in the *Tir*, an assemblage in which Saint Phalle tucked pouches of paint among the objects attached to her canvas and shot at them with a rifle to splatter and dribble pigments haphazardly over the white plaster covering the surface.

While the exhibition *elles@centre pompidou* surveyed a range of women artists, Morineau's new catalogue honors the work of one woman by expanding on the themes previewed at the opening of the earlier exhibit: the stereotyped societal roles assumed by women in Saint Phalle's art and the violence that marks them. One of the strengths of the catalogue is that it counters an understanding of Saint Phalle based entirely on her joyous *Nanas*, bringing attention to early assemblages in which guns, knives, and cleavers abound. Morineau and several other authors emphasize that the roots of the *Nanas* lie in some of the early assemblage works in which mothers and brides play roles straight out of gothic horror movies. Indeed close examination reveals that the *Nanas* themselves are complex, sometimes menacing, sometimes injured women.

The catalogue brings to our attention a part of Saint Phalle's oeuvre less known than the later *Nanas*: her early assemblages and *Tirs*. In a groundbreaking essay from 2003, Jill Carrick argued that Saint Phalle's staging of herself as a femme fatale in the *Tirs* offered a radical feminist critique of gender.[1] Several authors in this catalogue build on Carrick's work by examining the *Tirs* and early assemblages for their critique of prescribed female roles, the Catholic Church, and Cold War politics. Authors Sarah Wilson and Laurence Bertrand Dorléac document the different locations where Saint Phalle performed her *Tirs*, consider the various observers and participants that she invited to the shootings, and insightfully discuss these events not only as a therapeutic means for the artist to exorcise her demons but also as aesthetic gestures whereby art could be created out of destruction.

Since 1994, when an aging Saint-Phalle revealed that she had been raped by her father, her traumatic childhood has dominated art historical accounts of her art.[2] Her *Tirs* and her film *Daddy*, in particular, are understood as instances where the former abused child revolts against her father, her upper-class family, and the Catholic Church in which she was raised. To a certain extent many of the essays in this catalogue are still beholden to Saint Phalle's life story from 1994. Amelia Jones tackles the thorny issue of biography head-on by arguing that since Saint Phalle self-consciously made the personal the center of her artistic project, so too should the author. Accordingly, she emphasizes the complexity of Saint Phalle's story, highlighting her dual citizenship and bicultural identity, as well as Saint Phalle's ambivalence about feminism, even as she engaged in gender critique in her art.

The marked role of Saint Phalle's biography in her art is a result not only of her personal revelations but also of her significant presence in contemporary popular media when she was creating her works. Saint Phalle, a striking woman who had a brief career as a fashion model at age eighteen, posed often and strategically as an artist for the still and moving camera. As Morineau suggests in her opening essay, "Saint Phalle was not averse to being a star, and even became one consciously, like Andy Warhol and at exactly the same time" (31). The series of opening photographs in the catalogue captures the complexity of her persona: upper-class sophisticate, concentrated artist, armed assailant. Other women such as Marisol and Pauline Boty also played the role of fashionable, celebrity artist during the 1960s, and it is unfortunate that the essayists here did not consider Saint Phalle's relation to these figures as much as to Warhol. Even as Saint Phalle, Marisol, and Boty drew attention to themselves as artists by self-consciously capitalizing upon their femininity for the camera's eye, they used their artwork to challenge stereotypes about women. Catherine Gonnard provides a wonderful essay examining the reception of Saint Phalle on television in France. Saint Phalle also was featured on American television, and comparative work on the televisual reception of contemporary women artists in both countries would point to the ways in which women used this new medium to claim serious attention for themselves as artists.

To what extent was Saint Phalle's exploration of the range and limits of femininity in her self-presentation and in her art effective as a feminist tactic? The essay by Kalliopi Minioudaki challenges reductive feminist readings of Saint Phalle's work as "a ritualistic killing of the father and an unabashed celebration of femininity" (164). Probing the complexities of Saint Phalle's images of mothers in the 1960s and early 1970s, Minioudaki argues that her "proto-feminist exploration of the feminine" is subversive in its efforts to unmask the role of the feminine in western culture (165). Her analysis is particularly rich as she examines Saint Phalle's art closely while also analyzing feminist politics in the 1960s, the work of other women artists, and audience reception of Saint Phalle's art. Saint Phalle's politics, as several authors in the catalogue emphasize, encompassed not just women's issues but also the Cold War, the

Black Power movement, and the AIDS crisis, about which she produced posters, lithographs, postage stamps, and a book.

Even as numerous authors in the catalogue focus on Saint Phalle's femininity, feminism, and examination of women's roles, they also stress that she was part of a larger community of artists who traveled across the Atlantic in the nascent age of the jet-set. Saint Phalle's ability to develop friendships on both sides of the Atlantic was in part owing to her bicultural and bilingual identity. Born in France in 1930 but raised in New York City, Saint Phalle returned to Paris in 1952 with Harry Mathews, the man she married at age 19. In 1960 she left her husband and two children to move in with artist Jean Tinguely. Alone and with Tinguely she travelled across Europe and the United States and, owing to her language skills, she easily developed extensive artistic networks on both continents. In his essay, Patrik Andersson situates Saint Phalle in an international art world that developed in the early 1960s as she moved between Paris, Stockholm, New York, and Los Angeles. Emilie Bouvard in her essay underscores the importance of understanding Saint Phalle's art within the context not just of France but also the United States, where artistic categories and concepts differed from those of the French Nouveau Realistes with whom she was initially affiliated.

Saint Phalle enjoys recognition from a broad public in part because she created monumental public works, including three sculpture parks in Italy, Israel, and California. The final essays in the catalogue take these installations seriously as a challenge to projects in architecture and urban development dominated by men. Morineau, for instance, attributes to Saint Phalle the invention of the "body-house" a new type of sculpture in which visitors enter the female body, first seen in *Hon* but also implicit in early pictures of castles imprisoning nude women.

Saint Phalle's reputation is likely to become more nuanced among both the scholarly community and the public at large as a result of this catalogue. Rich in documentation and in art historical analysis and insight, the handsome volume rightly claims an important place for Saint Phalle in the development of post-war Euro-American art. •

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Notes

1. Jill Carrick, "Phallic Victories? Niki de Saint Phalle's Tirs," *Art History* 26, no. 5 (Nov. 2003): 700–29. Other texts that address the violence of the *Tirs* and early assemblages include Jo Applin, "Alberto Burri and Niki de Saint Phalle: Relief Sculptures and Violence in the 1960s," *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 27, no. 2/3 (Winter/Spring 2008): 77–81; Cécile Whiting, "Apocalypse in Paradise: Niki de Saint Phalle in Los Angeles," *Woman's Art Journal* 35, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2014): 14–22; and, Nicole Woods, "Pop Gun Art: Niki de Saint Phalle and the Operatic Multiple," available at: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/pop-gun/
2. Niki de Saint-Phalle, *Mon Secret* (Paris: La Différence, 1994). See also her *Traces: An Autobiography Remembering 1930-1949* (Lausanne: Sylvio Acatos, 1999); and "Letter to Boum," in Susan Hapgood, *Neo-Dada: Redefining Art 1958–62* (New York: American Federation of the Arts, 1995).

"The heroine Paint" After Frankenthaler

Edited by Katy Siegel,
Visual Chronology by Liz Hirsch
Gagosian Gallery, 2015

Reviewed by Ellen G. Landau

This 269-page catalogue, titled with a line from Barbara Guest's 2008 poem, "In the Middle of the Easel," and subtitled "Stains, flows, decoration, play, ambition: a different account of painting from the 1950s to the present day," was published to accompany an exhibition held at Gagosian Gallery's Madison Avenue venue in 2015. Featuring what its editor terms in her acknowledgments "intuitive scholarship" (n.p.), *"The heroine Paint" After Frankenthaler* combines new critical writing by Katy Siegel, John Elderfield, Daniel Belasco, Suzanne Hudson, Lane Relyea, and Howard Singerman, as well as reprinted texts by Harmony Hammond and Tracy K. Smith,[1] with a variety of statements by artists directly influenced or at the least extremely impressed by Helen Frankenthaler's oeuvre. Musings by artists of today, Laura Owens, Carrie Moyer, Carroll Dunham, Sterling Ruby, and Mary Weatherford, are interspersed, as well as such ephemera as a 1953 play, *Beach at Amagansett*, by Frankenthaler's friend Dwight Ripley. These varied parts are somewhat loosely combined under chronological section headings, including, "1950s: A Debut & the Tibor de Nagy Gallery," "1960s: Color Field & Its Influence," "1960s–1970s: Feminist Art," "1970s–1980s: The Men's Room," "1980s–1990s: Bad Girls," and "2000– Present: Contemporary Art."

Further interspersed amongst and between the essays and shorter artist statements are sections of visual chronology that include illustrations of a variety of works by Frankenthaler, as well as numerous photographs of her with her cohort, and reproductions of articles about her art as well as her beauty and charm from popular sources such as *Life* magazine. Daniel Belasco's essay characterizes "Helen" and her female "posse" as exemplifying in sexual behavior, attitude, and erotic flair the newly liberated postwar women in Rona Jaffe's popular 1958 novel, *The Best of Everything*. In addition, other documentary ephemera are highlighted—for instance, never published postcards Frankenthaler wrote express-ing her feelings more nakedly are discussed by Belasco—as well as illustrations of apparently related works by subsequent artists added into the mix. The latter include examples by those who provided statements for the catalogue as well as supplementary art deemed Frankenthaler-inspired, some discussed by the primary essayists and the rest presumably also included in the Gagosian show. No checklist of the exhibition is provided.



Fig. 1. Joan Mitchell, Helen Frankenthaler and Grace Hartigan at the opening of Frankenthaler's solo exhibition at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, February 12, 1957.

Siegel's lead essay, "Contextually Boundless," begins with a quote by Frankenthaler in which she responds to curator Henry Geldzahler's 1964 question, "How do you feel about being a woman painter?" "Obviously," she states, "first I am involved in painting not the who and how."[2] Siegel uses these categories ("how" is explicated as process and "who" as image plus sensibility), adding "what" (i.e., painting), as a way to organize her thoughts and to introduce some of the primary themes of the show and catalogue. "Process, painting, femaleness, seriousness, and personal identity," Siegel states, all "collide" here, conflicting with mid-century modernism, described as calcified by males into "a rather narrow and non-inclusive practice" (9–10). Turning on its head the feminized "lyrical" trope attached to second-generation Abstract Expressionism—when women artists like Frankenthaler, Joan Mitchell, and Grace Hartigan (Fig. 1) rose somewhat to the fore in comparison to their macho elders, Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, et al—Siegel represents Frankenthaler as caricaturing Pollock's drips in her reliance on the stain, a more active intent. She rejects the prevailing notion of Frankenthaler as merely "a midwife" to male Color Field artists like Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland promoted by critic Clement Greenberg.

The bodily implications of her soak and stain method (Mitchell once accused Frankenthaler of "Kotex painting") are presented as inspiration not only for subsequent feminist art by women such as Janine Antoni and Lynda Benglis, but also for Andy Warhol's oxidation paintings and more recent works by younger male artists like Mike Kelley and Christopher Wool. The latter is an idea discussed in greater detail by Howard Singerman in his interesting text, "The Men's Room," which first questions if there are further ways to differentiate Frankenthaler from Pollock other than gender, using art historian Anne Wagner's ideas about the problems faced by Pollock's wife, painter Lee Krasner, as a model.[3] Singerman juxtaposes the implications of Guest's anthropomorphizing of the "heroine Paint" to the accepted concept of Pollock as "hero painter" (182). He describes male artists in his "men's room," a nod to Jacques Lacan's law of urinary segregation (a concept under fire in today's culture wars), as differently engaging Frankenthaler's terms and materials and her relation to process and materiality, a situation for which she has not been given due credit. In particular, Singerman sees her impact on artists like Ross Bleckner and Felix Gonzalez Torres whose work engaged the AIDS crisis by politicizing sexuality and identity, an association not typically made. Frankenthaler's reputation as merely "the bridge between Pollock and what was possible"[4] appears totally patronizing and—with the benefit of hindsight—severely delimiting to Siegel, Singerman, and others writing here. Siegel highlights Mary Weatherford's statement, "If anyone decides to do stain paintings, even now they must consider Helen Frankenthaler" (17, 242), but she, Singerman, and other catalogue authors make clear that Frankenthaler's legacy is fundamental as well to differing modes of art making, including performance. They seek to establish her impact on today's freedom to play with sexuality, this despite Frankenthaler's (era-influenced) rejection of gender identity as basic to her process of creation.

In different contexts, former curator John Elderfield and theorist Lane Relyea both engage Clement Greenberg's negative view of "feminine" and "decorative" art in favor of the bland rationality that characterized Post Painterly Abstraction by men such as Louis, Noland, Larry Poons, and Jules Olitski, noting how this played into reduced assessments of the career of Helen Frankenthaler (who had been romantically involved with Greenberg in her twenties and benefited from his influence and contacts). Elderfield cites as well prominent art writer Eugene Goossen's negativity toward Frankenthaler's staining as equally representative of anxiety in the Mad Men era, when even the slightest ascendance of women artists began to cause discomfort for their male compatriots and for the critical establishment whose reputation was built on praising the latter. Elderfield also writes of the effect Frankenthaler's staining had on sexualizing the traditional category of landscape, adding that folds of pigment in her paintings of this type implicate the topography of making in gender well beyond the menstrual metaphors so often used (59). He considers Frankenthaler's mature style more truly "optical" than Pollock's, celebrated as such by Greenberg's acolyte, critic Michael Fried (61).

In the final key essay, enticingly titled "A Comma in the Place Where a Period Might Be," art historian Suzanne Hudson

returns to Frankenthaler's *Mountains and Sea* (the 1952 work that so impressed Noland and Louis, later dubbed by critic Robert Hughes "the watercolor that ate the art world"[5]), styling it as simultaneously a breakthrough and an apotheosis (226). She agrees with Sonya Rudikoff's assessment of Frankenthaler's oeuvre as gathering a cumulative impact: "No one picture announces itself as the only picture, or as the end of the world" in contradistinction to Pollock's innovation (i.e., dripping), which Rudikoff reads as "a cipher of destruction."[6] Critiques of its "prettiness" by commentators like Arthur Danto notwithstanding, Frankenthaler's work demonstrates, according to Rudikoff, a "continuous and vital response to existence" (226–27).

Following this kind of assessment allows Hudson to introduce progeny that now expands to include, for example, artists involved with Miriam Schapiro and Judy Chicago's 1972 Los Angeles Womanhouse project, as well as male and female participants in the Pattern and Decoration movement for which, she says, Frankenthaler served as "an inchoate index" (228). Hudson also points out that 1980s male artists like Julian Schnabel, Eric Fischl, and Francesco Clemente in effect converted emotional femininity to parodic excess, "recuperating the position of the woman ... but reserving it for male use" (228). Terming the 1990s Bad Girl phenomenon an unfortunate repackaging of feminism, Hudson positions conceptual painting of the 2000s as a reaction against this type of work (as well as to so-called "abject" art) and argues that the "deskilling" (charges of her not working hard enough) often associated with Frankenthaler's soak and stain method has borne additional fruit in the twenty-first century in works by such varied artists as Wade Guyton, Christopher Wool, Lucas Ajemian, and Jacqueline Humphries. "Radical contingency," Hudson concludes, "does not disallow the subjective but ushers it into view more fully, through narratives of process that become the meaning as well as the method of the otherwise nonobjective work" (234).

The final section of the catalogue, likewise covering 2000 to the present, is anchored by the statements of two artists who certainly appear currently to be working "after Frankenthaler," Mary Weatherford and Sterling Ruby. One of Weatherford's conclusions—"The difference between my work and hers is visible *doubt*. I have it, she doesn't"—may or may not actually be the case. Weatherford adds the important caveat (also arguable) about Frankenthaler, "I am sure she had doubts, of course, but the record of them isn't in the paintings" (242). Ruby celebrates the materialism of used clothing and the like which he appropriates to create dyed soft sculptures. Claiming a word other authors in this catalogue point out has so often been used to denigrate the paintings of Helen Frankenthaler, Ruby describes his materials as "liquid, *flow*, that then gets fixed ..." (249). There's power, he asserts, in being unstable: "it is productive and strong to work against order" (249), referencing yet another legacy of the "Heroine paint." •

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Notes

1. Hammond's "Feminist Abstract Art—A Political Viewpoint" was originally published in 1977 in the feminist journal *Heresies*. Smith's poem "The Universe is a House Party" was published in her collection *Life on Mars* in 2011.
2. Henry Geldzahler, "An Interview with Helen Frankenthaler," *Artforum* 4 (October 1965), 38.
3. Anne M. Wagner, "Lee Krasner as L.K.," *Representations* no. 25 (Winter 1989).
4. Clement Greenberg, "Louis and Noland," *Art International* 4 (May 1960), 28.
5. Robert Hughes, "A Look at a Beautiful Impasse," *Time*, November 10, 1986, 100.
6. Sonya Rudikoff, "Helen Frankenthaler's Painting," in B. H. Friedman, ed., *School of New York: Some Younger Artists* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), 16–17.

Simone Forti: Thinking with the Body

By Sabine Breitwieser et al.
Museum der Moderne Salzburg, 2014

Reviewed by Jayne Wark

Simone Forti (b. 1935) was a fountainhead of the revolution in dance that took place in the 1960s in the United States. This impressive catalogue was published to accompany a retrospective of her work at the Museum der Moderne Salzburg in 2014. Curator Sabine Breitwieser's decision to hold a retrospective in an art museum of someone known primarily as a dancer testifies to the multidisciplinary nature of Forti's work.

Forti shared this multidisciplinary approach with the people she knew and worked with in New York's Greenwich Village in the 1960s, such as Trisha Brown, John Cage, Robert Dunn, Robert Morris (her husband from 1955-1961), Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer and La Monte Young. This hothouse environment led to a cross-fertilization that eroded the disciplinary boundaries between dance, art, sound, music and film. What made this possible was a collective impetus to resist what Steve Paxton describes in his catalogue essay as "the cultural habit of interpreting art" through metaphor, symbolism and subjective expression (60). In Forti's case, this was achieved by presenting dance as bodily movement stripped of narrative, sentiment, and expression. In Paxton's view, Forti eschewed technical dance training, treated the body as pedestrian, and based the choreography on ordinary task-oriented activities. These characteristics were evident in her first two performance events in New York, the debut of *Rollers* at the Reuben Gallery in December 1960, and *Five Dance Constructions* at Yoko Ono's Chambers Street loft in May 1961, which included *See-Saw*, *Slant Board* and



Fig. 1. Simone Forti, *News Animation*, May 8 and 9, 2004, *An Evening of Dance with Yvonne Rainer and Simone Forti*, The Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA. Performed by Simone Forti.

Huddle. As Robert Morris noted in his essay, "objects and rules formed the a priori structural features of several of these works," thus largely foreclosing self-expressive or improvisatory movement (46). Although Forti was never a member of the famous Judson Dance Theatre founded in 1962 by Paxton, Rainer, and others, her task- and rule-based approach became one of Judson's choreographic mainstays.

The legacy of Forti's groundbreaking contributions to the New York dance scene in the 1960s has overshadowed the scope of her lifelong work. *Thinking with the Body* provides a corrective to this by highlighting how drawing and painting have been integral to her working-out of ideas about bodily movement as an untapped source of individual and social knowledge. Many of these ideas are communicated in the introductory interview with Breitwieser, which also offers fascinating insight into the personal and artistic arc of Forti's life. It recounts her origins in a wealthy Jewish family of wool factory owners in Florence, Italy; the family's overnight flight to Switzerland in 1938, just one step ahead of impending anti-Semitic legislation, and thence emigration to Los Angeles; her art education at Reed College in San Francisco, where she met Robert Morris and began to take dance classes with Anna Halprin; the move to New York with Morris in 1959, and integration into the Greenwich Village art scene; her animal locomotion studies in the late 1960s; her collaborations with composer Charlemagne Palestine in the Illuminations series during the 1970s; and the *News Animation* performances she's been doing since the 1980s.

The interview is followed by Meredith Morse's essay focusing on a specific work (*See-Saw*), Robert Morris's analysis of the *Dance Constructions*, Julia Bryan-Wilson's description of Forti's encounters with Arte Povera during her stay in Rome in 1968 and her first animal studies at the Rome zoo, Steve Paxton's account of participating in the premiere of *Five Dance Constructions* at Yoko Ono's loft in 1961, Liz Kotz's conversation with composer Tashi Wada about the role of sound in Forti's performances, Yvonne Rainer's tribute to Forti's inspiring influence on contemporary dance in general and Judson in particular, and Fred Dewey's discussion of Forti's integration of language and embodied experience beginning in the 1970s and culminating in the *News Animations* that brought together "body, mind, world" (76). The final section of the book consists of 195 pages of documentary photographs and illustrations of artworks grouped into thematic categories with descriptions by Forti.

Simone Forti: Thinking with the Body is a grand publication. It strikes a good balance between personal memoir and historical and critical analysis, while the profusion of illustrations provides readers with direct access to the formidable range and diversity of Forti's life work. It is an especially welcome eye-opener for those familiar only with Simone Forti as an avant-garde dancer in New York in the 1960s. •

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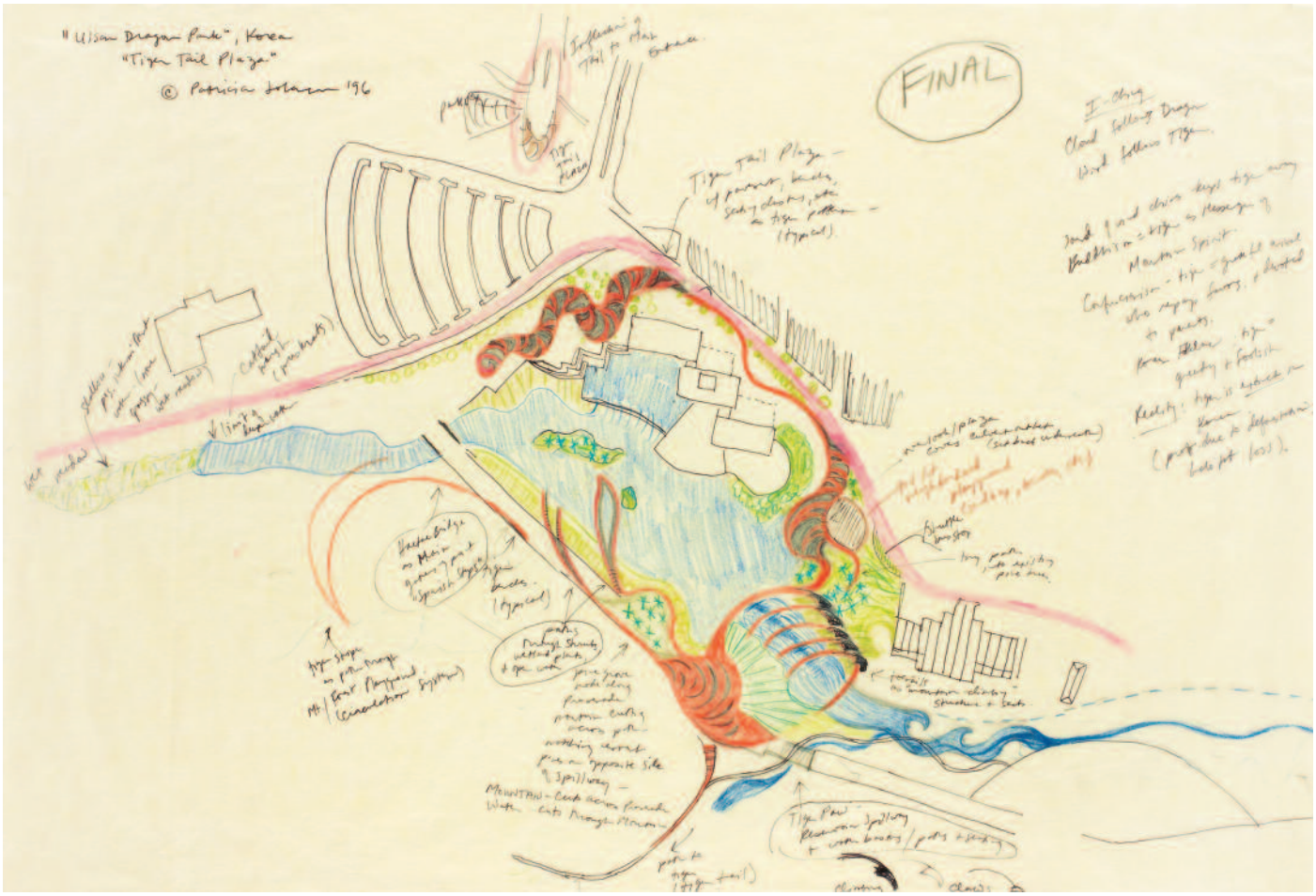
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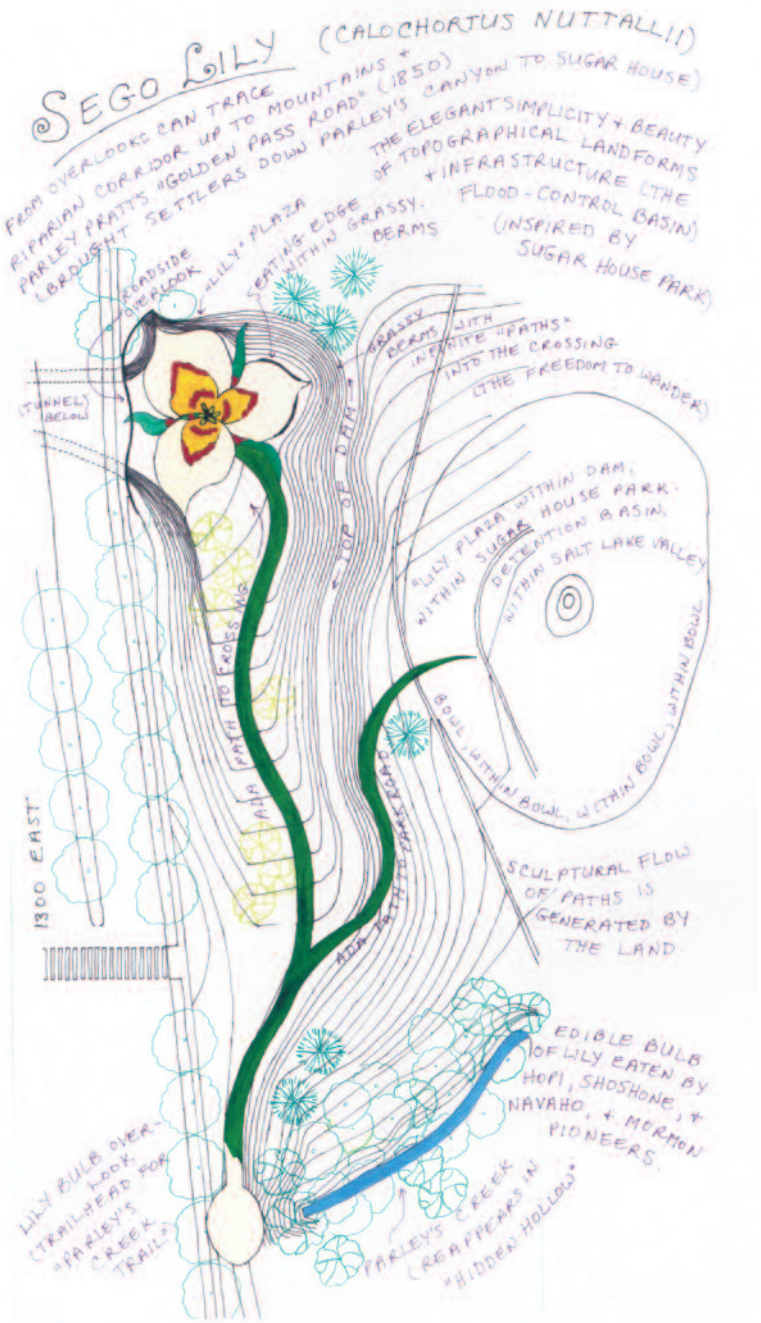
Pl. 1. Patricia Johanson, *Dragon Park*, Ulsan, South Korea, drawing for *Tiger Tail Plaza* (1996), colored pencil and ink, 26" x 40 1/2". © Patricia Johanson.



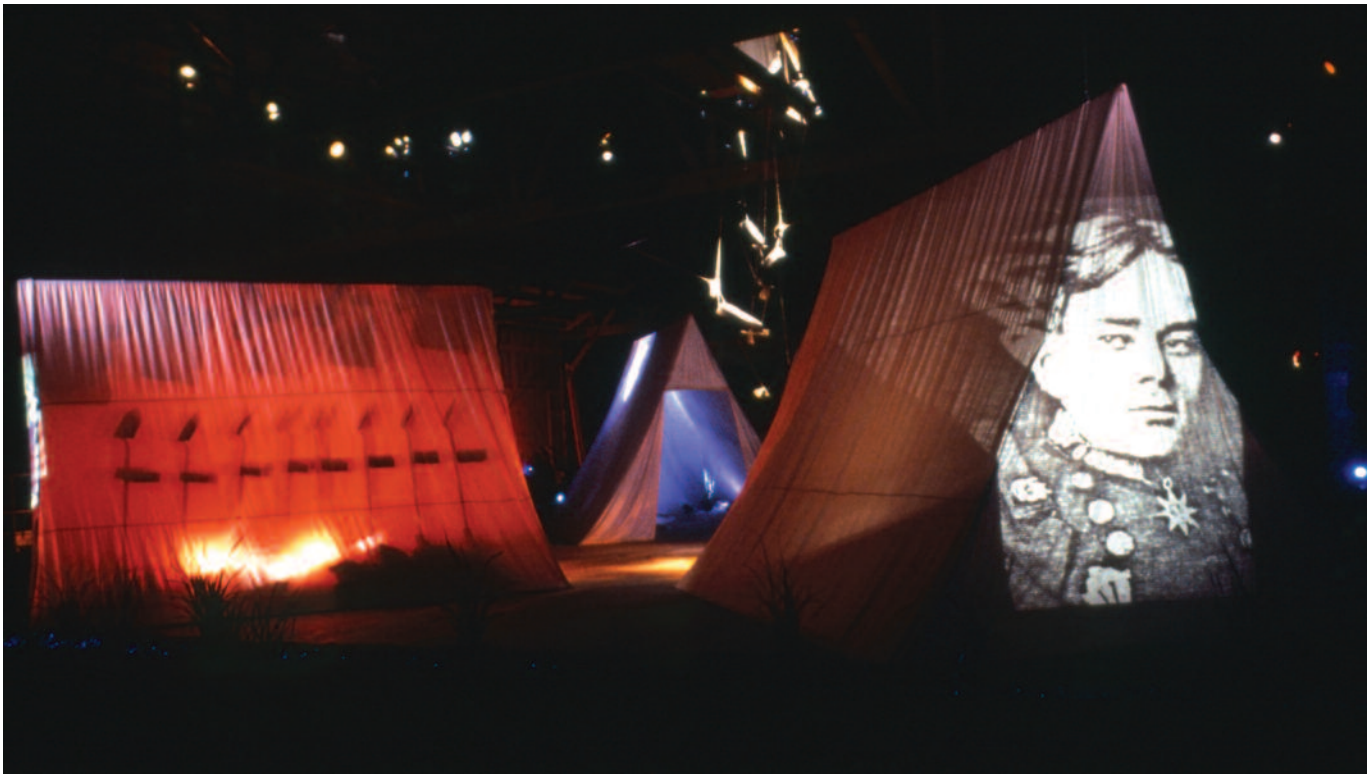
Pl. 2. Patricia Johanson, *Endangered Garden, Candlestick Cove*, San Francisco Bay (1987–95), Ribbon Worm/Tidal Sculpture, gunite, 75' x 25' x 8'. © Patricia Johanson.



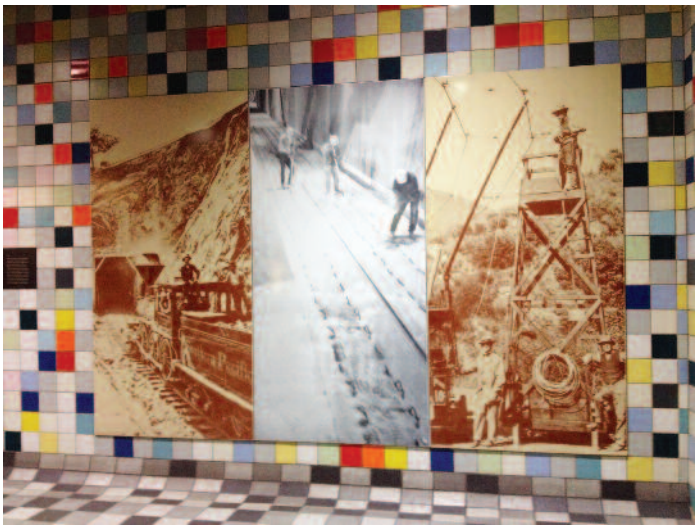
Pl. 3. Patricia Johanson, *Wetlands Park* and *Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility*, Petaluma, CA (2001–05), aerial photo. © Patricia Johanson.



Pl. 4. Patricia Johanson, *The Draw at Sugar House*, Salt Lake City, UT, (2003–present), *Sego Lily* (2003), acrylic, ink and colored pencil, 28" x 15". © Patricia Johanson.



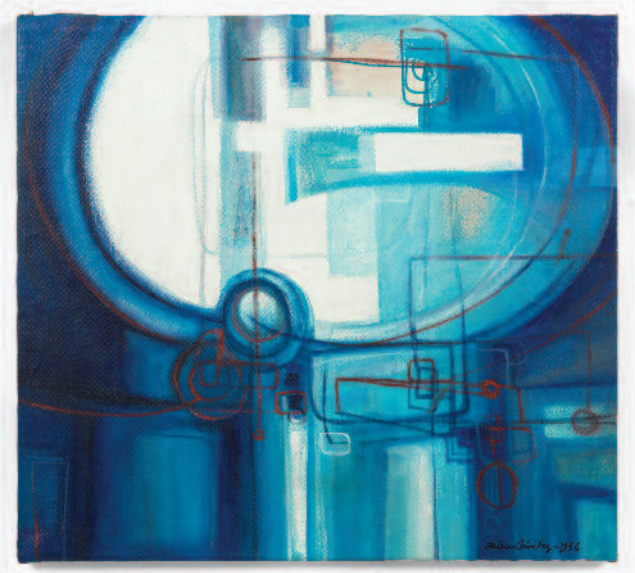
Pl. 5. May Sun, *L.A./River/China/Town* (1988), mixed media, Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, CA. Photo: David Familian.



Pl. 6. May Sun, *Hollywood and Western Red Line Subway Station* (1990–99), mezzanine level. Photo: May Sun.



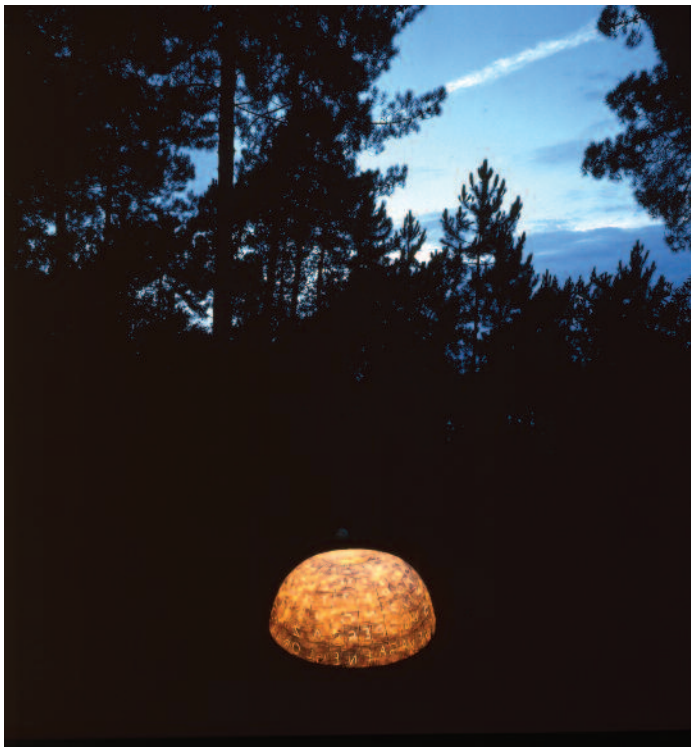
Pl. 7. May Sun, *Hollywood and Western Red Line Subway* (1990–99), platform level. Photo: Tom Bonner.



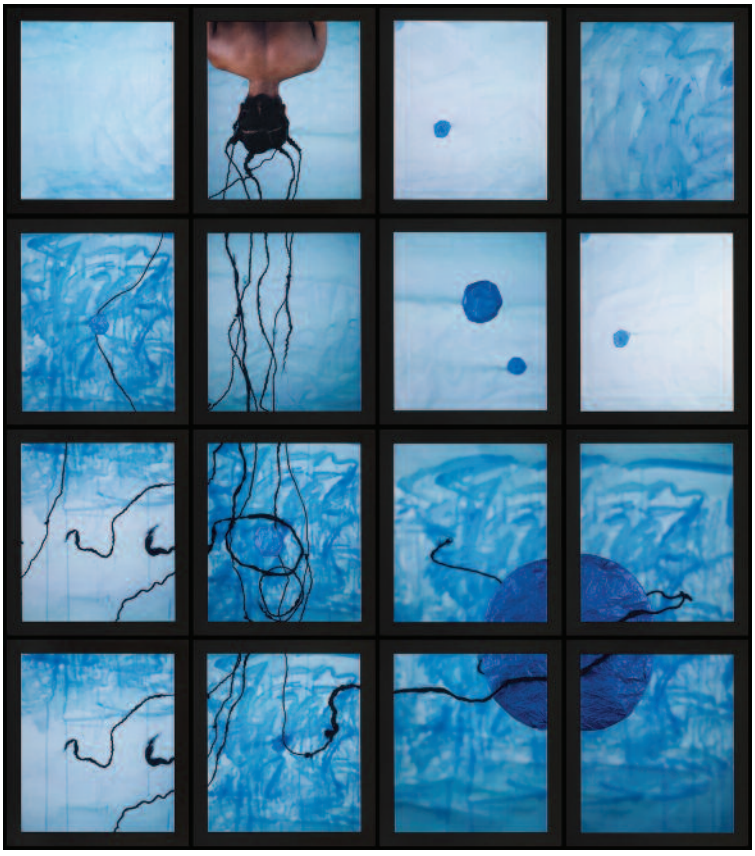
Pl. 8. Zilia Sánchez, *Azul azul* (Blue blue) (1956), acrylic on canvas, 21" x 23". ©Zilia Sánchez. Photo: Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York.



Pl. 9. Zilia Sánchez, *Lunar con tatuaje* (Moon with Tattoo) (c. 1968/96), acrylic on stretched canvas, 71" x 72" x 12". © Zilia Sánchez. Photo: Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York.



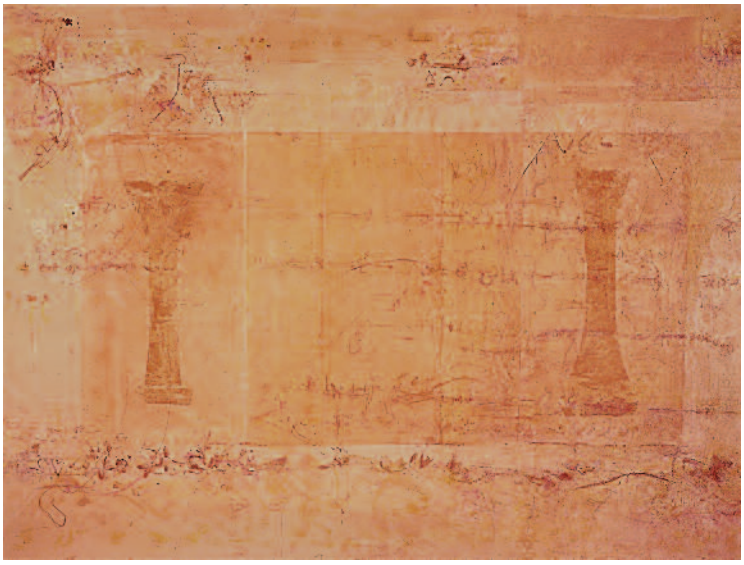
Pl. 10. María Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Interiority (or Hill-Sided Moon)* (2003), installation detail, translucent polymer, as installed at La Marrana Arte, Ambientale, Italy. © María Magdalena Campos-Pons. Photo: Courtesy La Marrana Arte.



Pl. 11. María Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Elevata* (2002), 16 Polaroid Pro 20" x 24" photographs. © María Magdalena Campos-Pons. Collection of the Indianapolis Museum of Art, IMA Business GroupArt Acquisition Fund.

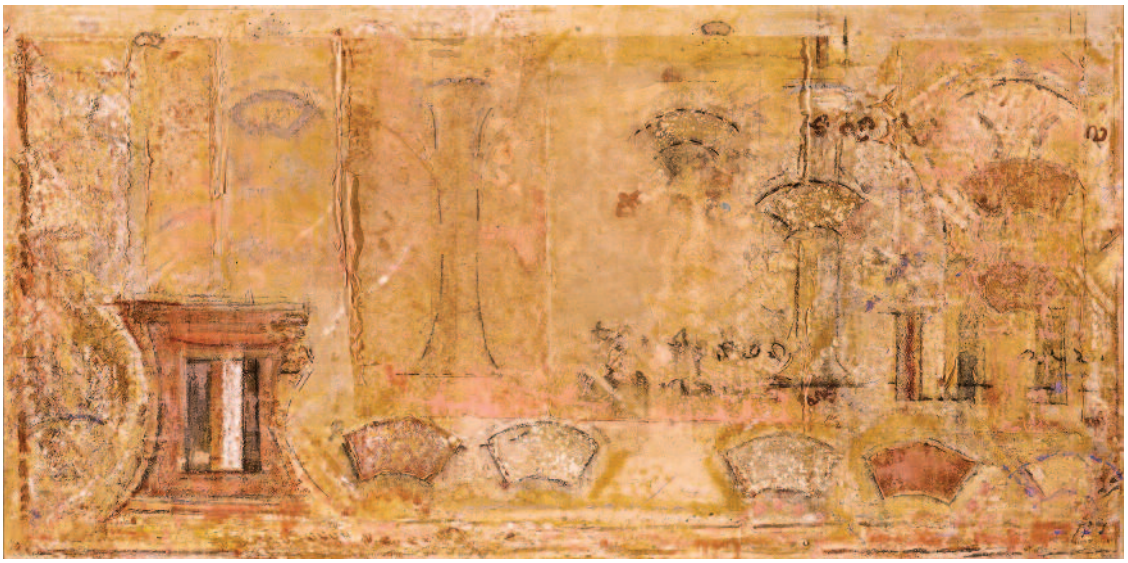


Pl. 12. María Magdalena Campos-Pons, *The Warrior Reservoir* (2010–11), watercolor, ink, and Prismacolor on cotton fiber, amate (bark), handmade papers with ribbon, and wood carvings and swords, 80 1/2" x 131". Vanderbilt University Fine Arts Gallery. Photo: John Schwelkert Photography.



Pl. 13. Sandra Lerner, *Tao Series IV* (1975), oil and mixed media on canvas, 90" x 120". Private Collection.

Pl. 14. Sandra Lerner, *Echoes* (1989), oil and mixed media on canvas, 55" x 108". Private Collection.





Pl. 15. Sandra Lerner, *Matsushima* (1981), oil and mixed media on canvas, 70" x 70". Private Collection.



Pl. 16. Sandra Lerner, *Tao II* (1981), oil and mixed media on canvas, 88" x 85 1/2". Private Collection.



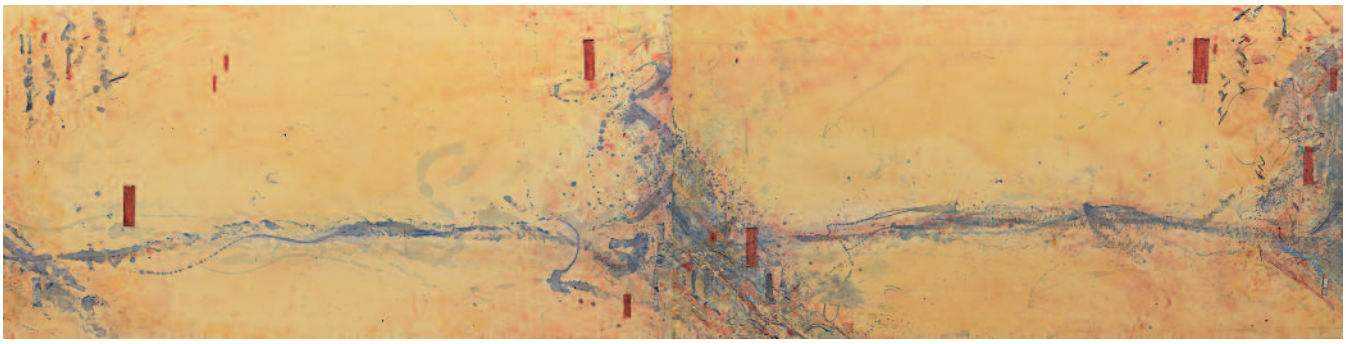
Pl. 17. Sandra Lerner, *Breath VIII* (1999), oil and mixed media on canvas, 78" x 139".



Pl. 18. Sandra Lerner, *Particle Dance* (1986), oil and mixed media on canvas, 72" x 96". Private Collection.



Pl. 19. Sandra Lerner, *The Particle and the Wave* (1993-96), triptych, oil and mixed media on canvas, 84" x 282".

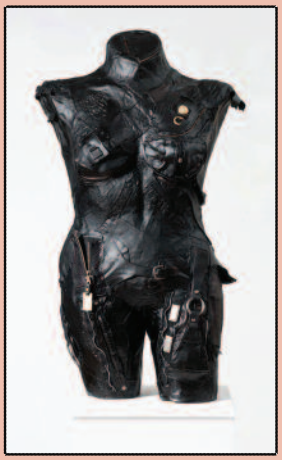


Pl. 20. Sandra Lerner, *Flux/Space I* (2015), diptych, oil and mixed media on canvas, 34" x 134".

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