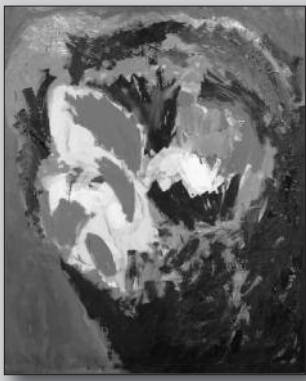


WOMAN'S ART JOURNAL

SPRING / SUMMER 2017 VOLUME 38, NUMBER 1 \$15.00





(Front cover)
Ethel Schwabacher,
Pennington I/Pelham II (1957),
oil on canvas, 60" x 50".
Denver Art Museum, Gift of
Christopher C. Schwabacher
and Brenda S. Webster.

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In this issue, we feature four artists who represent unique contributions to the history of women's art. Frances Flora (Fanny) Palmer was arguably the most prolific woman illustrator in nineteenth-century America. As an energetic mother with a family to support, Palmer contributed to the visual culture of her era with hundreds of fanciful lithographs as a staff artist for the renowned firm of Currier & Ives. Dennis Raverty explores how Palmer's renderings reinforced the Victorian "civilizing" values attributed to women, and how her images of the American frontier embodied the "grandest of all grand narratives" of her day, that of "'Manifest Destiny,' a cluster of ideas, hopes, fear, and fantasies about the far West...a romantic horizon waiting to be explored, cultivated, and populated." Writes Raverty, "Even when Palmer portrayed subjects marketed primarily to men, like speeding locomotives or sporting scenes, she ... brought a noticeably feminine perspective to her representations."

Morisa Mori was a firebrand among the Italian Futurists. Defying the dictates of F. T. Marinetti, the group's founder and leader, she focused on the "banned" subject of the female nude. Her explorations were far from sexual, but rather more troubled depictions of romantic couplings and motherhood, based on her own difficult life experiences as a "New Woman" in Italy under domineering fascist rule. Author Jennifer Griffiths notes that, "If Botticelli envisions the warmth of a tender embrace between mother and child, Mori distorts this relationship and transforms motherhood from a heartfelt, saintly undertaking into a physical burden, a restrictive responsibility."

The multifaceted career of Lauretta Vinciarelli is brought to light here by Rebecca Siefert. Born in Italy, Vinciarelli was a watercolorist as well as a trailblazer in architecture and design. Among the first women teaching studio courses in architecture at Columbia University, she also made numerous drawings that related to Minimal and Conceptual Art. A neglected chapter in her personal and professional life was an eleven-year association with Donald Judd. Siefert explains, "During their time together, Vinciarelli had a vital impact on Judd's work in architecture and design, collaborating on some of his most well-known architectural projects." Aside from their architectural work, Vinciarelli also influenced Judd's furniture design and printmaking. Through her research, including exchanges with other artists involved with Judd's projects during their eleven years together, Siefert restores the link between Vinciarelli and Judd that has not been properly acknowledged.

The majority of articles published in *Woman's Art Journal* are unsolicited, bringing us a wide-ranging sphere of global interests. In this issue we present the work of a contemporary Chinese artist, Tao Aimin, introduced by Simeng Tan. Fashioning installations from old washboards used by women living in areas where the traditional Chinese way of life has persisted, Tao Aimin makes a powerful statement about women's work and gender roles in China. Her installations personalize the washboards to relate to the struggles of their owners, superimposing photographs, or using the patterns on the well-worn boards to create ink and wash images. "The washboards," writes the author, "are a most obvious agent of communication to tell their history, their stories from a woman's point of view." By exploring what one critic called "the

bitter side of Chinese women's culture," Tao Aimin communicates the toll of their labor, their struggles, and the suffering endured by women who were not permitted the education or privileges accorded to their fathers, husbands, and sons.

Books and exhibition catalogues pertaining to women artists are in abundance, and in this issue we review eighteen recent publications, allowing us to "catch up" and publish all of the reviews our excellent reviewers have submitted. On our cover is a painting by the Abstract Expressionist artist Ethel Schwabacher that is featured in *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, the catalogue accompanying a major touring exhibition co-organized by WAJ's Joan Marter.

Among these volumes are biographies of Romaine Brooks, Louise Nevelson, and Agnes Martin that shed new light on the often-troubled lives of these singular twentieth-century figures and the challenges that informed their work. Other Modernists whose lives and works are examined in the books reviewed include Anne Truitt, Georgia O'Keeffe, Florine Stettheimer, Helen Torr, and Marguerite Zorach. Ana Mendieta continues to fascinate, and a study of her films is reviewed, as is a catalogue introducing the photographs of the German-born, Argentinian feminist photographer Annemarie Heinrich.

In an important book on a topic gaining prominence in our field, author Christine Filippone investigates ways in which science, technology and other cultural developments influenced four very different artists: Alice Aycock, Agnes Denes, Martha Rosler, and Carolee Schneemann. Other contemporary artists that are the subjects of books under review include Louise Fishman, Lynda Benglis, and Linda Stein.

We welcome reviews on early topics, and here we present an anthology on the construction of gender in European art (1300–1600), including treatments of subjects ranging from Giotto's figure of Fortitude, to witches and hags, to images of rape and female bravery.

As we begin another year, our thirty-eighth, we thank our authors and reviewers for their valued contributions, and we extend our sincere gratitude to our subscribers and to Rutgers University for its ongoing support of this publication.

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

Remembering Dore Ashton (1928–2017)

Late in January, Dore Ashton passed away. From the beginning of her career, Ashton wrote art criticism about women artists of the 1940s and 1950s. Her reviews in *Art Digest* and *The New York Times* were career-building for many struggling artists. An erudite and prolific writer, Dore Ashton worked with incredible energy and intellectual rigor, producing many books, exhibition catalogues, and biographies, including insightful monographs on Mark Rothko, Joseph Cornell, Philip Guston, and Isamu Noguchi, and books on the New York School. Dore Ashton was a friend, and she joined me in the publication of a 1979 book on the American sculptor Jose de Rivera. She needed to be honored more generously in her lifetime, and we will miss her contributions to the art world.

—JM

FRANCES FLORA PALMER

THE PICTORIAL DOMESTICATION OF THE WEST

By Dennis Raverty



Fig. 1. Frances Palmer, *The Mountain Pass: Sierra Nevada* (1867), lithograph, 17 5/16" x 25 3/16". Currier & Ives, Yale University.

Frances (Fanny) Flora Palmer (1812–76) was the only full-time female artist employed by the Currier & Ives lithography firm, the most successful of all the nineteenth-century printmakers producing mass-marketed, inexpensive reproductions in the United States. Dubbing their enterprise “The Grand Depot for Cheap and Popular Prints,” the company created over seven thousand different designs altogether, between 1834, when the firm was established, and 1907, when it was dissolved. So successful were they that over 90 percent of all lithographs in circulation in the United States at the end of the century were produced by the Currier & Ives firm.¹

Of the artists they employed, Palmer was among the most prolific, creating more than two hundred lithographs for the printmakers, signed F. F. Palmer. In addition to these well-

documented pieces, she was probably responsible for the design of perhaps even hundreds of others issued anonymously by the company, according to the late art historian Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein, one of the few scholars to do serious and extensive research on the artist.²

Palmer was very versatile and delineated a wide variety of subjects for Currier & Ives, from bucolic farm scenes and still lifes popular with female customers, to railroad, riverboat, and sporting scenes appealing mostly to men. But among her most popular and widely selling prints were those that depicted life in the far West, on or near the frontier, or of trains speeding westward through the prairies and mountains (although she herself had never been farther west than New Jersey).

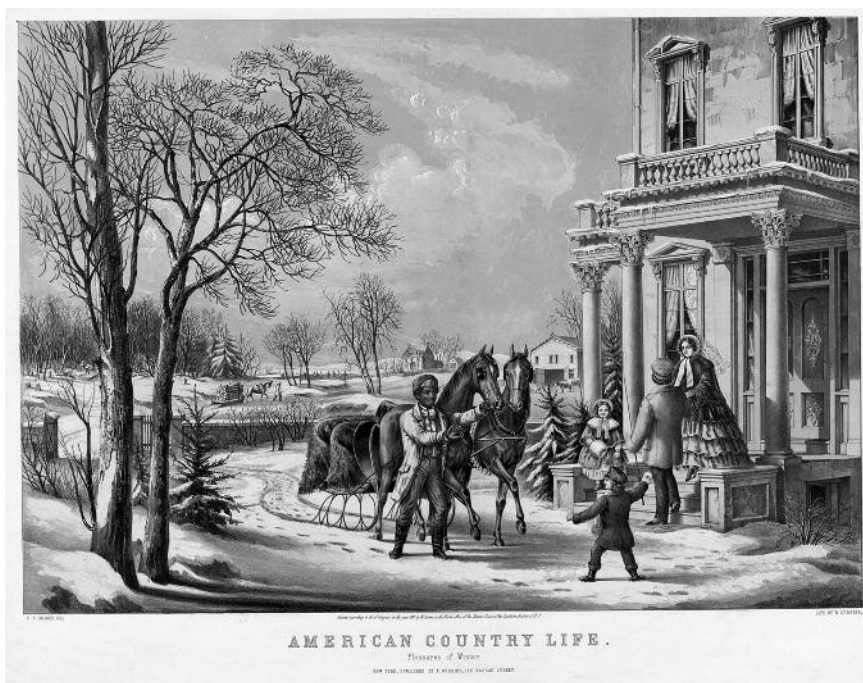


Fig. 2. Frances Palmer, *American Country Life: Pleasures of Winter* (1855), lithograph, 16 3/4" x 23 7/8". Currier & Ives, The Library of Congress.

Palmer's lithographs devoted to Western themes do not depict the far West as it actually was, however, but delineate a highly romanticized, gendered, and domesticized representation of life on the prairie for consumers back East. What had formerly been, in the hands of male illustrators, an essentially "masculine" domain, became in Palmer's work a more "feminized" realm, which was depicted by Palmer as caught up in the process of becoming domesticated, civilized, and Christianized, qualities which were considered to be feminine during the nineteenth century in America. Even when Palmer portrayed subjects marketed primarily to men, like speeding locomotives or sporting scenes, she arguably brought a noticeably feminine perspective to her representations.

In his insightful book on the prolific printmakers, cultural historian Bryan Le Beau writes that Currier & Ives prints were, in both the intention and the process by which they were produced, representations of objects, events, scenes, or symbolic allegories that are primarily interesting to us today as social documents of nineteenth-century self-representation, being in effect, mirrors of popular ideologies, values, and tastes.³ This does not mean, however, that they represented life as actually lived, but rather, he asserts, they produced an idealized picture of what nineteenth-century consumers *imagined* or hoped life to be, as viewed through the eyes of the popular marketplace—viewers and customers whose tastes were catered to, a result of the lithographers' understanding of what their clients wanted, and which was ultimately based on the public's response, as measured in sales of previous pictures they had published. The whole enterprise was entirely market-driven; aesthetics, when considered at all, being a much less significant concern for them. This is what makes these prints so fascinating; they serve as barometers of broad, popular consumer interests, and do not

necessarily embody elite taste alone.⁴ So the illustrators, who, like Fanny Palmer, worked for Currier & Ives, seem to reflect and corroborate and give visual form to popular opinions and ideologies, claims Le Beau, their representations being more like the embodiment of a myth than a true depiction of reality as it actually was.

During the nineteenth century in the United States, the driving myth, the grandest of all grand narratives, was "Manifest Destiny," a cluster of ideas, hopes, fears, and fantasies about the far West, conceived of as an ever-expanding frontier of almost boundless proportions, a sublime and romantic horizon waiting to be explored, cultivated, and populated. Palmer's depictions of the frontier embody these myths. For example, in the first of her pair of popular prints of scenes from the Sierra Nevada mountains, *Yosemite Valley—California: The Bridal Veil Fall* (1866; Pl. 1), the valley is depicted as serene and majestic but is not represented realistically. The area was of special interest at that time because, just two years previously, the Yosemite Valley had come under the protection of the federal

government in order to preserve its natural beauty from developers (and a few decades later it would become one of the first of the national parks). Although Palmer never traveled there, she would have been familiar with it through the widely disseminated stereographic photographs of the famous falls by Carlton E. Watkins. In Palmer's print, a few peaceful Indians are encamped in teepees, sitting around fires with their canoes tethered along the river, but with no sign yet of any contact whatsoever with whites. Clearly, this is not Yosemite as it actually was at the time, but how Palmer imagined it to have once been long ago, before the first colonial encounter (a veritable Garden of Eden). As pointed out in Rubinstein's monograph, in this picture the Indians are exaggerated in scale: "Her figures seem disproportionately large, somewhat out of scale with the landscape, making the awesome, frightening wilderness seem more cozy and inhabitable."⁵ This desire to render the grand sublimity of such natural wonders as "homey" or domesticated brings a sense of familiarity to the foreign and a sense of security to the more frightening aspects of the wilderness and its aboriginal inhabitants. The native peoples who originally occupied the valley did not actually live in teepees; this was just a conventional way of depicting all native life, regardless of the actual domestic architecture of any specific tribal group, a trope which Palmer utilizes in her fantasy depiction of a pristine, unspoiled nature that no longer actually existed (in fact, by this time the original native inhabitants had mostly been driven from the area.)

In its companion piece, *The Mountain Pass: Sierra Nevada* (1867; Fig. 1), a remarkably unthreatening black bear in the foreground is described by Rubinstein as resembling a teddy bear more than a fearsome beast of the wild. In Palmer's idealized wilderness, the awesome and the frightening aspects

of nature become friendly, turn out to be tame, and in the end are rendered harmless; the threatening, perilous frontier becomes as familiar as our own backyard—even the bears seem domesticated.

This sense of the mythic is present in all Palmer's works, not only her depictions of the far West. For example, in one of her many genre prints depicting contemporary, everyday life back East, such as *American Country Life: Pleasures of Winter* (1855; Fig. 2), although it may seem superficially to be more realistic, it is in many ways almost as mythicized as Palmer's *Yosemite*. In this print, a rural family is about to embark on a sleigh ride. Although they live a country life, they are apparently affluent, evident in their palatial Victorian house made of stone, the vast tract of land they seem to own, and the fact that they have a servant who brings around the sleigh (the black man in the foreground). The family is dressed in their finest clothing, the gentleman wearing a long-tailed coat and hat, the daughter with hat, tie, and muffler, and the mother, who is given prominence over everyone both by her position facing us and by her placement above the others, including her husband, is wearing a fashionable bonnet and an elaborate and undoubtedly expensive hoop skirt. This is not a typical family outing (these clothes are too dressy for that); perhaps they are going to church or to some sort of exclusive social gathering for the local landed gentry.

This lithograph, like all Currier & Ives prints, presents a common set of assumptions and aspirations about life in the U.S. during the nineteenth century, around which artists and consumers had developed a shared visual vocabulary. This included assumptions about gender. It is important to understand, however, that notions about the differences between the sexes during Palmer's life were far more bifurcated and rigid than they are today. Gender was not thought of as a social construct, as it is now widely believed to be; rather, gender differences were understood to be inborn—women were considered to be *fundamentally* different from men, not only physically but also psychologically, innately, and irrevocably.⁶

It was thought that woman's role was to preside over the home, understood in Victorian society to be her primary sphere of influence, a place where she had a civilizing and moralizing effect, especially upon the following generation in her role as mother—this is why the woman is given such prominence in Palmer's picture. A wife carefully created her home as a hallowed realm and a refuge from the dangerous moral corruption that was seen by many as endemic to a commercialized, industrialized society, especially as it developed after the Civil War, a dog-eat-dog world of the "survival of the fittest," competitive, driven, territorial, and savage—"manly" qualities run amuck, unmitigated by woman's civilizing moral influence.

Moreover, Currier & Ives undoubtedly realized that it was largely women who decorated the homes, and it was hoped that they would purchase reasonably priced prints to help them do this. So to be highly marketable, pictures needed to reflect women's values and tastes perhaps even more so than those of the men. Hiring a full-time woman artist was a smart

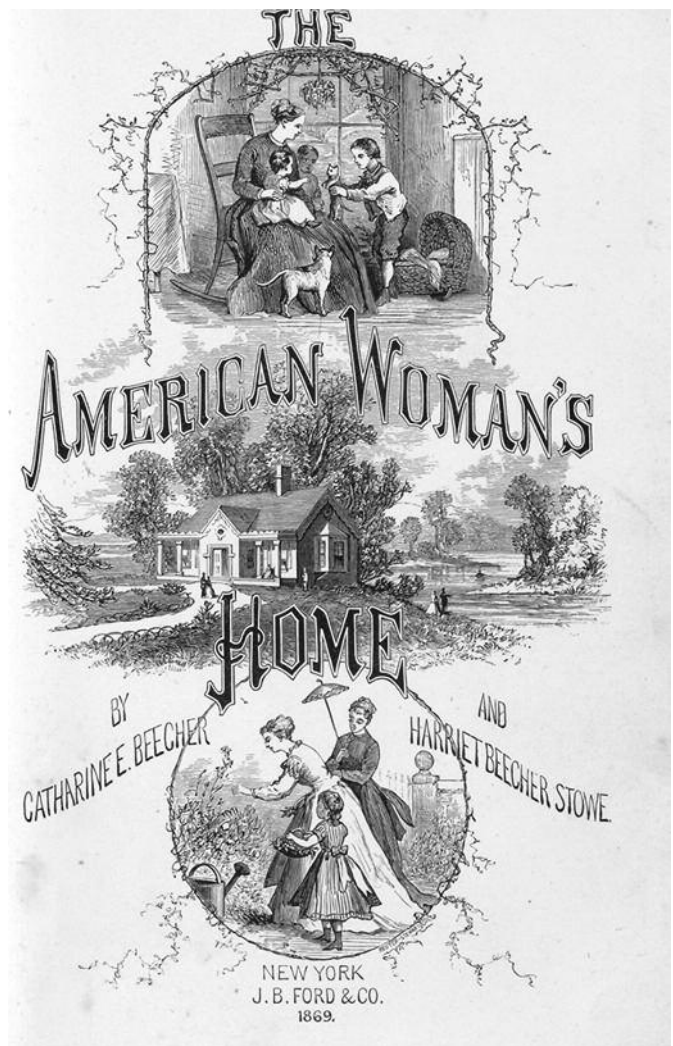


Fig. 3. Catharine E. Beecher, *The American Woman's Home: or Principles of Domestic Science; Being a Guide to the Formation and Maintenance of Economical, Healthful, Beautiful, and Christian Homes* (1869), lithograph. J.B. Ford and Company; H.A. Brown & Co., University of South Carolina Library.

business move for the firm, as well as a rare and fortunate opportunity for Palmer, who was a widow and had to provide for a family on her salary.⁷

Although the mother in *American Country Life: Pleasures of Winter* may dominate the home, it is her husband that negotiated the world outside her domestic realm, evidenced in this print by the fact that he holds a riding whip and his son points to his father, indicating to the servant that he will be the driver. The family situation, however, is idealized from a distinctly feminine perspective—it was designed to appeal to those working-class and lower middle-class women aspiring to be genteel "ladies," like the mother in the family (although upper-class women, such as the lady portrayed here, would certainly never decorate their homes with inexpensive Currier & Ives prints like this one, of course).

Gender assumptions during Palmer's time can be deduced by careful reading of a fascinating publication from the period, Catharine E. Beecher's, *The American Woman's Home, Principles*



Fig. 4. Frances Palmer, *The Trapper's Campfire: A Friendly Visitor* (1866), lithograph, 18" x 25 7/8". Currier & Ives, The Library of Congress.

of *Domestic Science; Being a Guide to the Formation and Maintenance of Economical, Healthful, Beautiful and Christian Homes*.⁸ Originally published in 1869, and reissued in several subsequent editions (it was very popular), this book was conceived as a complete guide to everything a woman needs to know in order to run an efficient, wholesome, and nurturing home for her family. Profusely illustrated with engravings (Fig. 3), it is a truly massive tome of some five hundred pages, with thirty-eight chapters on such topics as "good cooking," "home decoration," "domestic manners," "warming and ventilation," and creating a "Christian neighborhood," among many others. Although ostensibly about these various practical matters in running a home, it nonetheless contains a wealth of information about gender assumptions during the late nineteenth century in America. The approach is what we would call essentialist in regard to masculinity and femininity—about what it meant to be a man or a woman at that time, at least among middle-class whites.

The excellent introductory essay by Joseph S. Van Why in a 1985 reprinting of Beecher's book effectively places this practical housewife's handbook within its historical and social context, including the context of the differing expectations of the societal roles of the sexes. Beecher saw women as having a divine mission, as she put it in the introduction to her book: "During the upward progress of the age... the writers of this volume have gained more elevated views of the true mission of women—the dignity and importance of her distinctive duties, and of the true happiness which will be the reward of a right appreciation of this mission...."⁹ Beecher's position was that women, while intellectually and physically inferior to men, were nonetheless morally superior, by reason of the milder inborn disposition granted to them by God. Women's mission

was therefore chiefly in the home, instilling this superior moral sensibility in her children (particularly her male children), and also to temper her husband's natural aggression, tendency to immorality, and weakness for various vices that are, in turn, part of his inherent disposition (understood to be at least partly the result of original sin).

Although women might have been the primary consumers of Currier & Ives's inexpensive prints, there were also a number of pictures that were marketed to men, such as sporting subjects, nautical scenes, trains, horses, and animal prints, which were meant to decorate predominantly male gathering spots, such as barrooms and barbershops. Palmer also designed a number of these "masculine" subjects.

Men were thought at that time to be more engaged than women with struggles in the world of business or work outside the home, as reflected in Beecher's book. They were understood to be stronger and more intelligent than women, as well as

more aggressive, more sexual and more animalistic; in short, men made things happen, but they were in need of women's civilizing moral guidance.¹⁰

To many urban men during the nineteenth century, the dream of fleeing from the more "civilized" realm of women and families to join the untamed world of the "mountain men" and the trappers out West was a compelling fantasy. The independent, solitary man as a rugged explorer and adventurer, conquering the forces of nature, living by his wits, free and unattached, demonstrates by his lifestyle and, indeed, his very existence, that he needs no assistance from civilization (gendered, at that time, as feminine).

The frontiersman, widely depicted as a "type" by male illustrators throughout the century, was a distinctly masculine fantasy, in which virility is equated with violence, lawlessness, the abandonment of normal, polite, social restrictions, and a return to an almost untamed animalistic savagery marked by domination both of other men and of nature (i.e., the native peoples and their land). This romantic myth of the frontiersman, unfettered by feminine domesticity and the expectations of "civilized" society was to be the progenitor of the later myth of the cowboy on the open range in the work of artist/illustrators like Charles Russell and Frederic Remington a decade after Palmer's death. Many lithographs published by Currier & Ives played into these escapist fantasies. For example, in *The Prairie Hunter*, by Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, published by the firm in 1852, a white poacher in Indian Territory is pursued by an angry native hunting party. The lawlessness of the poacher's world, the necessary violence of his precarious existence in the wilds, yet the freedom and independence that this marginalization allows him, made him a folk hero in the popular male imagination.

Palmer occasionally depicted these “mountain men,” but her representation of them was tamer, more hospitable towards the natives, as demonstrated by her print, *The Trapper’s Campfire: A Friendly Visitor* (1866; Fig. 4), where three white hunters sit around a campfire with a genial, unarmed Indian, whose benign intentions are signaled by the calumet or “peace pipe,” he holds. Judging by the casual, relaxed postures of all four figures—the easy comradeship of familiars—their unexpected guest seems to be welcomed warmly, almost as one of them. Rubinstein points out that Palmer “places the figures inside a decorative arbor of leaves and tree branches, creating a ‘once upon a time’ aura.”¹¹ This fairytale quality of cozy familiarity between mountain men and natives on the remote frontier was a masculine fantasy already well on its way to being domesticated and feminized.

Within a few years, the image of the frontiersman, here softened somewhat, would be completely reinvented by Palmer and transformed, from a free and lawless maverick in self-exile from civilization to almost the opposite: a spreader of civilization, leading homesteaders safely through the wilderness to stake their claims, drive away the native people, and cultivate the land. The frontiersman became, in effect, the agent of Manifest Destiny in Palmer’s work, all the while maintaining his paradoxical role as an exile from the overly cultivated and “feminized” urban society of the East.

By 1867, when Currier & Ives published Palmer’s *The Pioneer’s Home on the Western Frontier* (Pl. 2), there appears to have been a thorough domestication of the frontiersman myth. The men return home laden with deer and game birds, and their children run to greet them, while in the background is a log cabin, with the hunter’s wife and youngest child standing at the front door. Behind the cabin, trees have been cleared, rows of wheat sheaves are stacked, and smoke comes from the chimney; friendly, faithful dogs and domesticated goats mirror the taming of the wilderness in this sugar-coated fantasy of homespun bliss on the prairie, where women bring their civilizing, moral influence to this formerly wild, essentially masculine domain.

Other works by Palmer also address the taming of the frontier, and in equally idealized ways. In *The Rocky Mountains: Emigrants Crossing the Plains* (1866; Fig. 5), settlers in a long wagon train pulled by oxen, stretching out to the distance, cross the verdant valley. Women and children are in every wagon, while men on foot near the front guide the slow, solemn procession westward. Unarmed Native Americans, mounted on horses, seem almost to welcome the settlers. The shirtless Indian on the white horse to the right spreads his arm in a broad and generous gesture (reminiscent of the *Apollo Belvedere*), suggesting that the bounties of nature are there to be freely used by all. Such a harmonious image must have been reassuring to family and friends of those who had left the



Fig. 5. Frances Palmer, *The Rocky Mountains: Emigrants Crossing the Plains* (1866), lithograph, 17 1/4" x 25 5/8". Currier & Ives, The Library of Congress.

comforts of the Eastern states to stake a claim in the West (in actuality, a *very* perilous journey fraught with dangers, so that many of those who left never made it).

Perhaps Palmer’s most widely reproduced lithograph for Currier & Ives is *Across the Continent: Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* (1868; Pl. 3), published just a few months before the opening of the first transcontinental railroad. The view is from high on a hill overlooking a small frontier village. In the foreground, we look down on a promontory, with three men digging up tree stumps, trees that we assume were recently felled, perhaps to make one of the log houses below. This little village has all the essentials for civilized frontier life, including a public school, and behind that a small depot, and what appears from its bell tower to be a church or town hall. The train is just departing; friends and relatives wave to the passengers on board as they embark upon their further voyage, on tracks that seem to extend infinitely, all the way to the horizon. On the right of the composition, Indians on horseback are literally left behind in the smoke of the locomotive, harbingers of a past who do not, however, impede the seemingly inevitable “course of empire.”

Palmer derives the subtitle for her lithograph from Emmanuel Leutze’s famous mural celebrating Manifest Destiny (*Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*), which had been executed for the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. less than a decade previously (and which had been widely reproduced). But whereas in Leutze’s image the pioneers are heroically trailblazing through and conquering the wilderness, fraught with natural barriers and inhabited by hostile Indians, in Palmer’s idealized West of the imagination, the wilderness has been cleared, the Indians pose no threat, and the “Iron Horse” (i.e., the train), makes the westward journey accessible and safe for all—even women and children.



Fig. 6. Frances Palmer, *American Express Train* (1864), lithograph, 17 9/16" x 27 11/16". Currier & Ives, Yale University.



Fig. 7. Frances Palmer, *The Return from the Woods* (1852), lithograph, 11 1/8" x 15 3/8" Philadelphia Print Shop.

This fantasy of western settlements left out many of the most unpleasant aspects of life in frontier towns, like the clashes between different European ethnicities and the general lack of civil authority and the rule of law. As Rubinstein points out: "Nowhere to be seen are the Irish and Chinese immigrants who constituted much of the work force that actually built the railroad. The workers shown stringing telegraph lines and laying ties [in Palmer's print] are homogenized, creating the impression that they are all white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants."¹² In actuality these frontier towns were notorious for their gambling, prostitution, and general lawlessness, unlike the fantastic confections whipped up by Palmer and other artists working for Currier & Ives.

The train itself was a powerful symbol of both Manifest Destiny and the domination of what would have been called "Man over Nature" during the nineteenth century. As such, train pictures were popular, and these kinds of prints were primarily marketed to male customers. Among Palmer's most famous images is one of the several versions she did of *American Express Train* (1864; Fig. 6), a standard fixture in barbershops throughout the nation for decades.

Palmer sometimes did hunting scenes, which were also popular with male customers, as in a pair of prints she executed in 1852 depicting gentlemen hunters, who, by their body language indicate a certain easiness and familiarity with one another, qualities missing from most hunting scenes by male lithographers, in which there is often interdependence but rarely intimacy.¹³ The men hunting together in the forest in *Woodcock Shooting* (Pl. 4) are much more

relaxed and gentlemanly than those in most lithographs by male artists. Here, she depicts men in their "natural habitat," the woods representing the wildness of their essential nature. Two hunters, two dogs, two game birds: the trees are stylized, fluffy, almost Rococo, the men and the animals and the forest become one continuous decorative scheme in Palmer's imagination. A dead tree stump on the right suggests the fate of the birds. In the second scene, entitled *The Return from the Woods* (Fig. 7), the companions leave behind their more primitive hunter roles and relax together for a genial conversation. In the background, farm workers harvest a crop, and behind them is the homestead itself, while in the distance, a church steeple signifies the civilizing effects of Christian virtue and morality. *The Return from the Woods* is at the same time a return from the virile realm of nature and instinct to the domestic sphere dominated by the values which are predominant in the Victorian conception of womanhood: home, religion, and family.

Despite her reassuring representations of these idealized domestic relationships, Palmer herself had a troubled family life.¹⁴ Born in Leicester, England, to a well-to-do family of an attorney, she was an educated woman whose training at a private girls school included drawing lessons. She was married in 1832 to Edmund Seymour Palmer; their daughter was born the following year, and their son two years later. When Edmund Palmer's family fortune dwindled, he became a printer, and the couple opened a printing business, for which she worked as an artist and lithographer, producing maps, law forms, and, in 1842, a portfolio of picturesque scenes titled "Sketches in Leicestershire." When an economic downturn in the region ended this enterprise in 1843, the couple immigrated to the United States, together with her brother, sister, and brother-in-law.

The Palmers established a printing business, F & S Palmer, in lower Manhattan. Fanny Palmer created fifty original prints



Fig. 8. Frances Palmer, *Love, Marriage, and Separation* (1857–75), pen and ink drawing, 12" x 29 3/4". The Museum of The City of New York.

as well as taking on jobs for other publishers, illustrating sheet music and doing architectural renderings. By 1849, she had drawn the attention of Nathaniel Currier, who published some of her New York views. When the family firm failed, Currier bought the business and hired Frances, while Edmund Palmer found employment as a tavern keeper, but apparently preferred to live the life of a sporting gentleman, leaving it to his wife to support the family. Over the course of a few years her husband descended into alcoholism, and in 1859 he died from injuries sustained after falling down a flight of stairs, leaving his wife to care for their invalid, tubercular son.¹⁵ A devoted and productive staff artist at Currier & Ives, Fanny Palmer created about two hundred prints that bear her name and many more anonymously, and collaborated on others, supplying landscape and architectural backgrounds.

In an unpublished drawing now in the collection of the Museum of the City of New York, entitled *Love, Marriage and Separation* (1857–75; Fig. 8), Palmer chronicles the course of an unhappy romantic relationship. Arranged as steps, resembling a tiered wedding cake, the relationship starts innocently enough and culminates in marriage, followed by a brief period of nuptial bliss (the marriage scene of the composition resembles in some ways the familiar figures of bride and groom topping a cake). But soon the husband is having an extramarital affair, as reported to the wife by a female confidant, leading to the couple's increased familial discord and then their final separation; it is a study in faithlessness, promiscuity, and disappointed love. The format for her drawing is probably taken from a temperance lithograph designed by Nathaniel Currier himself a few years earlier, entitled

The Drunkard's Progress (1846; Fig. 9). In this print, the addiction begins with a casual drink with a friend, then progresses to occasional drunkenness and belligerence as the vice advances, then to loss of job, abandonment by family and friends, and finally, melodramatically, ends in death. The moral lesson here seems to be: Don't start to drink alcohol, even casually, or the vice might start its insidious progression. (Alcoholism at that time was not yet understood to be a disease but was viewed, rather, as a moral weakness.)

Although the subject in Palmer's similar drawing is different, the moral lesson is parallel: love and marriage inevitably end in tragedy, so we would be better off not even to begin courtship with the opposite sex. The bitterness evident in the progression illustrated, where love, like alcohol, is seen as a sort of vice, leaves the viewer with a sense of hopelessness and despair. Of course, this is not at all the kind of Christian, family-oriented message the firm wanted to convey to its customers, and it is little wonder that they never published it.

Despite the strong presence of traditional gender roles and Victorian ideals in the prints she published with Currier & Ives, as this drawing reveals, Palmer herself did not entirely subscribe to the dominant discourse of gender of her time. Indeed, and apparently for good reasons, she had certain reservations about societal prescriptives concerning the nature of relationships between the sexes. Interestingly, given her

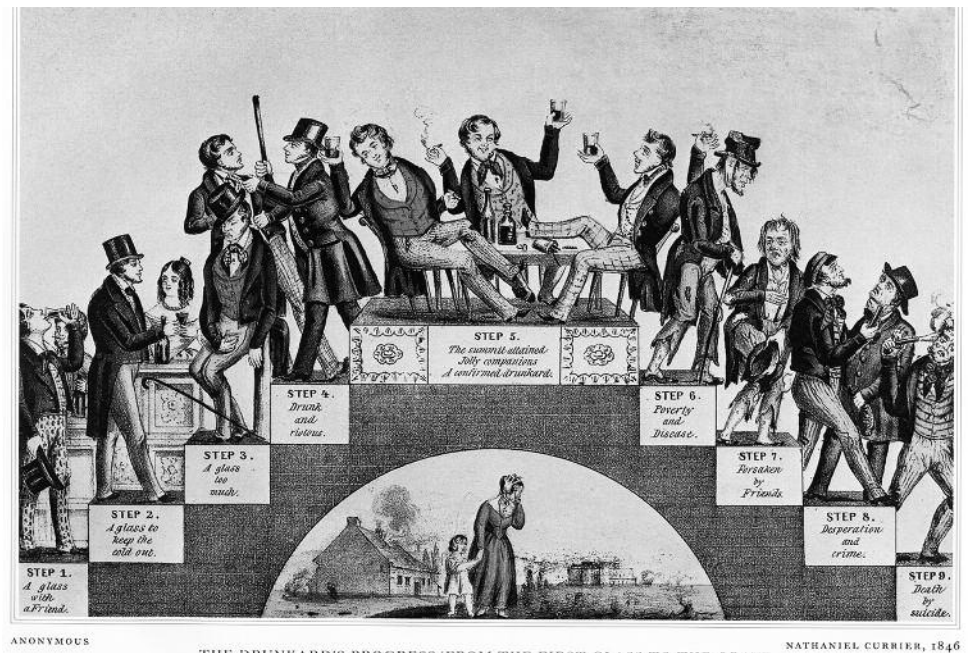


Fig. 9. Nathaniel Currier, *The Drunkard's Progress/From the First Glass to the Grave* (1846), lithograph, Currier & Ives' America: From a Young Nation to a Great Power

personal history, in her drawing she blamed not alcohol but adultery for the separation of the couple. Men seem to be virtually unable, by their essential, animalistic nature, to value marital fidelity and practice restraint with regard to extramarital affairs. Temperance, however, was an important value in nineteenth-century feminist discourse and, had her drawing referred to alcohol abuse, it would probably have been more publishable. Nevertheless, one can easily understand Palmer's bitterness about her failed marriage and her frustrations with the limitations imposed upon members of her sex by widespread contemporaneous beliefs about inherent female psychology, natural disposition, and moral "mission" in society, as articulated by Beecher and other nineteenth century authors.

Artistically, Frances Palmer was never anything more than a reasonably competent professional illustrator, delineating popular prints for a mass, lowbrow market. Like all the illustrators for Currier & Ives, she gave form to popular desire in sweet, often sentimental, inexpensive prints to be used as parlor decorations. She was unique, however, in being perhaps the first woman to be employed full-time as an illustrator in the United States, and as I have tried to demonstrate, she brings a discernibly woman's viewpoint to her subjects—particularly in her representations of the far West, the formerly savage and masculine domain depicted by her as domesticated by the civilizing moral influence of women.

Despite her technical and artistic limitations, Palmer's prints and drawings are fascinating as social documents of the period, embodying widely held essentialist notions about gender—about what it meant to be a woman and what it meant to be a man during the mid-nineteenth century in the United States—widespread cultural assumptions and myths about femininity and masculinity of which the artist herself may not have even been fully aware, but that are nonetheless evident in her work. •

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Notes

1. Donald H. Karshan, "American Printmaking, 1670–1968," in *Art in America* 56 (July 1968): 31. See also Walton Rawls, *Currier & Ives' America: From a Young Nation to Great Power* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2016), 50–51.
2. Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein, "The Early Career of Frances Flora Bond Palmer (1812–1876)," in *American Art Journal* 17 (Autumn 1985): 71–88. See also her "Fanny Palmer: The Workhorse of Currier & Ives," in *Fanny Palmer, A Long Island Woman Who Portrayed America* (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, 1997), 6–15. Before her death in 2013, Rubinstein completed a lengthy monograph on the artist, which is scheduled for publication in 2018, by Syracuse University Press, which graciously shared portions of the manuscript

with me during the writing of this article. Any further quotes from Rubinstein that are not otherwise documented are from this currently unpaginated manuscript.

3. Bryan Le Beau, *Currier & Ives: America Imagined* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 3. This remains the finest treatment of the firm and its enormous output. According to Le Beau, a cultural historian, Currier & Ives pictured an America of the imagination, a "mythic" rather than an accurate, realistic account.
4. Unlike, for example, the Art Union, which tried to uplift collective public aesthetic refinement through their connoisseurship in the selection of prints released. See Charles E. Baker, "The American Art-Union" in *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union, 1816–1852*, Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, ed. (New York: New-York Historical Society 1953).
5. Rubinstein manuscript, n.p.
6. See for example, Catharine E. Beecher, *The American Woman's Home, Principles of Domestic Science: Being a Guide to the Formation and Maintenance of Economical, Healthful, Beautiful and Christian Homes*, (Hartford, CT: Stowe/Day Foundation, 1985). Originally published in 1869, this book contains a wealth of information about gender roles in the nineteenth century. Beecher's position that women were morally superior to men by inborn disposition was progressive for its time. Her more famous sister, Harriet Beecher-Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, is given as a co-author of the book but probably did not have much to do with the content, her name being added to the byline for purposes of marketing and name recognition (*Uncle Tom's Cabin* was one of the most widely selling book of the entire nineteenth century, second only to the Bible in numbers of copies purchased).
7. Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, "Palmer, Frances Flora Bond," in *Notable American Women: 1607–1950* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), 10–11.
8. Beecher, *The American Woman's Home*, see note 6, above.
9. *Ibid.*, 15–16.
10. Insightfully discussed in Why's introduction to *Ibid.*, n.p.
11. Rubinstein manuscript, n.p.
12. *Ibid.*
13. As in Tait's *The Life of a Hunter*, a dramatic scene of a man attacked by a bear, armed only with a knife, whose companion standing behind a nearby tree takes aim with his rifle to kill the beast and save his friend's life.
14. Biographical information from Rubinstein, *Fanny Palmer, A Long Island Woman Who Portrayed America*, n.p.
15. Rubinstein, "The Early Career of Frances Flora Bond Palmer (1812–1876)," 73.



Woman's Art Journal archives are available online

MARISA MORI

IMAGES OF THE NEW WOMAN IN INTERWAR ITALY

By Jennifer Griffiths

An image of painter Marisa Mori (1900–85) photographed beside an acrobatic biplane prior to take off during her Futurist period (Fig. 1) rivals other images of the New Woman such as that popular icon of liberated womanhood, Tamara de Lempicka's 1925 *Autoportrait*. While Lempicka (living and working in Paris) depicted herself in the driver's seat of a green Bugatti, left hand on the wheel, driving helmet fastened under her chin, and scarf flying in the wind, Mori stands beside the pilot in anticipation of a dangerous adventure in early aviation. Mori is pictured, like the Parisian *femme moderne*, as a woman on the move, literally going places in automobile, speedboat, or airplane.¹ For all its seductive qualities and emancipatory implications, however, Lempicka's painting has also been seen to communicate a conflicting sense of "physical containment and repression."² Looking at the painting today we can read it as a reflection of the precarious place that the "modern" or "new" woman occupied in interwar European societies.

In Italy, as in France, the juxtaposition of women and modern machines in visual imagery often conveys the tenuous position they occupied, caught between expectations of the past and the possibilities of the future. In Italy, Mussolini imposed restrictions against women fliers—in 1934, after reading an advertisement for women to join the local flying club in Bologna, he sent an immediate telegram to the mayor instructing him to retract the invitation and instead to bar women from attending. "The most fascist thing Italian women can do is to pilot many children," he wrote, "flying, on the other hand, is a serious affair that must be left to men."³ When it came to the Fascist regime's desire for conquest by land, sea, and air, in automobile, speedboat, or airplane, women were supposed to be pictured in the home and not at the helm.

During the *Ventennio*, Italy's interwar period, automobiles, speedboats, and, above all, airplanes, became staples of avant-garde machine aesthetics; yet few could imagine an Italian Futurist equivalent to Lempicka's bold Art Deco ode to modern women on the move. In the *Founding and Manifesto of Futurism* (1909), F.T. Marinetti infamously professed a "scorn for women" and an intention to fight against feminism. Yet his intellectual encounters with strong women prompted a shift.⁴ His happy marriage to author and artist Benedetta Cappa (1897–1977)⁵ seems to have transformed the movement and its founder in significant ways.⁶ Notwithstanding his enduring reputation for misogyny and his close ties to the regime,



Fig. 1. Marisa Mori at a Roman airfield with unknown pilot (1934), photograph, 3" x 5". Mori archive, Florence.

Marinetti celebrated the idea of the modern woman. If, he remarked, a woman was to be offered the same opportunities for edification as a man, then she might well prove to be his equal.⁷ Unlike Mussolini, he encouraged women to seek out worldly experiences like travel and flight. Even as Il Duce was ousting women from the cockpit, Marinetti was encouraging them to take to the air. He offered his support to "Barbara" Biglieri Scurto (1915–2002), the only Futurist woman painter to possess a pilot's license, calling her an "ingenious aeropainter."⁸ He encouraged Benedetta in this regard as well. She had already flown four times by October 1931, according to statements in the Milan "Futurist Exhibition of Aeropainting and Scenography" exhibition catalogue.⁹ In the same year that Mussolini barred women from flight school in Bologna, Marinetti made arrangements for Marisa Mori to face down the dangers of early flight in an acrobatic biplane over Rome. She subsequently explained that he and Fillia (a pseudonym for the Turin-based Futurist artist Luigi Colombo) had encouraged her to fly with the assertion that a true aero-instinct could only be born out of direct experience. "I was tied to the seat," she remembered, "and those acrobatics, that extraordinary vision of the earth, inspired me to work and I became an aeropainter."¹⁰



Fig. 2. Marisa Mori (1934), with others, including Tullio d'Albissola standing at her immediate right, and F.T. Marinetti seated to her left, in front of her paintings, *Suonatore di Jazz* (1933) and *Aviatore che cade* (1934), photograph, 3" x 5". Mori archive, Florence.

Futurism offered women a safe space to explore the idea of the modern woman during these restrictive years. Behind the rhetoric, Marinetti was a master of cognitive dissonance who cultivated the art of self-contradiction as a key element of modernity itself. Like Walt Whitman, who sustained, "Well then I contradict myself! I am large. I contain multitudes" in *Song of Myself* (1855), Marinetti asserted that, "To contradict oneself is to live."¹¹ Lucia Re suggests that these glaring gender contradictions created what she terms a "paradoxically feminist" space within the movement,¹² but the question of how women activated and engaged with complex notions about modern womanhood within the realm of painting remains relatively unexplored. When examined in cultural context, Mori's paintings illustrate precisely the kind of "paradoxical feminism" that Futurism enabled.

Marinetti attracted adventurous women artists like Mori to the ranks of Futurism by encouraging them to experience and embrace the modern world. Born in Florence in 1900, she was the daughter of Mario Lurini, an insurance company inspector, and Edmea Bernini, a direct descendent of the Baroque sculptor. Her only sibling, Gastone, was killed at age eighteen just a few months after volunteering for the Italian Army Cyclist Corps in World War I, and partly as a result of this traumatic experience, Mori began to paint. The family relocated to Turin in 1918, when her father was promoted to regional inspector for Piedmont. Two years later the artist married her first cousin, Mario Mori, who had returned from South America in 1915 to fight for Italy on the Austrian front. He survived, but spent the rest of his life numbing his psychological traumas, regrets, and internal scars with heavy drinking. The couple obtained a special dispensation from the Pope to marry, but, barely two years later, Mori left her husband in Florence to return to her parents in Turin, where the couple's only son, Franco, was born on November 2, 1922, four days after the

Fascist March on Rome. Shortly after Mussolini launched a national demographic campaign in 1925, Mori entered Felice Casorati's studio, relying on her mother to care for her young son. She returned to Florence in 1932 to reconcile with her husband, but the couple maintained their emotional distance, and Mario Mori died in 1943. During the war Mori documented the bombing of her city and painted portraits of the American soldiers that passed through her home. Mori then experienced a postwar return-to-order, enrolling herself at the Academy of Florence to study the nude under Arturo Cecchi, and for the next thirty years she dedicated herself to portraiture, still life, and landscape.¹³

Casorati, one of the most important figures of Italian modernism, was the principal celebrity of Turin's art scene at the beginning of the twentieth century and played a transformative role there, introducing the city to international trends in modernism. Initially inspired by Symbolist and Austrian Secessionist tendencies, during the interwar period Casorati shared the company of Giorgio de Chirico, Carlo Carrà, Giorgio Morandi, and

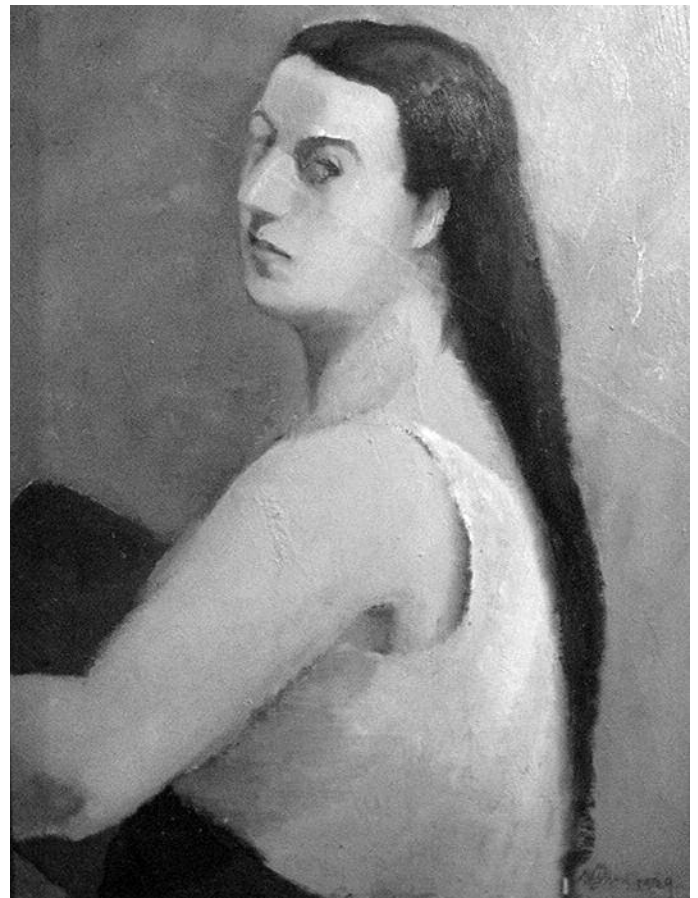


Fig. 3. Marisa Mori, *Self-Portrait in Blue* (1929), oil on plywood, 27" x 20". Photo: the author, 2011.



Fig. 4. Benedetta (Cappa Marinetti), *Velocity of a Motorboat* (1924), oil on canvas, 27 1/2" x 43 3/8". Rome, City Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Mario Sironi, all affiliated with the journal *Valori Plastici* and metaphysical painting. Although he never shared the fascist sympathies of its cultural agent, Margherita Safatti, he would exhibit with the Novecento Group throughout the 1920s. After being arrested by the Fascist government in 1923,¹⁴ he ceased overt political activity and opened a private school of art, into which he admitted many women artists. These included Nella Marchesini (1901–53), Daphne Maugham (1897–1982, who would marry Casorati in 1931), Jesse Boswell (1881–1956), and Paula Levi-Montalcini (1909–2000, sister of the Nobel laureate, neurobiologist Rita Levi-Montalcini), who joined the school in 1928). Mori studied alongside these women and developed close friendships with Marchesini and Levi-Montalcini. She showed her work with Casorati, most notably in the exhibition of “Casorati Among his Disciples” (February 1929), following which she became his personal assistant. Between 1925 and 1931, she was at the center of an anti-fascist intellectual circle that included Antonio Gramsci, Luigi Einaudi, Natalia and Leone Ginzburg, and Carlo Levi (whose art Mori would cite as a specific influence).¹⁵ Throughout the interwar period she continued to draw on Casorati’s lessons of magic realism and metaphysical painting, but an encounter with the Futurists in 1931 prompted her to experiment and take greater stylistic liberties.

Casorati was concerned that his pupil would be “ruined” by her involvement with the group, and yet, “Futurism was a joy,” according to Mori, because it offered her the chance to

“invent” and “enrich with colors and rhythms.”¹⁶ She became the sole female contributor to *The Futurist Cookbook* (1932), signed several Futurist manifestos, and exhibited frequently with the group between 1932 and 1939. Her work was shown with “Enrico Prampolini and the Italian Futurist Aeropainters” at the Galerie de la Renaissance in Paris (March 1932), featured in four Venice Biennales (1930, 1934, 1936, 1940), and given a solo exhibition at the Bragaglia Fuori Commercio gallery in Rome (April 1934; Fig. 2). It was during this Futurist period that she was included in France’s first exhibition of contemporary women artists, “Les femmes artistes d’Europe,” at the Jeu de Paume in Paris (February 1937).¹⁷ In 1980 Mori was included in Lea Vergine’s pioneering Palazzo Reale show in Milan, “The Other Half of the Avant-garde 1910–1940,” dedicated entirely to women artists, and in January 2015 her *Self-Portrait in Blue* (1929; Fig. 3) joined an unrivaled collection of self-portraits by pioneering women artists in the contemporary collections of the Vasari corridor in Florence’s Uffizi Gallery.

Mori’s separation from her husband was highly uncommon as it was socially and culturally frowned upon. Interwar Italians regarded the family as the *cellula madre* (mother cell); church and state advocated the idea that mothers were supposed to be the glue holding the family together, sheltering husbands and children from the pressures of modern society.¹⁸ When she eventually succumbed to pressure from family and community, and agreed to reunite with her husband in



Fig. 5. Marisa Mori, *Possession* (1932–35), oil on plywood, size in inches. Photographed by the author with permission from the Mori family.

Florence, she left behind the stimulating atmosphere she had found in Turin, where she had thrived artistically for seven years. Following her move, between 1932 and 1936, she executed a series of paintings that reflect on the burdens of marriage and maternity. Mori's frequently figural images overturn Futurism's initial ban on the nude and its exhortations against individualist self-expression. The *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* (1910) declared the movement to be, "Against the nude in painting, as nauseous and tedious as adultery in literature," demanding that it be suppressed for a decade.¹⁹ The nude made a modest comeback in second Futurism as the spiritually infused biomorphic and geometric abstractions of artists like Enrico Prampolini and Fillia. To my knowledge, Benedetta Cappa never painted the nude, generally focusing on the more characteristic Futurist themes of industry and modern machinery as in *Velocity of a Motorboat* (1924; Fig. 4). Done in a highly individual Futurist style, Mori's reflections are not glowing idealizations of the female body, but appear skeptical of prevailing Fascist glorifications of ideal mothers and wives.

In *Possession* (1932–35; Fig. 5 and Pl. 5) Mori depicts a nude female figure clasp ed in the arms of a darkly dressed male, whose hands appear like claws to ensnare her and whose eyes emit beams of light that penetrate through her form and look



Fig. 6. Marisa Mori, *Futurist Maternity* (1932), oil on plywood, size in inches. Photographed by the author with permission from the Mori family.

like jail bars. The two figures are fused at the head in an embrace that conveys a sense of captivity rather than of intimacy, and her title underscores the portrayal of violent ownership. Like Käthe Kollwitz in her drawing of *Death Seizing a Woman* (1934), Mori uses spatial density, vertical composition, and figure placement to transform the tenderness of an embrace into an aggressive grasp. Casorati had addressed the relationship between the vulnerable or exposed female nude and her anonymous clothed male observer in *Platonic Conversation* (1925) and *Susanna* (1929), and perhaps Mori was drawing on such examples, with which she would have been very familiar, to express her own sense of anxiety about male aggression and domination.

Futurist Maternity (1932; Fig. 6) depicts a mother and child bound together with heavy black chains. Here Mori calls on our familiarity with Catholic imagery, like Sandro Botticelli's *Madonna della Loggia* (1467), only to dramatically challenge our expectations for such an image. If Botticelli envisions the warmth of a tender embrace between mother and child, Mori distorts this relationship and transforms motherhood from a heartfelt, saintly undertaking into a physical burden, a restrictive responsibility. The monkey-like child clings to her neck, weighing her down alongside the chains that encircle them both. What exactly is Futurist about this maternity? As

dark shadows creep upward from below and a distant heavenly light shines across the figures from above, the figure seems caught between procreative immanence and creative transcendence. Perhaps the title suggests her personal experience of having turned away from the clear light of creative inspiration (Turin) and dutifully returned to domestic responsibilities (Florence). Mori seems to be expressing a sense of disillusionment or reflecting on the unfulfilled promises of Futurism. *Futurist Maternity* and *Possession* epitomize the notion that “the personal is political.” Executed following the artist’s marital reconciliation at the height of Fascism’s demographic campaign, neither suggests a happy homecoming or a celebration of the *cellula madre*.

The Italian return to order, the *ritorno all’ordine*, became increasingly strident after the Fascists took power in 1922. Traditional gender hierarchies were consistently legitimized by the “naturalness” of male authority and the ideologies of “virilism.”²⁰ While Mussolini initially promised the vote to certain categories of women, he soon reneged and continuously responded to notions of modern womanhood with ridicule or censure.²¹ The regime and its supporters demonized the *garçonne* or *maschietto*, French and Italian terms referring to young ladies who cultivated a boyish style, whose choice of unfeminine attire or desire to study, smoke, and drive were viewed as a masculinizing threat. They fought back by advocating traditional ideals of femininity in which women were “expected to be daughters, wives and mothers, and nothing else.”²²

While Fascism initially shared radical anti-clerical and proto-feminist positions with Italian Futurism, Mussolini and Marinetti parted political company after the dismal failure of a joint ticket in the elections of November 1919. Fascism abandoned its more radical positions to align itself with the Catholic Church. Social policy under the regime promoted motherhood as the main responsibility and natural biological role for women, launching a 1925 demographic campaign that targeted women in a push for higher birthrates. Regime propaganda extolled marriage and motherhood as women’s sacred duties, drawing on the strong Catholic tradition of the Virgin Mary. A propaganda film like *Madri d’Italia* (1935) idealized and glorified motherhood while simultaneously stressing maternal sacrifice and responsibility.²³ Mussolini famously insisted, “War is to man what maternity is to woman.”²⁴ Thus if Fascism’s ideal New Man was a soldier, then its ideal New Woman was a mother, and neither was very new at all.

In two paintings, *Sleeping Aviatrix* (1932; Fig. 7 and Pl. 6) and *The Physical Ecstasy of Maternity* (1936; Fig. 8), Mori merges the female nude and the machine using the language of Futurist aero-aesthetics to explore the vanguard trope of the “woman-machine,” which Andreas Huyssen has described as signifying otherness and its threat to traditional male authority and control.²⁵ The airplane was an icon of modernity representing the pinnacle of power, speed, and freedom that Marinetti regarded as emblematic of the Futurist mechanized man, and Mussolini viewed as the ultimate bastion of masculinity. Flight brought into focus with particular clarity

how the machine could liberate mankind from the limits of earthbound existence, but as might be expected, Mussolini was quick to point out that women were never expected to experience those disembodied freedoms or transcend the barriers of nature. Mori’s fusions of woman and airplane are neither straightforward Futurist odes to the evolutionary merger of man and machine, nor glorifications of women’s passive reproductive role in Fascist society. Instead they resonate with the literary work of earlier Futurist women as part of a continuing exploration of new womanhood in the Futurist context.

Two years before her firsthand experience in the air, the artist painted *Sleeping Aviatrix*, inspired by the idea of flight. In it the rough contours of a fleshy pink female nude are intertwined with the fragmented and colorful forms of a propeller, wing, and cockpit. Behind this composite of human and machine forms is a bed of pale blue and a touch of green that imply the earth and sky. Like Lempicka, Mori’s figure is apparently in command of a modern machine, but unlike Lempicka, her eyes are closed and she relinquishes physical control in sleep. If the Art Deco painting conflates the seductive materiality of driver and vehicle, then the Futurist one ponders a more ethereal plane. The *Sleeping Aviatrix* maneuvers a virtual airplane through a dreamscape in the land of Morpheus, where a flying machine is a metaphor for the journey of the mind, a symbol of inner freedom. The modern woman pictured here may free her mind even if she cannot free her body. The title underlines the idea that the machine-woman occupies the in-between spaces, the literal and figurative interstices between earth and sky, body and spirit, vision and dream. At the peaceful helm only of her own fantasies, she deflates the martial image of a heroic masculine aviator who sees and conquers all he surveys.

Despite its title, *The Physical Ecstasy of Maternity* disturbs rather than thrills. Mori appears to revisit the theme of the earlier painting to examine the raw fleshy surface and material volumes of a specifically maternal naked body. Through hazy contours of pink and red geometries a foreshortened woman is laid out before us in a scene of fragmentation and disintegration. Areas of passage and curved force lines smear and slice through a body that appears to be spiraling around the red vortex of her female genitals. Set against a dark circular backdrop, perhaps a spinning propeller, her body is superimposed with thin contours of other airplane parts such as a wing or tail section. One thick red streak of paint swipes across her throat, her head flops to one side, and her arms hang limp and unmoving. The body on display seems at once to be the subject of the painting and the object of a process of erasure as her lower half disappears beneath a twisting mass of red volumes and planes. If Lempicka presents herself within the solid square of an automobile stronghold, Mori’s evanescent silhouette is barely recognizable, dissolving, spinning out of control, coming apart at the seams, and ravaged. It is not her face, but her lower half that is pressed up against the picture plane and penetrable. Her insides are turned outside as pools of red paint spill out of a heart-shaped central focal point. The image challenges the erotic charge of a

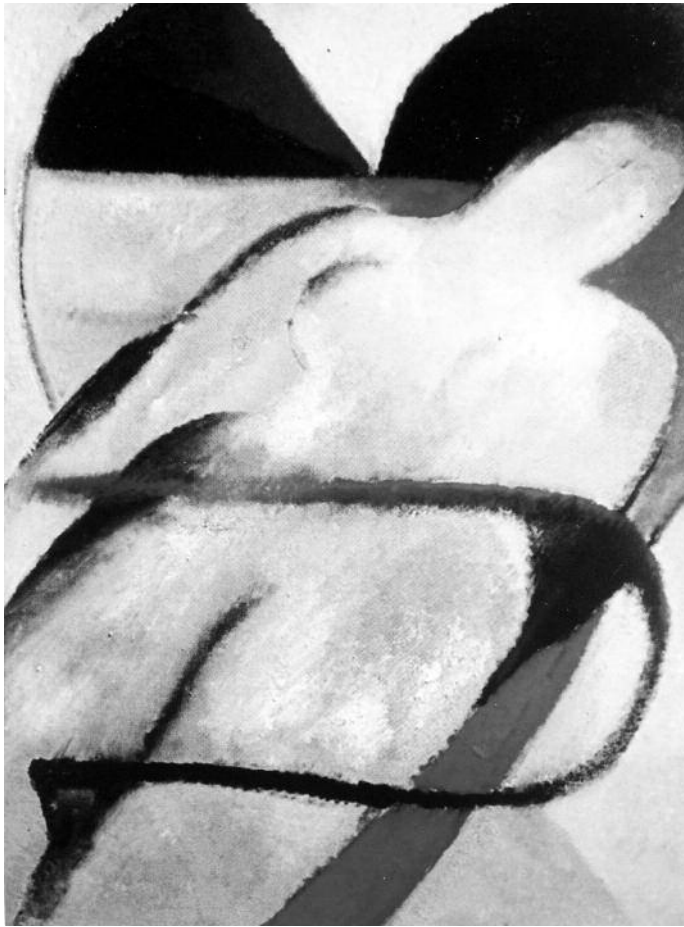


Fig. 7. Marisa Mori, *Sleeping Aviatrix* (1932), oil on cardboard, 39" x 27 1/2". Photographed by the author with permission from the Mori family.

painting like Courbet's *Origin of the World* (1866) by confronting a presumably male viewer with the unspeakable and uncontainable effluence of female interiority. Mori thus communicates an understanding of the female body as a battleground long before Barbara Kruger's 1989 photographic silkscreen.

Several scholars have contended that avant-garde modernism was underpinned by oppositional conceptions of masculinity and femininity,²⁶ and Futurism made such oppositions explicitly corporeal. The *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* (1910) with its proscription of the female nude in painting as "nauseous" and "tedious" confirms the observation that "it is not only the body in Futurist theory but, specifically, the female body that forms the landscape of decay and disorder that afflicts Italian culture...."²⁷ In Marinetti's novel, *Mafarka the Futurist* (1909), women and the feminine are even imagined as physical wounds to be excised from a healthy masculine society.²⁸ Here the founder of Futurism fantasizes a future in which men have no need of women's wombs to create sons, but can parthenogenically reproduce. The protagonist builds an immortal, flying superhuman son, Gazurmah, who is animated by his father's kiss. Futurism's relationship to the female body has elsewhere been described as compatible with Julia Kristeva's theories on abjection,²⁹ and

Mori's 1936 painting taps into the violence that characterizes this relationship. However, it also illustrates the power of the maternal abject to, in Kristeva's words, "disturb identity, system, order."³⁰ Re-appropriating the realm of flight and insistently exploring female embodiment, the artist demonstrates conflicted attitudes that echo the literary sentiments of Futurist women authors active a decade earlier.

In her recently published analysis, Paola Sica investigates the kind of ambiguous, and often contradictory, feminisms that appear in free word poetry, novels, plays, and essays by Futurist women of the Florentine circle active during roughly 1910–25. This circle of experimental authors included, among others, Eva Kuhn Amendola (pseudonym Magamal), Fanny Dini, Fulvia Giuliani, Maria Ginanni, Enif Robert, and Rosa Rosà (who was also an illustrator). Magamal and Fanny Dini, she writes, "present sensual female bodies able to transform themselves through ecstasy of the senses,"³¹ whereas Ginanni or Rosà "combine the power of machines with that of the spirit."³² In Rosà's *Woman with Three Souls* (1918) the female protagonist, Giorgina, is contaminated by particles of the future from a scientific laboratory, which then prompt a series of transformations. Her intellectual capacities facilitate a transformation into a "dynamic mechanical entity" that the author describes as at "the center of an enormous net of fluids and radiating energies," looking like an "abstract spaceship."³³ Co-authored with F.T. Marinetti as an autobiographical account made up of fragmentary accounts, notes, and letters of correspondence (including those of F.T. Marinetti and her friend Eleonora Duse), Enif Robert's book, *A Woman's Womb: Surgical Novel* (1919), narrates Robert's experience of uterine cancer.³⁴ Representations of the female body play a central part in describing a long series of treatments as the protagonist struggles to overcome a weak, passive, and ailing female body using the willpower of a strong, active, Futurist intellect to heal. Her doctor eventually diagnoses the cause of the illness to be "an overly virile brain in an overly feminine body,"³⁵ and following the required surgery, a hysterectomy, she reaches her full intellectual potential. By applying new science and rigorously exercising her literary genius the protagonist eventually heals and transforms herself into a new woman. Such texts illustrate how Futurist women were struggling to define modern womanhood by accepting some gendered stereotypes and rejecting others, often imagining ways for the new woman to remake herself via technology, new sciences, and esoteric spirituality.

A Woman's Womb, in particular, anticipates Simone de Beauvoir's sentiments in *The Second Sex*, that a woman's ovaries and uterus seem to "imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature."³⁶ Yet Robert's opinions reflect a paradoxical view of the womb as both a source of shame and pride, resentment and celebration, extreme pain and pleasure. She had published a rebuttal to Marinetti's *How to Seduce Women* on the pages of the Italian periodical *L'Italia Futurista* in 1917,³⁷ and would publicly advocate legal abortion in a 1929 letter intended to repudiate radical Fascist and Futurist Mario Carli, who had written an article promoting "compulsory procreation" for all fertile

women, an idea in line with the regime's pronatalist measures.³⁸ Robert refuted the idea of women as mere reproductive machines, but ultimately accepted many other cultural assumptions about the superiority of masculine virility and the inherent weaknesses of the female body.³⁹ In *A Woman's Womb* she describes the birth of her son as a "fully carnal joy,"⁴⁰ but then requests a hysterectomy for the explicit purpose of birth control long before her illness makes it necessary. The relevance of the maternal abject is significant, not merely with respect to the character's self-disgust or self-hatred, but in tracing that character's uncertain path toward self-healing, self-acceptance, and new womanhood.⁴¹

Like Marinetti and Robert's novel, Mori's painting exemplifies Kristeva's assertion that the best modern art explores the abject as a place where binaries, boundaries, and borders begin to break down.⁴² Like a body displayed before a surgeon on the operating table, the central figure in *The Physical Ecstasy of Maternity* is vulnerable, exposed, and in the grip of a physical transformation. The faint red halo that encircles her drooping head recalls the saintly sacrifice or martyrdom of maternal experience as glorified by church and state. Birth is imagined as physical rupture and emotional rapture. Her title and image suggest the paradoxical state of extreme pain and pleasure discussed in *A Woman's Womb* and prefiguring Kristeva's description of the abject as "edged with the sublime... something added that expands us, overstrains us."⁴³ Like the *Sleeping Aviatrix*, Robert's character in the novel occupies that borderline state between selfhood and otherness, one that exists for Kristeva par excellence in the experience of motherhood. If the abject is understood as a "'subject' and 'object' [that] push each other away, confront each other, collapse, and start again—inseparable, contaminated, condemned, at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable,"⁴⁴ then it is not only the maternal subject/object of Mori's painting that occupies this liminal space, but the viewer who is likewise forced into that confrontation. Like Robert, Mori explores the paradox and complexity of maternal experience, refusing a reductionist dichotomy of revulsion or glorification.

The word *ebbrezza*, or ecstasy, in Mori's title seems a hollow echo of Marinetti's celebratory odes to the divine promise of machines.⁴⁵ The thrill of disembodied spiritual freedom that he so frequently lauded is translated onto her canvas as the agony and ecstasy of raw material flesh. In place of Futurism's technolatriy, she gives us a body that is not extended or liberated by its merger with the machine but circumscribed, fragmented, and vulnerable. The transformative potential of the machine is drowned out in a flood of maternal gore. Flight is a fleeting fantasy and, Mori seems to say, eventually we all descend back to reality. With visual language that is far from

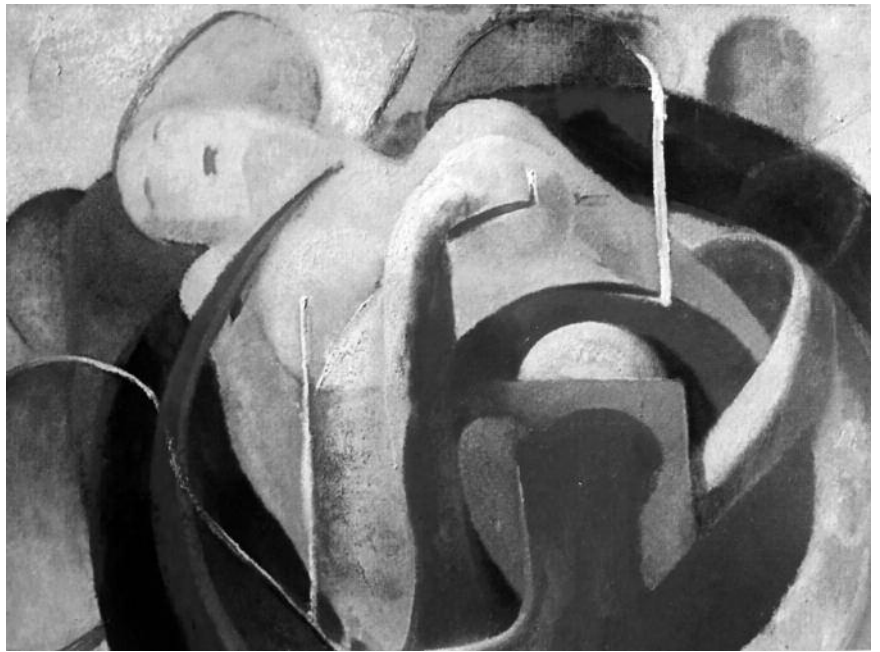


Fig. 8. Marisa Mori, *The Physical Ecstasy of Maternity* (1936), oil on cardboard, 27 1/2" x 40". Photographed by the author with permission from the Mori family.

thrilling and less than celebratory, this, perhaps her most powerful Futurist image, prompts an ironic reconsideration of Mussolini's analogy, that "war is to man what maternity is to woman." One a machine of destruction, the other a machine for reproduction, the regime envisioned faceless men and women as mere components in a soulless state engine. Having been at the epicenter of Italy's most internationally significant avant-garde art movements, Metaphysical painting and Futurism, Mori then retreated from public life and experienced a postwar return-to-order. She moved to the fringes of second Futurism, associating with Antonio Marasco's group of *Futuristi di iniziativa* (Futurists of Initiative) and signing the *Manifesto of Independent Futurists* in 1933. In 1939 she made a decisive break with the group because of its loyalties to the regime despite passage of the Race Laws.⁴⁶ In her memoirs she recorded, "I participated even under advanced Fascism in the Rome Quadriennales complying with Marinetti who furnished the themes.... But then when Mussolini became Hitler's slave and the racial persecutions began I stopped exhibiting with the Futurists."⁴⁷ The bulk of Mori's professional artistic career unfolded in the shadow of the Fascist dictatorship and, although not a party member, she chose to participate in regime-sponsored exhibitions and competitions with paintings like *Military Synthesis* (1933; Pl. 7). By the time Turin suffered heavy Anglo-American bombing in 1940 and 1941,⁴⁸ Mori had relocated to Florence, but her good friend Paola Levi-Montalcini and her family, who were Jewish, had to flee the city. Two years later, having fled again as a result of the German invasion, Paola, Gino, and Rita Levi-Montalcini telephoned Mori from Santa Maria Novella train station, and she invited them to stay in her home. (They lived with Mori and her son Franco under the pseudonym Locatelli for nearly

a year during the German occupation.) When Florence was bombed by the Allies in 1943, Mori documented the ruins, and when American soldiers took refuge in her home, she sketched and painted their portraits. Outside her door a postwar Italian debate began to rage between realism and abstraction, but Mori now turned inward. She enrolled in life drawing classes at the Academy of Florence studying with Arturo Checchi and for the next thirty years she dedicated herself overwhelmingly to the painting of nudes, portraits, still-lives. ●

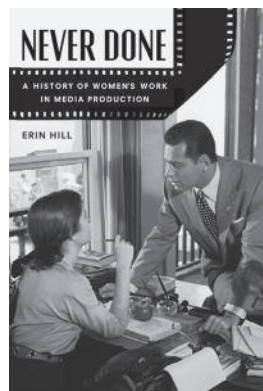
Jennifer Griffiths lectures at The American University of Rome and Iowa State University College of Design in Rome. Her articles on gender and representation in Italy have appeared in *Gastronomica*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, and *Annali d'Italianistica*. She is currently writing a monograph on Marisa Mori.

Notes

1. On this subject see Tirza True Latimer and Whitney Chadwick, "Introduction," in Tirza True Latimer and Whitney Chadwick, eds., *The Modern Woman Revisited: Paris Between the Wars* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2003).
2. Paula Birnbaum, "Painting the Perverse: Tamara de Lempicka and the Modern Woman Artist" in *ibid.*, 95–108.
3. Quoted in Renzo de Felice, *Mussolini il duce. Gli anni del consenso 1929-36* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), 155. My translation.
4. Lucia Re, "Enif Robert, F.T. Marinetti e il romanzo Un ventre di donna: bisessualità, trauma e mito dell'isteria" in *California Italian Studies* 5:2 (2014).
5. The artist renounced use of paternal and marital names opting to sign works only as Benedetta.
6. Siobhan Conaty, "Benedetta Cappa Marinetti and the Second Phase of Futurism" *Woman's Art Journal* 30:1 (Spring/Summer 2009): 21.
7. "Contro L'Amore e il Parlamentarismo," *Teoria e Invenzione Futurista*, Luciano de Maria, ed. (Milan: Mondadori, 1968), 293. My translation.
8. "Sono lieto di dichiarare che la signorina Barbara è una aeropittrice geniale e che con quadri importanti ha partecipato alla ultima Biennale Veneziana... Ho molta fiducia nel suo ingegno pittorico. F.T. Marinetti." A photocopy of the original was published in *Barbara aeropittrice aviattrice futurista* ex. cat., Claudia Salaris, ed. (Rome: Edizioni Alzaia, 1983).
9. *Mostra futurista di aeropittura e di scenografia* ex. cat. (Milano: Galleria Pesaro, 1931). Reprinted in Claudia Salaris, *Aero...futurismo e il mito del volo* (Rome: Le Parole Gelate, 1985), 18.
10. Quoted in Adriano Olivieri, *Marisa Mori: dalla misura casoratiana al dinamismo futurista* ex. cat. (Turin: Galleria Narciso, 2009), 9.
11. "Lecture to the English on Futurism" in *Critical Writings of F.T. Marinetti*, ed. Günter Berghaus, trans. Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2006), 92.
12. Lucia Re, "Futurism, Seduction, and the Strange Sublimity of War," *Italian Studies* 59 (2004): 83–111.
13. This and all other biographical information not otherwise cited is from the Mori family archive in Florence, Italy.
14. In 1923 Casorati was arrested alongside anti-fascist Piero Gobetti who had been under police surveillance from May 1924 on the direct instruction of Mussolini. Casorati was associated with the publication of *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, Gobetti's second periodical, sequestered in December 1924 after the publication of a series of articles criticizing the government. After several violent attacks by Fascist squads in 1926, Gobetti escaped and died in Paris, possibly as a direct result of his injuries.
15. Olivieri, *Marisa Mori: dalla misura casoratiana al dinamismo futurista*, 7.
16. Quoted in *Marisa Mori: pittura volo futurismo* ex. cat., eds. Sabrina Caredda and Carlo Vanni Menichi (Pontedera: Fondazione Piaggio, 2011), 11. My translation.
17. For a discussion of this exhibition, see for example, Germane Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters* (London and New York: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1979; Reprint, Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2001), 323. The show included works by Paola Levi-Montalcini, Tamara de Lempicka, Vanessa Bell, Mary Cassatt, Marie Laurencin, Romaine Brooks, Natalia Goncharova, Alexandra Exter, and many others. Greer reports that the exhibition subsequently traveled to the Metropolitan Museum in New York.
18. See Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy 1922-1945* (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1996), 79.
19. Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting" in *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, ed. Mary Ann Caws, (Lincoln: Nebraska Univ. Press, 2001), 182.
20. On the subject of Fascist masculinity, see for example, Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1996), and John Champagne, *Aesthetic Modernism and Masculinity in Fascist Italy* (London: Routledge, 2013).
21. de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy 1922-1945*, 37.
22. Gigliola Gori, *Italian Fascism and the Female Body: Submissive Women and Strong Mothers* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 59.
23. Lesley Caldwell, "Madri d'Italia: Film and Fascist Concern with Motherhood," *Women and Italy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 43–63.
24. Speech to the Chamber of Deputies on May 26, 1934. Quoted in de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 281.
25. Andreas Huyssen, "The Vamp and the Machine: Technology and Sexuality in Fritz Lang's Metropolis," *New German Critique* 24/25 (Autumn 1981- Winter 1982): 226. He argues that nineteenth-century anxieties about increasingly powerful machines were increasingly "recast and reconstructed in terms of the male fear of female sexuality... Woman, nature, machine had become a mesh of significations, which all had one thing in common: otherness...."
26. For example Carol Duncan, "Virility and Domination in Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting" (1973), reprinted in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), 293–314; Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (London and Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995).
27. Ann Bowler, "Politics as Art: Italian Futurism and Fascism," *Theory and Society* 20:6 (1991): 771.
28. Cinzia Sartini-Blum, *The Other Modernism* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996).
29. Ursula Fanning, "Futurism and the Abjection of the Feminine," in *Futurism: Impact and Legacy*, ed. Giuseppe Gazzola (New York: Forum Italicum, 2011).
30. Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1982), 4.
31. Paola Sica, *Futurist Women: Florence, Feminism, and the New Sciences* (New York: Palgrave, 2016), 87.
32. *Ibid.*, 139.

33. Ibid., 156.
34. Co-authorship with Marinetti was based on the inclusion of his letters and editorial input. For deeper analysis of this novel see for example Graziella Parati, "The Transparent Woman: Reading Femininity within a Futurist Context" in *Feminine Feminists: Cultural Practices in Italy*, ed. Giovanna Miceli Jeffries (Minneapolis and London: Minnesota Univ. Press, 1994), 43–64; Paola Sica, "Il testo, il corpo e la cultura futurista: riflessioni sul romanzo *Un ventre di donna*," *Quaderni del Novecento* 5 (2005): 11–23; Lucia Re, "Enif Robert, F.T. Marinetti, e il romanzo *Un ventre di donna*: bisessualità, trauma e mito dell'isteria" in *California Italian Studies* 5:2 (2014): 43–82, URL: <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2dt2z4wx>. (accessed Nov. 1, 2016).
35. Enif Robert, *Un ventre di donna: romanzo chirurgico* (Milano: Facchi, 1919), 97.
36. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), trans. and ed. H.M. Parshley (London: Vintage, 1997), 15.
37. For the most recent detailed assessment of the "Donna + Amore + Bellezza" debate in *L'Italia Futurista* see Sica, *Futurist Women*, 25–58.
38. The original texts were published as "Come si seducono le donne: Lettera aperta a F.T. Marinetti," *L'Italia Futurista* 2.35 (Dec. 9, 1917) and "Maternità e economia," *L'Impero* (Feb. 6, 1929).
39. For example Paola Sica and Cinzia Sartini Blum share the opinion that Enif Robert is ultimately constrained by a phallogocentric understanding of virility.
40. Robert, *Un ventre di donna*, 22.
41. Lucia Re describes the character's trajectory in terms of her path towards a positive reconfiguration of the womb in "Enif Robert, F.T. Marinetti e il romanzo *Un ventre di donna*," 47–48; Paola Sica sees the novel as "emblematic[ing] the difficult task of Florentine Futurist women in representing new models of female identity through an empowerment of the body..." in *Futurist Women*, 77.
42. Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror*, 207.
43. Ibid., 12.
44. Ibid., 18.
45. "Ebbrezza" can be translated as inebriation, thrill, exhilaration, or ecstasy. The term is used to describe the experience of machines and speed in *Let's Kill Off the Moonlight!* (1909), *Discourse to the People of Trieste* (1910) and *The New Ethical Religion of Speed* (1916).
46. First published anonymously on 15 July 1938 as "il Fascismo e i problemi della razza" in *Giornale d'Italia* and republished 5 August 1938 in *La difesa della razza*, a document known as the "Manifesto of Race" would lead to a series of Regio Decreto Leggi or government decrees in September and November of 1938 such as: R.D.L. 5 September, n. 1390 – regarding "Provisions for the defense of race in schools," R.D.L. 23 September, n. 1630 – regarding the "Institution of separate schools for Jewish children," and R.D.L. 17 November, n. 1728 – regarding "Provisions for the Italian race."
47. Marisa Mori's transcribed personal notes qtd. in Alessandra Marzuoli, "La Pittura di Marisa Mori (1900–1985): tra la Torino di Casorati e di Fillia e la Firenze di Marasco e Checchi" (PhD diss. Università degli Studi di Siena, 2000), my translation.
48. The bombing of Italy was an "Allied strategy," but the aircraft and pilots that bombed Turin in 1940–41 were exclusively British and American.

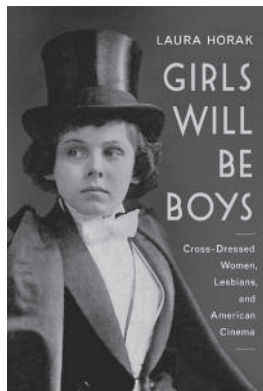
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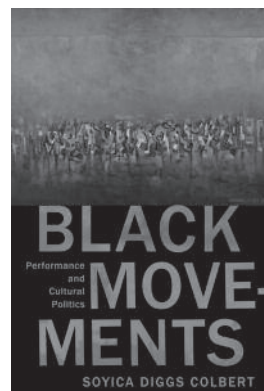
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LAURETTA VINCIARELLI

INTO THE LIGHT: HER COLLABORATIONS WITH DONALD JUDD

By Rebecca Siefert

"Making, for Judd, had become a collaborative endeavor, a circuit of production.... A work looked *more* like a Judd when it was not *made* by Judd – when it was built by someone with superior technique."

—James Meyer¹

The luminous, haunting watercolors of Laretta Vinciarelli (1943–2011), Italian-born artist and architect, have aptly been described as "Not Architecture but Evidence that it Exists."² Vinciarelli's watercolors are saturated with color, light, and memories, largely autobiographical works recalling her childhood homes in Rome and the small, nearby town of Gradoli, as well as her adopted homes in Southwest Texas and New York City (1988; Figs. 1 and 2 and Pls. 8 and 9). Her early watercolors are representational, obliquely referencing Rome and its "uniquely magnificent spaces" such as the Pantheon and Santa Sabina, which she appreciated for their "magic light" and "simple, powerful shapes."³ Although she was indeed a prolific watercolorist, she was first a trained architect, having earned her Ph.D. in architecture from La Sapienza University in Rome. Vinciarelli moved to New York in 1969, where she would live for most of her life, working as an architect, artist, and a teacher at several universities, including Columbia University, Pratt Institute, and the City College of New York.

By the late 1970s, Vinciarelli was established as a trailblazer for women in architecture and design. She was the first woman to have work acquired by the Department of Architecture and Design at MoMA (Museum of Modern Art) (1974)⁴; she was among the first women hired to teach architecture studio courses at Columbia University (1978); and she was the first and only woman granted a solo exhibition at Peter Eisenman's influential Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies in New York (also 1978). Like many of her colleagues, Vinciarelli's work at this time was rooted in a deep dissatisfaction with the high modernism that had reached a tipping point by the late 1960s. She believed that artists and theorists needed to direct the architectural discourse to counter the corrupting forces of developers and corporate practice. Emphasizing history, theory, and especially drawing were ways to usher in a less exploitative role for architecture. This theoretical turn coincided with the trend of exhibiting architectural drawings, signaled by MoMA's influential exhibit curated by Arthur Drexler, "The Architecture of the École des

Beaux-Arts" (1975); for Vinciarelli, to focus on drawing rather than building was not a nostalgic move but instead a pointed sociopolitical act. Vinciarelli created dozens of abstract, architectonic works on paper in the early 1970s —*The Non-Homogenous Grid* (1973–74), for example—was her historic series acquired by MoMA in 1974. These early works reflected her background in architecture (she likened them to a "spatial fabric," a term often used in urban planning⁵), but they also correlated with the ubiquity of the grid in Minimal and Conceptual art. Vinciarelli's early works on paper would also later interest artist Donald Judd, with whom she was involved both professionally and romantically from about 1976 to 1987.

An icon of Minimalist art, Judd has also been hailed for his architectural interventions in Marfa, Texas, on the abandoned army base that was purchased by the Dia Art Foundation in 1971 to house long-term art installations of his and his contemporaries. Scholarship on Judd's architectural work began with the publication of *Donald Judd: Architektur* in 1989, a compilation of his writings on the subject.⁶ Since then he has been labeled "Master Judd" by the Dutch art historian Rudi Fuchs,⁷ and a real "American original" by Tate Museums director Nicholas Serota,⁸ while Marfa has become a pilgrimage site for artists and scholars alike, declared "one of the great aesthetic experiences possible anywhere"⁹ and "a perfect model of artistic existence."¹⁰ More recently, the opening in 2013 of his newly renovated loft at 101 Spring Street in New York as a house-turned-museum brought renewed interest in Judd's architectural work. With an exhaustive new compilation of his writings published in 2016 and a Judd retrospective slated for MoMA in fall 2017, a reevaluation of his work, in particular the collaborative work by Vinciarelli and Judd, is timely.¹¹

During their time together, Vinciarelli had a vital impact on Judd's work in architecture and design, collaborating on some of his most well known architectural projects, including work in Marfa, Providence, Rhode Island, and Cleveland, Ohio. As late as 1986, an article in *Architectural Digest* claimed that Judd and Vinciarelli were "starting a firm" together.¹² Although that rumor was unfounded, Vinciarelli confirmed in a 2008 interview with Judd's daughter, Rainer, that she and Judd did collaborate both "formally" and "informally."¹³ Aside from their architectural work, it can be shown that Vinciarelli also influenced Judd's furniture design and printmaking. This breadth of collaborative work calls into question the sole authorship of Judd's architecture, even if the question of



Fig. 1. Lauretta Vinciarelli, *Texas Remembered* (3 of 3) (1988), watercolor on paper, 30" x 22". Private collection.

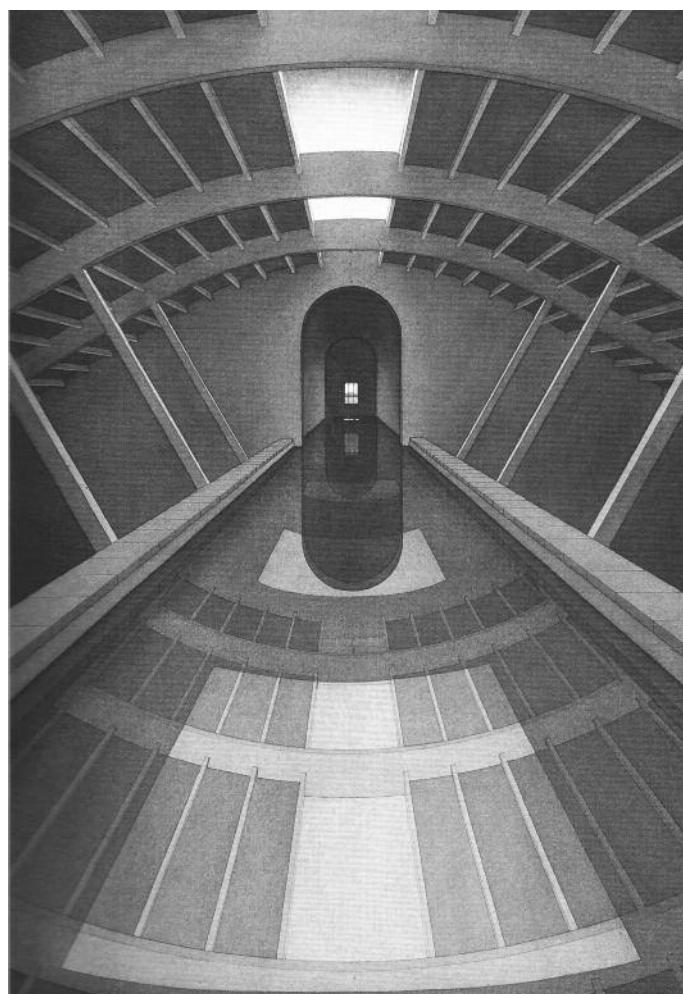


Fig. 2. Lauretta Vinciarelli, *The Subway Series* (2 of 3) (1988), watercolor on paper, 30" x 22 1/2". Collection of Peter Rowe.

attribution is especially problematic, considering his characteristic use of delegated fabrication.

Judd's foray into architecture seemed natural. He served as an engineer in the Army during 1946–47, and at that time he considered becoming an architect but claimed that the "business" of it all repelled him.¹⁴ Beginning in the late 1970s (after he became involved with Vinciarelli), scholars identified a new phase of innovation in Judd's work, particularly in the areas of architecture and design. Fuchs concluded his essay, "Master Judd," with some telling observations:

For a time, until into the seventies, [Judd's] approach to [printmaking] was fairly orthodox. Later, as I see it, the work became no less fundamental but certainly less orthodox. This is when it became more colourful, sometimes verging on the gaudy and the painterly. The renunciation of orthodoxy, the artist's greater "tolerance" towards the principles of his work, undoubtedly gave a fresh impulse to the prints. What has also increased over the past ten or fifteen years is his activity in the fields of architecture and furniture.¹⁵

That "fresh impulse" was likely a reflection of Vinciarelli's involvement in the creation of dozens of his prints (discussed later in this article); however, Judd's renewed force of color—verging on the "painterly"—also coincided with her own foray into the watercolor medium, where color took on a materiality and transparency that Judd often exploited in his own work. Undoubtedly, his increased activity in architecture and furniture design was indebted to Vinciarelli. Considering that her role extended beyond that of a mere technician, as I will demonstrate, the glaring absence of any reference to her role as collaborator is egregious. Since her name is virtually absent from the "Master Judd" narrative, it is imperative to set the record straight.

Judd began spending summers in the remote town of Marfa in 1971, officially moving there in 1975. By 1978, Vinciarelli also was living there with Judd and his children and working on projects in Marfa.¹⁶ As she mused in the 2008 interview with Rainer, "I speak of [the] late '70s, early '80s. Then I was very much involved in Marfa, in terms of something that he was building."¹⁷ Judd's longtime fabricator Peter Ballantine also acknowledges that "the Lauretta influence in Marfa is huge."¹⁸

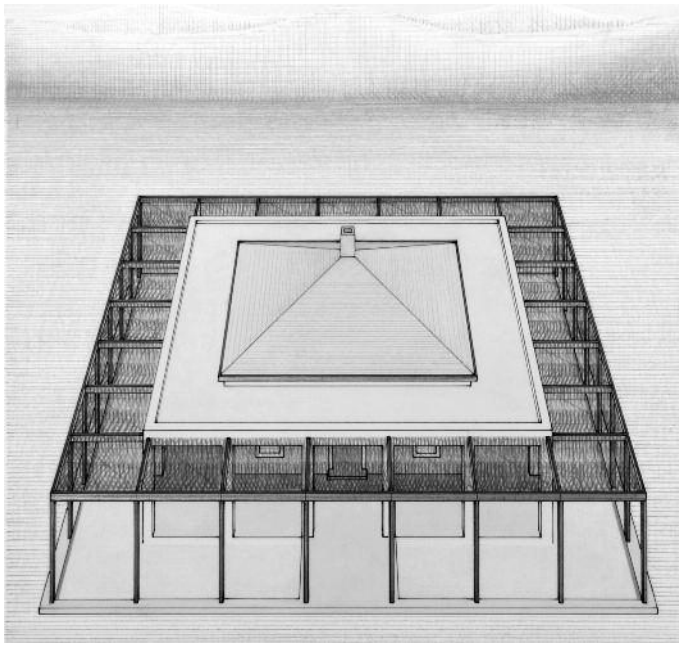


Fig. 3. Laretta Vinciarelli, drawing from the "The Seven Courtyards" series (1981), pastel, graphite and ink on vellum, 20" x 32". Judd Foundation.

Besides her proposals for a building that was to contain Judd's plywood pieces (c. 1978–80), studies of the former airplane hangars at the Mansana de Chinati, a garden at the Walker House (c. 1979) in town, and surveys of the barracks at Fort D.A. Russell (c. 1980) which now house works by Dan Flavin and others, Vinciarelli had a broader, largely conceptual influence on the architecture of Judd's Marfa compound.¹⁹

In an essay titled "Horti Conclusi" (1989), Judd wrote: "I've made my place in Marfa into a courtyard and have considered many other kinds of courtyards, open to closed."²⁰ Indeed, the additions of the courtyard, the *hortus conclusus* (Latin, for "enclosed garden"), and the pergola are integral to Judd's architecture in Marfa and are some of the reasons he has been praised as an innovative architect,²¹ especially considering there were few changes made to the existing buildings themselves. The entire Mansana de Chinati, Judd's living quarters in Marfa, is essentially a large, open courtyard surrounded by a thick adobe wall. Within the compound (often referred to as "The Block" since it occupies an entire city block), there is another open courtyard. Vinciarelli made

investigatory studies of these and other courtyards throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, having proposed, for example, "The Seven Courtyards" and "Hangar and Courtyard" (Figs. 3 and 4).

Vinciarelli's research on the courtyard building type went beyond Marfa, however, as it allied with her pedagogical and theoretical work in the housing studio at Columbia University, where buildings were taught and studied based on "type"—Vinciarelli, for example, ran the courtyard house studio. The courtyard type dominated her research and drawings, as an extension of her larger social preoccupations that a building should correspond to its particular location rather than exploit its site for economic profit. As she affirmed in a 1981 statement on her work in Marfa, "I do not believe in the validity of a universal building type; in fact the pitched-roof North American house looks defensive and sentimental in Southwest Texas. Its own meaning is debased in its thoughtless repetition by a consumer society that has lost its sense of the specificity of place."²² The courtyard is well suited to hot and dry climates throughout the world, including that of Southwest Texas, as it allows both privacy and free circulation of air. The *hortus conclusus*, like a courtyard, offers shade and respite from the heat by incorporating elements of water and greenery. Both have deep roots in Italian building culture extending back to the ancient Roman *domus* (a prototypical residence featuring a central open atrium), or perhaps earlier. As Vinciarelli explained: "The idea of the *hortus conclusus* means a garden that is walled in ... That is something that has been done since humanity started."²³ More important, Vinciarelli noted that at that time "these sorts of types and archetypes were much studied in Italy."²⁴

Another of Vinciarelli's preoccupations at the time was the pergola. A columned walkway often covered by vines or other climbing plants, the pergola can be traced back to ancient Roman gardens, where it extended out from the courtyard wall.²⁵ The pergola is at the heart of Vinciarelli's unrealized Puglia project of 1975–77 (Fig. 5), an architectural collaboration with Leonardo Fodera commissioned by the Puglia Regional Administration in southern Italy. This typological study of gardens consists of a series of transformations of a given space; each "micro-garden" or "garden of delights," as she called them, would contain areas of shade, recycled water "in very shallow canals and pools," vegetation, and architectural elements including small vaults or pergolas.²⁶ Several of these micro-gardens could be interlocked to form a spatial fabric.

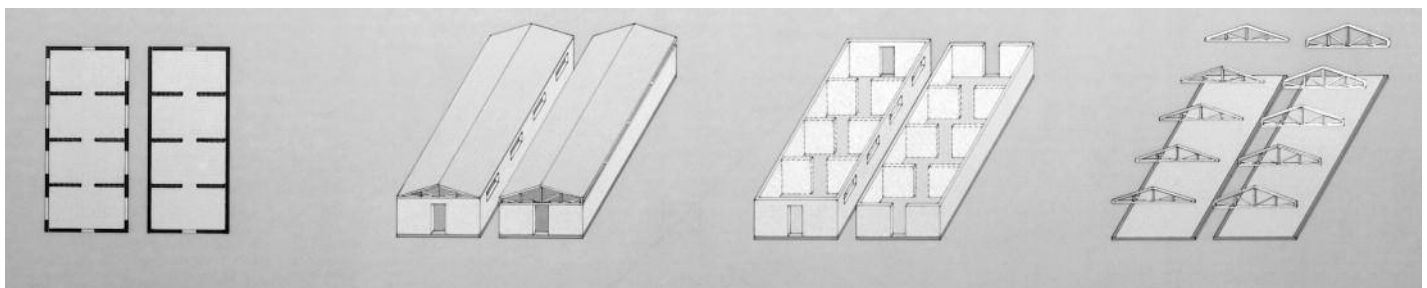


Fig. 4. Laretta Vinciarelli, drawings for "Hangar and Courtyard," a hangar and open and enclosed courtyard houses (1980), pastel, graphite and ink on vellum, 11 1/2" x 12". Judd Foundation.

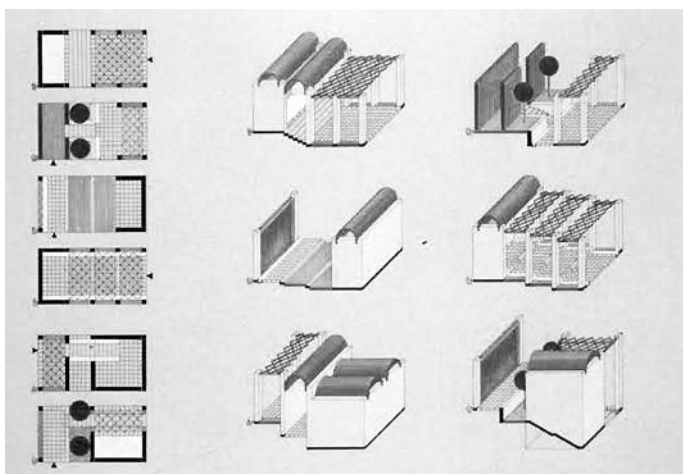


Fig. 5. Laretta Vinciarelli and Leonardo Fodera, Puglia Project (1977), ink and colored pencil on mylar.

Judd purchased her series of thirteen related drawings in 1977, and Vinciarelli said she was “extremely honored that he bought it, because he bought it because he loved it.... And I think that these drawings influenced him.”²⁷

Indeed, several elements of the “micro-garden” are found within the courtyard at the Mansana de Chinati. As in the Puglia project, there is a pergola, which is covered in vegetation and placed next to a water element. Not only are the courtyard, *hortus conclusus*, and pergola connected to the history of Italian building culture, they also exemplify the dynamic between openness and enclosure, which Vinciarelli employed in her designs for a garden at the Walker House in Marfa in 1979 (the drawings for which Judd also purchased).²⁸ Although the Walker House garden and the Puglia project were never realized, Vinciarelli believed that they were influential in Judd’s incorporation of the pergola, pool, and garden at the Mansana de Chinati, and his inclusion of a pergola at the Casa Perez (located on the ranches on the south side of the Chinati mountains).²⁹ When renovations at the Arena building in Marfa began in 1981, the original exterior courtyard was preserved, as was a smaller, covered courtyard within. The smaller courtyard’s roof was removed, essentially producing a courtyard within a courtyard.³⁰ The exterior courtyard, which has a pool, a pergola, places to sit in the shade, a vegetable garden, and a greenhouse certainly seems to echo Vinciarelli’s take on the “garden of delights.”³¹ Curator Marianne Stockebrand described the courtyard at the Arena building as “all in all a microcosm that satisfied the demands of the intellect as well as the senses,”³² while Melissa Susan Gaido Allen painted Judd as a kind of “social ecologist,” claiming that his incorporation of the pergola and pool are “further examples of his environmental awareness.”³³ Vinciarelli’s preoccupation with the courtyard type, *hortus conclusus*, and pergola in her architectural designs and teaching, her interest in simultaneously open and enclosed spaces; the connections to Italian building culture, and her sensitivity to site and ecology all contributed to what is now understood as Judd’s Marfa.

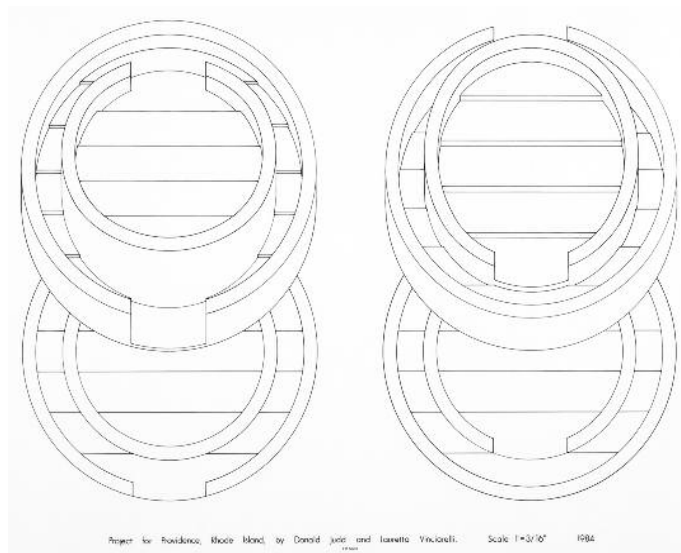


Fig. 6. Donald Judd (Drawing by Laretta Vinciarelli), axonometric drawing for project in Providence, Rhode Island (1984), ink on tracing paper, 23 3/4" x 30". Judd Foundation.

Vinciarelli also collaborated with Judd on two unrealized projects, for Providence (1984) and Cleveland (1986), on which his architectural reputation also rests.³⁴ The Providence project developed out of a grant competition, set up by the office of the mayor, to create a monumental sculpture to be installed in front of City Hall. Judd later explained, “Since the project was close to being architecture, I asked a friend, Laretta Vinciarelli, an architect, to be partners.”³⁵ Their proposal began as a large-scale sculpture and developed into an architectural project. Vinciarelli recalled: “[I]t became evident that it was more appropriate to intervene ... using architecture instead of placing a sculpture. So we discussed—he proposed [that we] do it together, which was not that unusual, because we had an ongoing discussion on architecture that started since we met.”³⁶ They also brought on Vinciarelli’s former student Claude Armstrong and his partner Donna Cohen, who had lived and worked with them in Marfa. Armstrong later explained, “Laretta was consistently helping Don translate his ideas of space, form and number into architectural and landscape scale.”³⁷ Their proposal consisted of a series of concentric circles in concrete, each with a different function (Fig. 6). The main circle would serve as a platform for residents of the city, in an attempt to initiate a dialogue with City Hall, the stairs of which would act as the “stage” for public discussion.³⁸ In many ways the proposal resembled an ancient Roman amphitheater, and as such it acknowledged the history of the site, which was formerly occupied by a theater. This consideration comes as no surprise to those who know Vinciarelli’s work, in which memory and history always played a central role.

The Cleveland project was a proposal for a large complex for the Progressive insurance company, and once again, Judd called upon Vinciarelli, Cohen, and Armstrong for architectural support. The site, whose original Beaux-Arts



Fig. 7. Donald Judd (Drawing by Lauretta Vinciarelli), axonometric drawing for project in Cleveland, Ohio, (1986), ink on vellum, 12" x 14 1/2". Judd Foundation.

geometry was retained on the water's edge, was on a bluff on the shore of Lake Erie, next to a set of railroad tracks and the Cleveland Browns stadium.³⁹ A lengthwise axis ran across the grid, resulting in a plan composed of a series of interior, open volumes—perhaps Juddian boxes, but more likely courtyards, recalling Vinciarelli's architectural concerns (Fig. 7). Since the site was long and narrow, they devised a plan for what would resemble a skyscraper lying on its side, so as not to obscure the city or the lake view.⁴⁰ Judd in fact described it as such, calling the project a "prone skyscraper," a description reminiscent of the Tuscolano housing project in Rome by Adolfo Libera, an important early project of the postwar rebuilding effort. Vinciarelli was no doubt aware of Tuscolano, and was perhaps even aware of its nickname coined by Bruno Zevi (professor of architecture at Vinciarelli's alma mater, La Sapienza University): "*grattacielo sdraiato*" (reclining skyscraper).⁴¹ Although ultimately neither the Cleveland nor Providence project was built, these collaborations provided Vinciarelli and Judd with another opportunity to refine their shared concerns about architecture, urban planning, and site specificity.

While Judd's first attempts at making furniture came in the late 1950s, with the help of his father,⁴² aside from a few stainless steel and aluminum coffee tables from the early 1970s, his return to furniture making did not come until 1978, after becoming involved with Vinciarelli. In the accompanying catalogue to the 2010 exhibition of Judd's furniture, critic Alex Coles declared that Judd's decision to return to furniture design was based on an internal struggle between art and design: "Only later, when he accepted this distance between the two, and found a way to approach the furniture on its own terms and not through his art, did he successfully enter into the field of furniture design and production."⁴³

Here again, Vinciarelli's influence is apparent. In 1977, she designed a desk constructed in plywood, repurposed from a

Judd piece that had been damaged in transit from Melbourne, Australia.⁴⁴ Peter Ballantine constructed the desk according to Vinciarelli's design: a large desk with a flat top, supported on one side by a thin bookshelf, and on the other by a wider rectangular box that contained bookshelves, horizontal slots to lay architectural drawings flat, and square slots to store rolled drawings (Fig. 8). Her desk was housed on the third floor of Judd's Spring Street loft during the time they were together. Judd liked its formal clarity and functionality and designed a comparable desk for his two children that followed Vinciarelli's design closely (Fig. 9).⁴⁵ This design appears to be a prototype for Judd's subsequent desks, distinct from his earlier table designs, which were simpler, smaller, and without storage. Even though Judd's desks from 1978 and after are clearly in dialogue with Vinciarelli's 1977 design, he cited his own work as the primary inspiration. According to Judd, the children's desk (and subsequent furniture) developed from a bed that he designed in Marfa: "the lumber yard could cut the few different lengths to size and I could then nail them together in place.... Later...I designed desks and chairs for the children using the same method of construction. More furniture developed from this beginning."⁴⁶

From 1979 to the mid-1980s, Vinciarelli also designed and prepared the plates for a number of Judd's prints, including a series of fifty-four plates for two series of etchings. These fifty-four plates resulted in twenty-nine prints, which comprise nearly forty percent of the seventy-five total etchings in the catalogue raisonné of Judd's prints and works in editions.⁴⁷ She also worked on a series of his woodcuts, which required that a maroon line be inserted by hand, a challenging task for which Vinciarelli had the necessary dexterity. As she recalled in 2008, "Donald had some difficulty in doing precise drawings of this kind," at least partially due to his eyesight, so he asked Vinciarelli to assist in the preparation and delineation of the printing plates.⁴⁸

The catalogue raisonné notes that the "images on the plates" of a large series of vertical etchings were made "after drawings by Loretta [sic] Vinciarelli,"⁴⁹ indicating that her role extended beyond that of technician. Elsewhere in the catalogue, it states that these attributions were "based on the records and memory of the artist."⁵⁰ Adding to the confusion is the lack of specific identification on Vinciarelli's part. In her 2008 interview with Rainer Judd, Vinciarelli identified a few particular series she worked on but also speaks broadly, noting, "I did many for Donald ... I mean, many of these drawings, that are more technical, let's say, were done by me."⁵¹ It is therefore difficult to ascertain her exact role in the process, even if some examples were signed "A.P. L.V." (Artist's Proof Lauretta Vinciarelli).

Vinciarelli explained her position vis-à-vis this collaborative work, saying, "I think this is quite natural. If you know how to do something, you do it for the person you love."⁵² She also confirmed the extent to which the two were indeed partners, stating, "When I speak of his architecture, it's as if I would speak of mine, so much we agreed."⁵³ (Armstrong describes their working process as "fluid."⁵⁴) Although it is challenging to assign credit to one or the other for specific details in their

collaborative projects, at issue here—and what I hope to rectify—is the acknowledgment that these projects were, in fact, collaborative.

Vinciarelli is, of course, one of many women whose role in the collaborative work with their male colleagues has been minimized or altogether erased. Designers Charlotte Perriand's and Lilly Reich's collaborations with Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, respectively, were only uncovered in recent decades, thanks to Mary McLeod, Matilda McQuaid, and other feminist scholars.⁵⁵ It is within this context that Vinciarelli's erasure must be considered, as she brought her architectural knowledge and history of collaborative design to her partnership with Donald Judd. One of the only mentions of Vinciarelli in the Judd literature refers to her as Judd's "erstwhile girlfriend," after which her name appears only in the footnotes.⁵⁶ Dancer and choreographer Julie Finch, Judd's wife from 1964 to 1975, returned to the limelight after 101 Spring Street reopened to discuss the early days of loft living, and Marianne Stockebrand, Judd's romantic partner for the last several years of his life, has since championed his work. When Judd passed away in 1994, the obituaries mentioned his wife and his final companion, but none mentioned the "erstwhile girlfriend," whose impact on his work was undoubtedly the most visible and sustained. Acknowledging Vinciarelli as a professional partner could pose a threat to his legacy by placing his authorship into question, while as an "erstwhile girlfriend" she barely scores a mention in his biography. It is also clear that Stockebrand, as a spokeswoman for Judd's legacy, contributed to his mythic status. This last point signals perhaps the most troubling notion: that Vinciarelli's erasure occurred not only at the hands of men but of women as well.

Although rooted in the same impetus as her architectonic works on paper of the 1970s, Vinciarelli's watercolors, begun in 1986, were a stark contrast in many respects: emotionally affecting, suffused with memory, and brimming with vibrant color. The spaces she depicted were voluminous, luminous, and noticeably empty; in the absence of "things," light and color take on an unusually physical, tangible presence. Color was especially vital, according to her husband, Peter Rowe: "[C]olors lived for her"—ultramarine blue was "sexy," whereas sienna brown was "La Mama," and cadmium yellow was altogether avoided—it was "dangerous" and "poisonous," she would say.⁵⁷ Here again, architecture was the driving force behind these works. Her aim was to construct spaces containing "the simplest architecture as possible ... something more solid and massive," as she explained in a 2009 lecture.⁵⁸ Works such as *Water Enclosure in Blue* of 1987 (Fig. 10 and Pl. 10), which depicts an interior space open to the sky above and a pool of pristine, placid water below, is reminiscent of the ancient Roman *domus* on which it was loosely based. Also embodying several dualities characteristic of Vinciarelli's entire oeuvre of watercolors, it is both art and architecture, open and enclosed, filled with light yet devoid of people or objects, and solid, yet threatening to dematerialize before our eyes. Water is another common subject, as it had been in her architectural projects. In the watercolors, it gave her the opportunity to



Fig. 8. Lauretta Vinciarelli, Plywood Desk, seen here at 101 Spring Street (1977). Photo: Peter Ballantine.



Fig. 9. Donald Judd, Children's Desk (1978). Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

construct an expansive, multilayered space, imbuing the surface with a sense of "evanescence."⁵⁹ In these ways, although Vinciarelli's architectural subjects suggest timelessness and permanence, the incorporation of water elements paired with her medium and process underscore a sense of fragility and ephemerality.

By the late 1990s, Vinciarelli's work found greater visibility and institutional success. After the first monograph on her work was published in 1998, her *Orange Sound* series (1999; Pl. 11) was purchased by the Museum of Modern Art in 1999, and her work was featured in the 2002 Whitney Biennial. Her more representational works had slowly given way to increasingly abstract compositions such as *Orange Sound*, harkening back to her early works from the 1970s. These late works feature startlingly reductive compositions, floating rectilinear planes of electric color, with titles like *Icy Water* (2004–07) and *Orange Incandescence* (1997) suggesting extremes in temperature, whereas *Orange Sound* and *Silence in Red* (2000) render auditory phenomena visible.

Given her relationship with Judd, critics have been eager to identify a correspondence between Vinciarelli's late work (c. 1998–2007) and the Minimalist aesthetic, even though the watercolors were made more than a decade after the couple

separated. In *The New York Times* review of the 2002 Whitney Biennial, Julie Lovine stated matter-of-factly that “Ms. Vinciarelli does Minimalist watercolors.”⁶⁰ In MoMA’s *Envisioning Architecture* catalogue (also 2002), Peter Reed compared her work to Judd’s Minimalism, while glossing over her role in his work: “The warm orange and other tones of *Orange Sound* recall remembered landscapes, perhaps particularly the American Southwest, where Vinciarelli spent time with the artist Donald Judd. She clearly admires Judd’s serial Minimalist sculpture, and art in a similar vein.”⁶¹ Similarly, *New York Times* critic Martha Schwendener described the watercolors in her 2016 show at the Totah Gallery as “rectangular interiors reminiscent of Mr. Judd’s minimalist sculptures.”⁶²

In fact, Vinciarelli’s late watercolors engage in a variety of metaphysical, autobiographical, and historical references—she was consciously working within “that whole European tradition,” employing the “compositional effects” that Judd earlier disavowed in a famed 1964 interview with Bruce Glaser.⁶³ Vinciarelli made no recorded mention of Minimalism. Rather, she described a strong connection to Abstract Expressionism, speaking admiringly about it in a 2009 lecture she gave at the Spitzer School of Architecture at The City College of New York. She described Abstract Expressionist art as “extremely affecting and uplifting, at least to me”⁶⁴—hardly the cold, impassive qualities commonly associated with canonical Minimalism.

To label Vinciarelli’s watercolors simply as “Minimalist” is not only a mischaracterization, it credits her later successes to Judd’s influence and further undermines any possibility of *her* influence on *his* work and thinking.

Questions of influence are essential to identifying the mechanisms that continue to determine the discourse on creative partnerships, and certainly they must be resolved to correct the narrative of Judd’s legacy. Proper attribution, however, is not the only matter at stake. There is, too, the call for a wider acceptance and understanding of architectural partnerships between couples through a toppling of the outdated but persistent myth of the solitary male artist, and an examination of the unique nature of collaborations between architects and artists. The oft-repeated tale of the overlooked woman might seem just as outdated, not to mention dangerous, as it risks perpetuating a victim narrative for women like Vinciarelli who

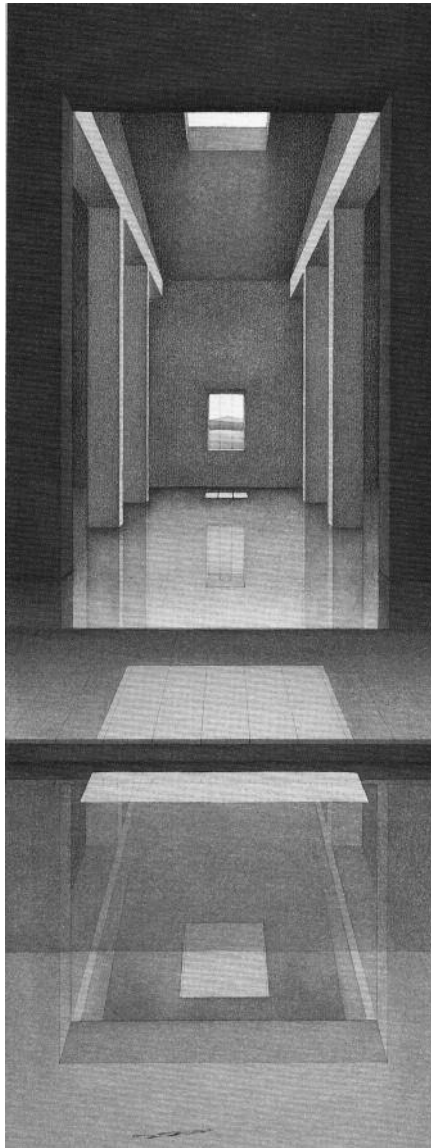


Fig. 10. Laurretta Vinciarelli, *Water Enclosure in Blue* (1987), water-color on paper. Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo.

had accomplished careers separate from their partners. Vinciarelli’s pioneering work must be properly evaluated as it contributes to the story of women in architecture, the socio-political impetus of the architectural drawings revival, the role of pedagogy, and the dialogue between Italy and the United States during the postmodern era, the historiography of which is still in its infancy. •

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Notes

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TAO AIMIN'S INSTALLATION ART

NARRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY BY THEIR OWN "LANGUAGE"

By Simeng Tan

In the contemporary art world of China, heterogeneous groups of artists exist, and the spirit of individualism in Western art, including modernism, has become a popular motif in avant-garde art. Installation art, developed since the 1980s in China, calls for abandoning traditional and classical art to create a more freestyle technique.¹ Among an increasing number of independent women artists Tao Aimin has become one of the foremost installation artists, combining various innovative materials and techniques.

Most Chinese feminists who have adopted Western feminist values are modern women who come largely from metropolitan areas and the capitalist class. They were able to take advantage of educational opportunities and the modern information society. Compared to some feminist artists in contemporary China, whose emphasis is on the visual shock of performance art and fighting for political rights for women, Tao Aimin expresses a distinctive Chinese feminism with her works, using a nonlinguistic system of signs to tell stories of women's life, labor, and history under the traditional agricultural social system.

Tao Aimin was born in 1974 in Hunan Province. She grew up in a small village with her parents and sisters and was familiar with the rural women's traditional way of living. She earned a degree in art from HuaQiao University in 1999, and completed advanced studies in fresco painting at China's Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2001. Though currently living in Beijing, she still felt closer to rural areas.

In 2010, the Onemoon Art Gallery in Beijing exhibited Tao Aimin's installation titled *Riverbed* (Fig. 1). It included previous installation works and a new series of Chinese water and ink paintings titled *Women's Journal*. Her primary motif throughout these works is narrating the history of country women's labor through compositions using old family washboards.

The exhibition synopsis outlines the theme of her series of works, describing how Tao Aimin delves into the daily life of common Chinese women through washboards: "This multimedia exhibition reveals the private language and toil of simple women from Tang Dynasty until now through installations, ink wash paintings, ink wash prints, photographs and video. The monotonous labor of women is in the washboards themselves, split and worn down, like the hands and souls of the women who used them."²

"What is the women's history?" Tao Aimin has said, "Old granny spent her whole life washing and her body is confined



Fig. 1. Tao Aimin, *Riverbed* poster (from *Riverbed* Solo Exhibition) (2010). Photo: Onemoon Gallery.

in domestic space. Turning the washing boards into an installation, I insert the female body into history.”³

Why did Tao Aimin collect the old family washboards, which even the rag-pickers did not want and which the owners threw away or used as firewood? She got the idea that seeking old washboards was a way to understand the life stories of women, a way of experiencing their lives. She journeyed to areas in Hunan Province, where people still live in an agricultural society and washboards are still being used, to find the boards and their owners as well as the owners’ stories (Pl. 12). She tried to understand the sadness and pathos behind many of their life stories and to find a process that would be expressive and totally meaningful.

Umberto Eco proposed that every cultural phenomenon can be studied as communication.⁴ Tao Aimin’s works can be viewed in this way as a non-linguistic interpretation of the history of certain groups of women as a cultural phenomenon. The washboards are a most obvious agent of communication to tell their history, their stories, from a woman’s point of view. Also, if her *River of Women* is explained from a semiotic view of narratology, all of the elements the artist uses become referential codes.

Tao Aimin’s first installation work, *River of Women* (2005; Fig. 2 and Pl. 13), consists of fifty-eight washboards. On each washboard, she drew a portrait of its owner, based on photographs she took, so that each piece represents the lifetime of labor of a particular woman. She photographed the faces and collected the worn washboards of women of all ages—newly married wives and middle-aged women with long histories of labor, but mostly old women with grey hair and wrinkled faces, many of whom had experienced foot-binding. As she drew each woman’s portrait on the old washboards, their wrinkles coincided (conceptually) with the ridged bands of the washboards, as both show the markings of time. Therefore, what is hidden behind the metaphor of the washboards is the length of each woman’s life and labor, sometimes many decades.

The old family washboard represents not only the woman but also her history of suffering and her family role and status. It stands for the social role of the female in traditional Chinese society—as a good wife and a good mother. In the Chinese traditional agricultural society of times past, especially under the Confucian view as the dominant social ideology in history, women were responsible for most of the housework including cooking and washing clothes so as to spend most of their lifetime staying at home while the men worked outside to earn the majority of the family income. The family role was usually the primary social role that women were made to play. This kind of gender segregation was most common in the exploited and lower class’s daily life before the industrial age of China, and is still true today in some rural areas that are relatively short of economic resources and information, with poor transportation and education facilities, where people continue to live behind the times. “Because men are identified with the public sphere and women with the domestic sphere, there is a tendency to infer that public and private would naturally coincide with



Fig. 2. Tao Aimin, *River of Women* (from *Women River*) (2005), Installation, photography and sound, 39' 4" x 47 1/4" x 9' 10". Photo: Tao Aimin.

this division.”⁵ In this sense, the washboards with the images of the women become a cultural icon.

The second level of the visual code is the river. With all fifty-eight pieces of mottled washboards put together and in a dimly lit space, the women’s faces appear to be flowing, bringing the river to life. The river also figures significantly in the way the women use the washboards. In ancient times and even today in some rural areas of China, women place clothes on the wooden washboards and rub them until they are clean. This requires a water source, sometimes from running water or a well, but more usually from a river, where the women gather to do laundry. In the river, they can wet the clothes before rubbing and soaping them, and then rinse them afterwards.

Tao Aimin also added the sounds of the modern washing machine as background music in the exhibition of *Women River* as a reminder that the old family washboards as well as the important social roles women played in history faded with the gradual disintegration of Chinese agricultural society. The old times may never come back again due to modernization, especially the invention of the washing machine—products of the industrial revolution. It can be said that Tao Aimin’s works suggest that western modernization and industrialization led to the destruction of the old ways and the significance of the



Fig. 3. Tao Aimin, No. 3 (preface from *Books of Women*) (2005), installation, Photo: Onemoon Gallery.

washboard. With the changing times, women's roles changed, and it is the washing machine's voice that sounded the death knell of the old identity.

Books of Women (2005; Fig. 3 and Pl. 14) is the second installation Tao Aimin made for the Art of Chinese Characters Exhibition, which took place in The China Millennium Monument, Beijing. She combined seventy-two washboards to form a "bamboo slip"—the form most ancient Chinese scripts took before the advent of paper. Despite the title, *Books of Women*, actually there are no scripts or characters written on the Book, except for the preface (written by the artist). Rather, the "scripts" that form this bamboo book are the mottled prints left on each washboard and the washboards themselves. With the subordinate status of women in the past and even today in some rural areas, women are forbidden from formal education. So most women could not read or write any scripts during their lifetimes. Forced to be illiterate, doing housework and raising children were their primary duties. They became and still remain the "traditional women," generation after generation.

Tao Aimin explained that she treated the prints, formed by rubbing over years during the women's repetitive laundry task, as the written language. These prints are not ordinary characters but form a vital language with further meanings.

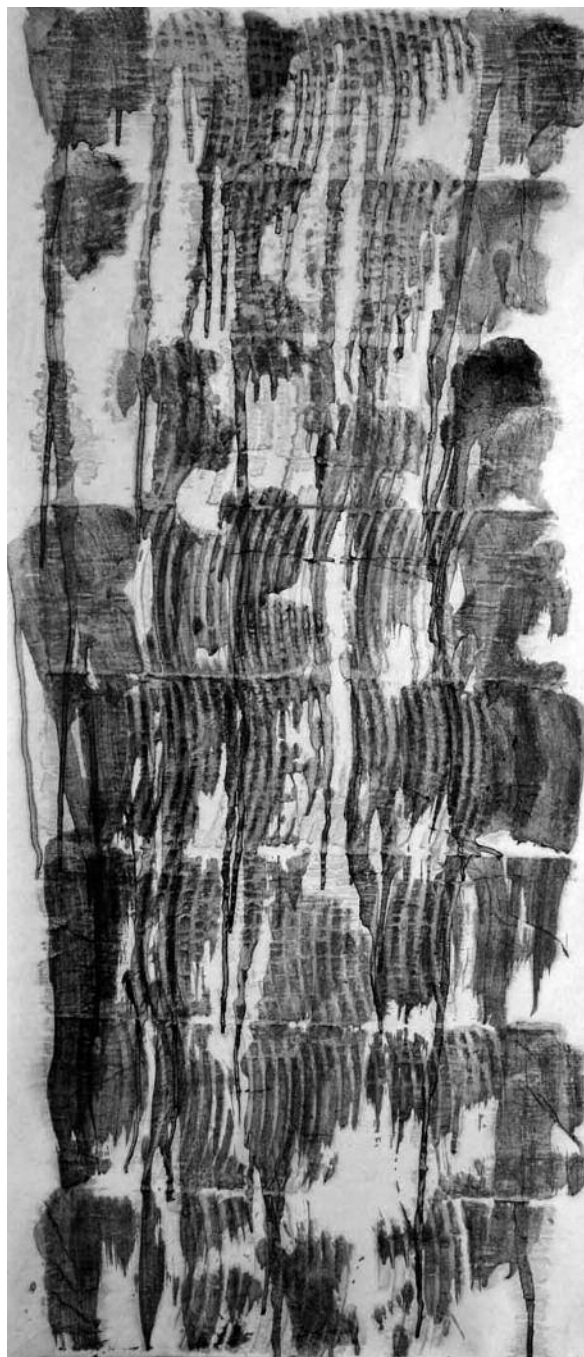


Fig. 4. Tao Aimin, No. 2 (from *Language of Water*) (2007), ink and washboard prints on paper, 47 1/4" x 23 5/8". Photo: Artlem.

They bear witness to the women's lost youth, a time already passed, and give the prints a sense of grief and bitterness. Thus the visual language, which is far beyond real scripts or characters, plus their formation as a "bamboo slip," which signifies the women's long history of suffering, together narrate these women's life histories in a highly emotional and abstract way and construct a real "Book of Women."

Since 2006, Tao Aimin began to create *Language of Water* (Figs. 4 and 5), a group of ink and wash paintings made by Chinese traditional stone rubbing in the traditional manner with ink and water. Tao's inspiration, again, came from the

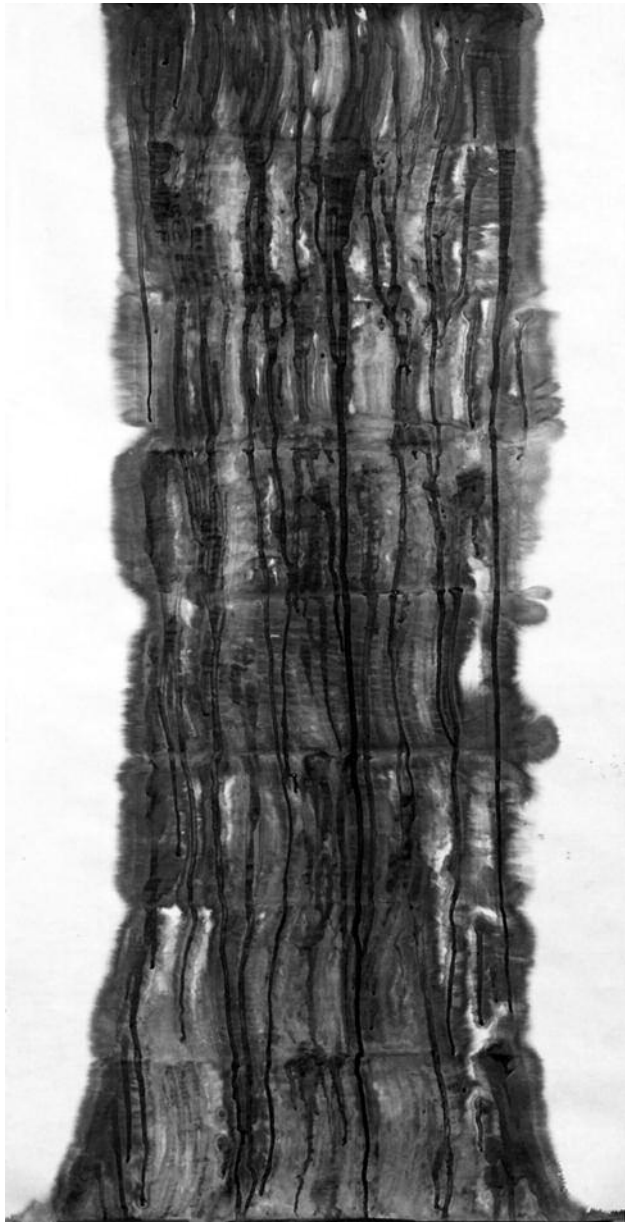


Fig. 5. Tao Aimin, *No. 7* (from *Language of Water*) (2007), ink and washboard prints on paper, 47 1/4" x 23 5/8". Photo: Artlem.



Fig. 6. Tao Aimin, *A Woman's Long March* (2006), photo-graphy and video installation, 30 3/4" x 46". Photo: Long March Space.

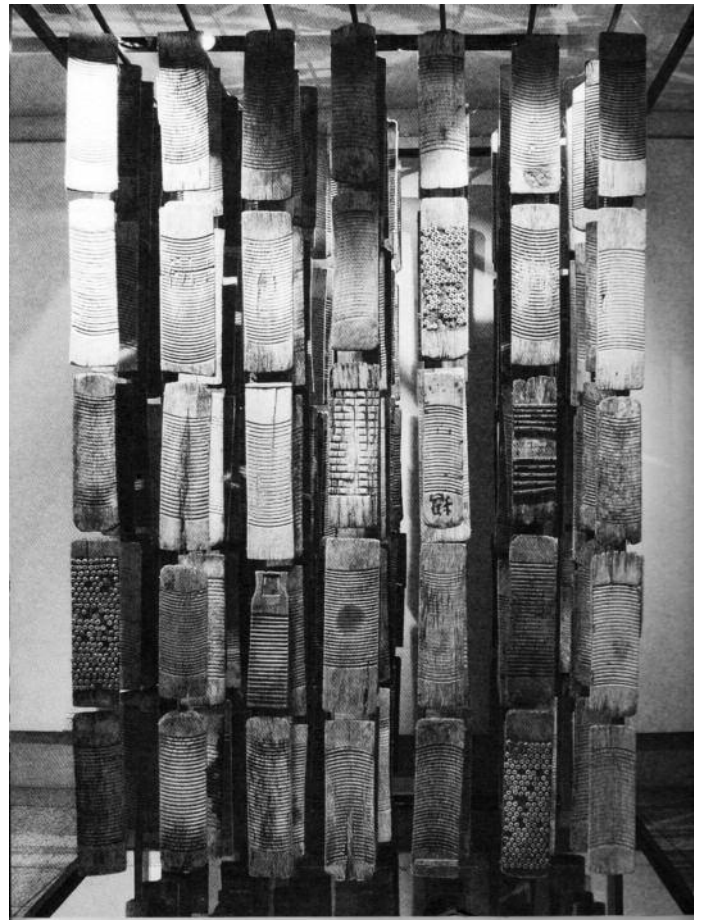


Fig. 7. Tao Aimin, *Cultural Relics out of Water* (2006), installation and photography, 94 1/2" x 7 7/8". Photo: Onemoon Gallery.

practical function of washboards, which could never be realized without water. First, water nurtures all things in nature, and the old family washboards are made from wood—made from trees, which need rain to grow. Also, the washboards are soaked in water all year round as they play a practical role in daily life. The markings on them over time are the results of their long-term “communication” with water; and finally become the language of the water that they knew well. Thirdly, as one can imagine, the curves of the washboards’ ridges appropriately correspond to the ripples of flowing water and are eroded by water to help form their current shape. These worn ridges of the washboards have witnessed the lives of the women and the passage of time, and the beauty of the washboards naturally transferred to the beauty of water. Using the foundational element of the water

sign, Tao Aimin added another element of traditional Chinese painting—Chinese ink—to construct another language for narrating the history of women.

For Tao Aimin, the fate of the washboards is like the women’s fate, as is the water’s fate. According to Chinese

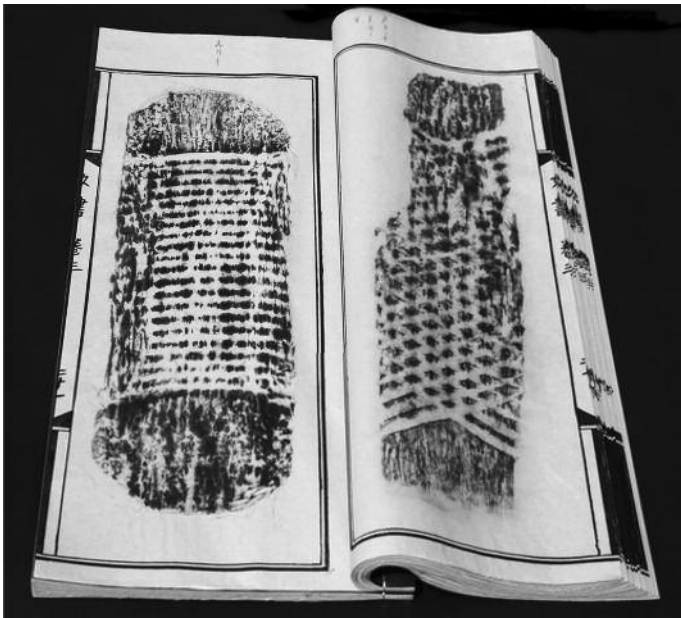


Fig. 8. Tao Aimin, No.1 (from *Women's Scripts*) (2008), Installation and video, 10' 6" x 10' 6" x 31 1/2". Photo: Ink Studio.

Taoism, water is the gentlest thing in the world and is given the female character as the nature of Yin (as in the Yin-Yang duality). But at the same time, it has the tenacious character of Yang, which is the opposite of Yin, as Yin and Yang are mutually transformable just as their relationship in Tai Chi. Though soft and yielding to the touch, given enough time, water can carve a path through solid stone as nothing else can do in this soft and slow way. That is what the water narrates in *Tao's Language of Water*, telling how women spent their lifetime "decorating" the washboards, as water makes its various markings. The water encounters various obstacles and reverses during its flowing, and when it stops, its life ends. Here the water is not only water, but another referential code for women's life and identity.

The combination of ink with water on the washboards also gives a new connotation to the traditional medium of water and ink: it reveals the symbolic codes of the worn markings of the washboards as a visual way of interpreting the owners' daily lives on the rice paper. Tao Aimin has described what she did in this group of works as using these traditional materials to record the women's stories told by the water in an objective way.

The following two groups of installation works by Tao Aimin are considered more philosophical compared with those just discussed. *A Woman's Long March* (2006; Fig. 6 and Pl. 15), Tao Aimin's third installation, was first exhibited in Long March Space in Beijing. An introductory text about this group exhibition described the work:

A woman walks along the road, as if she is traversing time itself. The sharp edges of this collection of washboards have long been worn down, worn until all that is left are mottled traces of the ridges once there. Throughout their journeys, the owners of these washboards have



Fig. 9. The Tai Chi Pattern with the Eight Diagrams

experienced trials and hardships, tribulations and suffering, but their spirits persevere. Using art to chronicle their journeys is, in ways, akin to putting their histories down in writing. This is a life course filled with passion, a road in the long march of life.⁶

A Woman's Long March involves two hundred washboards and also features photography and video. The washboards and photographs are connected to construct a series of referential codes. The photographs show the portraits of the washboards' owners, and the video shows the process of collecting the washboards. Photographs of the owners and washboards are also displayed on the walls around in the exhibition room to construct the historical context. As the introduction indicates, this group of works created meaning by chronicling a significant but overlooked women's history through purely visual and tactile means.

Similarly, *Cultural Relics out of Water* (2006; Fig. 7) carried on with the same narrative signs—hanging washboards in order and in a limited space, signifying a history of the women/owners. For this work Tao Aimin hung 280 washboards on a 3.2-meter-tall rectangular iron stand with a large mirror on the floor beneath the center of the stand. The mirror reflections gave the full view of the hanging washboards and extended the visual space by essentially doubling it. The mirror space also signified the water while the washboards hanging in the real space signified the relics salvaged from the water. The name "relics," which is already endowed with the meaning of a long history, also serves as a metaphor for the long-ago era that these women with their washboards experienced. With the emphasis on antiquity, so as to raise the meaning of the simple washboards to a cultural level, the artist also showed her sensitivity to the impermanence of life.

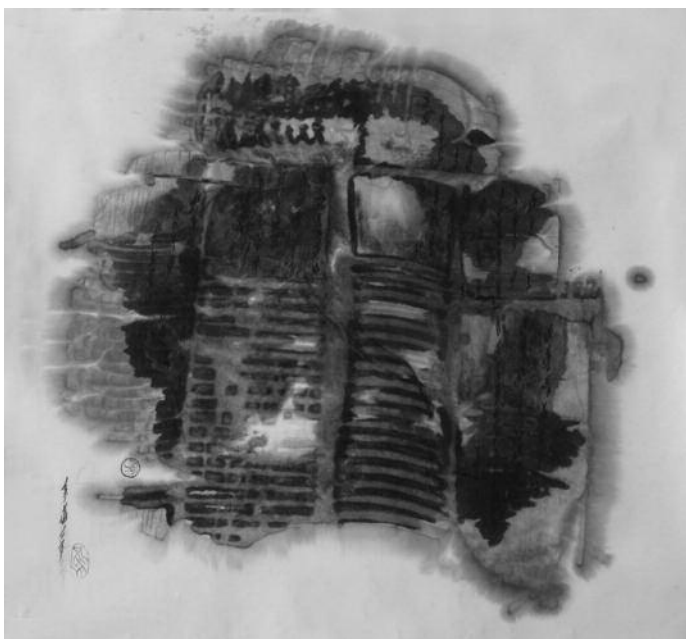


Fig. 10. Tao Aimin, No. 17 (from *Women's Journal*) (2009), ink on paper, 27 3/8" x 27". Photo: Ink Studio.

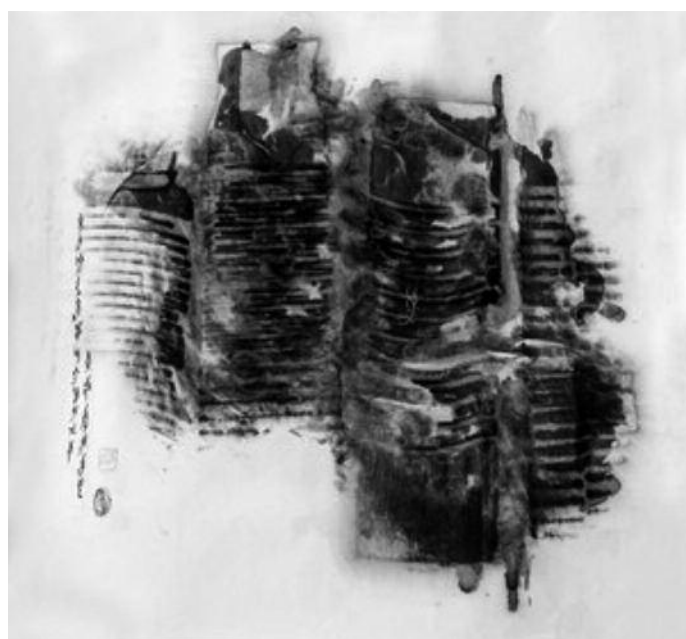


Fig. 11.. Tao Aimin, No. 24 (from *Women's Journal*) (2009), ink on paper, 27 3/8" x 27". Photo: Ink Studio.

In 2008, Tao Aimin began combining a linguistic code, *Nü shu*, with the nonlinguistic code of washboards into her work. As the introduction of her work says,

The idea of this work was based on the "*Nü shu*"—a syllabic script created and used exclusively by women in Jiangyong, Hunan Province, China. The women were forbidden formal education for many centuries and developed the *Nü shu* script in order to communicate with one another. They embroidered the script into cloth and wrote it in books and on paper fans. *Nü shu* is one of the most interesting and least known writing systems. The word *Nü shu* literally means 'Woman's Writing' in Chinese. As the name implies, *Nü shu* is a writing system created and used exclusively by women in a remote part of China. Traditional Chinese culture is male-centered and forbids girls from any kind of formal education, so *Nü shu* was developed in secrecy over hundreds of years in the Jiangyong county of Hunan province.⁷

For her installation *Women's Scripts* (Fig. 8 and Pl. 16), Tao Aimin positioned a group of washboard "books" with notes written in *Nü Shu* in a pattern related to the Tai Chi Eight Diagrams (Fig. 9).

To add clarity to her conception of these works, Tao Aimin started her journey at *Nü shu*'s place of origin, Pumei Village, Jiangyong, to find the women who inherited this secret language and who still use it today. *Women's Scripts* also builds on the artist's previous works. As in the *Language of Water*, she used a stone rubbing technique to print the naturally formed surface graphics that exist on the washboards, using ink and water on rice paper which was the same size as the washboard. This time, however, she set them together as a

thread-bound Chinese book—another ancient form of Chinese texts other than bamboo rubbing. Tao Aimin positioned the washboard "books" with the notes written in *Nü Shu* into the Eight Diagrams pattern, which originated from Tai Chi (*Yi Ch'ing*), and is an auspicious sign in daily life. It also looks like a flower, which is a symbolic sign for woman and is related to the topic of the "*Nü-Red*."⁸

Nü Shu has its own forms, which, like the symbols for water can be explained as Yin in nature—Yin is the female sign, the gentle, passive, quiescent forces in Yin-Yang theory—but at the same time it has its dashing spirit hidden inside. Each of the characters in *Nü Shu* signifies the soul looking for independence and freedom. "They added mysterious spirit to my works of *Women's Script*," Tao Aimin said about these old scripts. "They are implicit and profound, and the combining of the two languages presents a kind of visual language that can never be read."⁹ In fact, *Women's Script* is the continuation of the essence of her creative concept with washboard signs as well as the conclusion and distillation of her previous works with washboards as language. In addition, both the visual language and *Nü Shu* narrate women's history in a unique way and possess the characteristics of these Chinese women. They also shine like a powerful spirit source with the beauty of humanity. Through *Women's Script*, Tao Aimin asserted her aspiration of "rebuilding women's spirit."¹⁰

A continuation of *Women's Script*, *Women's Journal* (2009; Figs. 10 and 11) also combined languages to narrate women's history. Here Tao Aimin mainly focused on the construction of traditional Chinese ink and wash painting effects in a natural way, especially Chinese paintings of mountains and waters. While making the installation series showed in 2010 at Onemoon Gallery, her exploration of building the language by water and ink stepped unconsciously into an individualized

and personalized way of narrating history. Tao Aimin refined the beauty of the mottled washboards and the essence of Chinese ink and wash painting to form an aesthetic perception that was already contained in the materials. This time the stone painting works are full of variety: the rubbings are like the rocks, mountains, water, mist, etc.—the traditional images of Chinese ink and wash painting, but at the same time, they are not exactly alike. The traditional ink and wash painting is usually combined with the use of a writing brush in an artificial manner. But Tao Aimin starts with the rubbings of the washboard prints on rice paper and then adds just a few brushstrokes to suggest representational images. The symbolic rubbings are predominant in *Women's Journal*, bringing a modern spirit to the ink and wash painting. In Tao's mind, art is a purer language itself without artificial intentions, and the dominant images presented on the rice paper are ink and wash paintings without the traditional skills of drawing and writing. It is the pure painting components and composition that are being highly valued.

The scripts of the female social groups signified their social status, which is both made and restrained by the traditional view of the Confucian patriarchal social system. Women had an important role in traditional Chinese society, but it was strictly delimited and was defined almost entirely in terms of the family they would nurture and, specifically, the sons they would rear.¹¹ Tao Aimin's works, however, imply the collective memory of women in history as written by their suffering as a group rather than as individuals.

The critic Tong Yujie also described the instrumental nature of the washboards as signifying female bodies, which showed their low, even embarrassing, cultural status in women's history. The instrumentalism of the washboards is so contrary to humanity, reflecting the psychology of submitting to the patriarchal authority over keeping a rational approach to humanity. Finally, *Women's Scripts* and *Women's Journal* are not only the signifiers of female or women's culture; their secrecy indirectly reflected on the men's life in the traditional patriarchal society. In other words, the women's scripts unconsciously served to classify and define all the other characters or scripts written in Chinese history as men's scripts, and to offer a comparison with them.¹²

In Tong's words, Tao Aimin is an explorer of the bitter side of Chinese women's culture. No one knows the toll of the labor women of former times experienced or what they suffered every day at home, whether mental abuse or real violence. Therefore Tao Aimin's series of works stand out among Chinese contemporary art works. They communicate traditional Chinese philosophical spirits, which mainly manifest a practical-emotional (or affective) spirit.¹³ She treats her works as a story, that of one woman looking out for other women, as a journey to look for an aspect of women's lives, and as an experience of women's real lives. Collecting the washboards is collecting the stories that imbue them; it is finding the hard-working women who are the heroines of their own stories. In the creation of the river-like installation panel

work, a new language of expressing women's history is generated. Using the tools inherent in old washboards, Tao Aimin set up a whole new non-linguistic sign system.

To the artist Tao Aimin, each washboard is already a piece of incredibly perfect artwork, and each signifies the existence of a particular female individual. To the users of the washboards, they express the language of their lives, which involves experiences of many kinds of suffering. The meaning of her works is to memorialize the history of Chinese traditional females, to memorialize a former time whose traditions, no matter good or evil, are dying and will never return. Tao Aimin has said her narrative of women's history will never end. Her process of creating her works is a way of exploring daily life experiences that requires enormous patience and recalls personal and collective memories. Seeking the steps of the common people is her way of searching for higher spiritual value as well as crossing the boundaries of lives lived. From these steps, one can see the eternity of spirits and meaning of life. •

Simeng Tan is an independent Chinese scholar and translator whose area of study is contemporary Chinese women artists.

Notes

1. See Carol Yinghua Lu and Sue-an Van Der Zijpp, *New World Order: Contemporary Installation Art and Photography From China* (Groninger: Groninger Museum, and Rotterdam: NAI Booksellers, 2008).
2. "About Riverbed—Solo Exhibition of Tao Aimin" (2010), Beijing Onemoon Gallery at <http://www.onemoonart.com> (accessed Dec. 12, 2016).
3. Shu-chin Tsui (trans.), 'Bowdoin Professor Seeks Out Experimental Chinese Women Artists' (2010), Bowdoin Performance and Exhibitions, at <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1academicnews/007669.shtml> (accessed Dec. 12, 2016).
4. See Michael Caesar and Umberto Eco, *Philosophy, Semiotics, and the Work of Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 1.
5. *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea and Japan*, eds. Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush and Joan R. Piggott (London: Univ. of California Press, Ltd., 2003), 238.
6. Tao Aimin, *A Woman's Long March*, Long March Independent Space at <http://www.longmarchspace.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/06.05.06-Tao-Aimin-A-Womans-Long-March-Independent-Space.pdf> (accessed Dec. 12, 2016).
7. Nu Yishu (Female Art) Website at <http://nuyishu.blogspot.com/search?q=tao+aimin> (accessed Dec. 12, 2016).
8. Ibid.
9. Tao Aimin, "Nü Shu: Growing in My Heart," Tao Aimin's Blog, at <http://blog.artron.net/space-86786-do-blog-id-153402.html#> (accessed Dec. 12, 2016), (author's translation),
10. Ibid.
11. See Stewart McFarlane, "Chinese Religions," in *Women in Religion*, eds. Jean Holm and John Bowker (London: Pinter Publishers, 1994), 159.
12. *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea and Japan*, eds. Ko et al., 238.
13. Ibid., 268.

Women of Abstract Expressionism

Edited by Joan Marter

Essays by Ellen Landau, Robert Hobbs,

Susan Landauer, Joan Marter

Yale University Press, 2016

Reviewed by Ann Eden Gibson

The catalogue *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, edited by Joan Marter, coincided with the eponymous exhibition at the Denver Art Museum (DAM). But as beautiful as that exhibition was, this large-scale, handsomely produced catalogue is a match. Meant as a more permanent testimony to the accomplishments of this group of women artists, its lush reproductions and persuasive histories bring these women into the ranks of their male peers. The exhibition culls a stunning collection of Abstract Expressionist works by twelve women. By presenting these artists along with thirty more, this volume aims to embed them and others, once and for all, into the roster of what is still regarded as a masculine achievement.

The essays locate forces that meshed to shut these vibrant women out, providing information and ideas that will help to integrate the selection of full-blown Abstract Expressionist works that are illustrated. In the introduction, DAM Curator Gwen Chanzit argues that these women's art was abstract in both appearance and intention, pointing out similar methods and themes, and noting their "expressive freedom of direct gesture and process at the heart of Abstract Expressionism" (10).

In her cleverly precise essay, "Missing in Action: Abstract Expressionist Women," Joan Marter opens with some cold, clear facts. Abstract Expressionism, which had begun in the late forties as the province of a group of mostly men but with several women, by the late fifties had become an all-male club, the women having been pushed to the background. The women were still there—Perle Fine, for instance did some striking work in the 1950s and after, Marter notes—but it was the male Abstract Expressionists who experienced



Fig. 1. Deborah Remington, *Apropos* (1953), oil on canvas, 39" x 51". Denver Art Museum, Vance H. Kirkland Acquisition Fund. © Deborah Remington Charitable Trust for the Visual Arts.

a positive market for their art continuing into the 1960s and beyond. Hardest hit were the older female abstractionists. Little of their work was shown, even in group shows, let alone in solo exhibitions. A spate of articles and then books on Abstract Expressionism included none of the women or their work.

Marter's essay is also distinguished by the specificity she gives to notable women *not* in the exhibition, such as Anne Ryan and Michael West, who developed their careers in the 1940s in tandem with the men. This extended treatment of artists not included in the show gestures to its purpose beyond the exhibition: bringing obscured women into their rightful place in the history of Abstract Expressionism.

Marter goes on to acknowledge the sub-classification of younger women and men, called "Second Generation" with the connotation that their work, though new and well done, was derivative and therefore of less value. Nevertheless, it further distracted collectors and museum curators from the work of the now "first" generation of women, seriously burying the presence of what might be called the

First Generation of Abstract Expressionist women.

Most significant in this regard is the attention given here to those first women of Abstract Expressionism. Each is pictured with her work, in color, in Aliza Edelman's "Selected Biographies," which includes a page for each of forty-two accomplished professionals who also worked from the forties on in Abstract Expressionist modes, including Ruth Armer, Ruth Abrams, Madeleine Dimond, Claire Falkenstein, Lilly Fenichel, Gertrude Greene, and Ethel Schwabacher, whose *Pennington I/Pelham II* (1957; front cover) was among her paintings on view in Denver.

Ellen Landau launches "Biographies and Bodies, Self and Other in Portraits by Elaine and Bill de Kooning" with early photographs of two couples, the de Koonings in Bill's studio in front of his painting, and Lee Krasner in Jackson Pollock's studio, watching him paint. Landau notes commonalities between the women, for example, the downplaying of their achievements but also their noticeable resistance, as can be seen in the photos: de Kooning's downturned glance, and Krasner's show-me stance of,

elbow-on-the-hip, crossed knees and tilted head. Concentrating on the contradictions for women presented by the masculinization of Abstract Expressionism, Landau goes on to focus on one woman—Elaine de Kooning—to examine how she dealt with it.

For instance, Landau links Elaine de Kooning's unusual art training to her fierce determination to be "a great painter," shaping the pursuit of her identity as well as her career. She began early to make portraits, without pay—except for her commissioned 1963 portrait of President John F. Kennedy—even though (and probably because) portraiture was considered anathema to abstractionists, as the ultimate capitulation to aesthetic originality. Responding by fusing her representational portraits of recognizable people with the fast, paint-laden strokes of "action painting," she also rubbed out all or parts of the faces, most often of men she loved or befriended. Landau concludes that her ability to reconcile her womanhood with being "one of the men," an unrepentantly sexual woman, and a "great painter" lay in her ability to embrace contradictory situations. By clearly flouting both cultural mores in her not-so-private life and the staunch injunction Abstract Expressionism imposed on her fluid movement from one style to another, she constructed the self she was determined to be. "For Elaine de Kooning, the contest's outcome," concludes Landau, "was never in question: the privacy that her practice of portraiture most 'rigorously' invaded was always her own" (38).

In her essay on Women Abstract Expressionists in San Francisco, Susan Landauer discusses the East Coast art world's diffidence towards West Coast painting in general and, more specifically, to the part West Coast women artists played and to their professional standing as Abstract Expressionists. San Franciscan men as well as women refused to be bound by any restrictions. Pointing out New York painter Alfonso Ossorio's observation, that the women artists of San Francisco never had to deal with the chauvinism of New York's "doctrinaire powerhouses" (42), Landauer writes that neither did they believe greatness was necessarily serious,

admitting humorous images such as those of Madeleine Dimond, Joan Brown and Deborah Remington, whose *Apropos* (1953; Fig. 1) was on view in Denver. Nor did they assume that a male's Abstract Expressionism was necessarily better than a woman's. The San Francisco women painters in this catalogue concurred that there was nothing to be won for either males or females in the early days: no sales, no walls in galleries for either. (That was true also in the early days of the movement in New York, even though directorships of several important galleries were occupied by women in the 1950s.) Landauer notes in this regard that one of the most prominent male painters in that milieu, Hassel Smith, was actually an "early and unwavering advocate of women's rights" (49). Many of the West Coast women had travelled outside the U.S., and had lived in New York. All returned to San Francisco, knowing that they would still struggle with obscurity, but thinking it better than the gendered judgment and competition for financial success they had experienced in New York.

In his essay, "Krasner, Mitchell, and Frankenthaler, Nature as Metonym," Robert Hobbs discusses these women's use of poetic metonymy (similarity in position) in their painting. Metonymy in modern times has been denigrated as weak and artificial in contrast to the often-quoted metaphoric (similarity in essence, or performance) comparison to the response of Jackson Pollock's iconizing himself: "I am nature," he said to Hans Hofmann's criticism of Pollock's preference for painting his own responses to nature. Hobbs cites Carol Gilligan's discussion of the frequency of metonymic tropes such as the admission of one's difference, and Jill Matus noting the desire it prompts for "affiliations, maintenance of connections and relationships" (59), to support the use of nature by Krasner, Mitchell, and Frankenthaler. If Marter concluded in her essay that the "white, male, urban" painting of Abstract Expressionism "is to be understood as negotiating visual metaphors," whereas women painters working in this mode operate with a "language of difference" (28), Hobbs demonstrates convincingly

how metonymy is used in the work of each of these three painters in the language of Abstract Expressionism, but with the goal of difference acknowledged, rather than banished.

Marter's telling 2013 interview with noted art historian and critic Irving Sandler follows the essays, bringing to the fore the problem of criteria for the evaluation of art, and the continuing difficulty of agreement on the value of the Abstract Expressionist work by women. Is "quality" in art innate in the work, recognized by experience and a "good eye," or is a judgment better that also allows contingent elements that may change over time? Should knowledge about the ancestry, gender, culture, age, or sexuality of an artist be a determinant of the worth of a painting?

The penultimate section of the catalogue is Jesse Laird Ortega's penetrating Chronology of significant events in these women's personal and professional lives alongside some benchmark events of their male counterparts, woven convincingly together with black and white as well as color photographs. Unexpected juxtapositions of pictures and texts enliven the milieu of these artists by this approach to the richness of the development and flourishing of Abstract Expressionism, inviting discoveries that remain to be revealed.

The catalogue ends with the generous "Selected Biographies" by Aliza Edelman mentioned above—this could be a book itself. It remains to say that all of this is still far from a complete look at Abstract Expressionism. But this conclusion to the catalogue, bursting with visual and textual knowledge, does indicate that the depth and breadth of Abstract Expressionism in the United States is surely greater than we know. •

Ann Eden Gibson is the author of *Abstract Expressionism, Other Politics* (1997) and many other articles and essays on Abstract Expressionism.

Holocaust Heroes: Fierce Females, Tapestries and Sculptures by Linda Stein

Edited by Linda Stein, foreword by Gloria Steinem, essays by Eva Fogelman *et al.*
Old City Publishing, 2016

Reviewed by Catherine Dossin

As Gloria Steinem explains in her opening text, Linda Stein's *Holocaust Heroes: Fierce Females* is part of a recent trend aimed at restoring the reality of women's lives and actions during the Holocaust, both as victims and as heroes. A widely praised collection of essays edited by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust* (2010), called attention to the rapes, forced prostitution, and other forms of sexual abuses suffered by Jewish women, thereby recovering the facts of their gruesome ordeal. Stein's project, on the other hand, uncovers the experiences of the women who blew up trains, parachuted behind enemy's lines, led rescue missions, or hid fugitives. By weaving stories of female soldiers, resisters, or rescuers into her work, Stein intends to provide role models of fierce females who, in Steinem's words, turned their "capacity for empathy into action" (7). Steinem describes empathy as "our need to help another human in trouble"—a biological response that explains "why the human race survives" (8). But empathy alone does not spark action—examples do.

The themes of empathy and empowerment are further developed in Stein's essay, which opens with a series of questions that dramatically present to her readers the life and death situations and moral dilemmas that people were confronted with at the time. This is not only a powerful way to empathize with both victims and potential rescuers, but also to plunge into the artist's state of mind as she developed her project. Stein's Spoon to Shell series, for example, resulted from reading the story of a woman who was offered a spoon in exchange for sexual favors. In a concentration camp, an ordinary household item like a spoon became a most precious object for which one could lose oneself. Stein found in the



Fig. 1. Linda Stein, *Ten Heroes* 859 (2016), leather, archival pigment on canvas, fabric, metal, zippers, 56" x 61" x 2". Photo: Courtesy Linda Stein.

shell a counter-image to the spoon—a metaphor for the protective shell one would need to wear to resist such attacks on the self, but also a symbol of the protection an empathic bystander could bestow on a victim.

I could not get images of the spoon and shell from my mind. They haunted me. I finally had to physically gather as many of them as I could obtain, in order to express my visual and visceral response to the heinous and grotesque crimes committed during the time of the Holocaust (12).

Amidst all the horrific stories, there were some bright moments: stories of courage and generosity, such as that of Nancy Wake, whom the Germans dubbed the "White Mouse." Wake's story is even more empowering since the pretty socialite was not an obvious candidate for becoming a highly decorated resistance fighter. Having witnessed the rise of the Nazis in

Germany, she resolved to "do anything, however big or small, stupid or dangerous, to try and make things more difficult for their rotten party" (64), and she did. Along with Wake, Stein researched other brave women who had used their power to fight, resist, and rescue, and selected ten as exemplars.

The next essay, by Eva Fogelman, author of *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (1994), examines what motivated some people to stand up. Fogelman first challenges the notion that men and women are different when it comes to empathy and courage. She explains how beliefs about male and female psychology have led to misunderstanding and misrepresentation of women's actions during the War:

The stereotype of women being relegated to the kitchen would have us believe that the actions of women in rescue situations was limited to saving one or a few Jews in their home and that men

were engaged in more active missions outside the home (20).

Based on the ten figures Stein selected, depicted together in the tapestry pictured on the front cover (Fig. 1), Fogelman shows how, on the contrary, women acted fearlessly outside their homes. She concludes by stressing the importance of learning about the actions of these courageous females because, as Albert Schweitzer once explained, “example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing” (23).

And so follow ten essays on ten fierce females: Anne Frank, Ruth Gruber, Vitka Kempner, Noor Inayat Khan, Zivia Lubetkin, Gertrud Luckner, Nadezhda Popova, Hadassah Bimko Rosensaft, Hannah Senesh, and Nancy Wake. Though written from different perspectives and with different voices (son, friend, activist, scholar, etc.), these short texts follow a similar structure, provid-

ing a biography of each woman spanning her entire life—not just the time of the Holocaust—along with a welcome list for further readings. What makes these stories particularly effective is that the authors do not present them as extraordinary women, but rather as normal women who, under extraordinary circumstances, made heroic choices.

The essays are illustrated with the individual tapestries Stein created for each woman. For these, Stein combined archival photographs, documents, and texts with multiple fabrics and her pantheon of (female) Exemplars—Wonder Woman, Princess Mononoke, Storm, Nausicaa, Kannon, and Lady Gaga—that she had developed in previous projects, as described in an essay by Gail Levin. The iconography and materiality of the tapestries are so rich that I wish more space had been devoted to the works themselves—their imagery, composition, and technique, all the more since the reproductions, even

the close-ups, do not do them justice.

The website *Encounter with Stein’s Holocaust Heroes: Fierce Females* <http://h2f2encounters.cyberhouse.emitto.net/> allows for interactive exploration of the tapestries. This site is part of an educational initiative which is the subject of a last essay. It describes how the series is used not only to trigger participants’ empathy but to prompt them to become what Stein calls a “Brave Upstander” in their everyday life. As Steinem explains in her essay, “[C]hange is like a tree that grows from the bottom. The smallest act of kindness may have unpredictable results” (8). •

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Science, Technology, and Utopias: Women Artists and Cold War America

By Christine Filippone
Routledge, 2016

Reviewed by Ellen K. Levy

The question why artworks assume their forms has repeatedly been asked, perhaps most notably by art historian George Kubler in *The Shape of Time* (1962). To answer that question at this point in art history requires a comprehensive look at the technologies, theories, and movements that shape art. For this volume in a series titled *Science and the Arts since 1750*, Christine Filippone has carried out a prodigious amount of research that vividly re-creates some of the inspirational leaps between sources and creative output made by four exceptional artists, Alice Aycock (b. 1946), Carolee Schneemann (b. 1939), Agnes Denes (b. 1938), and Martha Rosler (b. 1943). Filippone integrates analytic and emotional approaches to her subjects and, in the process, shows how

scientific, technological, and cultural developments during the Cold War influenced some feminist artists.

In a very real sense, Filippone enacts a process of transformation like that the artists have themselves undergone. She offers the reader an insider’s view of how the four artists interpreted a range of issues at the time they were being aired as opposed to how they are now viewed. By exploring how critical ideas affected the four artists, she hopes to achieve a more nuanced and inclusive view of art history. Her approach to the material allows the reader to experience some of the urgency that the artists experienced.

Filippone imparts how selected exhibitions and theories opened new avenues of creativity even while the decks were often stacked against women artists. We learn the little-known fact that Schneemann received support from the legendary *Experiments in Art and Technology* (E.A.T.). We also learn that Denes participated in Jack Burnham’s 1970 exhibition, “Software Information Technology, Its New Meaning for Art.” (Although not mentioned, she was also

part of the landmark “Force Fields” exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London in 2000.)

One of the challenges of cross-disciplinary undertakings is to successfully identify key readings in another field. Filippone stresses the writings of the artists as well as the sources of influence they cite during interviews, making it possible to verify their intentions.

These unusually articulate artists had several routes of access to extra-artistic ideas that overlap with but do not coincide with the standard knowledge base of cultural historians as well as historians of science and technology. The result is Filippone’s orchestration of a complex Venn diagram of overlapping information.

For example, Filippone’s point of view as an art historian generally accords with historian of technology Matthew Wisnioski (not referenced in the book). His take, like hers, is that the belief that artists and scientists are related by creativity and vision was widely held during the 1960s. This was particularly true at MIT, where György Kepes

actively promoted such ideas, and the order of the day was “collaboration and creativity.” But Wisnioski also discusses the backlash against such ideas that developed in the early 1970s. He goes on to discuss his views of the increasing importance of professionalization/institutionalism of artists and engineers as part of what he termed a developing “military-industrial-academic nexus.” Wisnioski pointed out that MIT was linked with national defense and by necessity catered to academic institutions for economic support.¹ As a result, defining what might constitute a creative human being during immense technological change in reality often involved reconciling contradictory aims for those involved.

Filippone’s approach is, perhaps, best aligned with noted feminist historian of technology Ruth Schwartz Cowan (cited in the book), who argued that women had different interactions with technology than men, and with sociologist Judy Wajcman (well-discussed in the book), who challenged ideas of gender-neutrality. Philippone shows and discusses key works by all four artists that support the point that technological developments impacted men and women differently. Philippone negotiates the territory from a woman’s standpoint between the destructive technology of Vietnam and the creative engineering that enabled space travel. Rosler and Schneemann work in a range of media from montage and sculpture to performance. They typically refused to have their art co-opted by corporate and military needs. Philippone elaborates how they made subversive work that exemplified the oppressive subjugation of women through technology despite its promise of minimizing household drudgery. Rosler made this fact hilariously biting in her photomontages of household machines like ovens that were permeated with breasts. She graphically portrayed the marketing of goods through sex, where images of consumer culture in turn consumed women. Schneemann’s images of technology similarly formed a telling contrast to their subjects through her emphasis on the body, both its vulnerability and sexuality. As Philippone points out, Schneemann’s depicted

machinery was roughened in texture and far from sleek. She portrayed women marginalized and razed by military apparatus, challenging the supposed neutrality of technology. Schneemann protested the Vietnam War in her kinetic theater work *Snows* (1967; Fig. 1). Actors on stage were shown in aggressive postures while audience members controlled the lighting through their movements and film technicians became part of the action.

Utopias and dystopias frequently find their origins in technology. Philippone often references Lucy Sargis, who sought to expand the scope of feminist utopianism. In the introduction, Philippone explores how she applied Sargis’s definitions of technology (this framework did not specify biotechnology) to the art of her four selected artists. Philippone elaborates throughout the book on the important influence of Herbert Marcuse during the 1960s on the four selected artists. He offered ways that art and technology could bring about positive social change while resisting the marketplace. Philippone brings in other references as they are applicable. Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (published in 1962, the same year as Kubler’s *The Shape of Time*) had the general effect of qualifying what had been previously regarded as unchanging scientific laws. Other influences include the fictions of Jorge Luis Borges that informed the structure of Aycok’s *Maze*, and Lewis Mumford’s architectural writings that influenced both Aycok and Denes.

Filippone addresses both the promises and failures of technology, at times via the subject of utopia. Utopian visions often involve our transformed relationship to earth. The Gaia hypothesis of the 1970s morphed into Earth system science. The theory involved principles of homeostasis brought about by biogeochemical feedback processes. The theory was also linked to processes regulated by the second thermodynamic principle. This theoretical basis influenced Denes



Fig. 1. Carolee Schneemann, *Snows* (1967) Photo: Charlotte Victoria. Image courtesy of the artist.

but also many other eco-feminists, several of whom Philippone identifies in the epilogue.

My favorite section is “A Means for Change,” which explores in depth biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy’s influence on three of the four artists in the context of “open systems.” The main idea is that living systems are open systems that exchange matter and energy with the environment. The artists repeatedly state that part of their attraction to open systems was that, in their view, these systems offered a credible way to negate formalism. Philippone’s argument is that Bertalanffy’s theory helped enable the artists to react against reductionism and to attempt a unification of cross-disciplinary information. Not surprisingly, many artists who were involved in systems theory subsequently became immersed in “complex systems” during the early 1980s. This development was not identified, although art reproductions through 1983 that might be seen as hinting at it are included in the book.

Given the rich amount of information imparted, omissions are inevitable and often desirable. Philippone clearly considered whether to include Lynn Herschman Leeson’s body of work, deciding not to do so. Herschman Leeson used her skills in a range of digital platforms to destabi-

lize the rational mindset of technology from within and would have offered a different trajectory than the four feminists discussed. It would likely have opened biotechnology as a developing issue. In addition, the New Media community of which Leeson is part has a different “alternate history” of bypassing the gallery and museum systems than the artists interviewed. Hersman Leeson’s inclusion logically would set the stage for Sherry Turkle’s critiques of technology and Manuel DeLanda’s insights on the Cold War and game theory.

Regardless of a path not taken, this well-researched, ambitious book by Filippone will surely enlarge the public’s understanding of significant art and concepts with which they may not be familiar. It will also be of value to insiders who have followed such developments. The endnotes are essential to read to trace the full theoretical discourse, and they suggest developing threads for the

future. For example, James Lovelock resides in an endnote along with Lynn Margulis, his co-author for many publications and for the Gaia hypothesis. Since the end of the 1980s, Margulis proposed replacing Gaia’s homeostatic nature with an autopoietic one based on lateral transmission. Another endnote reveals that Schneemann was influenced by D’Arcy Thompson’s *On Growth and Form*, published in 1917.

Technology was a male-dominated field for many years. Filippone successfully establishes how the expansion of technological knowledge, cross-disciplinary pursuits, and power structures during the Cold War affected feminist art history. I remember my first time as a presenter at the Society for the History of Technology (better known as SHOT). At their annual conference in 1986 only a handful of women participated compared to the active engagement by many women members today. Just as the artists

in this book repeatedly question what had been accepted dogma in the visual arts, Filippone, too, departs from the established boundaries of art history by seeing it through multiple lenses. For those, myself included, who experienced some of the history that she recounts, her book is one to relish. •

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Notes

1. Matthew Wisnioski, “Why MIT Institutionalized the Avant-Garde: Negotiating Aesthetic Virtue in the Postwar Defense Institute,” *Configurations* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press), 21:1 (2013): 85–116.

Louise Fishman

Edited by Helaine Posner, with contributions from Carrie Moyer, Nancy Princenthal, Ingrid Schaffner
Prestel, 2016

Reviewed by Brenda Mitchell

This well-illustrated catalogue (175 photos and color illustrations) was prepared to accompany the Neuberger Museum’s first museum survey of Louise Fishman (b. 1939), and chronicles the artist’s oeuvre from her early Abstract Expressionist paintings to her recent works on rusted metal, carpet samples, and other materials that expand the boundaries of “painting.” Essays by Carrie Moyer, Helaine Posner, and Nancy Princenthal, and an interview with the artist by Ingrid Schaffner contextualize Fishman’s life and work, education and influences, as well as her investigations of feminist, lesbian, and Jewish identity, while never straying far from her abstract vocabulary. Also included are a biography and selected exhibition history and a selected bibliography compiled by Kimberly Detterbeck.

In “The Energy in the Rectangle,” Helaine Posner outlines Fishman’s biography. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Fishman studied at the Philadelphia College of Art, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and the Tyler School of Arts. After earning her MFA from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, she headed to New York, where she became involved in the Women’s Movement and the fight for lesbian and gay rights that has dominated her life and work ever since. Although Fishman maintained an “enduring respect” for the leading Abstract Expressionists, she approached “this gendered form of painting as an active feminist and lesbian,” writes Posner (12). Her encounters with feminism led her to reject male-dominated styles and experiment with “materials and techniques traditionally associated with women, craft, and the handmade” (13). Posner concludes that Fishman’s body of work “offers deep aesthetic rewards while both redefining and expanding the scope of abstraction” (21).



Fig. 1. Louise Fishman. *Residue of a Gaze* (2005), oil on linen, 87 3/4" x 77". Photo: © Louise Fishman, Courtesy Cheim & Read, New York.

In “Language Lessons,” Nancy Princenthal further investigates feminist and lesbian identity, citing influential writing by Patricia Mainardi and Lucy Lippard in relation to Fishman’s cut-up, hand-dyed, and stitched canvases, as

well as her Angry Paintings of the 1970s. “Fishman turned hand-stitching into a statement of hard-fought resistance to heavily male authority,” writes Princenthal (46), and the word-based Angry Paintings name lesbian writers, critics, painters, “and, notably, the artist herself” (47). Princenthal argues that Fishman’s work remained strongly connected to language from then on, with references to Hebrew, and in some cases, to Chinese characters, as seen in *Residue of a Gaze* (2005; Fig. 1). Calling abstraction a “kind of linguistic community” that “can be as satisfying as those organized around ... other forms of identity.... It is a language for expressing things that are unsayable any other way,” Princenthal concludes (53).

In “Louise Isn’t Angry Anymore. She’s Painting,” Carrie Moyer focuses on the creation of a matrilineage for women artists since 1970. “Unlike the male

modernists, who were all about killing their fathers ... women artists are now looking for radical ‘art mothers’ who grant permission—permission to be alienated, angry, political, sexual, loud, gauche, out of step, or just plain weird,” she writes (101). Beginning with her own mother and aunt, who introduced her to contemporary art when she was young, and who both became serious painters in their own right, Fishman’s artistic “mothers” included Joan Mitchell and Harmony Hammond. She expressed admiration for Agnes Martin, whom she met in 1992, years after her Angry Paintings. Fishman recalled Martin sitting quietly in her chair, “and I thought, *It’s like sitting with the Buddha. So I’ll just meditate*” (105).

Ingrid Schaffner’s interview with the artist explores topics that informed her life, from being Jewish, her childhood, graduate school, early feminist circles,

meeting Eva Hesse, up to the time of the exhibition in 2016. Included is a conversation about Fishman’s personal relationships, as well as the exhibition “Paper Louise, Tiny Fishman,” held at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia in 2016, which showcased Fishman’s lesser-known work, such as miniatures, books, sculpture, and ceramics.

Nearing 80, Louise Fishman has led a life full of courage, focus, and dedication, as well as anger, in the face of exclusion and invisibility in the art world. *Louise Fishman*, richly illustrated with insightful text, begins to address this all-too-common scenario. •

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Lynda Benglis: Water Sources

By Nora Lawrence with Lynda Benglis
Storm King Art Center, 2015

Reviewed by Robin Rice

During a long and distinguished career, sculptor Lynda Benglis (b. 1941) has been predictably unpredictable in addressing a variety of organic, non-minimal, non-representational forms executed in a multiplicity of materials, surfaces, and colors. Paper, stainless steel, wax, and ceramic are among the materials she has used, but her signature works are constructed by free-pouring materials like polyurethane or latex rubber, “guiding—but never dictating—their course” (16). As early as the 1970s Benglis drew plans for fountains and received her first commission for one in 1982. Since making the cantilevered *The Wave of the World* for the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition she has returned repeatedly to the theme of fountains and water, executed on a human scale and gloriously colorful. She has even appropriated *The Wave* itself as the basis for subsequent pours, resulting in potential new works. Until this recent exhibition

Benglis’s fountains had never been brought together for an exhibition.

Organized by Nora R. Lawrence, “Lynda Benglis: Water Sources,” was a revelation to many who were already familiar with Benglis’s work. The outdoor setting with panoramic vistas of mountains, the attraction of moving water, and ever-changing light revealed Benglis as one of the foremost contemporary makers of fountains, one who has a powerful personal vision of water as a sculptural material. Nora Lawrence’s biographical essay “Lynda Benglis: Water Sources” draws on an extended interview, “Lynda Benglis in Conversation with Nora Lawrence,” recorded in a lively informal conversation at the artist’s studio in Santa Fe in December 2014. It is also reproduced in full in the catalogue. Lawrence, John P. Stern, and David R. Collens (Storm King Art Center President and Director/Chief Curator, respectively,) also participated.

“Raised in Lake Charles, Louisiana, surrounded by lakes, rivers and marshes,” Lawrence says in her catalogue essay, “Benglis has long felt a deep connection to water and she sees a natural connection between people and water. We are buoyant in the womb, she has noted and upon our exit, ‘We are walk-



Fig. 1. Lynda Benglis, (front) *Pink Lady (For Asha)* (2013), cast pigmented polyurethane H. 95", and *Pink Ladies* (2014), cast pigmented polyurethane & bronze, H. 124"; (back) *North South East West* (1988/2009/2014–15), bronze & steel, 66" x 184" x 184". Photo: Jerry L. Thompson. Courtesy the artist: Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, and Cheim & Read, New York.

ing water vessels ourselves.” Benglis recalls, “I remember very early on ... that my dad once took me to the lake, Lake Charles, the shores, and he got a clam and he opened it and we ate” (9). Benglis’s father’s influence extended beyond the importance of water. Lawrence links her career-long zest for incorporating newly available nontraditional media into her practice to her father’s successful business in building materials. *The Wave of the World* (a title dictated by the Exposition’s organizers) was made by pouring the newly developed polyurethane, “a material Benglis acquired directly from its developer, M.P. Medwick ... over a large weather balloon.” Benglis understands water as a material element in a fountain, but it is also a theatrical element. “[S]he sees the water as critical to this: ‘I am not the performer. The water is the performer’” (16).

The predatory, almost slaving, *North South East West* was initially conceived between 1977 and 1979 as four wings extending from a central column. Based on this, a single work, *Chimera*, was executed “by pouring polyurethane over a Ming vase Benglis found by the side of a road outside Ahmedabad, India” (19). Next, she decided to cast four elements that would be “located each element on a cardinal point and made to reach inward toward a central point, rather than extending outward—Benglis has described the effect as ‘imploding,’ like slow-

moving lava caught mid motion” (19).

A series of vertically, “fumblyingly balanced” stacked cones, beginning with *Pink Lady (for Asha)* (2013), is related to the family of the late Anand Sarabhai, Benglis’ partner, and to Ahmedabad, India, “where she has spent a large part of the last thirty years.” Benglis describes the color as a “decorative pink” intensely bright, “that gives life to the forms,” which have a feminine, kinetic, almost dancing aspect. The basic module was inspired by a kite observed by Benglis and her sister-in-law. Lawrence perceptively mentions additional “points of reference or association not all of them related to each other”: Brancusi’s *Endless Column*; the atomic bomb mushroom clouds; the Caryatids on the Erechtheion; fireflies, phosphorescent sea caves; and weightlessness in scuba diving (20, 22, 23).

Benglis regards many of the Minimalists as friends but rejects the Minimalist aesthetic. “[W]here the Minimalists celebrated the invisibility of the artist’s hand, she embraced its specific, subjective touch.” “[M]ythical, life-giving, and ethereal qualities have spurred her artistic development,” Lawrence notes. “While the fountains are among her largest works, they maintain a sense of humanity, both in the modeling of their surfaces and in their bodily forms” (23, 26). Benglis credits Isamu Noguchi with having a profound influence on her work (36, 37).

The Storm King show also included an indoor component, which is represented in the catalogue and includes the series “Rockmare,” small works based on the Southwest landscape. Benglis’s reputation for sensitive use of materials is echoed in an opulent catalogue, with thick creamy pages and thoughtful, stunningly beautiful images. Representations of entire works are augmented with details of colors and textures that could not be more satisfying. A handsome section of color plates seems to be intended to represent every work in the show, but that idea is not made absolutely explicit. The pictures of the outdoor works confirm that they were at Storm King Art Center. The indoor works, often presented with no visual context, are more ambiguous. In any case, as time passes and the actual exhibition recedes into the past, these questions will become less important to most readers who will still be able to immerse themselves in Benglis’ *Water Sources*. •

Robin Rice is a curator, author and co-author of books and articles connected with wide-ranging aspects of art and culture. Until recently she taught in the Museum Exhibition and Design graduate program at the University of the Arts, Philadelphia. Her current project is a series of video interviews with Alumni of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Carolee Schneemann: Kinetic Painting

Edited by Sabine Breitwieser
Museum der Moderne (Salzburg) and
Prestel, 2015

Reviewed by Heather Mathews

Published in conjunction with the Museum der Moderne’s major retrospective of the pioneering artist’s work, *Carolee Schneemann: Kinetic Painting* is a remarkable documentation of the development, breadth, and inventiveness of Schneemann’s oeuvre. The title, *Kinetic Painting*, emerges from the artist’s understanding of her work,

which has its origins in landscape painting, as “an embodied and time-bound art ... that transcends the boundaries of media” (7).

Sabine Breitwieser’s introductory essay follows the development of Schneemann’s work, beginning with her activity as a painter in the 1950s and early 1960s. Breitwieser notes that, already, in the experimental assemblages—what the artist called painting constructions—that Schneemann produced in this period, one can detect “Schneemann’s desire to take painting beyond the canvas and the medium of the picture” (17). From the early 1960s, the work for which Schneemann has become an icon of women’s art begins to emerge, cotermin-

nously with her collaboration with the Judson Dance Theater, including the staging of the New York performance of *Meat Joy* in 1964. Breitwieser’s essay provides a useful situation of the artist’s work in the context of postwar art in the United States, and sets the stage for the two thematic essays that follow it.

Branden W. Joseph’s “Unclear Tendencies: Carolee Schneemann’s Aesthetics of Ambiguity” links Schneemann’s work to that of Simone de Beauvoir, whom the artist has cited as an important touchstone throughout her career. Examining *Meat Joy* and related early works, Joseph seeks to clarify “the relation between Schneemann’s ethical and aesthetic projects” (30) while

complicating the notion that the artist's wide-ranging production can be unified neatly under the heading of "painting." Instead, Joseph's analysis focuses on the recurring "disparity, discrepancy, contrariness, and tension" (33) evident in all aspects of Schneemann's work, from the painted assemblages through her Kinetic Theater and film. Joseph cites Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and in particular her critique of the mythic idea of woman as a source for Schneemann's intense exploration of the physical rather than the ideal in her work. He further links Beauvoir's *Ethics of Ambiguity* to Schneemann, citing the similarities of philosopher and artist in their definition and usage of ambiguity as a concept. Linking Schneemann's work to Beauvoir's and to Judith Butler's reflections on ethics, Joseph's essay proposes a complex re-evaluation not just of the artist's work, but also of its reception within art history.

In her essay "Schneemann's Personal Politics," Mignon Nixon further contextualizes the artist's production and reception in the late 1960s and early 1970s through the examples of her groundbreaking film, *Fuses*, and the filmic montage *Viet-Flakes*. The author examines Schneemann's attempts to communicate a specific, radical politics to her audience through these two films. *Fuses* records the domestic and erotic day-to-day life of the artist and her then partner. For Nixon, the film "asserts ... women's prerogative to seek scopic pleasure in the representation of feminine sexuality" (45) and expresses "the subjective experience" of that sexuality (48), two concerns crucially absent even from more radical art films of the time. Nixon aptly tracks the tension between Schneemann's explicit portrayal of sexual pleasure and the critique of its representation that emerged, around the same time, within the psychoanalytic feminism articulated by Laura Mulvey and others in Britain. Turning to the short film *Viet-Flakes*, Nixon again describes Schneemann's politics turned outwards towards the audience, this time through the detailed examination of documentary photographs of atrocities of the American war in Vietnam. "Against the commodification of war,



Fig. 1. Carolee Schneemann, *Eye/Body*, from *36 Transformative Activities for Camera* (1963), photograph.

[Schneemann] ... dramatizes the ambivalent desire to see, and to be blind to, war and the suffering of the other" (53).

As a broad reference for Schneemann's career, the *Museum der Moderne's* catalogue is thorough and beautifully produced. The illustrations provide an insightful look not just at Schneemann's more well-known performance-based and film works, but also her early painting and assemblage. Reproductions throughout the volume, such as that of *Eye/Body* (1963; Fig. 1) are of high quality, on matte paper that works well to materialize the tactile quality of the media, while many of the film stills are presented in sequence. The catalogue also features a well-chosen selection of

documentary materials, including staging directions and sketch- and notebook pages and reflections by the artist, as well as an extensive chronology of exhibitions and performances and a comprehensive bibliography. Both as a record of the 2015 exhibition and as a resource for critical engagement with the artist's work, the catalogue is a striking success. •

Heather Mathews is Associate Professor of Art History and Chair of the Department of Art and Design at Pacific Lutheran University. Her current research examines the exhibition of contemporary art as a cultural and political force in the Cold War-era Germanies.

O'Keeffe, Stettheimer, Torr, Zorach: Women Modernists in New York

By Ellen E. Roberts
Norton Museum of Art, 2015

Reviewed by Roberta K. Tarbell

This catalogue brings together the work of four modernist painters in New York in the 1920s and 1930s who knew and respected one another but followed very different career paths. It was written by Ellen E. Roberts,¹ the Harold and Anne Berkley Smith Curator of American Art at the Norton Museum of Art, in West Palm Beach, Florida, to accompany an exhibition shown there and at the Portland [Maine] Museum of Art. This handsome book features 111 illustrations, including sixty-six full-page color images that faithfully reproduce the brilliant hues of paintings by Florine Stettheimer, Marguerite Zorach, and Georgia O'Keeffe, and the neutral and earth tones of those by Helen Torr. Roberts demonstrates how the ongoing recognition of O'Keeffe and Zorach, both of whom found gallery representation early on, differed from the critical fate of Stettheimer, who chose not to exhibit in solo shows, and Torr, an artist neglected during her lifetime. Stettheimer and Torr have, nevertheless, benefitted from significant posthumous exhibition and publication of their work.²

Roberts, assisted by Samantha Niederman, fulfilled her goal to "present the strongest possible group of works by these artists to enable an understanding of how they developed their own approaches to modernism" (13). Each artist developed a signature style. Roberts was struck that all four knew each other and had parallel careers in New York (13). O'Keeffe regularly visited Torr and her husband, the painter Arthur G. Dove, and gave the eulogy for Stettheimer's funeral. Zorach and her artist husband William, and O'Keeffe with her husband, the photographer and gallerist Alfred Stieglitz, attended the famous salons hosted by Stettheimer and her sisters. Zorach created portraits

of Stettheimer and miniature paintings for her sister Carrie Stettheimer's dollhouse. All but Torr showed with the unjuried exhibitions of the Society of Independent Artists and the Salons of America. Stettheimer, as an activist for modern and American artists, O'Keeffe by the power of her paintings and her life choices, and Zorach by the quality of her art works and through organizations for women and independent artists, were models for younger generations of women. A subtheme of Roberts's volume is the urban context of early twentieth-century art in New York, as seen in Zorach's *Jason* (1916), *Prohibition* (1920), and *West Tenth Street* and *Couple in a Cityscape* (both c. 1922); Stettheimer's depictions of soirées and portraits of city notables (1917–23); and especially with O'Keeffe's paintings of skyscrapers (1926–29) and *East River from the Thirtieth*

Story of Shelton Hotel (1928) (131).

In this engaging, very readable book Roberts uses case studies to investigate issues of gender and modernism.³ She focuses on Zorach's early works and textiles and how changing concepts of "decorative" applied to her art.⁴ Zorach, the only one of the four to have children, was the main source of income for the family during the 1920s, from the sale of her fiber arts to wealthy patrons (40). Roberts includes many unpublished or little-known paintings by Zorach, including *Two Sisters—Marguerite and Her Sister Edith* (1921), documenting the only time the sisters were together after 1912, and a rare image of a nude man in *Couple in a Cityscape*. Roberts does not include Zorach's more subdued works after 1922, and notes that after William Zorach began to publish during the 1920s, Marguerite—an accomplished

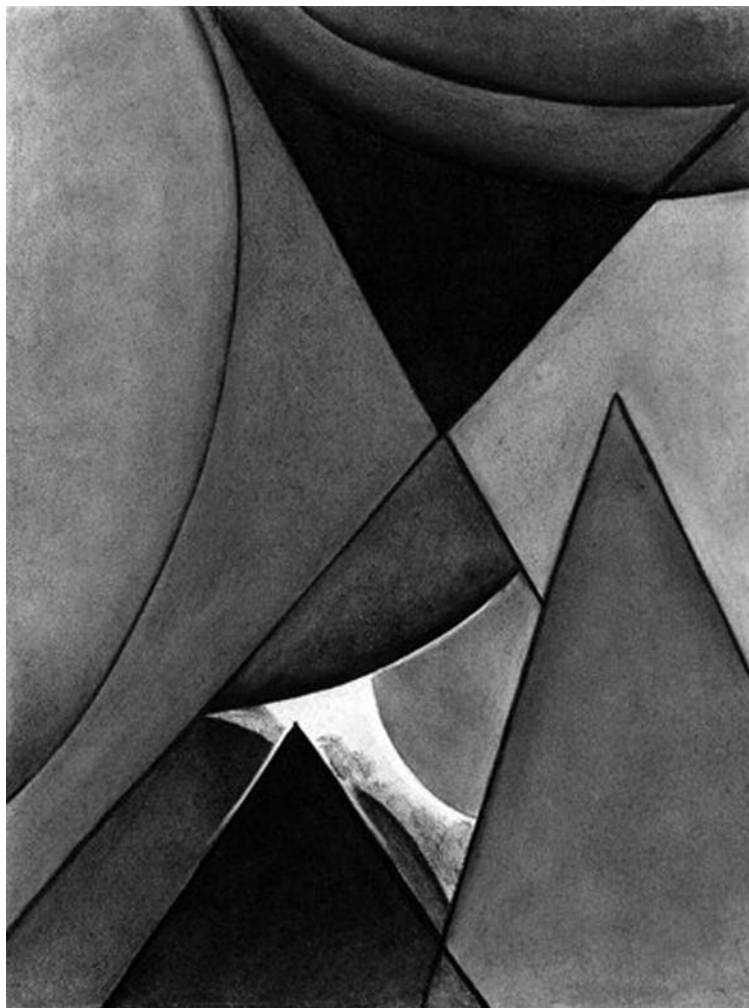


Fig. 1. Helen Torr, *Geometric* (before 1924), charcoal on paper, 14" x 10 1/2". Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Eva Ingersoll Gatling, M.A., 1944, 1983.113.

writer whose poetry and prose had been published in avant-garde journals—rarely expressed her aesthetics and ideas in public venues.

Stettheimer was fifteen or sixteen years older than Torr, Zorach, and O’Keeffe, yet all began creating modern art about the same time. Of the four, Stettheimer was the most self-consciously cosmopolitan and well-connected in the elite art world of New York, and was the least concerned with overtly modern aspects of painting. Roberts looks at Stettheimer’s signature paintings, all rendered in saturated colors—her floral paintings and languid portraits of herself and her sisters. She discusses at length *Picnic at Bedford Hills* (1918) and *Asbury Park South* (1920), two of her large, unique paintings of social groupings of New York’s avant-garde critics, curators, and artists that document this matrix so essential to the development—and acceptance—of American modernism.

Roberts’s excellent presentation of Torr’s pictorial works is most welcome. Torr’s nonrepresentational charcoal drawing, *Geometric* (before 1924; Fig. 1), the only work published during her lifetime, was included by the art critic Sheldon Cheney in his chapter on abstraction in *A Primer of Modern Art*. He wrote, “I find something coming into abstract work of certain Americans—particularly Georgia O’Keeffe and Helen Torr—which is emotionally very moving.”⁵ O’Keeffe, herself, thought highly of Torr, writing:

When her work was given to Stieglitz and he wouldn’t show it, I felt it was probably a mistake. The things were small and colorful in a very reserved fashion, but I thought that they were very good. I think she is a person who would have flowered considerably if she had been given attention. It seems a pity when you look at what she did anyway.⁶

Roberts agrees with O’Keeffe’s assessment of Torr (104, 108), and exults that she and other recent scholars “make it possible to evaluate, as her culture never did, this talented painter’s contributions to modernism” (110).

From 1932 to 1938, Torr’s work was eclipsed while living in Geneva, New York, Dove’s hometown. Challenged by this provincial location far from the stimulating venues of the city, loyalty to a physically ill but aesthetically thriving artist/husband, and lack of support for her work, Torr became discouraged—obvious in *Self Portrait* (1934–35) and *I* (1935), in which she depicted herself with dark circles around her eyes and down-turned mouth or pursed lips. Marginalized by Dove’s champion, Stieglitz, she, unlike Zorach, lacked the self-confidence to pursue interest from other dealers.

Roberts’s assessment of O’Keeffe rests solidly on the shoulders of the feminist interpretations, particularly Barbara Buhler Lynes’s *O’Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916–29* (1989), and many other subsequent scholarly publications on the artist. It was Lynes who pointed out the dominance of the Freudian interpretation of O’Keeffe that Stieglitz had engendered, which became the central thesis of Roberts’s case study.

Roberts facilitates the evaluation of the contribution of these passionately independent artists to American modernism by exposing the limitations of gendered interpretations of their work (144). While the four artists were unafraid to produce modern interpretations of such conventions of femininity as floral subjects, needlework, and pastel colors, Roberts concludes that “an in-depth look at the contemporary reception of these artists reveals that each suffered from having her art viewed as an expression of her gender rather than her own creative sensibility” (143). Unlike O’Keeffe, Zorach and Torr prioritized the careers of their husbands over their own, and Stettheimer, who never married, was “required to fulfill the time-consuming obligations of her upper-middle-class lifestyle” (143).

This book, which expands the male-dominated interpretations of avant-garde developments in America, is essential to all collectors, scholars, and students specializing in early modernism of the twentieth century. •

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Scholar, Center for American Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, has published extensively on the Zorachs and co-authored and co-edited with Bernard Barryte, *Rodin and America* (2011).

Notes

1. Ellen E. Roberts has contributed to collection catalogues of American Art for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Art Institute of Chicago and to the catalogue for the Art Institute’s exhibition *Art and Appetite: American Painting, Culture, and Cuisine* (2013). For the Norton she published *Industrial Sublime: Modernism and the Transformation of New York’s Rivers* (2014), and curated “Architecture in Detail: Works from the Museum Collection” and “Circa 1960: Figure and Form” (2013).
2. In 1968, Eva Gatling, then Director of the Heckscher Museum, rescued hundreds of Torr’s paintings, which she then exhibited and published at the Heckscher and Graham Gallery (1972), work continued by Heckscher Chief Curator Anne Cohen DePietro in 1989 and 2003. For Stettheimer, Henry McBride spearheaded a solo show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1946, and Barbara J. Bloemink’s definitive research can be found in her 1995 book, *The Life and Art of Florine Stettheimer*. A retrospective exhibition, “Florine Stettheimer: Painting Poetry,” is on view at the Jewish Museum, New York, May 7 – Sept. 24, 2017.
3. Roberts acknowledged that her model was Anne Middleton Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O’Keeffe* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996). *Significant Others: Creativity & Intimate Partnership*, Whitney Chadwick & Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), also is a model for interpretation of artist/writer couples.
4. See also Cynthia Fowler, “Early American Modernism and Craft Production: The Embroideries of Marguerite Zorach,” Univ. of Delaware, PhD Diss., 2002. The textiles are on display in “Marguerite Zorach—An Art-Filled Life” at the Farnsworth Art Museum, June 17, 2017 – Jan. 7, 2018.
5. Sheldon Cheney, “The Swing Toward Abstraction,” *A Primer of Modern Art* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924). 171.
6. Georgia O’Keeffe to Ronald G. Pisano, October 12, 1972, quoted from Anne Cohen DePietro, *Arthur Dove & Helen Torr: The Huntington Years* (Huntington, NY: Heckscher Museum, 1989), 24.

Louise Nevelson: Light and Shadow

By Laurie Wilson
Thames & Hudson, 2016

Reviewed by Robert J. Belton

Louise Nevelson, arguably the most celebrated American woman working in large scale sculpture in the mid to late twentieth century, has been featured a number of times in the pages of *Woman's Art Journal*. In the very first issue of 1980, for instance, Robert C. Hobbs alluded in passing to a number of issues that thread their way through much later Nevelson scholarship, such as the possible influence of Joseph Cornell on her work, her interest in the metaphysics of Jiddu Krishnamurti, and her nearly lifelong dedication to dance training.¹ Hobbs also alleged that Nevelson's work exhibited "distinct feminine overtones,"² a notion that resonated in an introductory essay by Joan Semmel and April Kingsley in the same issue.³ Two of the recurring themes in Nevelson scholarship are the extent to which she was an abstract expressionist—an assertion she refuted—and whether or not she used her sexuality to advance her career. Regarding the former, Hobbs wrote that certain formal features of her work tie it to Abstract Expressionism, "no matter how much she disclaims the relationship and touts her own unorthodox, individual, original approach."⁴ Regarding the latter, Sherri Buckberrough suggested elsewhere in *WAJ* that there is no question "Nevelson used her erotic appeal for material benefit."⁵ In her new and authoritative biography of Nevelson, author Laurie Wilson explores all of these and more, explaining some as understandable under the circumstances and exposing the contradictions in others.

Wilson's first book on Nevelson was a well-received dissertation for the City University of New York, completed in 1978 and published by Garland Press three years later.⁶ In that work, Wilson situated Nevelson largely within mainstream art historical discourses by emphasizing context and iconography, as did most graduate students at the

time. Wilson's new book covers much of the same territory but is informed more fully by her subsequent development into a practicing psychotherapist and art therapist.⁷ Here she foregrounds the artist's biography in such a way as to explain some of the themes haunting Nevelson scholarship in general.

The author begins by recalling that she had once felt Nevelson was "grandiose and self-centered—a classic narcissist" (4). She then revises this opinion throughout the new book, providing extensive biographical detail to explain how and why the celebrated grande dame was both a major player in late twentieth century art and seemingly, on occasion, a vainglorious provocatrix. Wilson discovers "entirely justifiable reasons" for the artist's behavior, for she was "a lone woman in a man's world who needed not only to make a place for herself as a person well before feminism, but [who] also had to make a place for herself as a strong artist in the crowded art world" (5). The artist's intense focus was not a matter of selfishness, Wilson argues; it was an indication that Nevelson was "self-aware" in the manner of any follower of Krishnamurti (10).

Wilson's goal is to understand the artist's work in the light of her inner life (11). She explores the connections between the artist's childhood and adulthood, and, with this inner life in mind, she studies the occasional contrarities of Nevelson's behavior within various commercially (and emotionally) complex art markets. To accomplish this, the biography has to be very thorough, with individual chapters on Nevelson's Ukrainian Jewish roots in Russia, when she was known as Leah Berliawsky; her childhood move to a culturally inhospitable Maine; and her unsuccessful marriage to Charles Nevelson. Other sections detail the birth of a son, Mike (for whom she exhibited no conventional maternal instinct), her earliest art education, and several charismatic female mentors. Wilson also details the influences of Surrealism and Cubism, the deaths of her parents and an influential dealer, and her emergence as an artist worthy of acclaim in the 1950s. Running across these chapters are

threads revealing Nevelson's gradual adoption of an over-the-top public persona. The level of detail seems higher than that in earlier biographies, including Nevelson's own *Dawns & Dusks*,⁸ and the portrait that emerges is of a genuinely unique individual struggling to make a life and career for herself in extraordinary circumstances.

When Nevelson was a child in Maine, the Berliawsky family spoke Yiddish at home, compounding their sense that they were surrounded by anti-Semitism (44). Her father Isaac was clinically depressed, and her mother Minna was bitterly unhappy for a number of reasons, including a dysfunctional sex life. Wilson hints that Minna's dissatisfaction may have been exacerbated by the post-traumatic stress that must have accompanied the Berliawskys' move from more familiar European surroundings (32). Minna certainly felt she didn't fit into her community, and she compensated by dressing her children in an "old country" manner that Wilson sees as foreshadowing Nevelson's later, more flamboyant fashionista affectations (95, 97).

Because her family life was not very pleasant, Leah developed into a young girl who was easily impressed by the wealth of summer visitors (34) and who consequently developed a taste for the best of everything (35). As Louise, she would later become promiscuous, which Wilson links to Freud's concept of "healthy narcissism," as well as to Nevelson's childhood craving for luxuries and fun (96). While still a child, Nevelson impressed her early art teachers, which led to an unshakable conviction that she would eventually excel at personal creativity (39). Being a psychoanalyst, Wilson recounts an event in which the young girl saw a funeral cortege of five hearses pass by—evidently the consequence of a local family murder-suicide—and she hints that the black horses compounded the trauma of her young life in such a way as to emerge much later in her most celebrated all-black sculptures (42).

Nevelson herself was no stranger to psychoanalysis, but she adamantly insisted that the doctor her sister paid

for her to see on one occasion wasn't much help. She was depressed because of her strained relationship with her son Mike (who had stayed behind in Maine when she first visited Paris), and for other, more specific reasons, including the unwanted sexual advances of someone she had otherwise admired (106). Nevelson's escape from her poverty and depression was her art, and she immersed herself in classes at the Art Students League of New York and elsewhere, meeting major players like Hans Hoffman, Chaim Gross, and Diego Rivera in the process. Throughout the era she was experimenting with wood, a lifelong interest some link to her father's having been a woodcutter and lumber merchant, although others blame poverty.⁹ Nevelson had to collect scraps of wood just for something to burn to keep warm (161). In any case, she began exhibiting in group shows in the 1930s, and she had a solo show in 1941, when she first enjoyed marginally more security at the Nierendorf Gallery. However, owner Karl Nierendorf, with whom Nevelson was intimate, died suddenly in 1947. Her mother had died just a few years earlier, and her father died not long after, so this trio of tragedies left her once again adrift (136–37). For a time she produced no works of note.

Things started to get better in the 1950s, when Nevelson joined Colette Roberts's Grand Central Modern Gallery and the press began to take notice (157). In 1957 she became president of the New York Chapter of Artists' Equity. By 1958, she had fully arrived; influential critic Hilton Kramer gave her his journalistic seal of approval, the Museum of Modern Art purchased one of her *Sky Cathedral* variations, and she joined the Martha Jackson Gallery, which afforded her a more stable income. In 1962 the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Los Angeles County Museum purchased works, she was exhibited in the Venice Biennale and the Seattle World's Fair, and she was made national president of Artists' Equity. Despite the height of her success, things suddenly fell apart in the same year. She had left the Martha Jackson Gallery for an attractive advance offered by gallerist Sidney Janis, but the



Fig. 1. Diana MacKown, photograph of Louise Nevelson (1974). Photo: Courtesy Diana MacKown.

deal was compromised by an agreement to buy a problematic house from Janis's lawyer Sam Kurzman, who was something of a "wheeler and dealer in real estate" (224). When the works in her first exhibition for Janis did not sell—indeed, some of the reviews were scathing (231)—the gallerist attempted to recover the advance, but it had been used for Kurzman's house. The ensuing legal wrangling left Nevelson as depressed as ever. Once again she was impoverished. Wilson's coverage of these events is extensive.

A coincidental but very welcome fellowship at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles kept her going financially for a time, after which Nevelson returned to New York. By the

fall of 1963, she was able to join Arne Glimcher's Pace Gallery, where she enjoyed a relationship that lasted for the rest of her life. Her spirits were buoyed by the interest of the Whitney Museum, which opened her first retrospective in 1967. Glimcher's personal and financial support was crucial in these years, and Wilson details it at length. For example, while describing Nevelson's desire to use mirrors at the back of her wall boxes, Glimcher said "She was going *behind* the wall," which Wilson ties back to Nevelson's early interest in the fourth dimension as a metaphor for Krishna-murti's metaphysics (249).

Nevelson's lifelong interest in metaphysical states of mind explains why she accepted a commission in 1975 to under-

take work for St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Manhattan. She felt her work's abstraction transcended religious barriers. This sentiment underlies the *Sky Cathedral* theme the artist pursued for many years. Similarly, Nevelson felt her appearance transcended fashion norms, and she increasingly appeared in public while wearing dramatic outfits, headscarves and large false eyelashes (Fig. 1). Wilson's account makes these eccentricities seem perfectly normal and almost to be expected.

Wilson is particularly strong on brief but telling interpretations of individual works, close to one hundred of which are beautifully illustrated. Many of these have to do with well-known proto-feminist tropes, like "the bride," who serves as a symbol of Nevelson's own escape from the restrictions of conventional matrimony (162, 196–99). Wilson notes, as have others, that some critics in the 1940s actually said they liked her shows until they found out she was a woman.¹⁰ Because of this context, Wilson understandably alludes to Nevelson's status as a strong forerunner of the feminist movement, even though the artist herself alternately protested the connection or reformed it in her own image (307–12). In fact, Nevelson often resisted the historical record in other ways, too. A particularly interesting instance is Wilson's telling Nevelson that she could prove the artist had exhibited a work entitled *The Village*, which the artist resolutely denied in spite of clear documentary evidence. "[H]er repudiation was an unconscious effort," writes Wilson, "to mask and deny something significant" hidden in "symbolic equivalents of her life story (173–74).

Wilson also offers a useful final chapter on the legal wrangling set into

motion after the artist's death. Son Mike, with whom she had latterly been in a profitable (but seemingly dispassionate) business relationship, removed dozens of works from her house, ostensibly for their protection. According to various documents, however, the artist had actually bequeathed these works to Diana MacKown, one of the three assistants whose contributions to Nevelson's career Wilson painstakingly details in different parts of the book. It almost goes without saying that these days must have been difficult for everyone involved, for Mike had resented the financial and personal influence of Glimcher (411), distrusted the motivations of MacKown (420), and had money troubles of his own (423).

Given the popular and scholarly attention given to Nevelson's highly visible career as an artist of note, I initially thought I did not need another book on Nevelson. I conclude, however, that Wilson's account adds significantly to the understanding of the artist's life and the reception of her work. Its psychoanalytically charged approach—happily free of befuddling jargon—puts the artist in a new light. I recommend the book for general readers, scholars, and libraries. •

Robert J. Belton, a former Dean of the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan Campus, is the author of *The Beribboned Bomb: The Image of Woman in Male Surrealist Art* (1995) and "Edgar Allan Poe and the Surrealists' Image of Women," *WAJ* (1987).

Notes

1. Robert C. Hobbs, "Louise Nevelson: A Place That Is an Essence," *WAJ* 1, no. 1 (Spring–Summer, 1980), 41.

2. *Ibid.*, 42.
3. Joan Semmel and April Kingsley, "Sexual Imagery in Women's Art," *WAJ* 1, no. 1 (Spring–Summer, 1980), 1–6.
4. Hobbs, "Louise Nevelson: A Place That Is an Essence," 42.
5. Sherry Buckberrough, "Louise Nevelson: A Passionate Life by Laurie Lisle; Sonia Delaunay: Artist of the Lost Generation by Axel Madsen," *WAJ* 14, no. 1 (Spring–Summer, 1993), 39.
6. Laurie Wilson, *Louise Nevelson: Iconography and Sources* (New York: Garland, 1981).
7. For example, Wilson was the moderator of a panel at the 46th Congress of the International Psychoanalytical Association in Chicago in 2009. See Nellie L. Thompson, "Psychoanalytic Theories of Creativity: Clinical Applications," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 91 (2010), 1254–57. More direct, perhaps, is the relation between this book and an essay Wilson wrote for the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* two years later: "Light and Shadow in the Life and Work of Louise Nevelson," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 59, no. 1 (2011), 89–108.
8. Louise Nevelson, *Dawns & Dusk: Taped Conversations with Diana MacKown* (New York: Scribner, 1976).
9. For example, Elyse Deeb Speaks, "Experiencing Louise Nevelson's Moon Garden," *American Art* 21, no. 2 (2007), 96–108.
10. For example, Joelynn Snyder-Ott, "The Female Experience and Artistic Creativity," *Art Education* 27, no. 6 (1974), 15–18.

FRONTIERS
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Edited by Guisela Latorre and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu

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Covered in Time and History: The Films of Ana Mendieta

Edited by Howard Oransky
University of California Press, 2015

Reviewed by Laurel Fredrickson

From 1971 to 1981, Ana Mendieta (1948–85) created 104 experimental films, first in 8mm, then Super-8 and video. Born in Havana, Cuba, Mendieta and her sister were among 14,000 children airlifted to the U.S. in Operation Pedro Pan in the early 1960s. Sent to Saint Mary's in Iowa City, an institution reputed for physical and psychological abuse (17), Mendieta endured years in foster homes, separated from her sister. As the essays in the exhibition catalogue *Covered in Time and History: The Films of Ana Mendieta* convey, Mendieta's traumatic experiences found expression in films in which she was the subject, either in body or through "surrogates," as essayist John Perreault sees them (40) in the *Silhuetas*, abstracted female figures that she sculpted from natural settings. Mendieta's films explore identity, exilic loss and isolation, and living between cultures.

The early films, involving blood, are haunting. In *Chicken Movie*, *Chicken Piece* (1972), Mendieta faces the camera, naked and vulnerable, holding a decapitated chicken until its death throes cease, leaving her body splattered with blood, marked by a sacrifice to art. In *Sweating Blood* (1973; Fig. 1), she seems the sacrifice. Face framed by the camera, eyes closed, Mendieta remains absolutely still. Almost imperceptibly, blood begins to ooze from her scalp and drip down her face. Other films show Mendieta writing in blood or painting it on her body. She also appears covered with feathers or stones, lying still in a swiftly moving creek, or wrapped in plaster gauze that hardens, immobilizing her. In other short films (typically three minutes, the standard length for Super 8) Mendieta interacts with nature, as in her *Silhuetas*, whose forms mimic prehistoric goddesses, sometimes animated by

flames and smoke. In 1981, when she first returned to Cuba, Mendieta filmed *Esculturas Rupestres*, abstracted shapes resembling Neolithic fertility figures that she etched in caves or in the earth. Fittingly, she filmed *Ochún* (1981), a color video and her last moving-image work, in Florida on the coast of her adopted country and facing the coast of the island of her origin. Mendieta named the artwork after the goddess of love of the Taino, who inhabited Cuba before Columbus.

The exhibition was co-curated by Howard Oransky, director of the Katherine E. Nash Gallery at the University of Minnesota, and artist Lynn Lukkas, Professor in the School of Art, and featured twenty-one films, and twenty-six related photographs. Although some films had been exhibited before, a number were unknown, discovered in the process of digitization and archiving completed in 2015. As reflected in the catalogue, the exhibition positioned Mendieta's films at the center of her artistic practice: as artworks in themselves, rather than documents of earlier performative works that took place in another time and place. For art historian Laura Wertheim Joseph, Mendieta's "cross media vision and aspirations" led her to create artworks intended to be experienced "via after images" (185). In most cases, only assistants were present for filming, Mendieta had no other audience.

The catalogue documents each exhibited film with sequences of full and half-page images, described and interpreted by Oransky. The well-researched "Filmography" archives all of Mendieta's films and videos, with titles, dates, running times, transfer and exhibition histories, production notes, and descriptions, providing a valuable resource for future scholarship. Each essayist approaches the films differently. Oransky begins with the memory of a transformational introduction to Mendieta's art in "The Great Goddess Issue" of *Heresies* (1978). He finds that her films extend beyond her life to evoke, as Rachel Weiss puts it in her catalogue essay, "an isolation that is fundamentally exilic" (61). In simultaneously engaging

the spiritual and the material, Oransky writes, Mendieta's films express a universal yearning for "an unattainable wholeness" (10).

Video and New Media historian Michael Rush follows with an essay that describes Mendieta's "radical displacement" as the "motivating core" of films that unleashed years of suffering (17). (Mendieta made her first films at the University of Iowa, first as an MFA student in painting and then as an MFA student in intermedia, in a program founded by her mentor and lover Hans Breder.) Rush briefly contextualizes Mendieta's films in relation to other artists' experiments with Super-8, while insisting that she defies categorization. Denoting her films as "expanded sculpture," connecting "recorded image and personal gesture" (17–18), Rush identifies a key theme, "transformation," as in Mendieta's mutation from human to animal in *Sweating Blood* (19).

John Perreault, the artist, poet and critic, adopts a more poetic approach in an essay he likens to a "braid," which interweaves varied strands, interpreting Mendieta's films as explorations of identity and efforts to give life meaning (25). He emphasizes his personal relationship with Mendieta, who took a summer course with him in Iowa. (Perreault was among the artists and critics that Breder invited to his program.) Perreault and Mendieta renewed their acquaintance in New York. Perreault claims to write as if he *were* Mendieta, whom he describes as "thinking and dreaming aloud" (25). He relates blood to menstruation and sacrifice, calling woman a "castrated male ... an entirely different species, a throwback to the sacred and the Neolithic" (38). Though sometimes unconsciously sexist, Perreault's blend of Freud and Jung, free allusions to mythologies and religions, and discussion of the Great Goddess are of Mendieta's moment when feminists positively re-envisioned nature and the body, and the immanence to which patriarchy assigns women.

By contrast, curator Rachel Weiss's richly complex essay seems indebted to poststructuralist critical theory in introducing Mendieta's films through



Fig. 1. Ana Mendieta, *Sweating Blood* (Nov. 1973) (no. 14), super 8 film, color, silent, 3 min. 18 sec. Film still. Photo: Ana Mendieta.

their “return” in artworks by younger Cubans, notably Tania Bruguera, who “reanimated” some *Silhuetas* and invented others (56). Organized around forms of time (including memory, the story, and the liturgical), the essay theorizes the films as acts of return, as ritual efforts to reconcile the past to the present and explore the ambiguity of self-image. The films oscillate between body and spirit, Weiss writes, adding the caveat of “secular aestheticism, without transcendence” (63). In their “redemptive finality,” Mendieta’s photographs soothe (62). The films, however, “hurt,” they “kick us out of the garden” (61). Weiss does not envision *nature* as beneficent. Likening Mendieta’s works to corpses or open wounds, she adds that the “interface of body-nature [is] a scab: not lovely, not essential, not linking” (61). The films, she says, deny the possibility of union or return.

Co-curator Lynn Lukkas directs her pedagogical essay to students of video and film, like those in the course that she taught in conjunction with the

exhibition. Each section extrapolates a lesson from Mendieta’s creative practice. For example, citing Theodor Adorno’s notion of art as a home for the exile, Lukkas understands Mendieta’s practice as one of making a refuge for herself, where free from judgment she could experiment. Another lesson is that by exploring the personal (for Mendieta Latina identity or being female) art becomes political. Out of the studio, *nature* (an unexamined concept) offered Mendieta a site for actions that collapse time, linking the present and (ancient) past. She also models being fully present when working—in “no time”—and professionalism: joining the collective A.I.R. Gallery and receiving the Prix de Rome (75).

In a piece that details the process of remastering, restoring, and digitizing her aunt’s films, Raquel Mendieta, a filmmaker, gives a history of technologies used. Her essay also identifies key themes, revealed in previously unviewed footage. For example, noting that Ana Mendieta compared her figures to “floating islands” (180), she finds a link between *Creek* (1974) and *Ochún* (1981). In the early film, Mendieta lies nude, face down in a creek, anchoring herself against the current, like an island dividing the water. The curving mounds in *Ochún* suggest both a body and two islands, between whose coastlines the sea passes, “the in-between” of two cultures and of sand and water” (181). The gentle lapping water one hears on the sound track suggests, for the author, that Mendieta, always between cultures, had finally achieved a sense of reconciliation.

A complimentary essay, Laura Wertheim Joseph’s preface to “Filmography,” discusses “remaking the archive” (202) and the complexities of preserving, organizing, and studying Mendieta’s films. She considers the changing reception of the films, the history of their digitization, and factors that kept this work on the margins. [The emergence of video installation as a medium may also have propelled reassessment of such films as art works in themselves.] The films, Joseph maintains, provoke both the desire to have been present at the filming and uncertainty about events outside the frame, creating a tension between the

past (event) and future (viewing). In conclusion she tells of her hope that future scholars will build on her work, and resolve unanswered questions about footage that may be either a completed work or an experiment.

A significant contribution to the field of contemporary art and film, the catalogue nonetheless lacks a rigorous social and cultural analysis of Mendieta’s films in relation to action art of the 1960s and 1970s. Such feminists as Valie Export, Adrian Piper, and Eleanor Antin set actions outside of museums and galleries, which were not staged for audiences, as normatively understood, even if others were present. It seems misleading to contest the films’ status as documents of performances, rather than aspects of actions. Performance art developed later, when artists like Laurie Anderson staged artworks in clubs and theaters for viewers, aware of themselves as audience. Finally, Mendieta’s relationship with Breder begs feminist analysis. In touching on the topic, Lukkas settles for a comment about the 1970s being different. Joseph alludes to the power dynamics of such relationships when she notes that Mendieta’s art changed once she stopped following Breder’s “guidelines” (198). This is not enough. When Mendieta was filming herself nude, she was also posing for Breder’s photographs, holding mirrors that multiply her legs and hide her upper body, suggesting photographs by the German surrealist Hans Bellmer of his manipulable doll to whose girl-like torso he attached limbs in differing configurations and then shot in often troubling scenarios. By raising such questions, *Covered in Time and History* should interest feminist scholars and contest art histories that obscure the transdisciplinarity of experimental art. •

Laurel Fredrickson is an assistant professor of art history at Southern Illinois University. Her interdisciplinary research engages cross-cultural and transnational intersections of experimental art and political dissent since the 1960s. Her book *Jean-Jacques Lebel and the French Happening: The Erotics of Revolution* is forthcoming from Bloomsbury Academic Press.

Memory Work: Anne Truitt and Sculpture

By Miguel De Baca
University of California Press, 2016

Reviewed by Jennifer Wingate

“As the stakes for art were redefined in the sixties,” writes Kirsten Swenson in her book about Eva Hesse and Sol LeWitt, “the work of art could no longer be understood as an isolated object separable from the artist’s mind, her community, and the field of ideas preceding and following from its emergence into the world.” Swenson’s “messy, varied, and broad account of art in New York” complements Miguel de Baca’s book about the Washington, D.C.-based abstract sculptor Anne Truitt (1921–2004) and the connections between her art and personal and cultural memory.¹ “Social and contextual analyses of minimalism are now welcome in contemporary art history, but this was not always the case,” especially in the 1950s and 1960s art worlds, which were dominated by formalist criticism and phenomenological thought (2).² Swenson and De Baca both also reposition artists whose careers launched when critics framed women’s art as inherently feminine and expressive, qualities at odds with how those critics exalted post-painterly abstraction and Minimalism. Hesse’s mixing of craft techniques and organic forms with factory production, and Truitt’s use of evocative color and hand-painted surfaces invited the art world to feminize their production; yet neither woman changed artistic course. As a result, historians have addressed their careers as anomalies. With *Memory Work: Anne Truitt and Sculpture*, De Baca attempts to bring his subject from the periphery to the center by suggesting we see Truitt’s practice not only as a novel act but also as an act of resistance against male authority (9).

Minimalism, however, has proven more resistant to revisionism than other movements, like Pop, for example, since critics and historians more rigidly associate it with the rejection of subjectivity. Industrial materials, factory

made and geometric serial forms, and the importance of “direct perception,” all have been primary to the Minimalist story. James Meyer’s *Minimalism: Art and Polemics* (2001) exposed the variety among Minimalism’s early practitioners, and included Truitt among its innovators; although, according to De Baca, Truitt’s works’ referential qualities continued to distance her from better-known male Minimalists. This is the conundrum that drew De Baca to Truitt in the first place, and one that he addresses in this focused study.

Memory Work consists of four chapters, three of which zero in on individual sculptures that helped define Truitt’s mature practice, and one that addresses the impact of her time in Japan. The book is generously illustrated (thanks to the Ahmanson and Wyeth Foundations) with 25 full-page color plates and 49 black and white illustrations. All the chapters resituate Truitt’s work in the context of memory. In other words, art historians need not split hairs trying to determine whether Truitt was one of the first Minimalist sculptors or not, or the exact position of her work vis-à-vis Greenbergian modernism. The field of memory studies, which itself has gained legitimacy in the last thirty years, lends an unassailable framework.

De Baca is not the first to show how Truitt’s sculptures are related to memory, but he takes the connection further. In the catalogue for the 2009 Hirshhorn Museum exhibition, “Anne Truitt: Perception and Reflection,” curator Kirsten Hileman highlights the personal connections running through Truitt’s oeuvre, explaining how the artist’s mature work was grounded in experience and “recollections of phenomenological effects.”³ Catalogue essayist James Meyer reiterates the major themes he introduced in his 2001 book, namely Truitt’s “Proustian mnemonics.”⁴ The involuntary resurfacing of images from the past is key to Truitt’s working method, and gained validity for the artist



Fig. 1. Anne Truitt, *Hardcastle (verso)* (1962), acrylic on wood, 99 3/4" x 42" x 16". Photo: © annetruitt.org/Bridgeman Images.

when she translated a scholarly text about Marcel Proust’s *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. De Baca picks up where Meyer leaves off, explicating the importance of Proust to Truitt’s creative endeavors, but also considering her work in the context of collective memory, opening Truitt’s abstract sculptures to a host of cultural associations, ranging from heroic Americana to tragedies suffered at the hands of relentless modernization. “I’ve struggled all my life to get maximum meaning in the simplest possible form,” the artist herself said in 1987.⁵ In *Memory Work*, De Baca helps us see the broad parameters of these meanings.

Memory Work starts with Truitt’s breakout sculpture, appropriately titled *First* (1961), made when she discovered that the experience of form cannot exist “outside the information supplied to it by memory” (19). *First* resembles, but does not replicate, the picket fences of

Truitt's childhood in rural Maryland. De Baca does not explicitly address Truitt's sculptural practice as catharsis (or its relationship to trauma), but he does show how Truitt's memories of the picket fences from her childhood reflect and converge with her experience of social inequalities. "Through an intensely personal memory of the fence, [Truitt] was able to name it as the architecture of exclusion, a persistent reminder of an archaic system of repression seeking to hem women within their accustomed domestic role—a role that Truitt was beginning to outgrow with greater intensity" (37). Not coincidentally, organizers of her first solo exhibit in 1963 excluded *First* for fear that its domestic references would be a liability. This was the type of gender bias that Judy Chicago pushed back against with her pastel *Rainbow Picket* (1966), included in the Jewish Museum's "Primary Structures" exhibition, the same exhibition in which Truitt showed *Sea Garden* (1964, destroyed). De Baca does not address Chicago, who may have opened topics too removed from his subject, but readers nonetheless may wonder at the omission.

In Chapter 2, which focuses on the formidable sculpture, *Hardcastle* (1962; Fig. 1), De Baca likens the "porous nature of past and present" evoked by Truitt's sculptural output to Walter Benjamin's description in his *Arcades Project* of unexpected connections, or "flashes," between past and present. De Baca calls these flashes "crash moments," moments "in which the past and present galvanize into an image." He identifies Truitt's memory of a fatal train accident in the Maryland of her youth as one of these moments of "temporal oscillation" (47–48). De Baca ties her associations with the word "Hardcastle" (the misremembered name of the person killed in the accident, and

the name of a tract of land encroached upon by postwar development) to larger artistic interest in violent imagery in the 1960s, Americans' changing relationship to the landscape, and the experience of historical loss brought on by late modernism.

In Chapter 3, De Baca takes the sculpture *Valley Forge* (1963) as a point of departure for showing the mnemonic capabilities of color in Truitt's work. "The valences of meaning that Truitt associated with both color and memory were not translatable to either modernist painting or minimalist sculpture" and so critics singled out her use of color as feminine (79).⁶ Nonetheless, she placed great significance on color from that point on. De Baca also shows how *Valley Forge* marked a moment when the artist's use of the past started to become less personal. *Valley Forge* can be understood as a history painting, De Baca contends, by addressing the "public culture's communal myths" through color, syntax, and composition (80).

De Baca's final chapter paints a picture of personal fortitude and artistic perseverance. Truitt felt dislocated and alone in Japan, where she moved for her husband's job just when her career was taking off in the United States. Managing a household and caring for her three small children in a foreign culture did not prevent her from pursuing new work, but she was not happy with the direction she took with her sculpture in Japan. Her frustration nonetheless prompted her to experiment with Japanese ink paintings that ultimately inspired a new way of thinking about color that would impact the rest of her sculptural output.

De Baca's well researched study, which draws on the artist's own writings, thorough consideration of

1950s and 1960s art and culture, and time spent in Japan studying the Tokyo art worlds of that period, is one that is committed to unearthing the "maximum meaning" that Truitt hoped to instill in her sculptures. The clues she has left us for unlocking these meanings, in her journals and in her sculptures' titles, forms, and colors, are both condensed like poetry and indistinct like memory. De Baca's use of memory as a framework for this investigation is revealing and evocative, at the same time that it confirms the triggers for Truitt's intriguing sculptural output as ultimately unknowable. •

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Notes

1. Kirsten Swenson, *Irrational Judgments: Hesse, LeWitt, and 1960s New York* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2015), 6, 26.
2. See for example Anna C. Chave, "Minimalism and Biography," *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 1 (March 2000), and James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2001).
3. Kristin Hileman, "Presence and Abstraction," in *Anne Truitt: Perception and Reflection*, ed. Kristin Hileman (Washington, D.C.: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and London: D. Giles Ltd., 2009), 12.
4. James Meyer, "The Bicycle," in Hileman, ed., *Anne Truitt*, 50–63.
5. Victoria Dawson, "Anne Truitt and the Color of Truth," *Washington Post* (March 14, 1987), G1.
6. See Clement Greenberg, "Changer: Anne Truitt, An American Artist Whose Painted Structures Helped to Change the Course of American Sculpture," *Vogue* (May 1968), 213.



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Corita Kent and the Language of Pop

Edited by Susan Dackerman
Essays by Jennifer Roberts and
Richard Meyer
Harvard Art Museums, 2015

Reviewed by Erin Devine

In *handle with care*, a 1967 screenprint by Pop artist and then-Catholic nun Corita Kent (1918–86), green stenciled letters overlap freer floating red ones on an orange, circular ground. The green set is titular, the red from a Chevrolet ad slogan of the mid-1960s: “See the man who can save you the most.” Bright colors and off-kilter fonts mimic the era’s design aesthetics that, along with directly appropriated texts, capitulate the Pop Art style in which Kent’s work was deeply entrenched. Using an existing ad slogan not as sardonic commentary but as a wry double entendre of theological import lends a sense of Kent’s unique and poignant perspective, enriched as it was by the revolutionary forces not only within art but the counterculture and the Catholic Church.

It’s said in the New Testament that in the beginning was the word, and in Kent’s images the word becomes the form. It was the basis for her visual compositions, both symbolically and aesthetically calling to mind the preeminence of highly ornamentalized letters and syncretic influences that comprised Christian manuscripts of the Middle Ages. Precise care seems given to every letter in her prints, and nuances of meaning are culled from the secular songs, poems, and advertisements she inventively aligned with Church doctrine. Kent selected passages and quotations that reflected ideals of compassion and community, newly elevated as part of Vatican II reforms. These sweeping changes in the Church—the most groundbreaking since the Council of Trent in the mid-fifteenth century—encouraged Kent’s appropriation of lines from writers such as Simon and Garfunkel, e.e. cummings, and Martin Luther King, granting currency to the Church as an ally in

harmony with the peace-love rhetoric of the decade.

Kent broached religious, cultural, and artistic revolutions during a tumultuous era, but she was not an easy placement within the vanguard milieu. Revisionist art historical inquiry situates the Los Angeles scene where Kent was based as a predominantly masculine one, as particularly noted in the stable of artists represented by the West Coast’s center for Pop Art, the Ferus Gallery (16).¹ With dual outsider status as a woman and a nun, this may explain why Kent was never included in the important galleries that exhibited Pop or the major museum showings of its artists in the 1960s and 1970s. Although some of these exhibitions were very near the Immaculate Heart College (IHC) where she lived and taught, and artists like Andy Warhol were aware of her output, it is perhaps also Kent’s singular approach, adhered as it was to her service to the Church, that may have worked against her in a time when religion in art was virtually obsolescent.

Her retrospective at the Harvard Art Museums in 2015 (the exhibition traveled to the San Antonio Museum of Art), the occasion for this catalogue, provided an important platform for the reinvestigation of an artist whose work bridged two important moments of 1962: Vatican II and the first major Pop Art exhibitions. Her contemporaries also utilized language and text in their work, but often only as incidental to the products, signs, and aesthetic concerns that captured their attention, such as Warhol’s cardboard boxes, Roy Lichtenstein’s comic strips, or Jasper Johns’s stenciling. Kent’s use of English text, however, coincided with the Church’s decision to end the use of Latin in the mass. Just as Warhol proclaimed Pop as an art for the masses, Vatican II called for a greater reconnection to its followers through more accessible worship (66). These turns toward the vernacular fueled Kent’s pictorial and symbolic strategies with language that fused modern advertising and secular writings to both art and spiritual experience.

Responsible for most of the exhibition’s material, Harvard Art Museums

obviously hoped to increase interest in their own vast holdings of the artist’s prints. Although much of her known output occurred in Los Angeles during the 1960s, by the end of that decade mounting tensions between the Church and the progressive nuns of IHC led Kent to renounce her vows in 1968 and move to Boston.

As the exhibition and catalogue suggest, the timeliness of a resurgent interest in Kent goes far beyond convenience and accessibility. Popular favor for Pope Francis I marks his arrival as perhaps the most radical impetus for change in the Church since Vatican II at the same time that the presence of a new counterculture movement seems afoot: from Occupy Wall Street, to the popularity of Bernie Sanders, to music festivals in the U.S. drawing tens of thousands of camping college-age youth to witness an atmosphere with similarities to the era of Woodstock. There is even a trendy reemergence of vintage letterpress, found in many of Kent’s prints, and her fascination with typeface.

The visual format of Kent’s prints is mirrored in the layout of *The Language of Pop*. Often sourcing at least three different texts in various fonts, including her own handwriting, Kent’s compositions demand that the viewer enter into a kind of optical sorting process, or what Harvard Professor Jennifer Roberts calls a “mental calisthenics” (75). Likewise, the dense catalogue is packed with Kent’s colorful images and the comparisons also included in the exhibition: works by Warhol, Lichtenstein, Johns, Ed Ruscha, Robert Indiana, Jim Dine, Marisol and others. Covering her work from 1962 to 1968 (the year she left the order), the essays and entries are divided along Kent’s central interests in text and language, the products (mainly food) from which she took inspiration, the street and traffic signage she appropriated, and the subjects of her political concerns. Exhibition curator Susan Dackerman’s excellent grounding essay contextualizes Kent within the framework of Pop Art while also correlating the style and subjects of the avant-garde movement to the re-identification efforts of the Church following Vatican II. Jennifer Roberts’s

thorough essay on Kent's printmaking process lends technical understanding to the unique style of her images, while Richard Meyer situates Kent's singularity as an artist to her social engagement, particularly in support of Civil Rights and against the Vietnam War.

Meyer notes that Kent "urges us to make meaningful change in the world" (141), thereby differing from the Pop artists of her age, transforming brand designs and popular texts into calls for political and cultural intervention. Kent's focus on food consumption especially provided allegories for the value the Church placed upon charity for the hungry. *Enriched bread* (1965) adapts the well-known Wonder Bread brand to the "wonder" of transubstantiation in communion as well as the social transformation of community as outlined in a passage by Albert Camus. Kent directly references the bells on a Bell Brand potato chip bag in the print *bell brand* (1967), overlaid with the Granny Goose Foods slogan, "Why not put a little snap in your life?," and a quote from the enigmatic comedian Lord Buckley, "Would it embarrass you very much if I were to tell you that I love you?" Kent's cleverly wrought iconography combining brand imagery, random texts, and Catholic doctrine recontextualizes both spirituality and social awareness in surprising ways, as in the catalogue's cover image, *the juiciest tomato of all* (1964; Fig. 1), in which the Virgin Mary is likened to a red, ripe Del Monte tomato. Her use of the supermarket as a site of information that can be reintroduced in enlightening ways represented a completely different strategy from those of her contemporaries such as Warhol and Claes Oldenburg—of whom she was well aware (19–20)—utilizing the same sources.

Current interest in social practice as integral to the artist's process positions Kent again as a prescient figure whose work has too long been undervalued. Meyer addresses Kent's direction of the IHC's 1964 Mary's Day as an example of her performative intervention congruent with the Happenings of her era. Traditionally a processional feast with donations from the congregation of food for the poor, Kent and her students



Fig. 1, Corita Kent, *the juiciest tomato of all* (1964), screenprint, 29 3/4" x 36". Collection of Jason Simon, New York.

turned the event into a visual extravaganza with the theme "Food for Peace." Little is stated in this catalogue on the disintegration in relations between the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart and the Catholic Church. But it is likely that Kent, spurred by the Church's failure to consistently live up to its own reforms and its criticism of her Order, left under a cloud of disappointment and disillusionment. The catalogue ends with a summary of the Boston Gas Tank—commissioned in 1971, this bright vision still can be seen along Interstate 93—Kent's largest and only permanent public work that is also her least socio-political one, leaving readers frustrated with

unanswered questions about this lost radical while also opening the doors to expand upon her life and work. •

Erin Devine is an artist and scholar based in Washington, DC, and directs the New Gallery for Contemporary Art at NOVA. Her video installations and performances have recently been exhibited at the Hillyer Arts Space and the Workhouse Arts Center.

Notes

1. Dackerman points this out in her essay, but further research is evident; see especially Cécile Whiting's *Pop LA: Art and the City in the 1960s* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2006).

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Agnes Martin

Edited by Frances Morris and

Tiffany Bell

D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 2015

Agnes Martin, Her Life and Art

By Nancy Princenthal

Lyon Artbook/Thames & Hudson, 2015

Reviewed by Deborah Frizzell

*A tree-
high thought
grasps the light-tone: there are
still songs to sing beyond
mankind.*

—Paul Celan¹

*When I first made a grid, I happened to
be thinking of the innocence of trees
and then this grid came into my mind
and I thought it represented innocence,
and I still do, and so I painted it and
then I was satisfied. I thought, "This is
my vision."*

—Agnes Martin²

One of the most significant American painters of the twentieth century, Agnes Martin (1912–2004) (Fig. 1) created a body of work renowned for its subtlety and evocative power. Martin influenced and had close friendships with peers such as Ellsworth Kelly and Ad Reinhardt, and she impacted subsequent generations of artists including Eve Hesse and Dorothea Rockburne. In works on canvas and paper, her signature grid-pattern paintings evince an economy of means within a radically reductive geometry that never feels mechanical. Her hand-drawn coordinates embody endless nuance and variation, shifting in scale and rhythm, texture, and quality of light. Martin's elusive fields of quietude are impossible to photograph and difficult to describe. They require our presence and patience; they demand close looking, bodily movement, interaction, and time. They do not reveal themselves all at once. Martin's paintings insist on an acute awareness of our own sensibilities, orientation, and the dynamics of stillness and motion, emergence and disappearance. She gives us much more than a moment of vision; we

are allowed to dwell along with the painting in a unique way that takes us out of ordinary time into fulfilled or autonomous time.³

The monograph *Agnes Martin* (in notes AM) was produced to accompany the first retrospective exhibition of Martin's oeuvre since the early 1990s, held first at the Tate Modern and subsequently in New York and Los Angeles.⁴ This has presented a rare opportunity to experience her art in depth and breadth (she worked until her death at age ninety-two): drawings, paintings, watercolors, early experimental works, penciled grid paintings, gray and pale-hued stripe paintings, and her final painting series. Edited by curator Frances Morris (Tate Modern) and Tiffany Bell (Artifex, digital catalogue raisonnés), this beautifully produced, wide-ranging compendium of scholarly essays includes the artist's own writings, rarely seen photographs, high-quality digital illustrations of Martin's work, an excellent chronology, and a selected bibliography.

Complementing this monographic catalogue is Nancy Princenthal's meticulously researched and vividly compelling biography, *Agnes Martin, Her Life and Art* (in notes AMLA), which dovetails critical analyses of the artist's oeuvre within art historical contexts. Together these books offer a rare comprehensive examination of Martin's life in art: her distinctive and varied body of work, her milieux in New York and Taos, New Mexico, her negotiations between image and perception and a rigorous pursuit of artistic practice, her often troubled mental life, and her inspiration and vision.

Born in Saskatchewan, Canada, Martin had an uprooted childhood in a large family, eventually living with her widowed mother in Vancouver. She received a teaching certificate in Bellingham, Washington, and had a long, interrupted career as a schoolteacher, among many other temporary jobs over the years. She was thirty years old when in 1941 she moved to New York to study art and art education at Teachers College, Columbia University. By 1946 she realized that she wanted to be an artist and went to study at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. She returned

to Columbia in 1951, where she received a Master of Arts degree, and also became intensely engaged in the philosophy of Jiddu Krishnamurti and the writings of Zen scholar D. T. Suzuki, who both were teaching there. She continued her peripatetic working life in Taos, where she taught and did odd jobs to support her own painting. It was there, in 1957, that New York art dealer Betty Parsons, who represented the renowned painters Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, saw Martin's paintings of abstracted biomorphic forms and offered her a solo exhibition, convincing her to return to the city.

Back in New York, Martin moved to a derelict industrial loft downtown near Wall Street on Coenties Slip; her neighbors included soon-to-be-friends Ellsworth Kelly, Lenore Tawney, Jack Youngerman, Robert Indiana, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. The Coenties Slip art community, "Bohemia on the Waterfront," as *Cue* magazine titled it, was also a place where Martin could more easily be herself, as a lesbian, because in mainstream society gay and lesbian sexuality was still unmentionable, very much in the closet (AM 238). Artistically Martin became immersed in the studio practices of the generation of young artists who would be the hinge between Abstract Expressionism and the emergence of pared-down minimalist and hard-edged experiments. She was part of a lively and stimulating coterie that also included Sol LeWitt, Anne Truitt, Donald Judd, and Ad Reinhardt, who became a close friend.

It was during this period while her work was developing, in the early 1960s, that Martin's struggle with schizophrenia began; she was hospitalized several times and subjected to electroshock treatments. As Princenthal writes in her careful and closely researched portrait of the artist's illness, it was remarkable that Martin was able to rigorously pursue her artistic visions throughout the longer stretches of lucidity and good health.

Martin's simple geometric forms—squares, rectangles, and circles emerging from lines and dots—often created nuanced fields of marks across the entire surface of paper or canvas. Her signature style became the hand-drawn square grid made in graphite or

colored pencil on painted canvas; painting became drawing, and drawing painting. As she described it,

My formats are square, but the grids never are absolutely square; they are rectangles, a little bit off the square, making a sort of contradiction, a dissonance, though I don't set out to do it that way. When I cover the square surface with rectangles, it lightens the weight of the square, destroys its power.⁵

The Tree, Martin's painting from 1964, the year she first applied graphite grids directly on a square white canvas, reveals her early notions of lightness and visual dissonance. Like an echo of a textile fabric's weave, a shifting vibration of vertical and horizontal stripes intermingle to form a network of lighter and darker white-to-gray spectrum lines and shadows: the slightly uneven stippling of graphite lines and white paint. While nature may be suggested, these paintings do not resemble concrete scenes or objects. The graphite lines and white paint are suspended between unseen layers; perceptions of inside and outside are dissolved as are notions of figure and ground. Space and time are invoked.

Both Princenthal's text and the essays by Bell and Morris in the museum monograph stress Martin's insistence that her art was *transactional*, that her paintings required participation by viewers to make meaning. As differentiated from personal expression, to which Reinhardt and Kelly were also opposed, Martin's paintings expressed states of mind, such as happiness and innocence; her paintings were incomplete without the viewer. Marcel Duchamp made a similar point about the transactional nature of art in his critical 1957 lecture, "The Creative Act," in which he wrote that "the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualification and thus adds to the creative act."⁶

In the monograph, Tiffany Bell's concise overview essay, "Happiness is the Goal," utilizes research material from her forthcoming catalogue raisonné and

builds a complex and detailed picture of Martin's development as an artist. Bell eschews the heavy-handed stereotypes surrounding Martin's status as "high priestess" of asceticism or mystic desert genius. Instead, Bell unpacks the evolution of Martin's belief in art as a realm of transcendent experience. While the artist thought of herself as an expressionist, she was a classicist in seeking after Neo-Platonic ideal form. Being her own most stringent critic from the beginning, Martin ruthlessly destroyed paintings that did not meet her standard of perfection. Frances Morris's essay, "Innocence and Experience," examines Martin's studio practice within the art historical context of the period and locale, tracing the artist's early development of experimental paintings and sculptures in the percolator of the Manhattan art scene. Morris analyzes Martin's distinctive voice heard in the artist's writings, which are reprinted here; they combine poetic journeys through the mind's awareness of perfection as well as straightforward practical knowledge. Describing Martin's artistic methodology, Morris examines her pragmatic approach to "inspiration" as the creative source for painting. The art historian Jacquelynn Baas follows the threads of the belief systems that inform Martin's art, including Neo-Platonism, Christian mysticism, Zen Buddhism, and Taoism. Richard Tobin discusses Martin's painting *The Islands* (1979), the large twelve-panel work (each panel 6' x 6') in graphite and white acrylic paint. Contemplative and luminescent, *The Islands's* aesthetic qualities, Tobin suggests, reflect Martin's study of East Asian philosophy and spirituality. Anna Lovatt writes on the importance of drawing as integral to Martin's work. Texts by Rachel Barker and Christina Bryan Rosenberger shed light on the artist's studio practice and examine her mature style as indicative of her close association with artist-peers. Martin's late work is analyzed in detail by Briony Fer, who focuses on the artist's rigorous trial-and-error methodology and her absorption of lessons learned from experimentation leading to formal innovations. The contrasts between Martin's public persona and her private, sometimes reclusive life are discussed in Lena Fritsch's essay,



Fig. 1. Agnes Martin in her studio on Ledoux Street, Taos, New Mexico (1953). Photo: Mildred Tolbert. Collection The Harwood Museum of Art, gift of Mildred Tolbert. © Mildred Tolbert Family.

which looks at six photographic portraits of the artist, including those taken by Diane Arbus and Annie Leibovitz.

A fracture occurred in Martin's life in 1967, just after Ad Reinhardt died, when the artist gave up painting to travel across North America and to delve deeply into Buddhist texts and meditation. The next year she returned to New Mexico and built an adobe and log house on a secluded mesa to live a simple, uncluttered life. She resumed painting by the early 1970s and garnered much international success, which allowed her continued independence. For three decades she explored the parameters of vertical or horizontal stripes using a reduced color palette. In the museum monograph, Marion Ackermann analyzes *Untitled #5* (1998) as the "synthesis of all that had gone before," an infinitely subtle painting that seems to respire as one stands in front of it (AM 168). Maria Müller-Schareck writes on the critical reception of Martin's painting in Europe, where her work was less well known.

Nancy Princenthal's comprehensive biography and exacting critical examination of Martin's unique oeuvre is a much-welcomed narrative framework that opens up additional approaches to possible meanings triggered by Martin's work. Princenthal knew Martin and analyzes multiple sources, including personal letters, interviews, archives, theoretical and medical texts, as well as

Martin's writings. The artist was a diffident and contradictory subject, but Princenthal's measured tone and deep scholarship trace an intimate portrait of Martin and her artistic development within her time, locales, and circle of friends. Princenthal is most illuminating and nuanced in her discussion of Martin's use of the terms "inspiration" and "vision," analyzing the painter's immersion in studying Christian mysticism and Eastern spiritual writings, which were widely presented to American audiences in translation in the post-war era. She writes compellingly, with tact and knowledge, about Martin's troubled mental life and her bouts with disabling schizophrenia, making distinctions between the hallucinatory voices that at times plagued Martin and the complete images she saw in her mind's eye as "inspiration" for painting. Princenthal interprets Martin's acute need for peace and quiet with the artist's belief that abstraction *itself* offered a space of awareness, a clearing of Being that was free from the distractions and noise of the everyday environment. Martin found this in the desert mesa, as has James Turrell, who has embraced this quietude in his *Skyscapes*: square-shaped chambers made of pale limestone with a rectangular opening in the ceiling

revealing the sky, a transcendence seen in an aperture. A kind of Quaker simplicity and silence confronts the viewer with space and time in order to turn our minds toward our *own* mode of seeing, expressed by Turrell as "the emergence into space where light comes forth as in a dream." Princenthal's articulation of difference is key in distinguishing between Martin's personal psychology and her invocation of "inspiration" and "vision" as creative forces. The canvas-aperture, in Martin's case, can be a means to point to existential and emotional states, which viewers may interpret within their own mental frameworks and through their own perceptual filters.

As a coda to both of these comprehensive volumes, Donald Woodman, the photographer and Martin's personal assistant for seven years (1977–84), has recorded in *Agnes Martin and Me* (Lyon Artbooks, 2016) his remembrances of and reflections on working with the artist. Accompanying his text are his rare photographs of her taken in New Mexico. •

Deborah Frizzell is Adjunct Assistant Professor of Art History at William Paterson University in New Jersey. She is co-curating an exhibition at Wave Hill, New York, "Outcasts: Women in the Wilderness, April 8 – July 9, 2017.

Notes

1. Paul Celan, "Threadsuns," *Breathturn into Timestead: The Collected Later Poetry A Bilingual Edition*, trans. Pierre Joris (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), 98.
2. Suzan Campbell, "Interview with Agnes Martin," May 15, 1989, transcript, Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: 10–11. Accessed at: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-agnes-martin-13296> (accessed Aug. 1, 2016).
3. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986).
4. The exhibition opened at the Tate Modern (June 3–Oct. 11, 2015) and traveled to Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf (Nov. 7, 2015–March 6, 2016), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (April 24–Sept. 11, 2016), and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Oct. 7, 2016–Jan. 11, 2017).
5. Agnes Martin, quoted in Lucy Lippard, "Homage to the Square," *Art in America* 4 (July–August 1967): 55.
6. Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act," in Robert Lebel, ed. (New York: Paragraphic Books, 1959) 77–78.
7. James Turrell, quoted in "Collections," The Israel Museum, Jerusalem: <http://www.imj.org.il/imagine/collections/item.asp?itemNum=199801> (accessed Aug. 1, 2016).

Edna Andrade

By Debra Bricker Balken
With an essay by Joe Houston
Locks Art Publications, 2015

Reviewed by Nancy G. Heller

"I made more money this year than I ever made. I think people are finally catching up with me."

—Edna Andrade, in 2007 (age 90)¹

Seven years after her death, the first monograph has appeared on the life and work of Edna Andrade (1917–2008), a Philadelphia-based pioneer of Op Art. This handsome volume, with over seventy high-quality color reproductions of Andrade's paintings, also includes two essays, an invaluable Chronology, and one of the most eccentric Bibliographies ever

published: it consists entirely of the reproduction of a two-page letter the artist wrote to a friend, listing more than fifty books she had been reading on subjects ranging from the Bauhaus to Paolo Uccello. This sample of Andrade's handwriting and insight into her thinking are fascinating; however, an actual bibliography of works about Andrade's art, and Op in general, would also have been welcome.

Edna Andrade demonstrates the artist's significance within the Op Art movement, noting her participation in numerous exhibitions, including three solo retrospectives, the latest of which occasioned the publication of this book.² For forty years Andrade was represented by Philadelphia's prestigious Locks Gallery; she was also an influential teacher, most importantly at The University of the Arts

(formerly Philadelphia College of Art), where she served on the faculty for three decades.³ Nevertheless, Andrade only achieved national recognition during the last years of her life, and never developed a noteworthy reputation outside the U.S. As indicated in the book, the reasons for this are complex, involving geography, gender, and changing attitudes toward Op Art.

The lead article, by exhibition curator Debra Bricker Balken, provides useful information about the many influences on Andrade's art—from her traditional Southern roots in Tidewater Virginia to her art teachers in Philadelphia, travels through Europe, Egypt, and India, interest in science, and friends like the innovative artists Dieter Roth and Anne Tyng. Bricker Balken also emphasizes the significance of Andrade's marriage

to architect Preston Andrade, for whose firm she did drafting and architectural rendering; her stint as a graphic artist for the O.S.S. (precursor to the CIA) during World War II; and her dedication to a full-time career as a fine artist, beginning with her divorce at age 43. The essay by Joe Houston covers some of the same ground as Bricker Balken, though emphasizing the political aspects of Andrade's work.

This may seem odd, given the general perception of Op Art as superficial, decorative, and technically brilliant, but devoid of "content"; yet Andrade's earliest and late works are clearly based on the natural world and many of her most successful, abstract canvases, including the subtle and lyrical *Night Sea* (1977; Fig. 1), evoke bodies of water, mountains, or stars. Andrade's pieces from the mid-1960s, such as *Color Motion 4-64* (1964) and the eye-searing *Turbo I-65*, reproduced on the book's dust jacket, explore standard Op Art effects: the illusion of movement, depth, and colors that are not actually there. But even within this group of canvases there is *Tribute to King* (1968), a rare example of political Op, where the title, cross-pattern, and central red square, are homages to the slain civil rights leader.

Houston also focuses on the importance of politics in Andrade's life, noting that she was "a self-defined feminist, liberal democrat and social progressive" (31), and giving numerous examples of her activist lifestyle.⁴ Andrade clearly reveled in the populist aspects of Op—which, she often commented, was more accessible than other types of abstract art.⁵ Andrade even welcomed the commercial application of her art, which was adapted into designs for wallpaper, decorative pillows, and jigsaw puzzles.

The Chronology section of this book is a treasure trove of images and information, featuring vintage photographs of the artist at work and with her friends, students, and colleagues, plus examples of the illustrations she made for ads, and one of the jigsaw puzzles created from an Andrade painting. Even better than the book's text, the Chronology captures Andrade's personality, including her

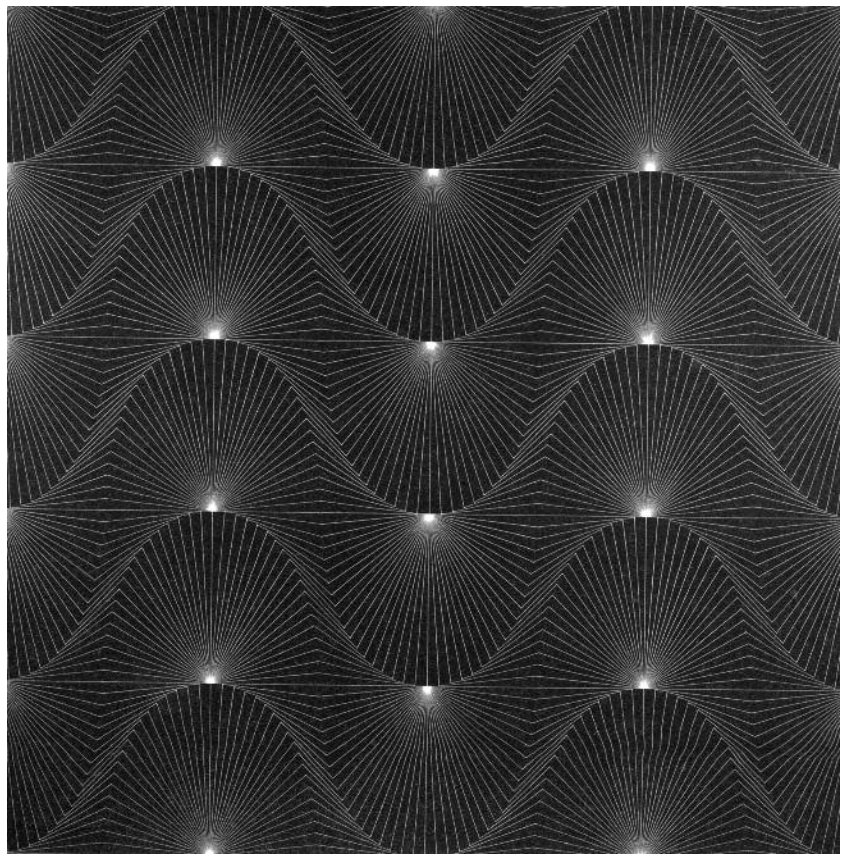


Fig. 1. Edna Andrade, *Night Sea* (1977), acrylic on canvas, 72" x 72". Philadelphia Museum of Art. © Estate of Edna Andrade.

sense of graciousness and fun. A lifelong devotee of vodka martinis, and always ready to join in celebratory dancing, the artist kept a large couch in her kitchen so that she could chat with her guests while cooking. The Chronology also shares vivid details about Andrade's travels through India, among other exotic places, and her fascinating experiences working in Washington, D.C. during World War II.

It is tempting to speculate about how Andrade's career might have unfolded if she had been included in William Seitz's groundbreaking Op Art show at New York's Museum of Modern Art, "The Responsive Eye" (1965). Reportedly, Seitz was unaware of her work until after the exhibition's checklist had been finalized. In any case, the fact that Andrade lived and worked in Philadelphia was undoubtedly a factor in keeping her known mainly as a "regional" artist, even though she did have work in numerous other mid-sixties group shows of Op Art.

Of course, gender was also an important factor in Andrade's career.

The prevailing U.S. attitude toward women artists a half-century ago is demonstrated by the fact that Seitz's show displayed work by nearly one hundred artists, only a half-dozen of whom were female. It is also difficult to imagine an American male artist setting aside his career, during the 1940s, to help out in his wife's architectural practice.⁶

Op Art only enjoyed a brief time in the spotlight. By the mid-1970s there was a marked decrease in new publications and exhibitions relating to Op, which was quickly supplanted by newer developments such as Minimalism, Conceptual Art, and Photo-Realism. Likewise, the revival of interest in Op Art that began roughly ten years ago, with exhibitions in France, Germany, and the U.S.—including the exhibition with which this book is associated—was short-lived.⁷

In his catalogue for an earlier group exhibition Houston calls Op "a defining moment in the history of art," related to then-recent developments in physics,

optics, and experimental psychology.⁸ He also notes that Andrade created “entrancing compositions that overtly challenge our perceptual faculties while covertly expressing progressive ideals” (26). This book gives readers a long-delayed opportunity to savor the impressive range of that work. ●

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Notes

1. Amy S. Rosenberg, “An Op Art Original,” in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Jan. 11, 2007; articles.philly.com/2007-01-11/news/25220963_1_landscape-painting-pop-art-major-painter, accessed Sept. 11, 2016.
2. The two earlier retrospective exhibitions of Andrade’s work were held at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, in 1993, and at The Institute of Contemporary Art of the University of Pennsylvania, in 2003. The latest exhibit was on view at the Joel and Lila Harnett Museum of Art at the University of Richmond (VA), Oct. 27, 2015 – Feb. 8, 2016. This show was intended to move on to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts but, for reasons that remain unclear, the second venue canceled.
3. I have taught at The University of the Arts since 1990, but only met Andrade once, briefly, many years after her retirement.
4. Joe Houston also wrote the excellent catalogue that accompanied his survey exhibition of the same title, *Optic Nerve: Perceptual Art of the 1960s* (Columbus [Ohio] Museum of Art, 2007).
5. The proof of this lies in the popularity of Op Art posters in American college dormitory rooms during the 1960s, as opposed to Cubist or Minimalist images.
6. Bridget Riley was, and remains, the sole example of a female Op Art painter with whom most people are familiar. Her situation parallels that of Marisol, long regarded as the only significant woman making Pop Art—although Sid Sachs’s important exhibition “Seductive Subversion: Women Pop Artists, 1958–1968,” which opened in 2010, has done much to correct this misapprehension.
7. On page 30 of *Edna Andrade* Joe Houston mentions Op Art group exhibitions that took place in Columbus (Ohio), Cleveland, Santa Fe, and in several European cities, between 2005 and 2012. But today, Op still gets little, if any, coverage in art-historical survey texts.
8. Joe Houston, *Optic Nerve: Perceptual Art of the 1960s*, 19.

Annemarie Heinrich, Secret Intentions, Genesis of Woman’s Liberation in Her Vintage Photographs

By Paola Cortés-Rocca, Agustín Pérez Rubio and Victoria Giraudo
Fundación Eduardo F. Costantini, 2015

Reviewed by Georgina G. Gluzman

The Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires began in 2015 a series of exhibitions focusing on the contributions of Latin American women artists “to the construction of female identity” (20). The first exhibition was dedicated to the work of the German-born Argentine photographer Annemarie Heinrich (1912–2005), curated by Agustín Pérez Rubio and Victoria Giraudo. This richly illustrated, bilingual catalogue (*Annemarie Heinrich, intenciones secretas, Génesis de la liberación femenina en sus fotografías vintage*) that accompanied this remarkable show contains two texts on Heinrich’s work and an interview with her children. Annemarie Heinrich, known by many as merely the photographer of film, theatre, and ballet stars, is presented in the show as a complex, many-sided artist.

Pérez Rubio’s essay is the shortest, but it conveys the curatorial guidelines of the show, which aimed to explore the ques-

tion of Heinrich as “a visionary in relationship to women’s liberation” (20). It is there, at the very core of curatorial project, where controversies begin, for the curators talk about “proto-feminism” as a frame to understand her work. For them, feminism began only at the end of the 1960s, while the photographs of Heinrich included in the show date from the 1930s to the 1950s. The fact that feminism has a much longer history is ignored. Moreover, in Buenos Aires, where Heinrich worked all of her life, a powerful feminist movement is traceable to the end of the nineteenth century. The curators, therefore, have invented a new context for Heinrich, one that fits the purpose of their alleged “discovery” (hence the name of the show: *Secret Intentions*). They create a world without feminism, where Heinrich shines like a rarity. Instead of offering a reading of the work in the context of feminism, the catalogue insists upon the so-called visionary qualities of her work.

Pérez Rubio thus describes Heinrich as “ahead of her times” (27), as someone outside of the history, making photographs that anticipate the imagery of David Lynch, the cover art of Brian Ferry, or the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe (27). As Germaine Greer put it almost forty years ago, “[a]ny work by a woman, however trifling, is as astonishing as the pearl in the head of the toad. It is not part of the natural order.”¹



Fig. 1. Annemarie Heinrich, Sin título [Untitled] (ca. 1935), gelatin silver print, 9" x 6 5/8"

However, this approach fails to render visible the links between Heinrich and the many women artists who also embarked on the visual construction of the “new woman.” An untitled photograph (1935; Fig. 1) is one example of the artist’s involvement with the creation of a modern feminine iconography. The “elegant vice” of smoking, in the words of an Argentine writer of the period,² is shown against

the background of the city lights. Far from being “visionary,” Heinrich’s work is rooted in her time, a period of modernization of women’s roles in the country. This image helps to render visible the links between Heinrich and the larger panorama of women’s changing roles and attitudes.

Another noticeable strategy in the catalogue is the negation of other women artists. The myth of the “Great (Female) Artist” surfaces over and over. Here, Heinrich’s nudes give a chance to further ignore the context of her career: the many Argentine women artists who in different media, such as painting or sculpture, opened the way for Heinrich beginning in the late nineteenth century are not even mentioned. Thus, the artist is presented as a lonely female hero.

The discursive construction of a “Great (Female) Artist” is partially understandable in the Argentine context, where the debates raised by the feminist critique in art history have been

dealt with only very recently. Research on women artists of this period has been dominated by an interest in a rather small group of creators, such as Raquel Forner and Norah Borges. This almost obsessive fixation on a few names has successfully obliterated the efforts of those art historians committed to writing a fairer art history.

Paola Cortes-Rocca’s essay studies both the work and the historical context of Heinrich’s practice, successfully avoiding many of the curatorial problems. The author particularly analyzes both women’s professionalization and the consolidation of photography as a profession (51).

The interview that closes the book, offers an interesting perspective on Heinrich’s life, as articulated by her children, photographers themselves. They comment on several key aspects of Heinrich’s political and artistic life, including her support of Spanish Republicans and her views on the nude,

thus offering a forceful portrait of the artist.

Overall, the book offers the chance of reencountering Heinrich’s work, so often misjudged as trivial, through an excellent selection of her photographs. However, this long-awaited rereading could have benefited from a more careful analysis rooted in gender studies. •

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Notes

1. Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1979), 4.
2. “La Dama Duende” [Mercedes Moreno], “Notas Sociales,” *Caras y Caretas*, May 3, 1930.

Romaine Brooks: A Life

By Cassandra Langer
University of Wisconsin Press, 2015

Reviewed by Michelle Meagher

In the opening pages of *Romaine Brooks: A Life*, biographer Cassandra Langer describes her first encounter with the artist: an electrifying glance at Brooks’s 1923 *Self-Portrait* (Fig. 1) on the wall of the Whitney Museum of Art in Manhattan in 1971. This unanticipated response compelled a lifelong interest in the artist, which has resulted in the production of this valuable and fascinating text. Langer promises a “fresh view” (xi), one that repositions Brooks in twentieth century art and culture by correcting the until-now authoritative biography produced by Meryle Secrest in 1974. Langer begins with Secrest’s work, but complements and indeed expands it with a serious return to the artist’s unpublished memoir, “No Pleasant Memories,” and carefully detailed research from Brooks’s archives. The book’s promise to offer “a fresh and different picture of Brooks” (13) is additionally supported by

meticulous archival research and the author’s engagement with recent publications concerning the main figures in Brooks’s life, namely Natalie Barney and Élisabeth (Lily) de Gramont.¹

Beatrice Romaine Goddard (1874–1970) was born into a wealthy but unstable and neglectful family. Her alcoholic father abandoned his wife and two children in the year following her birth, and her mother left her young daughter for a period in the care of a laundress, living in a New York tenement. Romaine lived variously in boarding schools or with her mother and mentally ill brother, and for a time in Rome was able to study art. After several years living on a monthly allowance provided, begrudgingly, by her mother, and following the death of her brother and mother, Romaine inherited much of her family’s fortune, freeing her to travel and live as she pleased. A marriage of convenience to Ellingham Brooks in 1903 offered a measure of respectability to both partners, neither of whom was heterosexual. Not surprisingly, the relationship quickly fell apart, and at the age of twenty-nine, Romaine Brooks found herself single, financially independent,

and ready to pursue her lifelong passion for art-making.

Early in her painterly life, Romaine decided on portraiture, and as Langer chronicles, she was frequently sought out for this work. Among the most famous is the captivating *Self-Portrait* described by Langer in the opening pages of her book. Brooks represents herself in three quarter form, facing the viewer head on. She wears a dark coat and top hat and carries a cane. Painted in shades of black, white, and grey, she offers a thrilling shock of color on her lips and lapel. Best known for her lesbian portraits of the 1920s, “Brooks used portraiture to comment on how lesbians could effectively use gender ambiguity in order to play with style, personality, self-invention, and impersonation—all disrupting the bourgeois mores Brooks disdained” (125). This image is a key example of that popularized aesthetic, but Langer’s careful and contextual reading of the image suggests that her experimentation with gendered dress wasn’t simply about Brooks’s desire to resist the tight strictures of gender and sexuality, but is rather best understood

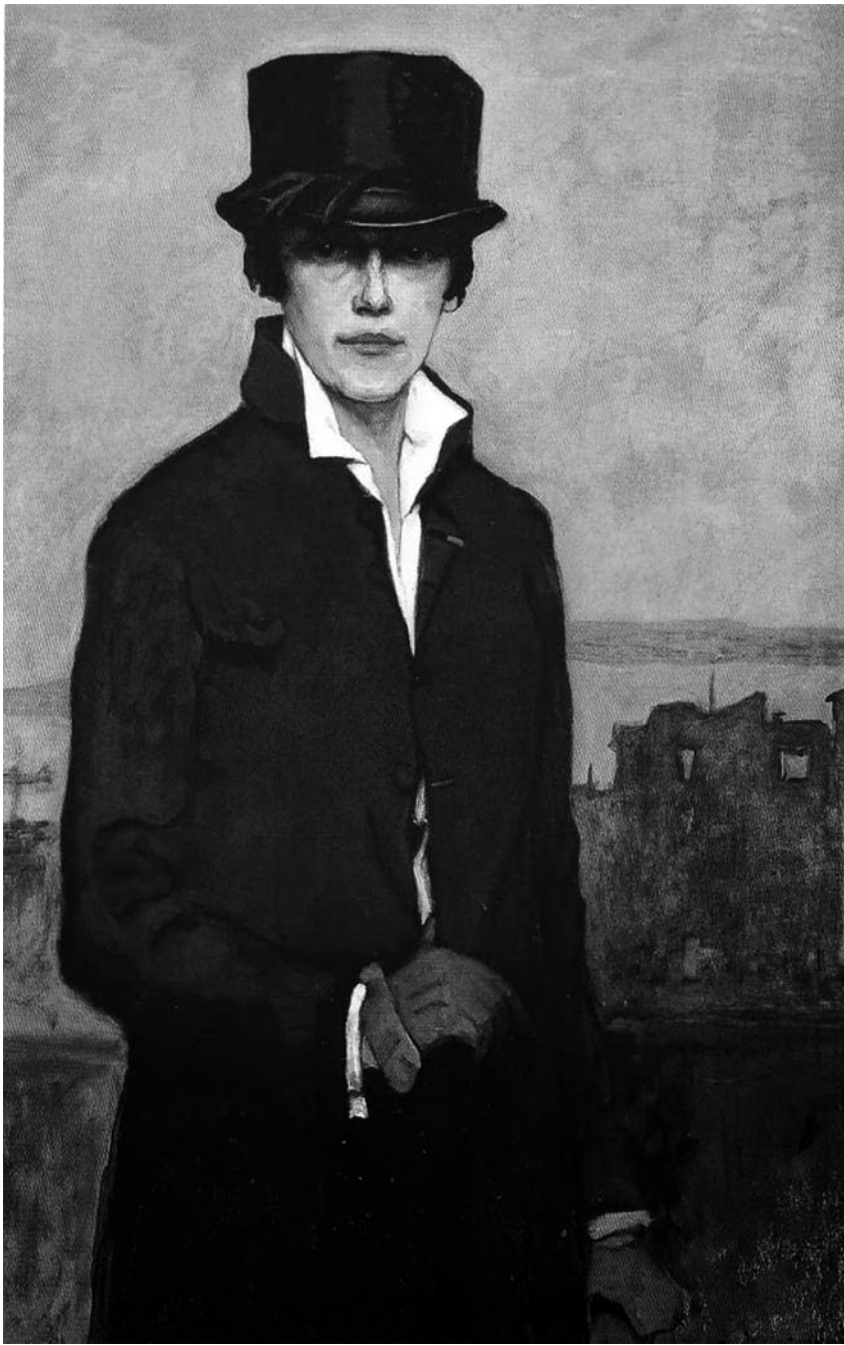


Fig. 1. Romaine Brooks, *Self-Portrait* (1923), oil on canvas, 46 1/4" x 26 7/8". Smithsonian American Art Museum.

as an expression of her "relentless independence and individuality" (82). Moreover, what emerges from this and other portraits is that Brooks's exploration of portraiture involved focused attention on single female figures, thus permitting her to develop what Langer describes as a heroic feminine (85). An early image in this pattern, *La France Croisée* (The Cross of France; 1914), is also characteristically stark in whites,

blacks, and greys. Like so many of her portraits, the figure was modeled by a close friend of the artist, in this instance, her lover Ida Rubinstein, a dancer and actor. Exuding a melancholic strength and self-assuredness, the image encapsulates what Langer describes as the "stern style" that marked Brooks's approach to portraiture. Brooks herself used the term "stern" to describe the aesthetic informing her work, which,

though accused of being "ice cold" (67) is perhaps better read as meticulous, serious, and deeply controlled (67–70).

Two years after painting *La France Croisée*, in the midst of World War I, Brooks met and fell in love with the woman who would be her partner until very near the end of their lives, the American-born "playwright, saloniste, and legendary seducer," Natalie Barney (217). Their relationship deeply marked her life, but it also has tended to overshadow much biographical writing on Brooks. Langer does not pull back from recognizing the influence of the sometimes stormy relationship between these women, but she insists upon the significance of Barney and Brooks's unconventional experiment in marriage. Brooks, often thought a loner, was a vital and engaged part of a "vibrant and ongoing family life" (6) with Barney and Lily de Gramont, a French aristocrat who, after losing her rank and money when she divorced her husband, entered into a (legally unrecognized) marriage contract with Barney in 1918.

Langer offers a vital intervention in the historical narratives about both Brooks and Barney. She draws on recently published scholarship—for instance Francesco Rapazzini's 2004 biography of de Gramont—to clarify the characterization of the relationship that was established in the earlier biography by Secrest. It's important for Langer to clarify basic facts, but she also argues that earlier scholarship has been marked by an opaqueness that often accompanies biographies of queer historical figures. The other point that matters for Langer is that by uncovering the true nature of Brooks's intimate life—a triad composed of interdependent but autonomous lovers—the unconventional and unique nature of her romantic and domestic arrangements becomes clear, breaking the comparisons of Brooks and Barney to "the Stein-and-Toklas model of coupled domesticity" (92). Langer maintains that the trio were "mapping new territory and building a model that simply did not have a name" (99). Buoyed by the privileges of financial freedom, which permitted each to avoid heterosexual marriage and, just as importantly, enabled each to keep multiple homes, these

women practiced a radical independence and autonomy. Langer writes that in their unique relationship, Brooks, Barney, and de Gramont “declar[ed] their freedom as women to explore their own sexuality and make their own decisions as to how they would experience their physical, emotional, and spiritual relations with each other within a society that allowed for nothing of this sort” (98). The early years of this relationship were, for Brooks, “amazingly productive,” and Langer points out that the work from this time “stands as visual testimony to the surge of creative inspiration and energy that loving Natalie and coming to terms with being in a committed relationship, albeit a trio, represented to Brooks” (97). Highlighting the relationship between the women not only expands understandings of Brooks’s personal life, it also enables Langer and her readers to consider the rich and lively lesbian culture in Paris, New York, Italy, and England in the first half of the twentieth century. These were wealthy, independent, cosmopolitan, white women who created for themselves vibrant and politically significant alternative communities.

One of the challenges taken up by Langer in this text is to understand “how such a cosmopolitan lesbian reconciled defying the bourgeoisie with conservative politics and bigotry” (158), which means dealing with the artist’s relationship to Fascism. Indeed, Brooks’s conservatism—and her reputed Fascism—are

important themes explored here. During the Second World War, Brooks moved to and sided with Italy (160), taking up residence there from 1940 until the mid-1960s; but her reasoning for this position was clouded by a misunderstanding of the broader implications of Fascism as a political movement. Langer goes so far as to argue that Brooks and Barney misunderstood the politics of their day and interpreted Fascism not as a militaristic form of government structured around dictatorship, but instead as a nationalistic movement that would “restore peace through imperialism by prioritizing culture” (161). Fascism, in other words, promised Brooks and Barney “a return to order following the chaos of war” (161); Langer contends that the two women saw Fascism as a movement that would enable them to continue to live the life of leisure, culture, travel, and autonomy to which they had become accustomed and hoped to sustain.

Langer distills a lifetime of research into this book. Her careful and indeed commendable biographical treatment of Brooks is organized chronologically, with each of the nine chapters covering a period of Brooks’s life, from her childhood in the United States to her last days in France. The book is carefully indexed; it offers a helpful chronology and a rich glossary of names that itself reads like a who’s who of queer European and American artists and writers of the twentieth century. The

book is well illustrated with 29 black and white images, largely reproductions of Brooks’s paintings, but also included are some striking photographs of the painter. Though Langer positions Brooks alongside the rising modernism and surrealism that dominated European aesthetics during the artist’s lifetime—arguing that her work was influenced by modernism but that the artist herself was ultimately disinclined to follow any aesthetic movements, content instead to practice stern, pure portraiture—the book shines when it describes her personal life. Langer does not set out to offer a conventional scholarly biography; what she accomplishes, however, is a work of “creative nonfiction” (12) that opens the door for further study on Brooks. •

Michelle Meagher is associate professor in the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of Alberta, Canada. She is author of several articles on self-representation in feminist art and is currently working on a project on feminist art and periodical history.

Notes

1. See for example, Francesco Rapazzini, *Élisabeth de Gramont: Avante-gardiste* (Paris: Fayard, 2004) and Natalie Clifford Barney’s autobiographical novel, *Amants féminins ou la troisième* (Cassaniouze, France: Erosnyx Editions, 2013), which was originally written in 1926 and only published in 2013.

Receptions of Antiquity, Constructions of Gender in European Art, 1300–1600

Edited by Marice Rose and Alison C. Poe
Brill, 2015

Reviewed by Rebecca Shields

This collection, *Receptions of Antiquity, Constructions of Gender in European Art, 1300–1600*, presents twelve essays. Five of them were delivered at the 2013 College Art Association annual conference, and seven additional writings expand the scope of the original panel. Featured essays consider the impact of classical art and texts on early

modern constructions of gender in art. Titularly the book addresses all of Europe, but aside from two studies addressing Renaissance reception and interpretations of scenes of rape in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the book deals almost entirely with Italy. Nonetheless, this volume provides valuable models for further art historical inquiry.

The essays reject the rigidity of reading a work of art or a text in one fixed, “correct” (usually male) way and instead adopt the premise that these works should be interpreted in a multiplicity of ways, depending on the viewer’s “horizon of expectations,” a concept first put forth by Hans Robert

Jauss in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (1982). Three essays address the gendering of allegorical figures. Mary D. Edwards offers an iconographic interpretation of the figure of Fortitude (c. 1304) in Giotto’s Arena Chapel and proposes an antique model for the grisaille figure in the dado of the chapel with an important discussion of antique representations of Omphale, the Lydian queen who briefly enslaved Hercules and donned his characteristic lion pelt. Genevieve Gessert’s analysis of the gender fluidity of figural representations of the city of Rome raises questions of the patriarchal underpinnings of the entire concept of the Renaissance, as “this

gender tension is at once a vivid description of the ruined state of antiquity, and a vivid metaphor for conceptualizing the Italian Renaissance desire to view, complete, and revivify Roman material remains" (99). Claudia Lazzaro argues that feminized representations of Florence as nurturing and fertile worked with, rather than against, traditional images of conquest, giving a certain flexibility to allegories of Florence.

Marginality figures into Katharine Bentz's study of the small minority of (male) Romans who found the practice of collecting and studying antique sculpture morally inappropriate. Bentz illustrates through this reception history that the revival of antiquity was the dominant, but by no means the only, vocabulary of sixteenth-century Roman taste. Fountains, gardens, and goddesses are central to April Oettinger's study of Lorenzo Lotto's *Venus and Cupid* (late 1520s) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Oettinger argues that Lotto's combination of reclining female nude and *puer mingens*, or urinating cherub, represents the stimulation of the creative imagination.

Patricia Simons's fascinating examination of the various modes of representing witches, hags, and crones in the sixteenth century gives early modern breasts their due. Simons's comparisons of nubile sor-

ceresses, such as Dosso Dossi's *Circe* (c. 1511–12) with wizened crones such as Dürer's *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat* (1500–01) take aim at Kenneth Clark's neat binary distinction between nudity and nakedness. Hetty Joyce similarly considers women acting subversively, even violently, in her analysis of the rape of Philomena in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and its representation on an embroidered valence (c. 1600) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This essay brings textiles, manuscript illuminations, and prints to the fore, further enriching the scope of media in the book.

Timothy Smith compellingly argues for the gender fluidity of the *Belvedere Torso* in his stimulating analysis of its significance as a model in Sodoma's *Execution of Niccolò di Tuldo* (1526). K. Sarah-Jane Murray and Ashley Simone explore women as figures marking pivotal moments of transition in the *Ovide Moralisé*.

Three essays consider mythological paintings depicting scenes of female bravery along the "horizon of expectations" of their identifiable recipients. Stephanie Leone's essay on Luca Signorelli's fresco of *Veturia Persuading Coriolanus to Spare Rome* in the Palazzo Petrucci in Siena considers the relevance of the work to Vittoria Todeschini Piccolomini, whose marriage to Borghese Petrucci in 1511 the fresco

commemorated. Leone's essay is a model for case studies that cannot rely on traditional archival materials, such as descriptions or accounts, which rarely record women's responses to art. Likewise, Maria Maurer rejects the rigid reading of the myth of Pasiphaë as a warning against unbridled female passion, arguing that Giulio Romano's fresco, *Pasiphaë with the Bull* (1526–28) in the Camera di Psiche in the Palazzo del Te in Mantua, could in fact be read as a statement of the power of Gonzaga women. Ian Verstegen considers the vanishing figure of Creusa in Federico Barocci's *Aeneas' Flight from Troy* (c. 1589) in light of the marital ambitions of its recipient, Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II.

Ultimately, the collection of essays is perhaps the ideal format for post-structuralist approaches to art history. A clear principle—the relative "horizon of expectations"—underpins the otherwise *sui generis* data of a multitude of case studies, each with her own nuanced stories that might be overshadowed by a broader narrative, and art history is richer as a result. •

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Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraits

By Frances Borzello
Thames & Hudson, 2015

Reviewed by Britta C. Dwyer

The self-portrait has long fascinated both artists and art historians because of the focus it provides on the fundamental questions of identity and forms of representation. Yet, until Frances Borzello's 1998 publication, *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraits*, most books on the subject of self-portraiture showed only a token selection of works by women artists. Her book provided a unique contribution to art history and the genre of self-representation.

Since then the situation has changed; new research has been added and previously unknown and forgotten women have come to light.

Borzello's revised edition seeks to fill this gap. The format consists of a short new Preface, followed by the Introduction and six chapters covering five centuries, of which the last chapter, "Into the Future," and "Conclusion: Drawing Breath" are new additions.

As in the 1998 edition, Borzello explains the scarcity of female self-portraits and the reason for the invisibility of women artists. Self-portraits painted by women artists have always existed, but given that they were created in a male dominated culture, they need to be explained in the context

of their making. So, Borzello asks, "Why have you chosen to look the way you do in your self-portraits?" (22). Her question is to the point. "In considering how to present themselves, women extended and inflected the range of self-portraits. For this reason, female self-portraiture deserves to be treated as a genre in its own right" (38).

Chapters One through Five, essentially reprinted from the earlier edition, cover themes and artists in the sixteenth through the twentieth century, with a few small additions. Through the centuries these self-portraits are discussed as documents of personal and professional achievement, as reflections of women's professionalism, as "beautiful" subjects either following

conventions or defying them, and more.

Of interest here is the entirely new Chapter Six, "Into the Future: The Feminist Impact," which provides an account of works from the second half of the twentieth century viewed specifically against the groundbreaking appearance of the first feminist art historians. Bolstered by the belief that the personal is political, the new wave of women artists was armed with feminist theory all the while expanding "the self-portrait's ability to speak about female experiences" (190), most poignantly captured in the performance-based *Rape/Murder* work by Cuban-American Ana Mendieta.

By the 1980s, the momentum changed as women artists found new things to say and new ways to say them (198). Indeed, nothing could better show that women artists began putting themselves confrontationally and confidently in the picture—physically, socially, and stylistically—than a slew of new themes. Health becomes a powerful subject for anorexic Rachel Lewis in *Am I still a Woman* (1990) and the topic of ageism is addressed in Anna Noggle's photographic work *Reminiscence, Portrait with my sister* (1980), appropriately questioning assumptions about perpetual youth culture. A major concern continues to be the female body—not as a passive object to be judged by male spectators but as a vehicle of their own interpretation. Jenny Saville's outsize naked body *Branded* (1992) is as unconventional (and shocking) as is it confrontational. Perhaps, one of the most unusual self-portraits in the history of art occurs in London-based artist Mona Hatoum's video installation *Corps étranger* (1994), which shows with claustrophobic detail the endoscopic journey into her own body. Of the many varied "voices" in this new chapter, Danish Olivia Muus must surely hail as the perfect artist for the age in her *Museum of Selfies* (2014; Fig. 1).

In her closing essay, "Conclusion: Drawing Breath," Borzello asks the loaded question, "What of the future?" The traditional self-portrait will survive, she writes, but "it will be joined by ever-more exciting works ... to express the complexities of being a female artist" (232).

Borzello's case for making female

self-portraiture a genre in its own right is both convincing and justified. Richly illustrated, the new edition provides an important updated account of the manifold ways of translating the female experience into a visual language. Still missing here, as in the earlier edition, is a mention of non-Western female self-portraiture, for instance the uninhibitedly bold sense of self-expression by some of today's women artists of the Republic of China as manifest in a recent 2011 exhibition.

My real problem concerns the packaging of the book. This new edition can unfortunately not compare with Thames & Hudson's handsome earlier publication. Yet, why a boudoir-pink cover? Why gender-marking the book so bla-

tantly? And why the oval insert of Helen Schjerfbeck's 1915 self-portrait on the cover, which "belongs" chronologically to Borzello's 1998 discussion. Surely *Museum of Selfies* by Muus would have been far more appropriate, if not also eye-catching to the potential browsers of books. Understandably these are the choices of the publishers and not of the author. The content of the book remains to be highly commended. •

Britta Dwyer, an Independent Scholar, lives in Cambridge, England; an art historian with a special interest in portraiture, she gives classes at the Cambridge U3A (University of the Third Age).



Fig. 1. Olivia Muus, *Museum of Selfies* (2014). Photo: Olivia Muus, museumofselfies.tumblr.com



Pl. 1. Frances Palmer, Yosemite Valley—California: *The Bridal Veil Fall* (1866), lithograph, 17 3/16" x 25 2/8". Currier & Ives, Yale University.



Pl. 2. Frances Palmer, *The Pioneer's Home on the Western Frontier* (1867), lithograph, 18 5/8" x 26 3/4". Currier & Ives, Yale University.



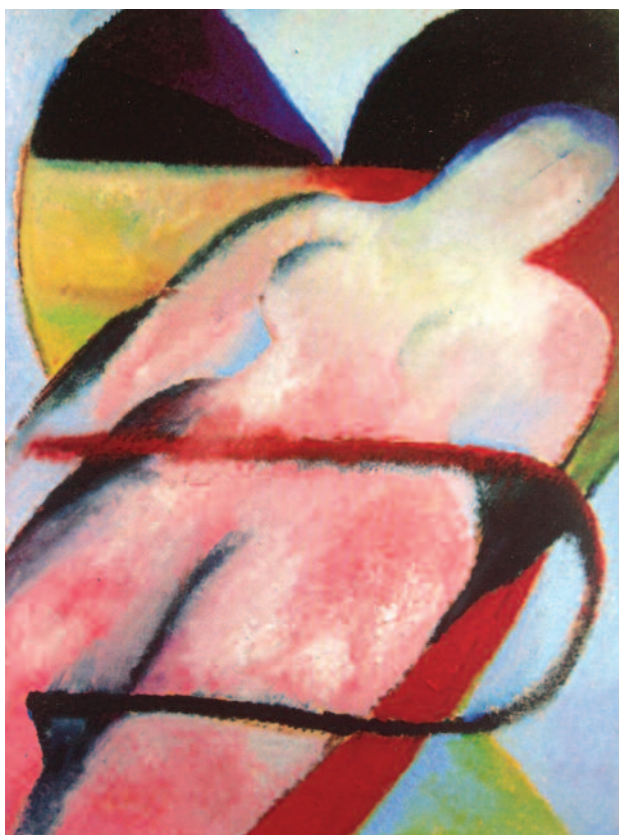
Pl. 3. Frances Palmer, *Across the Continent: Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* (1868). lithograph, 17 1/2" x 27 3/16". Currier & Ives, National Gallery of Art.



Pl. 4. Frances Palmer, *Woodcock Shooting* (1852), Lithograph, 13"x17". Currier & Ives' *America: From a Young Nation to a Great Power*.



Pl. 5. Marisa Mori, *Possession* (1932–35), oil on plywood, size in inches. Photographed by the author with permission from the Mori family.



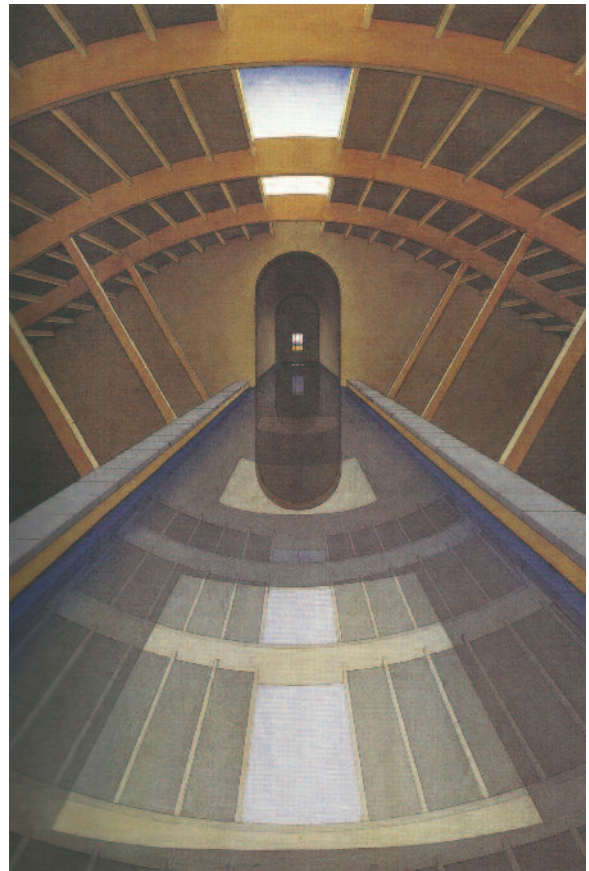
Pl. 6. Marisa Mori, *Sleeping Aviatrix* (1932), oil on cardboard, 39" x 27 1/2". Photographed by the author with permission from the Mori family.



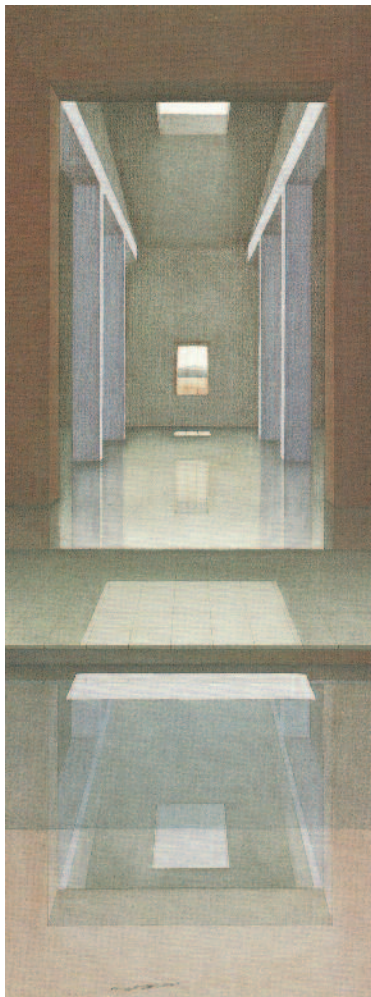
Pl. 7. Marisa Mori, *Military Synthesis* (1933), oil on plywood, 39 1/2" x 51". Marisa Mori exhibition catalogue, Aurelio Stefanini, 1994.



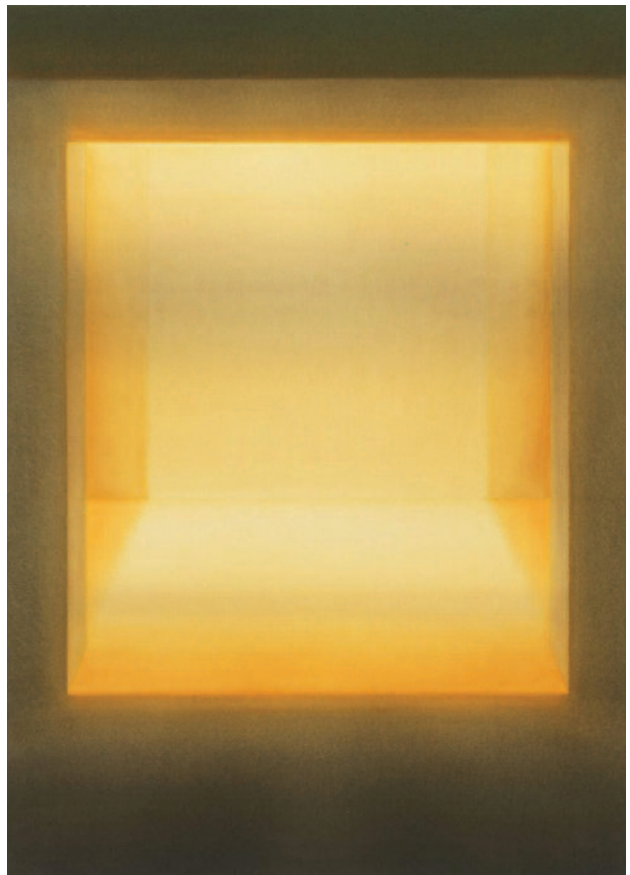
Pl. 8. Laurretta Vinciarelli, *Texas Remembered* (3 of 3) (1988), watercolor on paper, 30" x 22". Private collection.



Pl. 9. Laurretta Vinciarelli, *The Subway Series* (2 of 3) (1988), watercolor on paper, 30" x 22 1/2". Collection of Peter Rowe.



Pl. 10.
Laurretta Vinciarelli,
Water Enclosure in Blue
(1987), watercolor on
paper. Museo nazionale
delle arti del XXI secolo.



Pl. 11. Laurretta Vinciarelli, *Orange Sound, project* (1999), watercolor and colored ink on paper, 30" x 22". Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Pl. 12. Woman using a washboard. Photo: Tao Aimin.



Pl. 13. Tao Aimin, *River of Women* (from *Women River*) (2005), Installation, photography and sound, 39' 4" x 47 1/4" x 9' 10". Photo: Tao Aimin.



Pl. 14. Tao Aimin, *No. 4* (from *Books of Women*) (2005), installation, 19' 8" x 38 3/8". Photo: Onemoon Gallery.



Pl. 15. Tao Aimin,
A Woman's Long March (2006),
photography and video
installation, 30 3/4" x 46".
Photo: Long March Space.



Pl. 16. Tao Aimin, *Women's Scripts* (2008), installation and video, 10' 6" x 10' 6" x 31 1/2". Photo: Ink Studio.



HOME (LESS)

CURATED BY LAURA KRÜGER

SEPTEMBER 7, 2017- JUNE 30, 2018

**HEBREW UNION COLLEGE
JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION MUSEUM**

ONE WEST FOURTH ST, NYC 212.824.2218

Mon-Thur 9-5, Fri 9-3, Select Saturdays 10-2

Linda Stein
is represented by
Flomenhaft Gallery
547 West 27th Street
Chelsea, New York



The *HOME (LESS)* group exhibition features four “Cases” by Linda Stein, whose artist statement includes: This work is a progression of my art since September 11, 2001, when I consciously started to address themes of protection/victimization and power/vulnerability. This led to *Holocaust Heroes: Fierce Females*, and then to *Displacement from Home* *What to Leave, What to Take—Cabinets, Cupboards, Cases, and Closets*.

I was displaced from my own home for eight months following 9/11. Running for an entire day from the falling Twin Towers, I took shelter for the better part of a year with a friend at the other end of Manhattan. My downtown home was in turmoil. Everything in my apartment was covered with dust and debris: couch, carpet, curtains, books, mattress, fixtures and furniture. All needed disposal.



The observer of these Cases may be moved to tacitly complete a narrative, tell a story, prophesize, fantasize about what is behind these humble, yet compelling, materials. To whom did they belong? Were they used in celebration? What was each fragment's connection with its owner? Was it intentionally discarded? Was it a favorite object? Did it have sentimental value? Was it bought or found or gifted? The searching for familiarity and affiliation may become hypnotic for the artist and viewer alike. — Linda Stein

