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(Front cover) Joan Snyder, *Lipshtick* (2017), oil, acrylic, ink, cloth, pencil, pastel, rose hips, paper on canvas, 55" x 50". Photo: Dawn Blackman.

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Editorial Offices:
woman's Art Journal
628 north 2nd street
Philadelphia, PA 19123, usA
web: womansartjournal.org
e-mail:waj@womansartjournal.org

Advertising and Subscriptions:
ian Mellanby
old city Publishing, inc.
628 north second st.
Philadelphia, PA 19123, usA
Phone: +1.215.925.4390
Fax: +1.215.925.4371
info@oldcitypublishing.com

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Woman's Art Journal

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Our selection of articles for this issue unites artists from different times and places who delineate shared concerns about the plight of women in dangerous times. two of the artists presented in these pages are living: Joan snyder and eva r ocha. t hey bring compelling attention to women's rights and personal issues through their art production.

t he renowned American painter Joan snyder has been a feminist activist since the early 1970s. After graduating with the MFA from r utgers u niversity, she founded the women Artists series at d ouglass c ollege—then and now a liberal arts college for women within r utgers. t hese one-person exhibitions in the d ouglass l ibrary, beginning in 1971, were intended to introduce r utgers students to the work of emerging women artists, and to serve as role models for aspiring artists at a time when there were few if any women instructors in the visual arts programs. t he Mary h . d ana women Artists series continues to this day, offering exhibitions to women artists of varying generations.

o ver six decades, snyder's paintings and prints have drawn from her personal life, signaling times of conflict and triumph, sadness and joy. in a unique approach to interpreting snyder's art and life, our author is Molly snyder-Fink, the artist's daughter. she has written a moving, personal account—not only of snyder's career but of her mother's life and of life with her mother. For snyder-Fink, her mother's studio evokes memories of her childhood and, as an adult, she reflects on her deepened understanding of the work. snyder's paintings, she writes, "are bound by the materials she chooses, but their identity soars above what makes them. t heir identity is formed by the story she is telling in the process of creating."

Born in Brazil during the *anos de chumbo*, the years of lead, eva r ocha has known danger and tragedy. h er life experiences vibrate through her mixed-media and sculptural installations and canvases on which stirring, seemingly simple images are created with a single thread. As an art student, teacher, and performer, both in her home country and in the u s, she has given testimony to the abduction and silencing of women. About r ocha's recent sculptural installation comprising sixteen life-size female figures with their mouths bound shut, author Fredrika Jacobs writes that "*Silent Chorus* was conceived initially through 'interaction with women victims of human trafficking and other situations of forced migration.'" For other startling installations, r ocha uses video and technical devices to foreground these and other human rights abuses.

r eflecting on what she called "the l andscape of Man in the n uclear Age," Berta r . g olahny's (1925-2005) paintings and prints focused on the devastating effects of wars and the persistent threat of nuclear annihilation. Born in d etroit to a Jewish family, the child of immigrants, she favored a global view of suffering and social injustice. An art student in the 1940s, she was keenly aware of the atrocities of world war ii, and throughout her life, she continued making direct reference to places of torture and death, such as Auschwitz and h iroshima. Author Abigael Macg ibeny writes that in a 1960 painting titled *Bird of Fire (Hiroshima)*, g olahny "employed the malleable brilliance of oil paint to startling effect … the sky explodes in a vivid mix of red, orange, and gold. A woman stripped of clothing and hair, her open mouth red with terror, tries to shield a child clutching her waist. At bottom center a chubby infant views the viewer with strange calm, his skin radiant with the glowing hues of the eruption."

t he subject of our fourth article, the marginalized British c onstructivist Marlow Moss (1889-1958), faced a very different challenge, that of expressing her transgender difference through abstraction. h er early work is often compared with that of Mondrian, but as author Jessica s choula argues, what set her apart was her use of the double line. s choula argues "that Moss represents neither the female nor the male but rather a space in between," and she "attempts to elucidate certain curious components of [Moss's] work, which often signify her departure from Mondrian's strict n eoplasticism." s choula frames her "analysis of Moss's use of the double line in her c onstructivist paintings in reference to a consideration of her transgender identity."

Book reviews for this issue are broad-ranging and include exhibition catalogues and monographs about living artists—Judy d ater, l aurie Anderson, and Betye s aar, as well as noted women of the twentieth century—Anni Albers, Agnes Martin, Alma t homas, l ee l ozano, and s arah c harlesworth. A major survey of l atin American women is reviewed, and a book on "r adical e roticism" in the work of women artists receives attention. it is our intention to recognize new scholarship in art history, and we are pleased to include reviews of two new titles devoted to women artists in e arly Modern i taly. A book of essays on the well-known painter Artemisia g entileschi focuses on archival evidence leading to new attributions, and a second book investigates how "creative women navigated a patriarchal society to establish artistic reputations, secure commissions, and achieve fame."

s ince 2006, when r utgers u niversity became the co-sponsor of *Woman's Art Journal*, d r. u te t ellini has been our enthusiastic and efficient Book r eview e ditor, searching tirelessly for stellar new books on women artists and feminist topics. w ith her energetic style and winning personality, she has encouraged a long list of excellent reviewers to take on multiple assignments to review new publications for the journal. After overseeing many dozens of reviews and reviewers—after twenty-six issues—she is taking a well-deserved retirement. A mere thank you is not enough, and we will miss her good cheer and devotion to *WAJ*.

o n that note, we are delighted to welcome Aliza e delman, Ph. d . as the new Book r eview e ditor. s he has authored several articles and many reviews for *WAJ*, and it is our great fortune that she will step into this valued role. w e look forward to working with her and can rest assured that the quality and quantity of reviews will continue to excel.

As always, we thank r utgers u niversity for their support. w e extend a special thanks to o ld c ity Publishing for their advocacy and for sponsoring the *WAJ* booth at the annual meeting of the c ollege Art Association, February 13–16, 2019, in n ew york.

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

My Mother's Altar

Joan Snyder Paints To Face Herself

By Molly Snyder-Fink

In the summer of 1969, Joan Snyder (b.1940), the renowned American artist, made what she considered to be her breakthrough painting. She painted *Lines and Strokes* (Pl. 1) in her New York City loft on Mulberry Street at the very same time that the Woodstock Music Festival was happening. Snyder was starting her own cultural revolution right in the center of her studio. With *Symphony* (1970; Pl. 2), which she painted during that same period, she was in part rebelling against Color Field painting, "macho Minimalism,"[1] and generally the male-dominated sensibility of the art world. But more significantly, she was in the early stages of creating her own iconic visual language and establishing herself as a bold, uncompromising creative force whose prolific career would later receive national recognition—as a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and the MacArthur Fellowship. Snyder has remained in her studio for nearly six decades now, resulting in nearly eighty solo shows. As she recently told me, she is unlikely to "hang up her brushes" anytime soon. She is continually beckoned to the altars of her canvases to create, and in turn her paintings give life back to her with renewed meaning. I have the good fortune to say that Joan Snyder is my mother (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Molly Snyder-Fink and Joan Snyder (2018). Photo: Maggie Cammer.

Growing up with an artist for a mother meant that wherever we lived, a studio was attached, and she would consistently go to work in that studio, permeating our lives with stability and purpose. She was a then single parent, having left my father, the photographer Larry Fink, when I was just a toddler, and her paintings plus her decades-long artist teaching gigs were our bread and butter. Her career had taken off in the early seventies, before I was born, when the prominent New York art dealer Klaus Kertess put three of her large stroke paintings in a group show at Bykert Gallery. That opportunity helped to secure her first solo show, in 1971, at Paley & Lowe, a newly opened gallery in the Soho district of New York City. As a child, I distinctly remember gloating adults hovering over me with my mother's paintings behind them on the white, sterile walls of high-end galleries. I was overwhelmed. But at home, I took refuge in her studio. The smell of turpentine was comforting to me, and I'd wander into her work space just to be reminded of it. There was always something new to look at. At the age of six, I recall my mother inviting me to fasten white squares of silky fabric around ghostlike trees in *The Orchard/The Altar* (1986; Fig. 2), rendering an eerie, wintry scene. And at

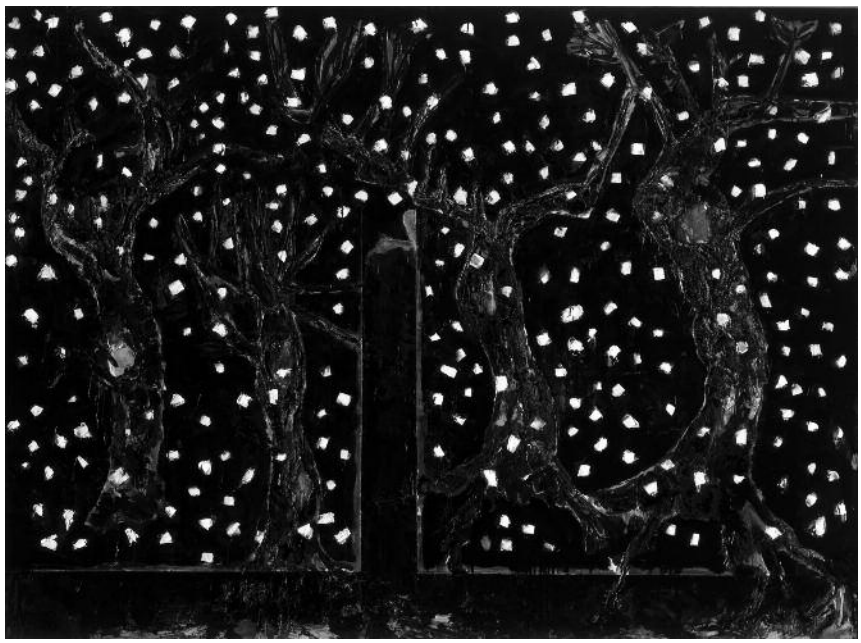


Fig. 2. Joan Snyder, *The Orchard/ The Altar* (1986), oil, acrylic, linen, paper mache on linen, 60" x 96". Photo: Steven Sloman.

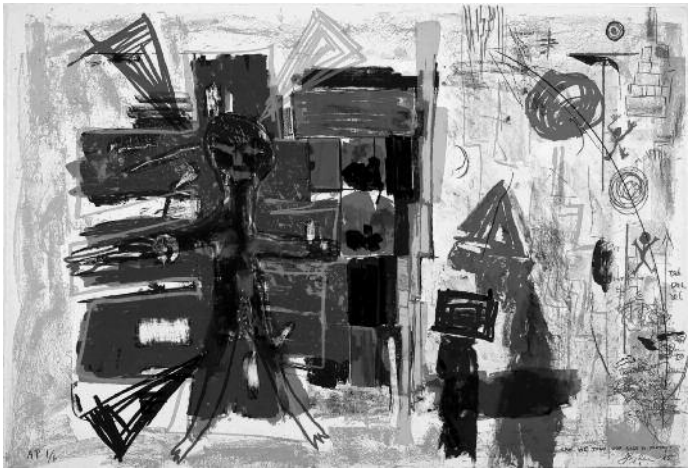


Fig. 3. Joan Snyder, *Can We Turn Our Rage to Poetry* (1985), color lithograph, edition of 20, 30 1/2" x 44 1/2". Photo: Zindman/Fremont.

the age of ten, she offered that I write a catalogue essay for a Joan Snyder exhibition at Hirschl & Adler Modern. An excerpt read:

> As I go to my mom's studio each time, I watch it develop, paintings popping up in different areas of the wall. As I watch our life develop, I think of how paintings and life relate. Over the years, our life developed just like her paintings did.[2]

Joan Snyder would agree. She has been reflecting upon how her paintings mirror her personal life from as far back as the early 1970s. In 1972 she wrote in a journal: "I have discovered that everything in my work relates to my life and all the important changes in my work are related to changes in my life, the most dramatic being summer 1969 when I was deciding whether to get married and was also struggling to do the grid layer stroke paintings." The entry continues: "The strokes in my paintings speak of my life and experiences. They are sometimes soft ... they sometimes laugh and are often violent ... they bleed and cry and struggle to tell my story with marks and colors and lines and shapes. I speak of love and anguish, of fear and mostly of hope." These insights are included in a longer essay by the art historian Hayden Herrera, in *Joan Snyder*, a 2005 monograph of my mother's work.[3]

In the introduction to that book, Norman Kleeblatt wrote:

> Today, looking at the trajectory of Snyder's oeuvre provides a view that is at once intimately diaristic and overtly operatic.... it ties together four threads. The oeuvre in its entirety serves as a barometer of the broad movements of her emotional life—it reflects the different environments in which she has lived, and it demonstrates her keen awareness of (and commitment to) urgent needs of contemporary society. Not least—though least discussed in the literature—the course of Joan Snyder's art over the last forty years demonstrates how she continually draws upon internal resources toward formal experiment and self-reinvention.[4]

Joan Snyder is a self-made person. The choices she made as a young woman strayed from the norm. Yet her gravitation towards painting as an undergraduate student in her last year of Douglass College, Rutgers University (she graduated in 1962 and completed the MFA at Rutgers, 1964–66), wasn't a complete anomaly. Her father, a toy salesman, had painted when he was a boy and then again in his older age. Having tried her hand at painting while growing up, my mother never thought that it could become her occupation, because women of that time became teachers or often social workers, which is the direction she seemed to be heading. But during her last year of college, she took an art elective that changed her life. She has said that the experience of painting in those early days was like "speaking for the first time." My mother was made from a different kind of cloth than most people whose conventions she was expected to follow as a child in the small, upwardly mobile community of Highland Park, New Jersey. She has often characterized her feelings of alienation growing up in the 1940s and 1950s by pinning some of it on her mother's insistence that she wear matching outfits "like all the other girls." The idea of conformity, she has acknowledged, made her anxious. She often felt that somehow she was different. And she *was* different, in search of her true self, as she was becoming a pioneering feminist artist. Embarking on this journey, she would soon find kindred spirits that aligned more closely with her sensibilities and values. She would also find herself.

I'm in my mother's Brooklyn studio, light streaming in through the skylights. It's April 2018, just months before my 39th birthday, the same age my mother was when she gave birth to me. It's also the month she was born. She often calls April "the cruelest month" because it was during this month in 1978 that she had a late miscarriage, a baby boy who was to be named Oliver. I came into the world about a year after this painful loss. For every failure to create there is another creation on its way. As I look around the studio today, I write:

> You get the sense that you are amidst a witches' den sitting in this studio. I'm studying a recently started small painting lying flat on its back. A piece of wheat-colored burlap is freshly glued to the canvas with an oval of bark, roots and dried rosebuds atop the cloth embossed by poured layers of green acrylic paint and topped off with golden glitter, creating a majestic, nest-like relief image. Dragonflies come to mind or butterflies, spring, the renewal of life, beauty. And yet, these are dead things encased in paint and chemicals. My mother leverages organic matter and toxic elements to express her ideas about being alive. The materials themselves infuse new meaning into old, deeply human stories.

Can We Turn Our Rage To Poetry (1985; Fig. 3) is the title of a lithograph that surmises Snyder's artistic sensibility to transform the negative into the positive; her work is her organizing principle much like the concept of God enables people of faith to find meaning and even joy from life's challenges. When you are an artist at work, you are assuming the role of the creator. You are your own Goddess.

Thinking about this, I write:

> Her work delivers her, and likewise, if we study it, we too are delivered. That is the witch at work, with her brewing pot, throwing in everything from the baby to the bathwater; she stirs a rigorous stew. All of her guts and the gore of living are mixed together, but by some miracle (that is in fact highly intentional and calculated) a pristine beauty emerges, levitating above the agony of birth. That is the good witch, the one who tries to heal us and cradle our sorrows by portraying flowers blooming rapidly across a battlefield.



Fig. 4. Joan Snyder, *Waiting for a Miracle* (1986), oil and acrylic on canvas, 78" x 120". Photo: Steven Sloman.

My mother has spoken about being at an altar when she paints. "It is the altar I go to face myself." And "Art," she says, "became a form of worship. Those were my shrines," speaking about her altar paintings made in the mid-sixties.[5] Her work is her self-created spirituality. It is her calling. She reaches new levels of comprehension about the meaning of life by throwing down herbs upon canvas, awash with glossy green paint and golden glitter. In the 1960s, when "the personal is political" became a rallying cry, my mother was in step with the times. Her early altar paintings from that decade were abstracted versions of the female body, and she would often add tacky materials like gold fringe or fake leopard skin. As Herrera wrote, "The use of vulgar non-art materials was part of a rejection of mainstream formalist taste, a rejection that Snyder would share with many women artists of the 1970s."[6] My mother's 'spiritual expression' at that time was political too. A good example of the use of these materials is a painting from the 1970s, *Vanishing Theater/The Cut* (1974; Pl. 3), where she incorporates thread, chicken wire, fake fur and cheesecloth into the painting. The use of 'kitsch' materials offers Snyder another tool for conveying meaning: the unexpected quirky object showing up in an otherwise stately painting can be humorous. As in *Love's Pale Grapes* (1982; Pl. 4), there's both a pleasing color palette and an ironic, sultry feeling because of the presence of the plastic grapes. In a 2015 interview about a solo show at the Franklin Parrasch Gallery, Snyder said, "My work has a sense of humor and is often playful as when I put plastic grapes or beads or glitter in a work, but just because a work has glitter in it doesn't mean that it's not dead serious."[7]

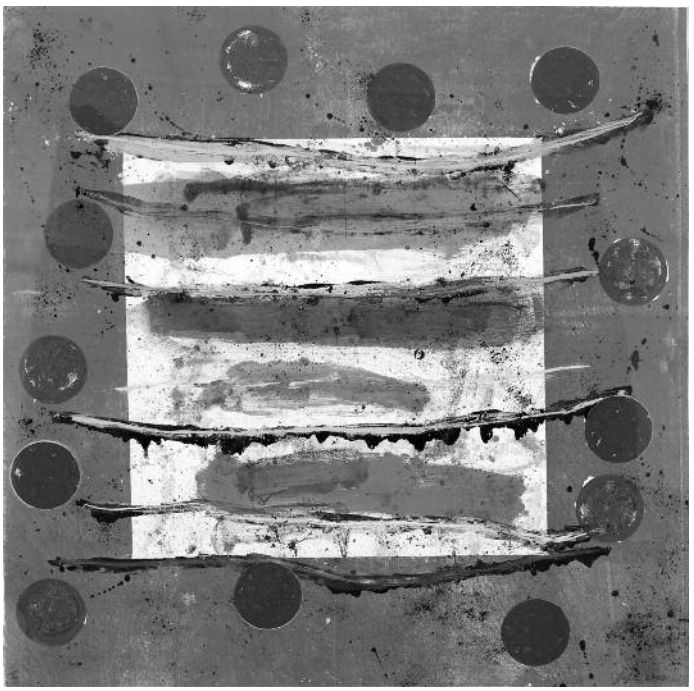


Fig. 5. Joan Snyder, *In Times of Great Disorder V* (2000), monoprint with lithography, woodcut and relief printing on paper, edition of 19 variable prints, 29 1/2" x 29 1/2". Photo: Bryan Whitney

On a recent trip to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, I visited the contemporary American painting section, hoping to gain new insights into my mother's work. I found little to reflect on. There were some usual male greats, Jasper Johns and Cy Twombly—"the boys' club," as women artists of my mother's generation might call them. It was only when I ascended to the second level and was among the South East Asian exhibit, which focuses on gods, goddesses, and divinity, that I found meaning that resonated. My mother is not a religious person, despite her upbringing with a devoted and loving Orthodox Jewish grandmother who shared her faith in subtle and intimate ways. But it was her discovery of painting that, for my mother, was like finding her God. Her work has always beckoned for a higher existence, borrowing ancient symbols like mandalas and totems, and expresses an affinity with nature. In a review of "Joan Snyder: A Painting Survey, 1969–2005," an exhibition at the Jewish Museum, Mark Stevens wrote, "She's one of our pagans … she seems to call upon something visceral, vital, and ancient, as if she just



Fig. 6a. Joan Snyder, *Apple Tree Mass* (1983), oil, acrylic, paper mache, wood, paper, cloth on linen, 24" x 72". Photo: Steven Sloman.

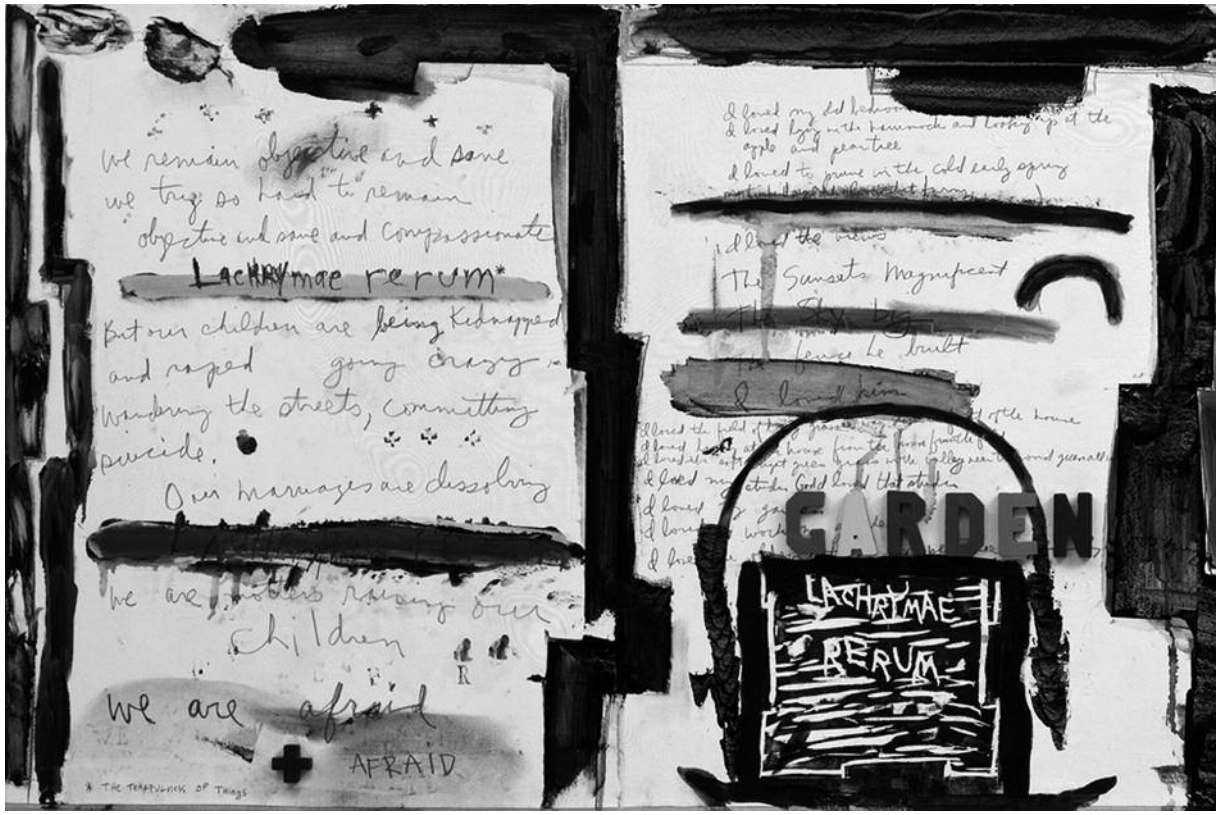


Fig. 6b. Joan Snyder, *Apple Tree Mass* (1983) (detail), oil, acrylic, paper mache, wood, paper, cloth on linen, 24" x 72". Photo: Steven Sloman.

doesn't have time for the ironies of the moment."[8] A good example of this might be a painting called, *Waiting For A Miracle* (1986; Fig. 4) in which Snyder paints a huge iconic totem in a dark autumn field, a work that becomes like a prayer for her friend Porfirio Didonna who was suffering with a brain tumor and soon to die.

Many of the sculptures in the Philadelphia Museum's South East Asian exhibit were about the power of being female. It made me want to place my mother's work in the context of these cultures, to inquire into whether she would be called a "feminist artist" in that world. The answer, of course, was a resounding "no"; her work is distinctly different from ancient Hindu sculptures. However, the stories she is telling through her visual language that employs female-centered narratives is akin to artistic representations of the goddess Durga, who represents the active power of the universe being triumphant over the demon of ignorance. It is only in the context of the American art world that a critic can remark that "Snyder's work [is] a continual sacrifice of modernism on the altar of feminism."[9] I can't help but read this as the author's perception that white male entitlement is being challenged by my mother's paintings, which he speaks of with reverence but

also with the implication that modernism and feminism are worlds apart. Fortunately, Snyder keeps a healthy distance between her art practice and the reviews of her work. When she is at her altar, facing her canvas, she becomes entirely herself, able to block out art world speak.



Fig. 7. Joan Snyder, *Powdered Pearls* (2017), oil, acrylic, cloth, colored pencil, glitter, beads on canvas, 50" x 78". Photo: Dawn Blackman.

Discovering the grid… Snyder's adoption of the grid was distinctly different from its use by minimalist artists. "The source of the grid began for many reasons," she told an interviewer, "one being the desire for narrative in the work. How to do that, structure that. And I had been very interested in music—the staff providing lines for notes—plus I had been working with children … and had become very used to seeing children's drawings on lined yellow paper. Those drawings became one of my inspirations for the grid," she said in a 2014 interview with Cara Manes for the MoMA / PS1 blog, in which they discussed *Sweet Cathy's Song* (1978; Pl. 5). "I do think my use of the grid came from my own search, not from any minimalist theory, but that doesn't mean I wasn't affected by what was going on. I, though, wanted more in my paintings, not less … and I wanted narrative."[10]

In 2000, I wrote gallery notes for her exhibition titled "In Times of Great Disorder," which featured a suite of eighteen monoprints (Fig. 5) that all employed grids with colorful, bold mandalas circulating around them. I wrote about her use of the grid in these monoprints as an organizing principle, a way to remain sane in the midst of chaos.

> The grid that begs the image to have composure
> An imagined sanity pushing through the havoc
> Explosive tissues of ink
> Some marks may rest.
> We are living in times of great disorder. Nothing is permanent or ever completely still. Yet the intuitive marks and incessant circles do the healing and bring some order.[11]

Also, at the time, I wrote about the job of a daughter being to learn her mother's pain, to learn her own pain, and to know how to distinguish between the two. Many aspects of our lives have changed in the last eighteen years, and yet I find that what I wrote then still resonates with my present experience of sitting with her work.

A recent grid painting, *Storyboard* (2017; Pl. 6) consisting of sixteen rectangles, can be 'read' like a graphic novel. No matter how you are accustomed to reading—from left to right and top to bottom or from right to left, bottom to top—you can 'read' this painting. Even those words featured in some of the rectangles, scribbled in script or handwritten illegibly, can say something. As emerging readers are taught, try to derive meaning from the pictures. If you can't make out some letters or decode the words, keep going. Read the images: an outstretched hand, a face beneath a black curtain (or is it a scene of two people inside?), three vulvas—one of which is part of a body, ruby red lips printed upon a paper towel, an explosion that drips down the canvas like a rainstorm, and the echo of grapes. In 1971, Marcia Tucker, the founder and director of the New Museum, wrote about Snyder's early grid paintings:

> Because no one part of the painting is less complex than any other, the visual confusion that results forces one to "read" the painting, stroke by stroke, and precludes being able to apprehend it as a whole. The grid, although it is a fixed system on which the elements of the painting thrash about, fails to offer visual stabilization. It offers visual *direction* instead, an indication of where to start, literally, "reading" the work. It is, according to Snyder, like a writing pad on which to place the letters, words or sentences that constitute a pictorial language.[12]

A good example of this would be an early 1970s work, *First Anniversary*, a painting made on the first anniversary of my parent's marriage. And as per *Storyboard*, I only know from my mother telling me that one of the boxes with the scribbly script says, "Your bruises darling." And I know that those words are for me.

It is a peculiar position to be in, knowing that my mother's latest body of work is, in part, a manifestation of her grief about the painful experiences I've gone through. Much like she chronicled the deterioration of her own marriage with paintings like *Apple Tree Mass* (1983; Figs 6a and 6b and Pl. 7) she is, in this latest body of work with paintings such as *Storyboard*, *Powdered Pearls* (Fig. 7) and *Love, Mom* (all 2017), processing complex emotional layers using her signature visual language. As my mother noted recently, "I feel free making them, making marks in a stream of consciousness, with

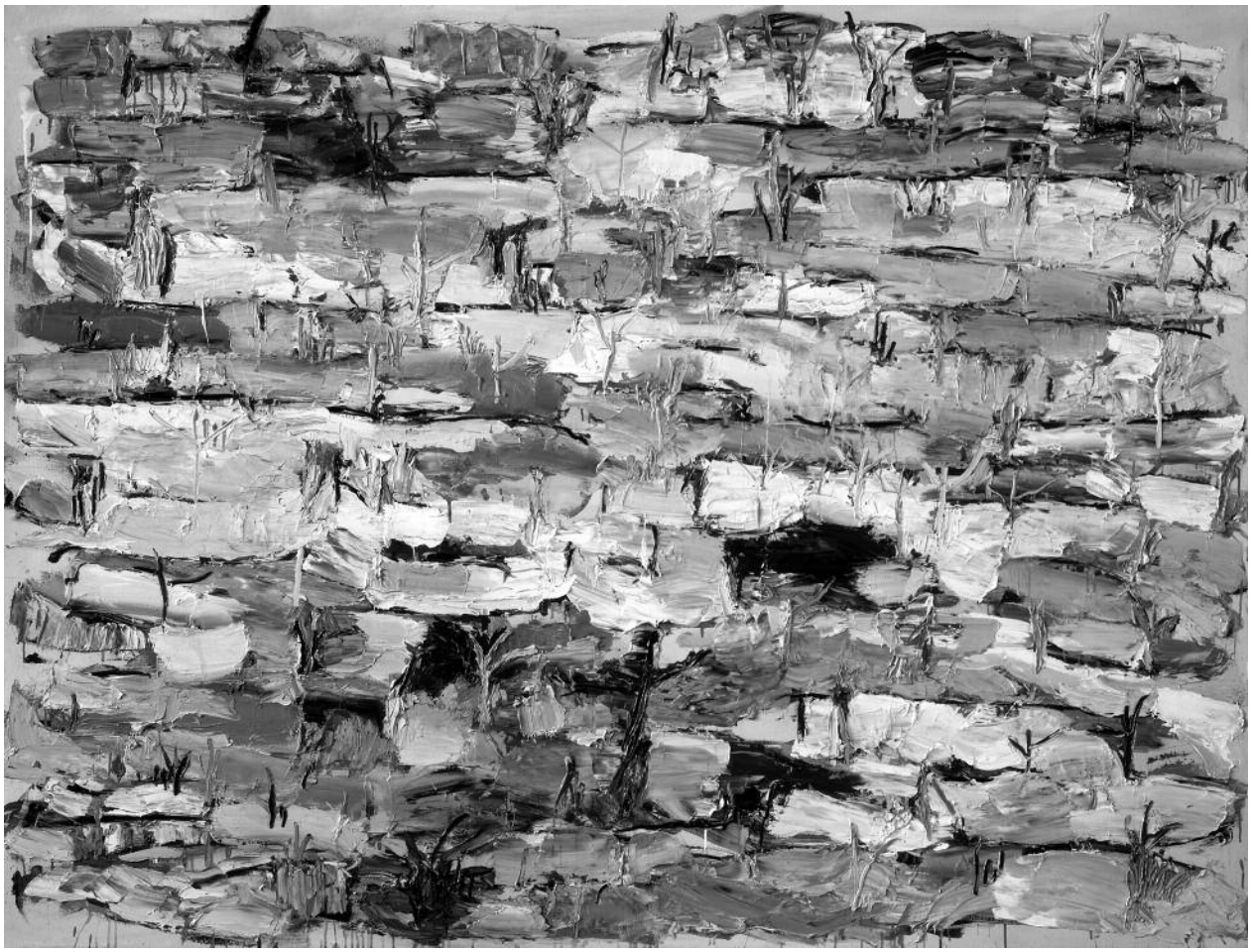


Fig. 8. Joan Snyder, *Beanfield With Snow* (1984), oil, acrylic on canvas, 72" x 96". Photo: Steven Sloman

messages that can't be read or spoken aloud to anyone, messages that break apart ... using all the iconography developed over 50 years of working. Totems, angels, female figures, nests, openings, breasts, strokes, lines, marks, words...stick figures, screaming mouths, red lips...." Marcia Tucker's 1971 words still apply to this current body of work: "Because no one image takes precedence over another, and because there are so many images in a single canvas, there is no *gestalt*, no holistic aspect to these paintings. For some artists, there is a desire to amalgamate the multiplicity of one's experience into a single image, to comprehend it and give it order. Snyder presents that multiplicity as it is experienced."[13]

Along with presenting multiplicity, a duality of voices is a frequent presence in Snyder's paintings. She is at once dealing with complex adult issues, while speaking through the voice of a child—the inner child if you will. Again, I am reminded of Marcia Tucker's writing about the 1970s work: "The disregard for formal perspectives (or for any single perspective or vantage point) in this work relates the painting to the way a child first makes objects larger or smaller according to a personal system of importance, rather than to an approximation of the 'real' values of the adult world. Similarly, Snyder appears to have disregarded the accepted values of formal-ordering in favor of a more personal, hermetic arrangement of images."[14] A current example of this can be found in another recent grid painting, *Lipshtick* (2017; front cover), that includes a number of boxes containing lips and hearts that are molded from paper mache. A set of words in chicken-scratch emerge next to the spine of a damaged tree: "you bastard." Four open mouths side by side create the sensation of being animated, as if the lips are speaking the words that are written on the painting. The other legible phrase is, "that's my child," written in a couple of places. And then, two hearts; one is of paper mache and the other in solid red paint with a purple line cut through it anchoring each side. These hearts and lips are elemental images that convey heartbreak. My mother's own voice within the realm of this painting comprises many voices speaking through her, like a manifestation of the human psyche on canvas.

In 1983, when she painted *Apple Tree Mass,* my mother was adjusting to being a single parent living in Manhattan. Just a few years before we moved back into our rented loft on Mulberry Street (in the cross section between "Little Italy" and "Chinatown"), a boy from a nearby neighborhood was abducted one morning. He was only six and at his insistence his parents had allowed him to go out alone and walk to the school bus stop—a mere two blocks from his parents' loft in

Soho. Needless to say, it was a different time. Parents across the city and the nation were jerked into a state of terror about protecting their children. I can imagine how this affected a newly single parent, just having moved to the area where this crime had occurred, knowing that a kidnapper was on the loose. I remember my mother holding my hand tightly as she walked me to school. At that time she also knew other mothers whose teenage children had committed suicide, and many women in her community had recently left their husbands. The world as they knew it was coming undone.

Written on the left side of *Apple Tree Mass,* in a loose hand script, it says:

> We remain objective and sane. We try so hard to remain objective and sane and compassionate. *Lachrymae rerum*. But our children are being kidnapped. And raped. Going crazy. Wandering the streets. Committing suicide. Our marriages are dissolving. *Lachrymae rerum*. We are mothers raising our children. We are afraid. AFRAID.

She translates the Latin phrase that's repeated twice at the bottom of the canvas, "the tearfulness of things." Both phrases are encased in different shades of purple oil paint strokes. In her writing, she assumes the collective voice for these women, elevating the content to more than just personal. Just to the right of that panel, she makes a list of all the things she loved about living at the farm (a property in Pennsylvania she and my father had purchased in the early 1970s) and her marriage and what she has lost. Underneath a soft washed pink stroke, she writes, "I loved him." In an etched square at the bottom of this list she repeats yet again, "*Lachrymae Rerum*." Big block letters, each a different color, glued onto the canvas overlaying some of the writing, spell the word "GARDEN." The block letters infuse the word with a child's perspective, and in all of the dizzying madness of society with its social ills, my mother seems to be insisting on preserving innocence.

The Garden of Eden must prevail… In the righthand, double panel of the painting are a landscape with a tree and a figure standing in what looks like an arched doorway. It appears that my mother is juxtaposing her former life in the country with her challenging new life in the city. In the mid 1980s we moved again. This time from our Mulberry Street loft into a small farmhouse in Eastport, NY, surrounded by bean fields. These fields inspired Snyder to abandon the heavy-hearted paintings she was making at the time and begin a series of bean field paintings, the first, *Beanfield With Music* (1984, Pl. 8) followed by *Beanfield with Snow* (1984, Fig. 8) and then *Beanfield with Mud*. All of her field paintings, and there have been many over the years, harken back to the energy and spontaneity of her early stroke paintings.



Fig. 9. Joan Snyder, *Lovers* (1989), oil on wood panel with fabric, 18" x 24". Photo: Zindman/Fremont.

A pervasive philosophy in Snyder's work formed in the 1970s when she began to explore what she calls the 'female sensibility.' In *Heart On* (1975; Pl. 9), whose title she came up with during one of her daily studio visits with my father, two gold hearts, shrouded flesh-like paint and crimson drips of menstrual blood fill some of the squares that are part of a larger grid composition. For her this painting was about "female pain, anger and needs."[15] In her artist's journal (1976)



Fig. 10. Joan Snyder, *Lady Labyrinth* (1989), oil, acrylic, paper mache, and cloth on linen, 60" x 60". Photo: Steven Sloman.

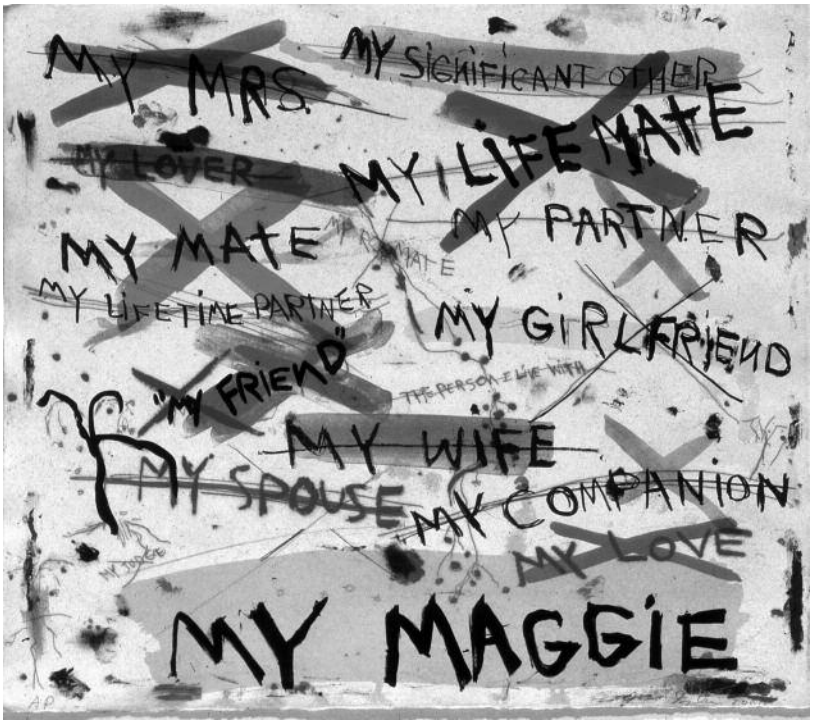


Fig. 11. Joan Snyder, *My Maggie* (1997), etching with watercolor on paper, edition of 60, 9" x 11". Photo: Zindman/Fremont.

she created a definition of not only what she was doing in her art at that time but also what then seemed a common theme among women artists: "Female Sensibility is layers, words, membranes, cotton, cloth, rope, repetition, bodies, wet, opening, closing, repetition, lists, lifestories, grids, destroying them, houses, intimacy, doorways, breasts, vaginas, flow, strong, building, putting together many disparate elements, repetition, red, pink, black, earth colors, the sun, the moon, roots, skins, walls, yellow, flowers, streams, puzzles, questions, stuffing, sewing, fluffing, satin hearts, tearing, tying, decorating, baking, feeding, holding, listening, seeing through the layers, oil, varnish, shellac, jell, paste, glue, seeds, thread, more, not less, repetition…."[16] She wanted to put all that it was to be female in one painting, and to celebrate her gender using all of the visual and material strategies she had developed thus far.

Lucy Lippard, responding to the trending "feminine sensibility," wrote at that time: "A central focus (often 'empty', often circular or oval), parabolic baglike forms, obsessive line and detail, veiled strata, tactile or sensuous surfaces and forms, associate fragmentation, autobiographical emphasis, and so forth … [these] are found far more often in the work of women than of men." [17] And in 1976, in *Art in America*, Hayden Herrera wrote of Joan Snyder's paintings: "They will continue to unsettle our notions about the quality of female experience as well as the pieties of abstract art."[18] My mother's work was at that time exposing the complexities of being a woman in a way that was generally not understood by the male-dominated art world. She was also unearthing painterly constraints by her bold insistence of speaking in her own voice.

Part of her search in exploring the female sensibility artistically was delving into her own sexuality. During the same era that she was making wildly courageous paintings about the female anatomy and psyche, she was seeking intimacy with women. Whether in the form of political gatherings to discuss greater visibility for women's art or seeking fulfillment sexually and emotionally with particular women, my mother was already in the process of leaving my father and their farm. Her paintings at that time expressed the agony she felt in her journey to come to terms with her sexuality. She later explained: "I was making paintings that were, for me, about being a painter and about being a woman, about trying to paint the internal, organic anthropomorphic sense of being a woman and also about my own sexual awakening."[19]

Not until the late 1980s would she meet her soulmate, Maggie Cammer, a New York State judge, whom she has been with for thirty-one years; Maggie is my other primary parent. In the early days of their courtship, she painted *Lovers* (1989; Fig. 9), an erotic scene between women unfolding on a black stage. The lovers are surrounded by flowers. The black strokes were painted with such vigor that a visceral sensation can be felt, as if the bodies are swaying in a ship at sea. My mother's passion makes itself felt in this painting that is, unlike many of her other works, fairly uncomplicated. It conveys joy, pleasure, and relief. That same year she also painted *Lady Labyrinth* (Fig. 10) and *Lady Blacklines*, both which appear in the catalogue for the Hirschl & Adler Modern show mentioned at the beginning of this article. A passage from Snyder's artist's statement read:

> This work reflects all of my concerns and moods, my sorrows, losses and struggles and a peace that has finally come into my life.

I can only assume that the "peace" she was referring to was finally having found a partner with whom to share a fulfilling life. But choosing to be with a woman was again stepping outside of societal conventions, much like her choice to become a feminist artist. And yet, this just gave her one more reason to put her life's journey into her art. In *My Maggie* (2000, Fig. 11) a monoprint with mostly words, she writes in caps, "My significant other, the person I live with, my Mrs., my life mate, my spouse, my companion, my love," etc. crossing all of them out with brightly colored red, orange and purple X's and "My Maggie" lands at the bottom of the print, highlighted in a happy sunshine yellow.

Preserving the Dance… Again I'm in the Brooklyn studio, studying a recent work, *Floating Soul* (2018; Pl. 10), a large square canvas whose central figure is part of the female body, her breasts and belly bulging out, suggesting pregnancy. Attached to her belly are wing-like thighs that seem to lift her in space, for she is swimming in a sea of deep blue water,

surrounded by paler shades of lavender blue and finally framed in a copper-toned, earthy circle of herbs and bark. The figure represents fertility, and she is created out of paper mache, that semen-like gluey substance bound up with its second incarnation, from tree to paper. Snyder's paintings are bound by the materials she chooses but their identity soars above what makes them. Their identity is formed by the story she is telling in the process of creating, I write:

> ... We are skin and bones and blood and muscle. We have a brain, and a heart and lungs and a tongue but does any of this define who we are?

Organic matter is mirroring the content, adding narrative force to an already pulsing, female image. Around this figure and her pond with its barky beach are strokes—light-filled pink and purple strokes, as if chosen by little girls to adorn their mother. My mother worries that the quality of the strokes will be changed with prolonged exposure to sunlight, and so she has sprayed them with an ultraviolet archival varnish to protect them. She has created the strokes out of a white ground carefully dried and painted over with colored inks. The effect is that each stroke has a light gradient to it, so that it dances off the canvas with greater dimensionality than would that of a flat matte paint stroke. Preserving the dance is critical.

My mother's journey as an artist, and her resulting body of work has taught me many lessons, and I am still learning. Foremost, she has taught me that if you are going down one path and another one presents itself that fills you with intrigue and hunger, take that one. It may be painful, but it will make you a stronger, clearer person. And although you are part of a world with influential forces all around you, follow your own voice and create your own language. Further, once you have found your calling, your spiritual and artistic duty, go to it each and every day. As Joan Snyder has written in one of her prints, "My work has been absolutely faithful to me." I think that perhaps she meant it the other way around. It will only be in that act of daily artistic devotion that the fruits which are yours to bear will make themselves known. •

Molly Snyder-Fink is a documentary filmmaker and writer. She lives in Brooklyn with her son. Her work can be found at: www.mollysnyderfink.com.

Notes

Additional artworks and writings by and about the artist can be found at www.joansnyder.net.

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Eva Rocha

Corpus of Memory

By Fredrika Jacobs

"Scamander's banks re-echo long and loud the screams of captive maids, as they by lot receive their masters."

-Euripides, *The Trojan Women*[1]

"Life is not about what we become
but about how we become."

-Eva Rocha, 2015[2]

Born during what are frequently referred to as Brazil's *anos de chumbo*, or "years of lead," Eva Rocha (b. 1967) speaks unflinchingly of her memories of an era beset with the fears of unexplained disappearance and the anxieties of unknowing. Works including two 2015 mixed media installations *I Am Not the in the Business/ I Am the Business* (Fig.1 and Pl. 11 and *Object-Orientalis* (Pl. 12), which respectively project videos of four and sixteen female nudes cramped into travel trunks and packing crates, resonate similarly with those memories. They reveal, albeit in different ways, her understanding of what it is to see and be seen during a time of disappearance.[3] Mapped to fit tightly within coffin-like spaces and moving almost imperceptibly within those constrictions, each projected figure is not so much a naked body to be looked at as it is an object to be looked through. Indeed, the act of looking through is underscored by haptic experience. Viewers, as if compelled, often extend inquisitive fingers into the crates. As a hand passes through a figure that is in truth not there, it comes into contact with the stuff that is: shredded paper, plastic wadding, sand, salt, and rice, the materials that are used to wrap, bundle, and bind commodities to be shipped—or trafficked—to buyers. Her thread works, such as *Under Self Spell* (2017; Fig. 2), resonate similarly albeit with distinct difference. In these contoured figurations of the female form stitched with black basting thread onto raw, rough edged canvas, as well as in other works, Rocha asks viewers to confront the reality of commodification not simply as a process of objectification but, rather, as one of dehumanization. She does so from the distinct perspective of having witnessed and experienced the *anos de chumbo*.

On March 31, 1964, the Brazilian Army marched on Rio de Janeiro, forced the ruling president, João Goulart, to flee, and claimed dictatorial control of the country. During the course of the next twenty-one years, purges silenced the populist left, censorship muzzled the press, and repression quashed any social movement that opposed the newly devised "institutional acts."[4] The worst human rights abuses occurred under the authoritative regime of Artur da Costa e Silva (1966–69). Detention was routine, imprisonment arbitrary, and torture all too common. Some people simply vanished, as also happened in Argentina between the years 1976 and 1983, Chile from 1973 to 1990, and Uruguay from 1973 to 1984. During those troubled times, disappearance was a fact of life, even in



Fig. 1. Eva Rocha, *I Am Not in the Business/I Am the Business* (2015), mapped video projection, travel trunks, mixed media. Photo: Eva Rocha.

the southern state of Paraná, where Eva Rocha spent her earliest years.[5] Not all who disappeared were political dissidents. Then, as now, Brazil was "a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor."[6] Like the thread Eva Rocha uses to fashion the figures in the ongoing series of thread works, a life of normal routine could be cut short.

Rocha chooses her materials with care. Whether "hair, underwear, tissue paper from presents, candles discharged from churches, objects collected on the streets," or lingerie obtained through social media solicitation, materials acquired without monetary transaction are those Rocha prefers.[7] For much of her life, materials produced expressly for the making of works of art were hard to find and too costly to acquire. "When you don't have good money for art supplies you feel guilty using [whatever] money you do have to buy them, so you do what you can." You use "available things," the stuff dropped "on the street and in the dirt," the bits and pieces of detritus left on a workroom floor. After all, she asks, "what is art material anyway?" For Rocha the [re]use of discarded and left-over materials is at once liberating and empowering. On the one hand, found and collected objects, which are imbued with their own past, function as connectors that enable her voice to reverberate with those of others to sound a collective outcry against social abuse and injustice. On the other hand, "available things"—needle, thread, frayed pieces of fabric—tie Rocha to her past. Certainly, it is not by chance that she "draws" with these materials.

For as far back as Rocha can recall, thread, needle, and fabric have figured prominently in her life. As a young child growing-up in rural Itacolomy, she remembers spending long hours beneath her grandmother's worktable in the community's general store. Throughout the day, her grandmother retrieved a large bolt of cloth from a shelf, placed it on her worktable, then measured and cut pieces of fabric to order. With each purchase a newly frayed edge of cloth released fibers to the floor. As the pile grew steadily larger, Rocha gathered its varied bits into small heaps, which she then manipulated into recognizable shapes. Even then, she grasped the creative possibilities afforded by strands of found fiber and miscellaneous lengths of thread. Because these materials were readily "available and cheaper than color pencils… I made my drawings with them," she says.[8] Later, in her thirties, Eva Rocha turned again to fiber when she found herself without drawing materials.

Following several years of experience in experimental theater acquired while working in São Paulo (1986–97) with producers and directors known internationally for their contributions to the avant-garde stage, including Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba, and Furia del Baus, and having earned a bachelor's degree in Cultural Studies in the Dramatic Arts from Virginia Commonwealth University (2002), in 2005 Rocha settled in the northern highlands of Peru.[9] She found work teaching theater at Davy College, a school established to serve the affluent international community of engineers and skilled workers employed by the Yanacocha Gold Mine. Her responsibilities at Davy occupied half of her day, and she spent the other half at the financially less-well-off Escuela Superior de Formación Artística Mario Urteaga Alvarado. In exchange for directing student theatrical productions at the Escuela Superior, Rocha took classes in painting, drawing, and the history of Andean textiles and ceramics. It was at this time that she began "creating images of people in the streets using thread," a medium that was again dictated by circumstance. Paradoxically, the world's largest gold mine, Yanacocha, is situated in Peru's most impoverished region, and while the supply closet at Davy College was full, art

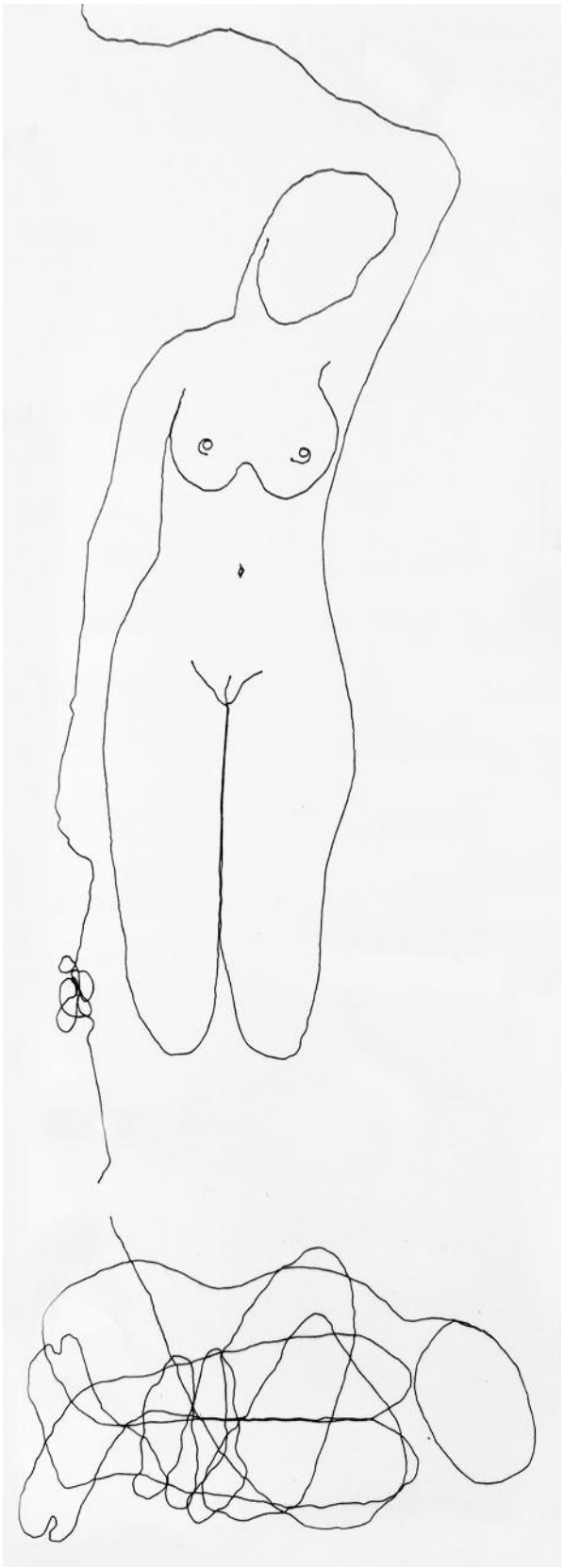


Fig. 2. Eva Rocha, *Under Self Spell* (2017), thread and unbleached canvas, 78 ½" x 28". Photo: Eva Rocha.

materials were otherwise scarce, which posed a dilemma. Reflecting on the predicament, Rocha asks, "How do you make an oil painting without paint, without cloth, without material?" Her answer was to return to materials familiar from her childhood in Itacolomy. Although she is no longer required by exigent circumstances to "draw" with thread, she continues to do so nonetheless. But availability and familiarity were not—and are not—the only motivating factors behind Rocha's use of needle and thread. Sewing, she says, is an act of self-determined "control," a means of claiming jurisdiction over one's self. The contention is evident in a corpus of thread works that is unabashedly self-referential.

During Brazil's "years of lead," newspapers were censored and the state-controlled airwaves filtered and spun the news each evening between six and seven on the Hora do Brasil (A Voz do Brasil). Even so, people learned the truth, as updates that bore little resemblance to the daily broadcasts were recounted by word of mouth in local gathering places. "I would hear stories from people passing through," Rocha recalls. "I [would] hear a man talking about men disappearing … crying for his brother." She remembers strangers straggling into town, disoriented, nervous, edgy. Perhaps, she says, they came from 30° Batalhão de Infantaria Motorizada de Apucarana, a military installation feared as a place of torture that was within walking distance of Rocha's village. In their ignorance, the children taunted these stragglers, yelling "the police are coming" then laughing at the resultant spectacles of unbridled panic they had instigated. Rocha remembers one man in particular. He "would hit his head very heavily and run and cry." When unprovoked by juvenile torments, he simply "walked in the streets … with no memory." As an adult trying to make sense of these remembrances, Rocha came to believe that this man, like others who drifted into and out of town, lost his memories when he lost his mind behind the walls of 30° Batalhão.

At age fourteen, Rocha and her family relocated, moving north to the municipality of Apucarana. Two years later, the sixteen-year-old Rocha joined the ranks of the disappeared. Although critics of the ruling regime continued to be imprisoned, political detractors no longer accounted for all those who suddenly vanished from the streets and homes of Brazil. Human trafficking was on the rise, its victims overtaking the number of people detained by the state. Rocha describes the situation perfunctorily. "The *desparecidos* abducted by military governments" became "another group taken by human traffick[ers]." Assessed to have market value in an illicit economy of supply and demand, Rocha was abducted, reduced to a commodity to be exploited for commercial gain. Before managing to escape her captors, she was bound with rope and held for three harrowing days with a bag placed over her head. Although physically unharmed, she was emotionally traumatized.[10]

Recalling the ordeal, Rocha observes reflectively that during that time "I had no face." Seeking to defend herself from all she sensed but could not see, Rocha says she "absented myself from myself so I would not suffer." Disassociating herself from her frightening situation and moving to the safety of a psychic space, she was doubly absent. Her face was physically erased by the shroud-like bag that others had forced upon her, while her emotional self was psychologically erased by her own will. "If you are present in one place," she explains, "you are absent from another." The slippage between absence and presence that characterizes Rocha's verbalized remembrances is visualized with striking poignancy in *Object-Orientalis* (Pl. 12), an installation that projects images of sixteen nude women—"fifteen plus me"—into shipping crates.

Exhibited first on the grounds of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, in conjunction with 1708 Gallery's InLight Festival, 2015, *Object-Orientalis*, was described as an exploration of the "correlation between the commercial relationship we have developed with the contemporary art object and the ways we have allowed ourselves to objectify other humans."[11] Commenting on the reinstalled work nearly two years later, Rocha explained further. *Object-Orientalis* uses video mapping to "fit" sixteen nude women "into positions of constriction inside crates." The result creates "the illusion of the women being trapped inside the crates, ready to be shipped." The work, she explains, is an exploration of "personal and collective trauma," an assertion underscored by the artist's decision to include herself among the crated women.[12] Here, as well as in *I Am Not in the Business/I Am the Business* (Fig. 1 and Pl. 11), Rocha blurs the distinction between herself and the works she produces. Both, she asserts, have market potential as commodities.[13] Nonetheless, it is the reprehensible transaction of the former—Rocha's memory of being "packaged" for sale—rather than the customary economics of the latter that is communicated more strongly.

Not surprisingly, Rocha repeatedly revisits the memory of her captivity. In *Ode to the object* (2015; Fig. 3), she gave it the form of a compact bundle of women's lingerie placed on the rusted coils of a bed surrounded by an assemblage of men's hats. In *Chorus* (2017), she encircled the torsos of sixteen fragmented mannequins with the same heavy, knotted rope. But it is with a Facebook post dated October 15, 2017, and, more specifically, a photograph she subsequently manipulated, that Rocha confronts memory—her own and as a faculty of storing and retrieving experience—with particular poignancy. "An Amber Alert has been issued for a 16-year-old girl missing out of Woodbridge. She is believed to be in extreme danger." On the artist's Facebook page the announcement is appended to a black and white photo of a young girl presented in triplicate. As sometimes occurs when an image or video from news media is reposted, the center photo records the missing girl's features in sharp focus yet those on either side of it do not. Rocha applied this b-a-b format to one of her own identification photos. The impassive expression that is so legible in the center photograph is an indecipherable haze in the pendant images (Fig. 4).[14] That Rocha reposted an Amber Alert for a sixteen-year old girl is not surprising, but the parallels between the missing girl and the artist's own disappearance should not blind us from seeing more in this photographic triptych. The juxtaposition of the vivid with the indistinct can be seen as a commentary on memory and, from the vulnerable perspective of the *desparecidos*, a gloss emphasizing the profound need to



Fig. 3. Eva Rocha seated beside bundled women's lingerie (20"x 30"x 20") used in the installation *Ode to the Object* (2015). Photo: Eva Rocha.

be remembered when facing the horror of being forgotten.

Rocha remembers well how she was not forgotten. During the artist's three-day disappearance, her grandmother picked up a needle and thread and began to stitch her granddaughter's likeness. "When I was brought back home, my grandmother, who is Roman Catholic [and an] Italian immigrant," said she had "prayed over my body, stitching it close so they wouldn't touch me." Viewing the act of figuration as one invested with protective agency has roots deep within the Italian Catholic culture that defined Rocha's grandmother and inevitably informed her legacy to her granddaughter. For centuries, many Roman Catholics perceived efficacy in representations of Jesus Christ, His mother, and the saints. Despite efforts by the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (1962–65), popular pietistic practices continued to evince the belief that an image can function as a surrogate for the holy referent. Hence, by and through an image the physically absent were appreciated as wholly spiritual presences capable of providing protection from danger and releasing the sick and injured from pain. Accordingly, in times of need the faithful turned to a sacred image such as the venerated *Salus Populi Romani* or the *Volto Santo*.[15]

Scores of theological texts acknowledged agency in sacred images, maintaining that representations of the holy enabled the divine to have an affecting presence on earth. Although denied the type of miracle-working agency accorded Lukan icons and *acheiropoieta*, secular images—specifically portraits of a loved one—were viewed by the mid-fifteenth century as having the capacity to "make the absent present." Among the first to articulate this "divine power" was Leon Battista Alberti. The author of the highly influential treatise *On Painting* (1435), Alberti held that through a well-executed portrait "the faces of the dead go on living for a very long time."[16]



Fig. 4. Eva Rocha, *Self-portrait* (2017), photograph posted to Facebook by the artist.

Alberti's contention, which was reiterated by dozens of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theorists, has its basis in a story recounted by Pliny the Elder in the *Natural History* (77–79 AD), a best-seller in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. According to legend, the arts of figuration, meaning at that time sculpture and painting, "originated in tracing lines around the human shadow." In truth, Pliny claimed, this was an undisputed fact. What remained in question was the identity of who first recognized the powerful potential of contour line to, in Alberti's words, "make the absent present." While acknowledging that early sources suggested diverse contenders for the distinction, Pliny favored the daughter of Butades of Sicyon, a potter in Corinth, as the perspicacious inventor.[17] Seeing the shadow of her lover cast on a wall, she drew its outline on the eve of his departure, transforming the contoured physiognomy into a trace of presence. By the eighteenth century, the practice was adapted to the popular aesthetic of silhouette portraiture. Known also as a shade, shadowgraph, and skiagram, the silhouette came into fashionable vogue.[18] Referenced as early as the late seventeenth century, silhouette portraits grew steadily in popularity throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Notably, the practice of affixing an opaque, black cut-out to a prepared white or cream-colored ground was attended by a surge in history paintings representing the story of Butades's daughter tracing the cast shadow of her lover as a remembrance of his presence.[19]

Silhouettes vary in medium, technique, and type. Despite differences, they have the same visual effect.[20] The represented subject appears as a featureless, opaque form. Exchanged between families, friends, and lovers, silhouettes were memory prompts intended to instigate recall. Although Rocha's contoured figures can be seen as a positive to a silhouette's negative, both hold evacuated interiors within an expressive delineated edge. Moreover, both function in a context of remembrance. As eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature makes clear, portrait miniatures, which included silhouettes, went "beyond the limits of representation."[21] Not only were they invested with the capacity to maintain the presence of an absented loved one—as did the trace of the lover of Butades's daughter—they prompted the viewer to interact with the image "as if it were alive," conversing and kissing it in ways that had been observed and recorded by Leonardo da Vinci centuries before.[22]

The blurring of lines between the representation and the represented that allowed silhouettes to engage in a "dialectic between presence and absence" became especially striking when the nineteenth-century taste for portrait miniatures merged with the fashion for donning a departed loved one's lock of hair configured into a wearable keepsake.[23] Mixing finely cut strands of the sitter's hair into pigment, artists quite literally collapsed subject into object by subsuming the substance of one into the materiality of the other, thereby underscoring what Alberti had recognized four centuries earlier as the "divine power" of the image to "make the absent present."[24] Like nineteenth-century miniaturists, Rocha evocatively used hair in the work she considers to be her first as a visual artist, *Eaves* (2011; Pl. 13). Yet unlike early miniaturists, she did so not to summon the aura of an absent other but instead to assert her own presence by literally incorporating herself—her hair—into the work. If in its integration of object and maker *Eaves* introduced a concept later developed in *I am Not in the Business/ I Am the Business*, it was also a precursor to the contoured female figures imaged in her thread works. Stitched into the mottled and stained pink of a 3" x 3" square of attic insulation, the figure "drawn" with hair evokes an intimacy of palpable presence that *Object-Orientalis* interrogates with its videos of "fifteen [women] plus me."

This fusion of self and work cannot be divorced from Rocha's years in experimental theater in São Paulo. "In my country, Brazil, I used to work as an actress, as a performance artist and I carried that into my visual art explorations. My body is there representing something, someone beyond my own body."[25] Rocha's groupings of sixteen in *Chorus*, *Object-Orientalis*, and most recently, *Silent Chorus* (2018; Figs. 5, 6 and Pl. 14), an installation of cast figures that, in Rocha's words, "investigates how the body stands [as a] physical archive of traumatic experiences of the individual and [the] collective," identify what and who the represented "something" and "someone" are.[26] The "something" is trauma. The "someone" is everyone who cannot forget.

"I think we cannot pass memory. It is always present." To date, Rocha's corpus of work has corroborated her statement without emendation. Yet if memory cannot be erased, as the artist claims, it is subject to modification through the distancing of time. Now, three years old in its conception and in its first iteration, *Object-Orientalis* can be viewed as among Rocha's most provocative engagements with the remembered anxieties of absence and presence. As stated above, the work "give[s] the illusion of [sixteen] women being trapped inside … crates" through the mapping of video projection.[27] Although each of the sixteen figures comprising the work is physically distinctive by reason of body type and hair style, all are subjected to the same condition. Crammed into the identically sized shipment crates and allowed movement relative to the relational size of body-to-container, all but one figure maintains the placement of their head in profile. Significantly, each further hides her face, cupping it behind raised hands. The single exception is Rocha. During filming, the artist dropped her hands at unanticipated moments, revealed her face, and turned her head to look directly into the lens of the camera.[28] In the context of *Object-Orientalis*, Rocha's confrontational act of looking purposefully asserts her presence, forcing the startled viewer to become cognizant of their voyeurism. Moreover, because bodily presence is an illusion, an image that the viewer not only looks through but sometimes penetrates in a confounded attempt to touch, *Object-Orientalis* is disquieting.

Silent Chorus arouses a similar sense of disquiet by other means. Constructed in conjunction with the ReCast Project, *Silent Chorus* was conceived initially through "interaction with women victims of human trafficking and other situations of forced migration."[29] Rocha composed each life-size cast of two elements. From the waist down, each figure has the shape of the lower half of one of the mannequins used in *Chorus*. Used originally to display the fashionable full, flared skirts of the 1950s and 1960s, these mannequins, similar to santos cage dolls, substituted evenly spaced slats of woods for legs. Covered in burlap, a mixture of plaster and concrete, and colored with dirt, the reworked wood slats have the appearance of ragged swaths of heavy cloth. In composing the remainder of each figure, namely an armless torso, neck, and partial head, Rocha turned to models she describes as "volunteer women [who] lent their faces to the faceless, [a] voiceless chorus affected by many tragedies." Although *Silent Chorus* is informed by a literary masterpiece, Euripides' *The Trojan Women* (ca. 415 B.C.E.), it references the recurrent tragedies of "forced migration."

The Trojan Women has special meaning for Rocha, who performed the role of the *coryphaeus*, or chorus leader, in São Paulo. Rocha blended her voice with those of fifteen others to lament a woman's fate as a spoil of war (Fig. 7). Together, the Chorus intoned a "piteous dirge" of loss: "No more through Ida's looms shall I ply the shuttle to and fro … henceforth shall I endure surpassing misery … [I]t may be as the unwilling bride of some Hellene; … it may be as a wretched slave."[30] Hecuba, reduced from the once proud queen of Troy to "a poor old drone, the wretched copy of a corpse," takes stock of the "smoldering ruin" of her war-torn homeland before acknowledging the inevitable. "Forth from my home to slavery they hale my aged frame." Her fate, to be "dragged and hurried away" to "dwell beneath a master's roof," is one she will share with all Trojan women. In the final lines of the tragedy Hecuba bemoans the future of Troy and foretells the fate of those who died to defend it. "Woe for the temples of the gods! Woe for our dear city," and woe to men such as "Priam, slain, unburied, left without a friend." The final exchange between the Chorus and Hecuba is worth quoting.

> Chorus: Soon you will tumble to your own loved soil and be forgotten.
>
> Hecuba: And the dust mounting to heaven on wings like smoke, will rob me of the sight of my home.
>
> Chorus: The name of my country will pass into obscurity; all is scattered far and wide, and hapless Troy has ceased to exist.[31]

The message is clear. As Troy goes, so go its captive women.



Fig. 5. Eva Rocha, *Silent Chorus* (2018), plaster, wood, burlap, concrete, and dirt. Installation, April 28 – July 1, 2018, The Depot, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond. Photo: Fredrika Jacobs.



Fig. 6. Eva Rocha, *Silent Chorus* (detail) (2018), plaster, wood, burlap, concrete, and dirt. Installation, April 28 – July 1, 2018, The Depot, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond. Photo: Fredrika Jacobs.

It is easy to grasp the appeal of Euripides's play for Rocha as a performer and as a visual artist. In fact, *Silent Chorus* conjoins the two forms of expression by expanding her questioning of what it means to be seen to include what it means to be heard, or, perhaps more aptly, what it means to gaze back, speak up, and thus not be forgotten. As in the performance in São Paulo, *Silent Chorus* features Rocha as one of the sixteen dramatis personae. At once referencing Greek theater and the artist's personal understanding of the need to absent one's self from the self in a time of crisis, the members of Rocha's chorus are only partially present. The cast torsos and heads are not whole. Torsos, their fronts cross-stitched to their backs, lack limbs. Heads are but faces with closed eyes and mouths conspicuously silenced by wide strips of stiffened burlap. Mask-like and seemingly gagged, the assemblage of faces repudiates the very function of the Greek chorus. Stifled, fragmented, and visibly hollow, they are, in Rocha's words, "a shell of absence."

Months before making *Silent Chorus*, Rocha examined "situations of forced migration" not through myth but by remembering an historical incident. During the spring of 1598, the Spanish conquistador Don Juan de Oñate led a party of approximately five hundred settlers that included 129 soldiers and seven Franciscan friars into the northern valley of Nuevo México (New Mexico). "Alternating new promises of fair treatment with traditional displays of Spanish weapons," Oñate settled the group "in the midst of the Pueblo peoples."[32] The uneasy peace that initially characterized the relationship between the native population and the newcomers erupted into open conflict as undisciplined soldiers and needy settlers threatened Pueblo subsistence. With winter setting in and starvation a looming prospect, native warriors killed Oñate's nephew and the ten soldiers who had accompanied him to the pueblo of Acomo in January 1599. Retaliation was swift and harsh.

> Spanish soldiers stormed Acomo, killing eight hundred Indian men, women, and children during three days of savage hand-to-hand and house-to-house combat. The victors herded five hundred survivors eastward to the Rio Grande for trial by Oñate for treason and murder. He condemned all those who were over the age of twelve to serve as slaves for twenty years. Those who were male and over the age of twenty-five also suffered the severing of a foot, to discourage them from running away or resisting their masters…. [C]hildren under the age of twelve…[were shipped-off to] Mexico as servants to Christian families.[33]

With *Severed* (2017; Fig. 8), a work made while in residence in New Mexico, at Santa Fe Art Institute, Rocha, drew on the

Acomo massacre to draw attention to the inequities, including the loss of identity that attends involuntary immigration and the ensuing clash of cultures. Originally installed at the entrance to Santa Fe Art Institute's exhibition "Equal Justice," *Severed* featured plaster casts of feet hanging from horizontal lengths of barbed wire strung from vertical posts suggestive of an unscalable ladder, a barrier between here and there, a fence separating us from them. Each foot was distinctive. Cast with plaster colored by dirt and shaped by the idiosyncratic feet of visitors to SFAI and other artists-in-residence, *Severed* presented viewers with an anatomical mélange of feet: "small, large, bunyoned [*sic*], narrow, crooked, clawed."[34] But while each foot was distinctive, all were similarly suspended. As with *Chorus*, *Object-Orientalis*, and *Silent Chorus*, *Severed* focused on collective trauma. And as is the case with *Chorus*, *Silent Chorus*, and so many of Rocha's thread figures, the absence of wholeness was weighted with meaning. In *Severed* the fragments, which connect the work to a documented incident, also refer more generally to objectification as a process that "allows fragmentation" and, indeed, sanctions "brutal dismemberment."[35]

Concurrent with her work on multi-figured, mixed media installations, Rocha has continued to produce thread works, smaller pieces that also address issues of presence, absence, and memory. However, having been stitched at different times over the course of many months, the figures comprising the corpus of thread works vary significantly. Rocha represents the contoured nudes singly, in pairs, and in groupings of three. Some stand upright, their resolute frontality iconic in its imperturbability. Others laze across the width of the canvas, their mellifluent bodies conjuring images of the languid beauties that fill the pages of art history survey texts: Praxiteles's *Aphrodite of Knidos* (4th c. BCE), Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (ca. 1510), Ingres's *Grande Odalisque* (1814), and any one of the multiple copies of Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave* (1840s –1860s). And still others crouch, their compact positions bringing to mind *malquis*, the mummy bundles described by the Jesuit missionary Bernabé Cobo (1580–1657), the Spanish chronicler Cristóbal de Molina (1529–1585), and other early travelers to territories once ruled by the Inca.[36] Most startling perhaps is the absence of facial features in approximately half of the figures. Even those with eyes, a mouth, and nose seem as uncommunicative as their faceless sisters. The eyes of the sighted are wide but vacant, their vacuity a rebuff of another's presence, an obstacle to their reading of—and hence control over—the inscribed physiognomy.[37]

If collectively Rocha's thread figures challenge the viewer to consider what it is to see and be seen, about half do so by inverting the viewer/image relationship that Rocha set in play in *Object-Orientalis*. In the sighted thread figures it is the imaged nude who looks through the viewer and not the other way around. As for Rocha's decision to represent some figures with faces and others without, it is best to allow the artist to elucidate. "It's hard to explain. Some days I don't have a face really," but, she continues, "not every day am I faceless. Some days I want to be present."

Rocha, who also holds an M.F.A. in Kinetic Imaging from Virginia Commonwealth University (2015), knows well the history of the female nude in art. She also knows what mummy bundles look like, having encountered them while living in the Andean Highlands of Peru. "At that time [2005–2007], I visited a man who had objects that he would find on the outskirts of Cajamarca. He kept them. It was normal to find objects in those places. But he [also] had a mummy…. The mummy was tied in the normal position [a seated bundle] in which they were sacrificed and covered with textile and stitched." Although subsequently she saw others, this "one mummy in particular impacted me. The posture of that mummy was the same as my posture [while held captive years before in Apucarana], being constricted and sitting down on a floor, tied, waiting for my release or 'death sentence'…. I thought about the mummy…. It was as a person. I would have known who she was if she had lived in Itacolomy."



Fig. 7. Eva Rocha and others in a performance of Euripides, *The Trojan Women* (1994), São Paulo, Brazil. Artist's personal archive.

The black, plied cotton thread with which Eva Rocha figures the female form is apposite to the memories it evokes. It is dark, indeed stark, against the unbleached canvas. Composed of multiple fibers that have been twisted together, its tensile strength captures the enduring recollections of Rocha's interlocked experiences just as the fluid, almost dulcet contours it delineates belie the taut anxieties of the realities it summons the viewer to face.



Fig. 8. Eva Rocha, *Severed* (2017). Plaster, dirt, wire, and metal. Installation, Santa Fe, Art Institute, New Mexico, Nov. 2017. Photo: Eva Rocha.

Concordantly, her technique and its resultant forms visualize the cognitive process of remembering. At varying intervals, small binding nodules stitched from back to front hold the contour in place, interrupting its flow and redirecting line to capture the curves and angles of the represented figure; the bend of an elbow, the hollows and protrusions of a physiognomy recorded in profile, the identifying features of the female body. At these points of intersection, Rocha's needle has literally pierced the canvas establishing a visual parallel to the way a suppressed memory erupts and intrudes into consciousness at unanticipated moments. Like the nodules that tack it in place, her contours speak to remembrance as a process of discontinuity, overlap, and dissolution. The intermittent

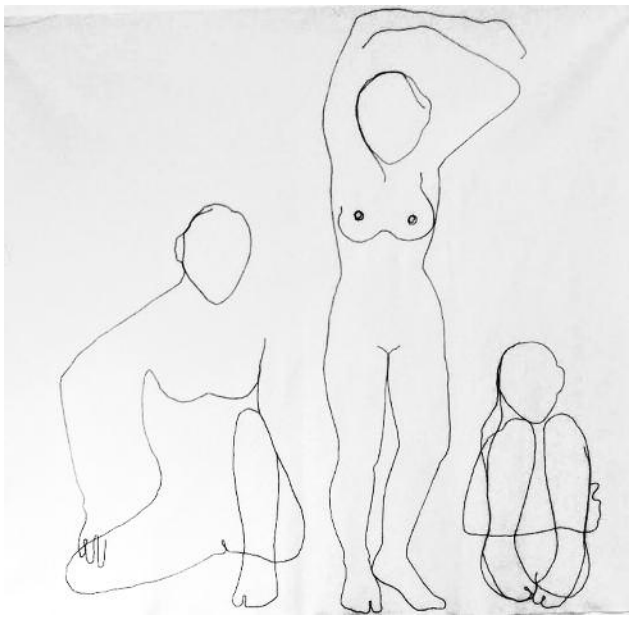


Fig. 9. Eva Rocha, *Three Bodies are a River* (2017), thread and unbleached canvas, 5' x 5'. Photo: Eva Rocha.

lengths of contour line that appear to rest easily on the canvas or meander to and, in some instances, seem to pass beyond its border visualize the ambiguities and elisions created by the passage of time, the fading of one memory into another. In *Three Bodies are a River* (2017; Fig. 9), as in other thread works, contour does not necessarily fix a represented body in space nor does it delineate the entirety of shape within a distinctly defined pictorial field. Instead it stops abruptly and at inexplicable points, suggesting the dissipation of a partially figured form into nothingness, an intimation of dissolubility that is augmented by the slightly frayed edge of the canvas. Conversely, the visually assertive contour that circumscribes the figure in *Laid Lady* (2017; Fig. 10) captures and holds form within an unbroken border.

All of Rocha's thread works suggest both the persistent distinctiveness that memories of trauma hold within her psyche and the resolute intelligibility with which she confronts them. Some do so by disrupting the flow of contour, thereby enabling the figure to unravel and dissolve into the canvas. Others resist interruption, holding tight the figure within the body's edge. Yet in these works, too, Rocha gives visual expression to the process of recollection, making manifest the way a memory acquires focus in the mind's eye. By means of stitched overlaps, front and behind occupy the same plane. Both are visible simultaneously. In an affecting visual exchange, the figures that appear to see through the viewer are themselves seen through. The ambiguity of presence and absence is again expressed as solidity and substance are disavowed. Nothing projects, nothing recedes. The simultaneity of seeing is analogous to the simultaneity of remembering, the manner in which the past exists in the present. The eliding of form into space in *Three Bodies are a River* and the simultaneity of seeing in *Laid Lady* do more than

exploit the analogical possibilities of stitching as a process of crossing through. With each intersection and overlap the relativities of back-to-front and void-to-substance are thrown into question. What does it mean to be whole and what does it mean to be wholly present? With *Under Self Spell* (Fig. 2), Rocha offers an answer.

Composed of two figures, *Under Self Spell* expresses opposing states of being through juxtapositions. Positioned horizontally, a constrained and compact figure fills the lower portion of the canvas. A crisscross of lines merges the captive with the material of captivity making it difficult to distinguish between the contour of the figure's encircling arms and the lines that cinch them together with her legs and torso like a mummy bundle. Only the head, slumping heavily to one side, is free of constraining line. Above this figure folded in upon itself is a second. Although the contour of the legs suggests a kneeling position, the figure's verticality, especially the undulating line of the raised left arm, imparts a sense of free, upward drift that is in marked contrast to the fixed, horizontal form below. The likeness as well as the difference between these two figures—one trussed tightly, the other floating free—is asserted by a single thread. The line binding the *malquis*-like figure extends upward, appearing at first glance to contour the right arm of the figure hovering above. In fact, Rocha cut the thread. The severed connection liberates one figure from the other; yet, paradoxically, it asserts the link between the two. If, as a captive sixteen-year-old, Rocha tried to mentally "absent myself from myself," now, years later, she asserts her presence while managing and manipulating how much or how little one sees, thus "refus[ing] to give the control of it (her body) to anyone."

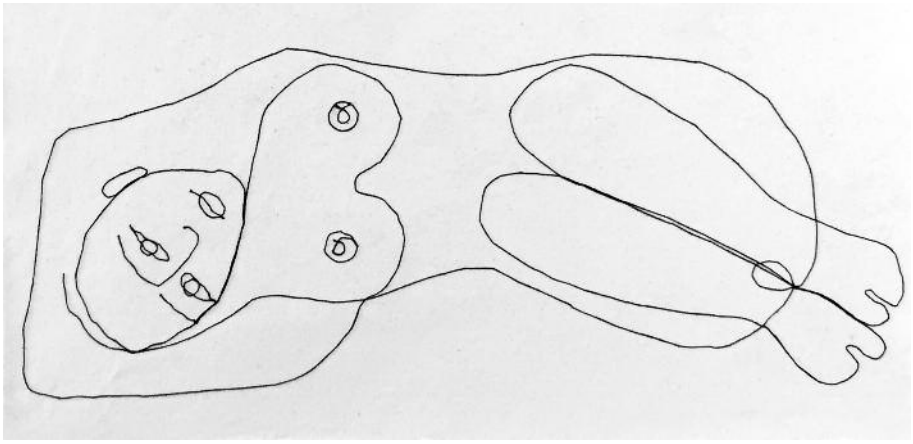


Fig. 10. Eva Rocha, *Laid Lady* (2017), thread and unbleached canvas, 18 1/2" x 30 1/4". Photo: Eva Rocha.

Increasingly, Rocha assumes as a visual artist a role she played as a performing artist. She is the *coryphaeus* who speaks on behalf of and in unison with others who have confronted injustice. Recently, Rocha reflected on "what the Theresa Pollak Prize [awarded 2015] did for me … as an emerging artist." It "validate[d] my voice," the voice of the *coryphaeus.* [38] ●

Fredrika Jacobs, professor emerita, Virginia Commonwealth University, has published in, among other journals, *The Art Bulletin, Word & Image,* and *Renaissance Quarterly.* She is the author of *The Renaissance Virtuosa; The Living Image in the Renaissance,* and *Votive Panels and Popular Piety in Early Modern Italy.*

Notes

1. Euripides, *The Trojan Women,* in *Great Books of the Western World* (Chicago: William Benton/ Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 5: 270. The Scamander River is known today as the Karamenderes.
2. Eva Rocha, acceptance speech, Theresa Pollak Prize for Excellence in the Arts, Emerging Artist Category, https://arts.vcu.edu/kineticimaging/ki-graduate-student-eva-rocha-awarded-theresa-pollak-prize-for-excellence (accessed Aug. 22, 2018).
3. https://www.artprize.org/blog/5-questions-with-eva-rocha (accessed Aug. 22, 2018). Also see, https://www.styleweekly.com/Studi/archives/2015/11/16/inlight-richmond-announces-winners (accessed Aug. 22, 2018). *I Am Not in the Business/ I Am the Business* (Collection of Pamela Kiecker Royal and William Royal) preceded by several months the making of *Object-Orientalis*. In the former, Rocha projected her own image in each of the trunks. In the latter, she is one of sixteen of the filmed women.
4. Marcos Chagas (April 18, 2011). "Brazil's military dictatorship: 21 years of interrupted democracy," *Brazzil*, 1; Anthony W. Pereira, "Persecution and Farce": The Origins and Transformation of Brazil's Political Trials, 1964-1979," *Latin American Research Review* 33, no. 1 (1998): 43-66.
5. Known today as Novo Itacolomi, Itacolomy was several decades ago no more than a small "frontier" town with three streets, a church, one gas station, a bar, and a cluster of houses.
6. https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2016/258731.htm (Accessed July 29, 2017).
7. Email exchange with the artist, May 18, 2018. All other quoted passages not otherwise cited come from numerous personal conversations and email exchanges with the artist, between June 2017 and July 2018.
8. Artist's statement, "Threadbare," Reynold's Gallery, Richmond, VA, July 20–Sept. 1, 2017.
9. Rocha is reticent to reveal details about her private life. This essay respects her reticence. She has said however that she felt anxious after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.
10. It is of critical importance to the artist that it be understood "that I did not suffer sexual violence. I was a virgin and that is a value." Email exchange with the artist, Feb. 16, 2018.
11. https://www.styleweekly.com/Studi/archives/2015/11/16/inlight-richmond-announces-winners
12. Eva Rocha interview, https://www.artprize.org/blog/5-questions-with-eva-rocha. On repeated occasions, Rocha has said that the number sixteen has special meaning for her. Although sixteen clearly references the age of the artist at the time of her abduction, she associates it with the Greek theatrical chorus, which coalesces multiple voices into one. See the discussion of *Silent Chorus* in this article.
13. She describes *I Am Not in the Business/ I Am the Business* as "a statement of I am not in the business of art, I am the art-itself, I am the artist/ I am not in the business of human trafficking, I am the human." Email exchange with the artist, May 27, 2018.

14. Rocha did not post her own manipulated photograph, which she retains in her files.

15. The literature on the subject has grown exponentially in recent years, with much of the discussion spawned by David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: studies in the history and theory of response* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989), and Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A history of the image before the age of art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1994). For a brief history of the Hodegetria attributed to the hand of St. Luke and the dissemination of Lukan icons, see Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power. The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Penn State Univ. Press, 2006), 124–43; Gerhard Wolf, *Salus populi Romani. Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilden im Mittelalter* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta humaniora, 1990), and Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles. Transforming Images in Italy in Italy from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Reaktion, 2013).

16. Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, Cecil Grayson, ed. and trans. (London: Phaidon, 1972), 61 (*On Painting*, book 2, chap. 25). Decades later, Leonardo da Vinci reiterated the concept. "The painter has the power to do the same [as the poet], the more so as he can place the true image of the beloved before the lover, who often kisses it and speaks to it." J. P. Richter, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1939), vol. 1, 64.

17. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, H. Rackham, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952), bk. XXXV, ch. 5, l. 15 (on the origin of painting); bk. XXXV, ch. 43, ll. 151–52 (daughter of Butades). Predictably, the honor would be shifted from daughter to father. See, for example, Giorgio Vasari's fresco cycle in the Sala del Trionfo della Virtù, Casa Vasari, Arezzo, executed during the summer of 1548. By the eighteenth century, artists were more faithful to Pliny's text. See, for instance, examples cited in note 19.

18. For a brief history of silhouettes and a survey of types and materials, see Penley Knipe, "Paper Profiles: American Portrait Silhouettes" in *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 41 (2002): 203–23.

19. Late eighteenth-century artists depicting the theme include, among many others, David Allan (1773), Joseph Wright of Derby (ca. 1784), Jean Baptiste Regnault (1787), and Joseph Benoit Suvée (1793).

20. The silhouette was sometimes cut from black paper that was then pasted onto a cream-colored card, at other times a piece of thin paper was thickly coated with matte black paint then cut and affixed to light colored fabric. Profile portraits could be bust- or full-length. Additionally, there were "conversation pieces" involving multiple figures in a scene.

21. Hanneke Grootenboer, "Treasuring the Gaze: Eye Miniature Portraits and the Intimacy of Vision," *The Art Bulletin* 88, no. 3 (2006): 501.

22. In this respect painters and poets were considered by Leonardo to be alike. Leonardo and J. P. Richter, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, vol. 1, 64. The potential for the intense interaction of a viewer and a silhouette perhaps has been best demonstrated by Kara Walker. In installations such as *Darkytown Rebellion* (2001), life-size black cut-out figures glued to gallery walls are both washed with light from colored transparencies projected from above and intermittently shaded by the transient shadows cast by visitors walking through the gallery space. See Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, *Seeing the Unspeakable: The Art of Kara Walker* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2004). By immersing viewers in the racialized legacy of the antebellum South, Walker bring establishes a "dialectic between presence and absence." Alessandra Raengo, "Life in Those Shadows! Kara Walker's Post-Cinematic Silhouettes," in *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st-Century Film* (Falmer, Brighton, UK: Reframe Books, 2016), http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/ post-cinema/5-5-raengo/ (Accessed Feb. 8, 2018).

23. Marcia Pointon, "Wearing Memory: Mourning, Jewelry and the Body," in *Trauer tragen — Trauer zeigen: Inszenieringen der Geschlecter*, ed. Gisela Ecker (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1999), 65–82.

24. Grootenboer, "Treasuring the Gaze," 503.

25. Facebook post, Aug. 27, 2017.

26. Artist's statement accompanying the installation of *Silent Chorus*, The Depot, Virginia Commonwealth Univ., Richmond, VA, April 28 – July, 2018. Additionally, see Rocha's description of the work in Richmond Magazine. http://richmondmagazine.com/news/my-take-strength-in-numbers-eva-rocha/ (accessed Aug. 22, 2018).

27. Eva Rocha interview, https://www.artprize.org/blog/5-questions-with-eva-rocha

28. https://www.facebook.com/cultured.GR/videos/544975319229103/UzpfSTEwMDAwMzE0NzY2NjYzMjozMDYwNjExMjk0OTk0MTQ6MTA6MTQ4MzI1NzYwMDoxNTE0NzkzNTk5OjYzMDM4OTQ3MTc0MTgyMzYwNQ/ (accessed Aug. 22, 2018).

29. Artist's statement accompanying the installation of *Silent Chorus*; also see http://richmondmagazine.com/news/my-take-strength-in-numbers-eva-rocha/

30. Euripides, *The Trojan Women*, 271. The reference to weaving is especially interesting in light of the roles of entrapment and death played by weavings in ancient literature, Clytemnestra's nets being a principal example. See Lois Martin, "Webs of Wrath: Terrible Textiles from the War of Troy," *The Journal of Cloth and Culture*, 1, no. 3 (Sept. 2003): 244–61.

31. Euripides, *The Trojan Women*, 281.

32. Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (New York: Penguin, 2001), 80.

33. Ibid., 80–81.

34. https://www.sfreporter.com/arts/2017/11/22/equal-justice-on-the-ground/ (accessed Aug. 22, 2018) Following the deinstallation of *Severed* and Rocha's return to Virginia, the artist boxed several of the feet in a container constructed of wood and chicken wire. She posted a photograph of the box and a brief comment on the project on her Facebook page, Nov. 22, 2017.

35. C. J. Adams, *The sexual politics of meat: A feminist-vegetarian critical theory* (2010), as cited in Rachael L. Herrington and Patricia McEachern, "'Breaking Her Spirit' Through Objectification, Fragmentation, and Consumption: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Domestic Sex Trafficking," *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* (2017), 5. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2017.1420723

36. Following the execution of Atahualpa by order of Francisco Pizarro on Aug. 29, 1533, and the naming of Túpac Huallpa as puppet emperor, the Inca chiefs pledged allegiance to the Spanish King. See José Valente, "Atahulpa," and Tim Watts, "Túpac Huallpa," in *Conflict in the Early Americas: An Encyclopedia of the Spanish Empire's Aztec, Incan, and Mayan Conquests,* Rebecca M. Seaman, ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2013): 27–30 and 389–90.

37. "When early modern physiognomists like Giovanni Battista Della Porta [ca. 1535–1615] and Ciro Spontone [ca. 1552–ca.1613] attempted to read the features of the face, they did so in order to predict and control [emphasis added] the subjects attached to them." Subsequent attempts to reduce facial features and expression into 'types' conducive to modern criminologists and eugenicists such as Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909) and Francis Galton (1822–1911) are rooted in the treatises of Della Porta and Spontone. See the provocative essay, Maria H. Loh, "Renaissance Faciality," *Oxford Art Journal*, 32, no. 3 (2009): 341–63.

38. Facebook post, Dec. 19, 2017.

States of Being

Berta R. Golahny's *Landscape of Man*

By Abigael MacGibeny

Painter and printmaker Berta R. Golahny (1925–2005) devoted her artistic life to the study of mankind's existence in a complex, unpredictable world. Using the face and figure as her primary means of expression, she explored subjects ranging from friends and family to historic catastrophes including the Holocaust, Hiroshima, and the persistent threat of nuclear annihilation. Adept in various media—drawing, woodcut, intaglio printing, wood engraving, and oil painting—she often addressed her themes in the greatest detail in her technically complex intaglios. These prints uniquely reflect the confluence of certain conditions of art making during her coming-of-age in mid-twentieth-century America: art education at prestigious schools, the stylistic shift from figuration to abstraction, the American printmaking "revolution," and the postwar anxiety that pervaded life beyond the arts. Her Landscape of Man series, a sustained meditation on man-made disaster, fuses her diverse aesthetic interests with her humanistic vision and changing conception of how best to represent human dignity under pressure. Executed as a succession of images in different media over the course of a career characterized by social concern and artistic experimentation, the series represents humanity's states of being as well as her own.

During the 1950s, many artists used the figure to explore what was commonly termed "the human condition," with varying degrees of reference to specific events.[1] In America, painters and printmakers including Hyman Bloom, Leonard Baskin, Antonio Frasconi, and Mauricio Lasansky used figuration to address the consequences of war both directly and indirectly. Golahny was unique in returning to her theme repeatedly, for decades, calibrating her depiction and response beyond World War II and the Cold War.

Born Bertha Rosenbaum in Detroit, Golahny was raised in a socio-politically progressive Jewish family with her older sister Ida and younger brother Edward. Her mother, Fanny Henken, who emigrated to the US from Beshnikovich, Ukraine, in 1908, was a garment worker and labor activist, first in New York and then in Kansas City, Missouri. There she met and married Gad Rosenbaum, a Polish immigrant from Warsaw. In 1916 they relocated to Detroit, where Gad founded iron works specializing in ornamental metalwork and structural steel.[2] Detroit was then a growing center of industrial innovation and soon, modern design.[3] Fanny organized reading groups for women; writers came to the house, a memorable experience for Golahny.[4] Literature—like her father's ironwork—would become an important inspiration for her art.



Fig. 1. Berta R. Golahny, *Easel Made by My Father* (c. 1941), oil on cardboard, 8" x 5". Photo: Abigael MacGibeny.

Golahny attended Cass Technical High School, a competitive public school that offered a robust art curriculum. Her extant

drawings, watercolors, and lithographs from Cass show the range of her early training. For her sixteenth birthday, her father made her an easel (Fig. 1); the scrollwork at its base is an aesthetic legacy transferred from father to daughter.

Self Portrait with Parents (Fig. 2), made in 1949, when she had nearly completed her MFA, represents Golahny's self identity and relationship with her parents. As they contemplate the news of the day, Gad holds a newspaper but gazes upward, as if he has read all that he can bear. Next to him, Fanny folds her hands together, anxious but composed. Illuminating the couple is a tall reading lamp, its twin bulbs suggesting their enlightened thought. A newspaper rack wrought in iron has sides scrolled like the base of their daughter's easel. The scroll motif is repeated in the lamp and other furnishings. The artist is present in a self-portrait, looming above. Her serious face appears within a partial picture frame that emphasizes her autonomy and her profession. The fractured space juxtaposes the interior of their home with elements of the world outside, including a radio transmission tower and a receding city street. The tableau evokes Golahny's personal transition to an independent life as well as her aesthetic interest in the spatial distortions of expressionism and Cubism.

From Cass Tech, Golahny won a scholarship to attend the Art Students League of New York during 1943–44. There she studied painting with George Grosz, lithography and silkscreen printing with Harry Sternberg, sculpture with Ossip Zadkine, and life drawing with Jon Corbino and Robert Brackman.[5]

During this formative year, Golahny sketched people on the street and in the subway as well as nudes in the classroom. One of her drawings was acquired by the League for its permanent collection, having been judged "best in show" at the weekly Student Concours and optioned for purchase at the competitive Red Dot Exhibition at the end of the academic year.[6]

Golahny next entered the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, earning her BFA in 1947. At SAIC she focused on painting, while continuing to sketch the everyday life around her. She consistently received recognition for her work, and her egg tempera painting *Boy in This World* (1947) was juried into the Art Institute's "51st Annual Exhibition by Artists of Chicago and Vicinity."[7] Among the jurors were painter Philip Guston, who was teaching at Washington University in St. Louis, and etcher Mauricio Lasansky, associate professor of art at the State University of Iowa, whose recent show of The Iowa Print Group at SAIC would have interested Golahny.

A respected printmaker and director of two art schools in his native Argentina, Lasansky had come to New York in 1943 to study independently at the print room of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and with Stanley William Hayter at Atelier 17, the experimental modernist printing workshop.[8] Synthesizing the spirit of Hayter's workshop with his own passionate advocacy for intaglio, Lasansky had brought to Iowa and the American Midwest a fresh, dynamic approach to printmaking. Golahny enrolled at the University of Iowa, again as a painting major, but studied printmaking equally.[9] In 1949, her second year studying with Lasansky, he and his method enjoyed even greater exposure with the exhibition "A New Direction in Intaglio," shown at both the Walker Art Center of Minneapolis and the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. Lasansky's works were displayed alongside those of artists he considered his printmaking forefathers—Mantegna, Goya, Picasso, and Hayter—and those of more than sixty of his students, positioning him as pivotal. Indeed, histories of American printmaking credit Lasansky with fueling a mid-twentieth-century transformation of the medium by creating a strong regional center for the practice at Iowa and dispersing intaglio techniques by way of his students, many of whom went on to lead their own workshops at universities nationwide.[10] Lasansky's *Bodas de Sangre (Blood Wedding)* (1949; Fig. 3), titled after the play by Federico García Lorca, exemplifies his characteristic non-literal interpretation of his subject, art historical references, and elaborate mix of media, which also served as a lesson for his students.



Fig. 2. Berta R. Golahny, *Self Portrait with Parents* (1949), etching and softground, artist print, image 17 1/2" x 13". Photo: Abigael MacGibeny.

Golahny's thesis painting, *The Resurrection* (now lost), embodied her own modernist figurative aesthetic. In a landscape alternately lush, barren, and dreamlike, a young mother cradles her baby; a girl holds flowers; a boy sifts sand; naked nymphs join hands in a circle à la Matisse's *Dance (I)* (1909). Referring to death and destruction, and perhaps the horrors of war, undifferentiated rudimentary bodies lay jumbled on the ground. Only decades later did she write that



Fig. 3. Mauricio Lasansky, *Bodas de Sangre* (1949), color intaglio, 23/35, plate 20 1/2" x 28 3/4". Photo: Abigael MacGibeny.



Fig. 4. Berta R. Golahny, *Wedding* (1950), color intaglio, 1/10, image 17 3/4" x 23 3/4". Photo: Abigael MacGibeny.

the painting referred to the biblical verse of Ezekiel 37, in which Israel arises from a valley of dry bones. Thus, the painting represents one of Golahny's earliest responses to world events: World War II, the Holocaust, and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.[11]

Moved by broadly felt postwar anxieties about modern life, Golahny articulated in her thesis her theory of art as a force capable of reconciling man with himself and the world. She believed that technology had caused a divide between man's thought and action, preventing the attainment of a harmonious "wholeness of experience."[12] She shared the point of view of contemporary artists including Oskar Kokoschka, who decried the "modern deification of the machine" and asserted the necessity of art to communicate human experience,[13] and her former instructor Harry Sternberg, who warned that mass production and mechanization interfered with artists' need to make whole things, threatening the very conditions of mastery and understanding that "give meaning to living and doing."[14]

In 1950 she married Yehuda Golahny, who had emigrated to the US from Palestine in 1947 and whom she had met in Detroit. Her intaglio print *Wedding* (1950; Fig. 4) records the couple as a modern Adam and Eve embracing in the garden, their clear gazes at angles to each other as in seventeenth-century Dutch portraiture. To the left of the bride, nestled in the grass, a small girl sits in a chair holding a doll, suggesting Golahny's past self. On Yehuda's left is broader, barer ground. A tangle of small abject figures gives way to a joyous formation of dancing spirits above, a motif from *The Resurrection.* A dove, harbinger of peace, swoops toward the couple. The print incorporates etching, engraving, and softground. *Wedding* was one of forty-four prints selected for the University of Minnesota's First National Print Competition and exhibition (December 1950), for which Lasansky served as a juror; his judgment marks both his respect for her work and his advocacy for his students.

The Golahnys relocated when Yehuda entered the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1951 Golahny gave birth to their daughter Amy, and three years later their son Fred was born. By the time Yehuda graduated in 1954 with a master's degree in electrical engineering, the family had settled in Newton, a suburb of Boston.[15] With the added responsibilities of being a wife and mother, Golahny concentrated on prints, which she could work on at night.

Printmaking was enjoying a heyday in the 1950s, having grown in popularity, largely thanks to Hayter and Lasansky. Print clubs and workshops sprang up around the country to nurture artists, promote prints as objects of fine art, and cultivate audiences of collectors. These organizations, which sponsored juried and invitational shows, made it possible for Golahny's prints to circulate more frequently and widely than her paintings. Throughout her career, her intaglio prints, woodcuts, and wood engravings were included in dozens of exhibitions around the country, which offered opportunities for display, critical recognition, and sales.

The Nun (1949; Fig. 5), an etching with aquatint whose copper plate Golahny made in Iowa and printed later on a small press in her home studio, exemplifies her developing figurative aesthetic. A comparison with Otto Dix's *The Nun* of 1914 (Fig. 6) reveals ways in which Golahny aligns with and departs from certain features of German Expressionism; a later reviewer likened her print to the social realist sensibility of Ben Shahn.[16] In both images, a nun's emotive face is turned three-quarters to her right and her hand frames the bottom of the picture plane. Dix's nun seems to bleed emotion, with hot orange and red pooling beneath her closed eyes and around her mouth. Her gothic-arched brow imprisons her intimately in church architecture. Female genitalia and nude female figures on her left and right suggest constricted or denied sexuality and pregnancy as the sources of her anguish. Golahny's nun, also anxious and angular, seems to grapple with metaphysical rather than physical concerns. While Dix's nun lays her bony hand across her chest, the long fingers of

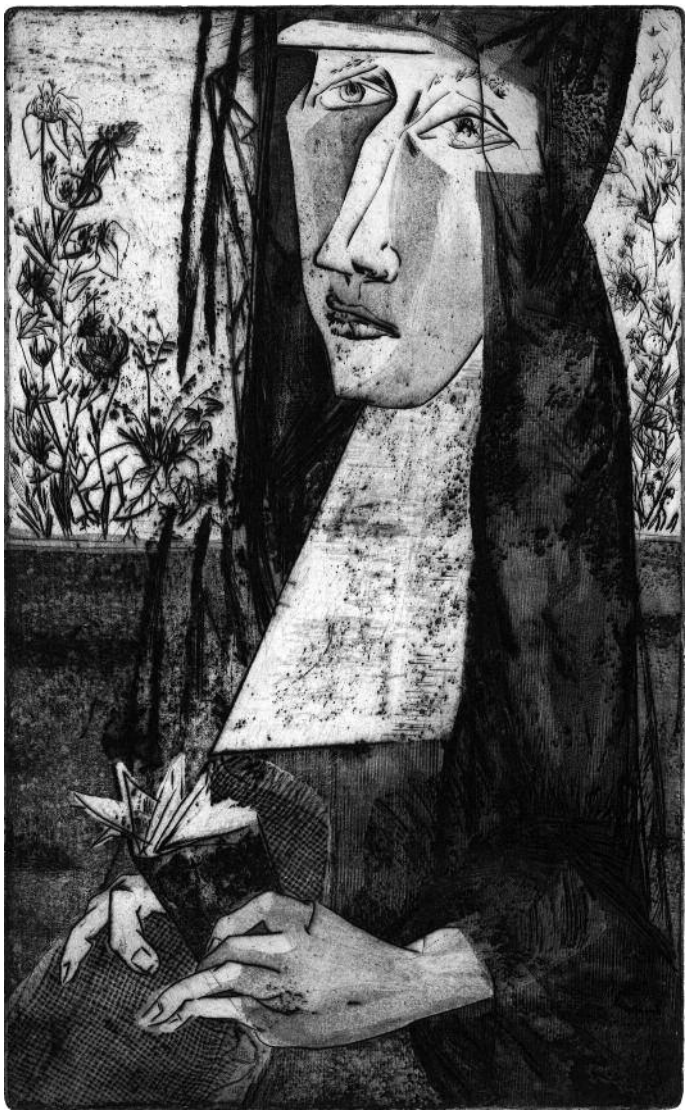


Fig. 5. Berta R. Golahny, *The Nun* (1949), etching and aquatint, 6/25, image 18" x 11". Philadelphia Free Library, Print and Picture Collection.



Fig. 6. Otto Dix, *The Nun* (1914), oil on cardboard, 27 5/8" x 20 5/8". Gift of Gertrude W. Dennis. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

Golahny's nun hold the Bible, implying as much involvement of faith as feeling. The plant-filled landscape relates her to the fertile world. In the pupil of her right eye are the curves and spikes of the surrounding branch and vine motif, placing issues of birth and growth at the ostensible window to her soul. If her fears are the same as those of Dix's nun—could there even be a spectral nude of lighter tone in her veil?—then she will not be consumed by them. The nun's pose with open book and garden motifs recalls Renaissance representations of the Annunciation, invoking a similar moment of great religious import and personal uncertainty. The intaglio medium, with which Golahny applied a mix of techniques and textures, helps to communicate a highly nuanced tension between the earthly and the spiritual.

Both the "Boston Printmakers Seventh Annual Exhibition" in 1954 and the "Philadelphia Sketch Club Annual Exhibition of Etchings" in 1959 included Golahny's *The Nun*. (From the latter, it was purchased by the Free Library of Philadelphia for their print collection.) Golahny also participated in exhibitions organized by the Library of Congress, Chicago Society of Etchers, Society of Washington Printmakers, Northwest Printmakers, Old Bergen Art Guild, and Silvermine Art Guild, earning widespread recognition for her prints.

Lasansky had declared his desire that his students leave his workshop "with a deep love for the metal plate."[17] Although Golahny continued using the intaglio techniques she learned at Iowa, she developed a new "deep love" for the woodblock, an alternative to intaglio then gaining popularity. The woodcut medium attracted her because of its rough expressiveness and technical simplicity; she could make prints by rubbing the inked block with a wooden spoon. The broader revival in woodcutting was driven by American printmakers interested in using traditional European means for modern ends, reaching what James Watrous called "a climax of creative inventiveness in the fifties and sixties."[18] Antonio Frasconi and Leonard Baskin were among Golahny's contemporaries who adopted woodcut as an appropriate medium for technical exploration and social commentary.

Themes of global anxiety emerged as a primary focus for Golahny. Concerned as were other artists about the continuing tensions following World War II, she responded with



Fig. 7. Berta R. Golahny, *Soldier, Mother, Wife* (1951), woodcut on pine, three known impressions, 12" x 17". Photo: Andreas Rentsch.

increasing frequency to past, present, and future threats. The woodcut *Soldier, Mother, Wife* (1951; Fig. 7) registers Golahny's response to the Korean War. She gouged into soft pine her impression of the primitive consequences of nationally sanctioned violence. The fallen soldier cries out, his upside-down head immediately communicating physical pain and the inversion of moral order. One woman, stunned, looks down and lays her palm on his body; the other turns her face upward, imploring the heavens. The solidity of the figures and their setting in a dense, woody landscape emphasizes the earthly weight of real-world conflict. The tragic, high contrast black-and-white imagery combined with the ancient associations of the wood recalls German Expressionist woodcuts by artists such as Ernst Barlach and Käthe Kollwitz, particularly Kollwitz's War series.

As her days became freer, Golahny returned to painting, and in works like *Bird of Fire (Hiroshima)* (1956-60; Pl. 15), she employed the malleable brilliance of oil paint to startling effect. Here, the sky explodes in a vivid mix of red, orange, and gold. A woman stripped of clothing and hair, her open mouth red with terror, tries to shield a child clutching her waist. At bottom center a chubby infant views the viewer with strange calm, his skin radiant with the glowing hues of the eruption. Barely visible within the rain of color are rudimentary faces and figures of indeterminate gender, standing as symbols for the wider impact of the disaster. The thick impasto conveys palpably the assault of fire on air and flesh. In form and feeling the painting bears comparison to the anatomical works of Hyman Bloom, an influential artist considered a founding member of the Boston Expressionists. Golahny shared certain affinities with the group, including its humanist approach to subject matter, allegiance to the figure, and grounding in German Expressionist imagery.[19] In contrast to the disfigured figures of Bloom and Baskin, which are often isolated, rarely are Golahny's figures alone; rather, as in *Bird of Fire (Hiroshima),* they share a space and a situation. Those who are able protect others. Alienation is a threat they resist with the unity of their common condition. *Bird of Fire* was shown with a group of Golahny's prints in 1959 at Artzt Gallery, where she had become a gallery artist. Donald Judd, in one of his earliest reviews as a critic for *ARTnews*, related the painting to the work of James Ensor, writing that "portions of figures … are evocatively dissected by color and texture."[20]

Golahny was not alone in her impulse to express and explore present dangers to human existence through figurative art. The influential exhibition "New Images of Man," held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1959, introduced emerging pessimistic modes of representation of the human figure, communicating a new Cold War-existentialist sensibility. In the catalogue preface, philosopher Paul Tillich characterized the contemporary mood: "Humanity is not something man simply has. He must fight for it anew in every generation, and he may lose his fight."[21] Included were artworks featuring mutilated bodies whose apparent torment could have come as easily from sources within themselves as from without; many works in the show focused specifically on death.

Golahny's belief in an archetypical "wholeness of experience," which art could help humans to reclaim, led her to modify such imagery. Her own wretched representations, showing skeletal bodies and disconnected body parts, are few and plausibly documentary in effect, for she would have studied them in photographs. She emphasized human

resilience, connectedness, and capacity for reason. Although she shared with the New Images artists a sense of personal and professional responsibility to use the figure to represent a changing human predicament, her figurative work reveals itself to be an alternative not just to abstraction but to those pessimistic modes of figuration as well.

While the 1960–62 trial of Nazi war criminal Adolph Eichmann inspired Lasansky to turn away from intaglio to address the Holocaust in a series of thirty life-sized drawings depicting the torture and debasement of children, women, and men by Nazi oppressors, witnessed by compliant Church figures,[22] Golahny turned back to intaglio for her thematically and visually complex *Auschwitz* (1965; Fig. 8). With intricately worked etching and softground she created a ghostly, densely peopled scene with clusters of victims arranged around an ominous oval void that dominates the top left quadrant of the image. Below the personalized faces in the upper right corner is what appears to be a pile of severed limbs. Elsewhere, mostly featureless couples embrace, mothers hold babies, naked figures stand erect or contort, and people stare at their surroundings, aghast. Along the bottom, a straining figure cries out while the watchful eyes of another bear witness. The bottom edge and lower right corner are bordered with a bent human arm. Rising from a flower shape on the left is a fragment of a poem originally written by a child in a concentration camp:

> From tomorrow on
> I shall be sad
> Not today
> Today I will
> Be glad
> And every day
> No matter how
> Bitter it may be I shall say
> From tomorrow on
> I shall be sad
> Not today [23]

Above the poem, a mass of anonymous heads floats in a sea of concentration camp tattoo numbers. While Lasansky's vicious images repulse and distance the viewer, Golahny's draw the viewer in with the diversity of representations—of people, the handwritten text, and small features revealed by close looking. His images are meant to shock; hers to provoke disgust but also concern, and to raise questions: "How could this happen? What can be done?"

Concurrent with her artistic responses to specific acts of large-scale violence, Golahny began to visualize the historical and philosophical framework in which they happen. She developed the concept of a "landscape of man" that would preoccupy her for decades. The Landscape of Man series, about the moral impact of humans on their world, is her most complex and enduring work. She explored its core motif in various media, including intaglio, woodcut, wood engraving, drawings, pastels, and oil paintings.



Fig. 8. Berta R. Golahny, *Auschwitz* (1965), etching and softground, 1/35, image 23 1/2" x 17 3/4". Photo: Abigael MacGibeny.

Initially, Landscape of Man was conceived as a response to the horrors and aftermath of World War II, but over time Golahny developed it to be applicable to other actual and potential man-made disasters. The works are characterized by a columnar arrangement of heads expressing different human roles and reactions to mortal threat. Possibly the earliest rendition of the theme was the black-and-white woodcut *Thoughts on Man #1* (1957; Fig. 9). The complexity of the subject is reinforced by the intricacy of the print: the number of elements in the composition, the variety of linear techniques used, and the range of tones achieved. At top center is the large, somber face of a woman; at bottom center is the grim, determined head of a man. Golahny's vertical cutting along the grain of the wood creates the moody effect of rain. Numerous faces and figures in different physical and mental states populate the left and right sides of the image, as in *Auschwitz*: a man thoughtfully holding his hand to his chin, a bare-breasted woman and a grasping child

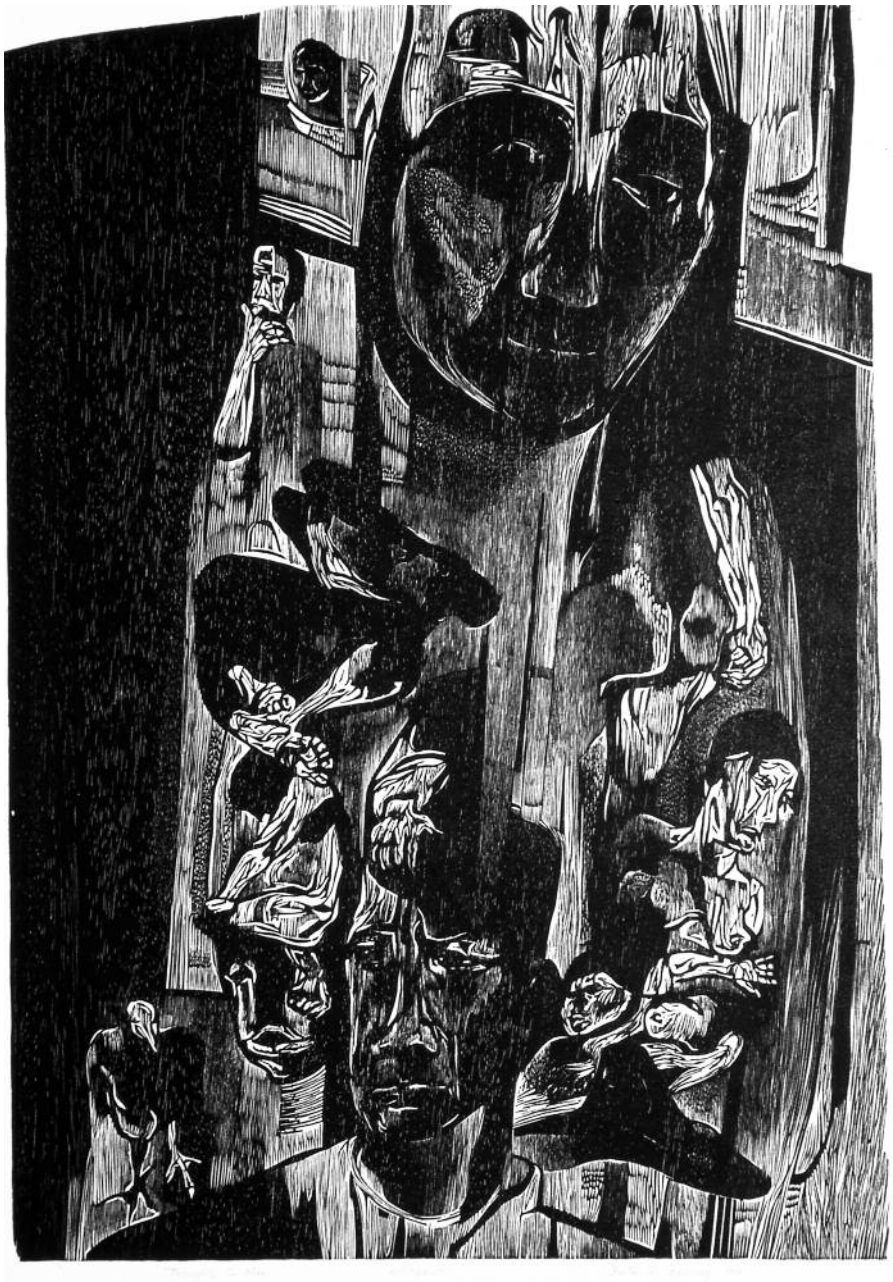


Fig. 9. Berta R. Golahny, *Thoughts on Man* #1 (1957), woodcut, edition of 25, image 30" x 22". Photo: Amy Golahny.

turning away from each other, a pair of praying or wringing hands, an ominous perching bird, apparently severed feet. There are neither visible oppressors nor crimes, yet the scene is one of chaos, which the anchoring heads attempt to contain with the means still available to them: the upper one—possibly the artist herself—witnesses, the lower one resists. As a meditation on the human condition, *Thoughts on Man* is decidedly gloomy, reflecting disturbing war and post-war experiences without the correctives of justice and accountability.

The copper intaglio print *Man and Fate* (1966), which is identical to the upper plate of her 1968 diptych titled *Landscape of Man in Nuclear Age* (Fig. 10), begins to clarify the artist's "thoughts on man." As "fate" implies, the situation appears intractable. The straighter vertical structure seems to order the chaos. A head at top center dominates the composition, his high forehead and the shimmering light in his eyes—where Golahny let the white of the paper shine through—suggesting intelligence. Rather than witnessing the plight of the women and men around him, he impassively beholds the beholder. A representation of power, he may control the fate of his fellow humans.

Figures cluster as in *Auschwitz*, but not as tightly. Many are in a state of suspension: they wait, watch, think. A boy bites his nails, a woman leans her chin on interlaced fingers, a girl holds a doll or a smaller child. Again, a man (here in a striped shirt) is positioned at bottom center, now seeming more thoughtful than indignant. The prevailing mood is brooding. Exceptions are the inverted face at lower left that seems breathlessly swept up by a large arm and a woman on the left holding a baby and staring upward. With her forehead and nose forming a continuous line and her mouth agape, she recalls the faces of victims in Picasso's *Guernica,* though more awestruck than agonized.

One senses that without the documentary demands of a specific event, Golahny felt freer to experi-ment aesthetically. The figures are dispersed throughout a design of organizing arcs that evoke organic forces. A nude female figure on the left stands erect; the same figure appears over her shoulder, prone and extremely foreshortened, an exercise in perspective. On the right is a figure with her head tilted all the way back, so that her most distinctive feature is the curve of her jaw; this may have been a favorite form, as it appears in other prints including *Soliloquy* (n.d. and *Man–1967.* If the distress is more general, it is also more personal. Among the masses are recognizable individuals: Golahny's mother, Fanny, and father, Gad (recognizable from the earlier *Self Portrait with Parents*), as well as her daughter, Amy. Not victims per se, nonetheless their fate is to live in a world in which the threat of violence is ever-present and the weight of authority to be feared.

In 1966 Golahny acquired a Meeker-McFee press that enabled her to make large prints in her home studio.[24] She was ambitious to make monumental prints that could compete on a wall with paintings, a broad trend in printmaking.[25] The press was itself an innovation, designed by Dean Meeker, an SAIC graduate and professor of art at the University of Wisconsin, and his engineer neighbor John McFee. Unlike traditional manual star-wheel presses, it was lightweight and motorized,

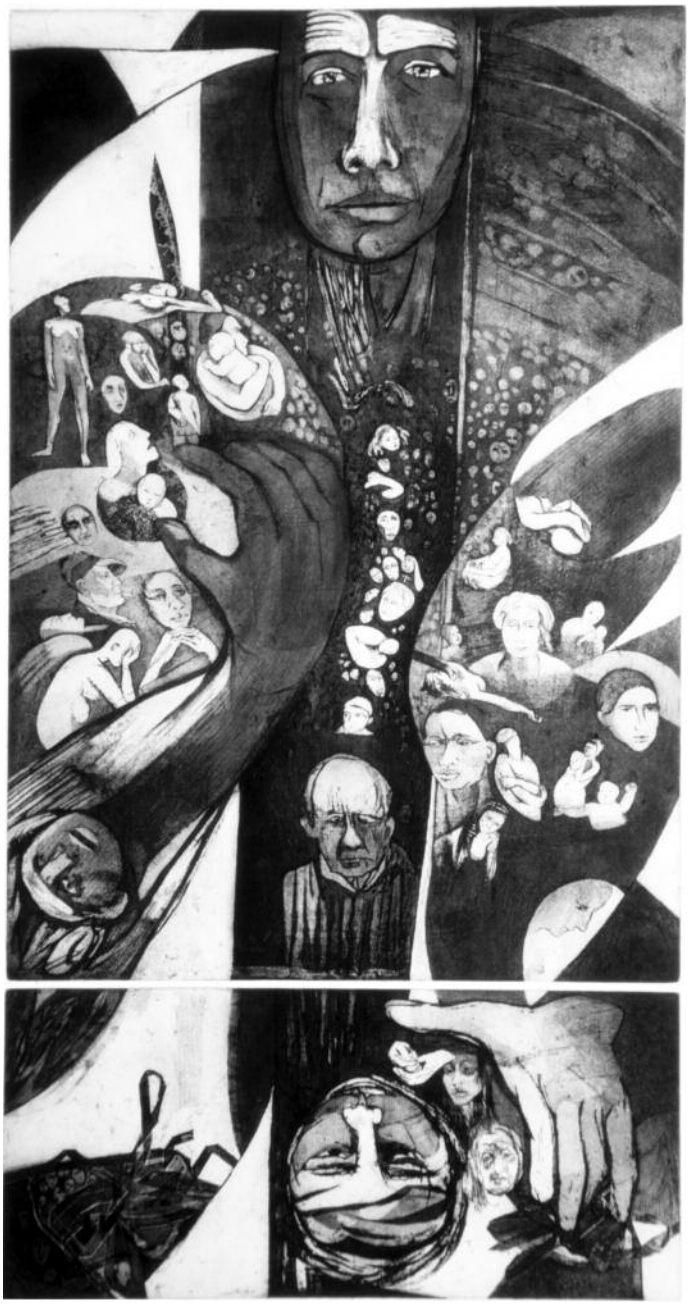


Fig. 10. Berta R. Golahny, *Landscape of Man in Nuclear* Age (1968), etching and softground, edition of 20 plus several proofs, image 33 3/4" x 18". Photo: Yehuda Golahny. (The upper plate image is identical to her 1966 intaglio *Man and Fate*.)

with a large bed and adjustable legs to ensure a comfortable height and a level surface. Of particular value to Meeker was the rollers' ability to apply pressure evenly to his high relief serigraph-polymer intaglio plates.[26] For Golahny the press made possible larger prints that required less physical effort to pull.

Her first work with the new press was the expansion of *Man and Fate* into the retitled diptych *Landscape of Man in Nuclear Age* (1968; Fig. 10), adding a second plate to her 1966 composition. The new title pointed to the relentless legacy of the 1945 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as man's responsibility for his own uncertain existence during the Cold War. In the new lower portion, the face of a prone individual looks upward, framed by a large hand bearing down. Smaller faces intercede between the hand and the larger face, and also appear within chaotic tangles of ribbons created by pressing lacy fabric into the soft ground. The effect of this new section on the full composition seems to be to add a potential victim—a sympathetic character to counter the dominant male—and perhaps a spiritual overtone.

The action of the large hand is ambiguous. Curved as it is near the prone individual's neck, it could recall the hand of Abraham on Isaac, preparing to sacrifice his son before being stilled by God. Ziva Amishai-Maisels identifies the sacrifice of Isaac as among the biblical imagery most commonly used by artists to address the Holocaust; thus, the tangles of ribbon at left and right could be bindings.[27] Yet elements of the story are missing: Abraham, the knife, the angel, and an obviously divine presence. If the hand is meant to be protective, then the faces it protects do not seem particularly safe or comforted. The equivocal juxtaposition of strength and vulnerability adds to the tension conveyed by this image.

In the 1980s Golahny revisited the Landscape of Man theme with renewed creative vigor and new, dreamlike imagery in a variety of media, beginning with a wood engraving (1981; Fig. 11). She had taught herself wood engraving in the late 1960s and illustrated William Blake's poem, "The Tyger," for a broadside published by Penmaen Press in 1973. Executed on the end of a hardwood block, rather than the plank side of the softer woods used in woodcut, wood engraving allowed her to incise much finer lines and achieve a greater range of tones. It became a favorite medium, with which she produced most notably a 1970–73 series based on the Book of Psalms.

In this 1981 interpretation, Golahny reexamined the question of who is responsible for the threat of man's destruction—here a predatory animal force. The dense, richly black wings of an eagle spread across the top of the image as if to blot out the sky; one of its claws is poised directly over the heads of a mother and child as if to pluck and carry them away. While the animal may symbolize man's basest instincts (and perhaps aspirations to power, as a national symbol), it seems also to transcend the natural world. The framing arm and hand, with even less reference to a potential host, encroach darkly on the space. The upsweeping arm seems to mirror the frightening wing and claw of the bird. The descending hand now appears actually to touch the jawline of the fallen figure.

The horror vacui of the image conveys physical and psychological pressure. The boxwood block swarms with creatures and curvilinear forms. Overall, the phenomena seem more explosive, evoking nuclear destruction. Smoke and gases swirl through the composition, engulfing figures and faces, some of them reprised from the 1968 copper plate. The block is meticulously incised, with extremely fine parallel lines of varying density and depth producing both strong black/white contrasts and subtler shading. The linear technique gives the central and lower heads the appearance of écorchés, exposing the muscles and sinews beneath the skin. They seem



Fig. 11. Berta R. Golahny, *Landscape of Man in Nuclear Age* (1981), wood engraving, edition of 20, image 18" x 12". Photo: Michael Darough.

physically and emotionally flayed. The central head's eyes are closed and his mouth is braided shut. What seems at first glance to be a helmet on the inverted male head at bottom center is more likely his cranial structure; his open eyes beseech the viewer. Here, Golahny's reconception of evil, though intensely personal, uses accessible symbolism to attract close looking and empathy.

Also in 1981, Golahny began a copper plate engraving on the Landscape of Man theme (1981–83, Fig. 12). It took two years to complete, as she created twenty states before considering the image final.[28] One of the most visible changes from the wood engraving is the reinstatement of a third human head at top center. The three faces are now at their most totemic and most clearly symbolize different states of being. The top head is at peace, unaffected by the surrounding turmoil; the center head squeezes its eyes tight, as if struggling to disengage; and the bottom head, eyes wide and sparkling, is vigilant yet perhaps also hopeful.

Golahny's continued use of the term "man" is reflective of the time when "man" was common parlance for "human."[29] Although she did not address feminist themes directly in her art, women predominate as subjects. Helen Langa has identified four themes with which women printmakers address female experience: women's faces as social symbols, representations of motherhood, artists at work and other workers, and aspects of modern social life.[30] As social symbols, Golahny's women represent a vulnerable yet dignified population as well as a critique of social conditions. Her recurring representations of motherhood, from pregnant females to women protecting their children, encapsulate instantly the darkest implications of mass violence and the brightest hope for the future. In her many figure studies, her sensitivity to her sitters' faces and moods often brings the viewer's attention to the demanding work of being a model. She also captured women engaged in modern life, at home and in their cities.

For a 1983 exhibition at Harvard Law School's Langdell Gallery, Golahny wrote a description of the new copper intaglio that elucidates both her subject matter and technique. She outlined a journey through time, left to right, starting with the ancient marine creatures (coelacanth and nautilus) on the left, moving up to the cluster of Holocaust figures and over to the present-and-future-oriented mother and child on the right. She identified the bird near them as a one-winged angel.[31] The damaged bird implies that salvation is not assured. The Holocaust and nuclear war, both past disasters, live in the present and hover over the future.

Golahny's virtuoso line ranges from deeply and cleanly incised to shallow and feathery, enabling a spectrum of tones and feelings. The incised lines are as spontaneous as a freehand drawing. Engraving is an intensely physical act, and when using the burin, Golahny constantly turned the plate and grooved the lines with an action involving her entire body. Golahny wrote of the "adventure of cutting" and what she called the "triangle of 'ink-paper-wiping'" that offered infinite possibilities for expression. Further, there was the "stimulating ambiguity" of the reversal of the printed image, not revealed until the end of the process.[32] This delight in discovery might well have been nurtured by Harry Sternberg, who had compared the revelation of the final image to "the joy of seeing one's own child being born."[33]

Golahny still had continued painting (Fig. 13), and she expressed her chosen theme on the largest scale and in the most vivid color in three oil paintings begun in the late 1970s and completed by 1984, all titled *Landscape of Man in Nuclear*



Fig. 12. Berta R. Golahny, *Landscape of Man in Nuclear Age* (1981-1983), engraving and softground etching, State XX, edition of at least 11, image 27" x 18". Photo: Abigael MacGibeny.

Age. With bold strokes of pure color straight from the tube, she heightened the dramatic sense of evil and resistance to evil, while expanding the arena from earth to the universe. Of these paintings, Golahny wrote that "there is a link between the nuclear threat facing humanity and the Holocaust that humankind allowed to occur."[34] The boiling, acidic primaries of *Landscape of Man in Nuclear Age (3)* (1984; Pl. 16) add an alarming dimension to the basic composition. For the first time, she described the topmost head as representing "the concept of the *unseeing God,* evil, or any construct symbolic of humankind's compliance with destructive forces."[35] Highly abstract and genderless, the head is a far cry from the figurative female and male heads that held that position in *Thoughts on Man* and *Man and Fate,* respectively. The suffering central head, the most realistic, seems engulfed in flames. The inverted lower head is reduced to a pair of eerily photorealistic eyes, a synecdoche standing for all mankind. The column of faces is so bold that the Holocaust figures on both sides appear to illustrate a larger tragedy than their own.



Fig. 13. Berta Golahny in her painting studio next to *Genesis, Day 1*, Series 1 (1979). Photo: Phyllis Giller.

If the imagery portends destruction, the flow of fresh color also seems generative. The *Landscape of Man in Nuclear Age* paintings strongly resemble Golahny's paintings depicting the turbulent energy of the universe like *Crab Nebula* (1985). The artist wrote that a newfound interest in cosmic phenomena had "invaded" and transformed her work. She studied high-resolution photographs at the Harvard College Observatory for her space imagery. Inside the nebula's bright ferment of constantly moving and recombining elements bobs a human head. To her this was not a sign of danger, but a positive affirmation that "we are all made of star stuff."[36]

In 1994, Golahny dramatically reworked the 1968 copper plate *Landscape of Man in Nuclear Age* and retitled it simply *Landscape of Man,* acknowledging the end of the Cold War and signaling her return to her original impetus for the theme. In a series of fourteen monoprints that would blend her most recent universalized conception of evil with her earliest personal conception of beleaguered humanity, she burnished the top head smooth to leave only a pair of eyes gazing out from within overlapping, variously colored arcs. She substituted a flowing composition of curvilinear planes for the original vertical column connecting the heads at top and bottom. The man at bottom center is surrounded by a semicircular membrane. As she created different effects through variations in color and tone, the man and his shroud became gradually paler. In version X they are a ghostly grey,

and in XI (1994; Pl. 17) they are stopped out entirely. The stark white of the paper—representing the disappearance of both the thinking man and the artist's witnessing hand—constitutes Golahny's strongest warning yet. The Holocaust symbolism is stronger; for example, she filled in previously blank areas on the right with additional heads to make the receding masses more populous. Stronger too are the personal associations—Golahny's mother and daughter, and the many other figures and faces that likely came from her sketches from life, survive from the original plate. Significantly, she engraved into the space above her mother's head a tangle of naked skeletal figures like those she had introduced almost fifty years earlier in *The Resurrection, Wedding* (Fig. 4) and *Auschwitz* (Fig. 9). The embracing arm remains, but not the shielding hand; in fact there was no shielding hand for the victims of the Holocaust.[37]

As a young art student, Berta Golahny had expressed concern about the precarious state of humanity in the modern world. She believed that technology posed a threat to the harmonious existence of mankind. Yet over decades, she used one of the most specialized technological artistic processes to examine such a threat in her Landscape of Man series and related works. Intaglio seemed to enable the greatest level of specificity available to her based on her life experience, and perhaps also the aesthetic distance required to portray her subjects with dignity. In combination with other media, it helped her to render bitter truths, glimmers of hope, and always compassion for the many states of being of her fellow man. By continually revisiting and revising earlier imagery in her later work, she revealed her own state of being as a thinking and feeling artist on a lifelong quest to understand the world in which we live. •

Abigael MacGibeny is an independent art historian based in the Boston area. She is research associate to Dr. Patricia Hills on the Eastman Johnson Catalogue Raisonné Project.

NOTES

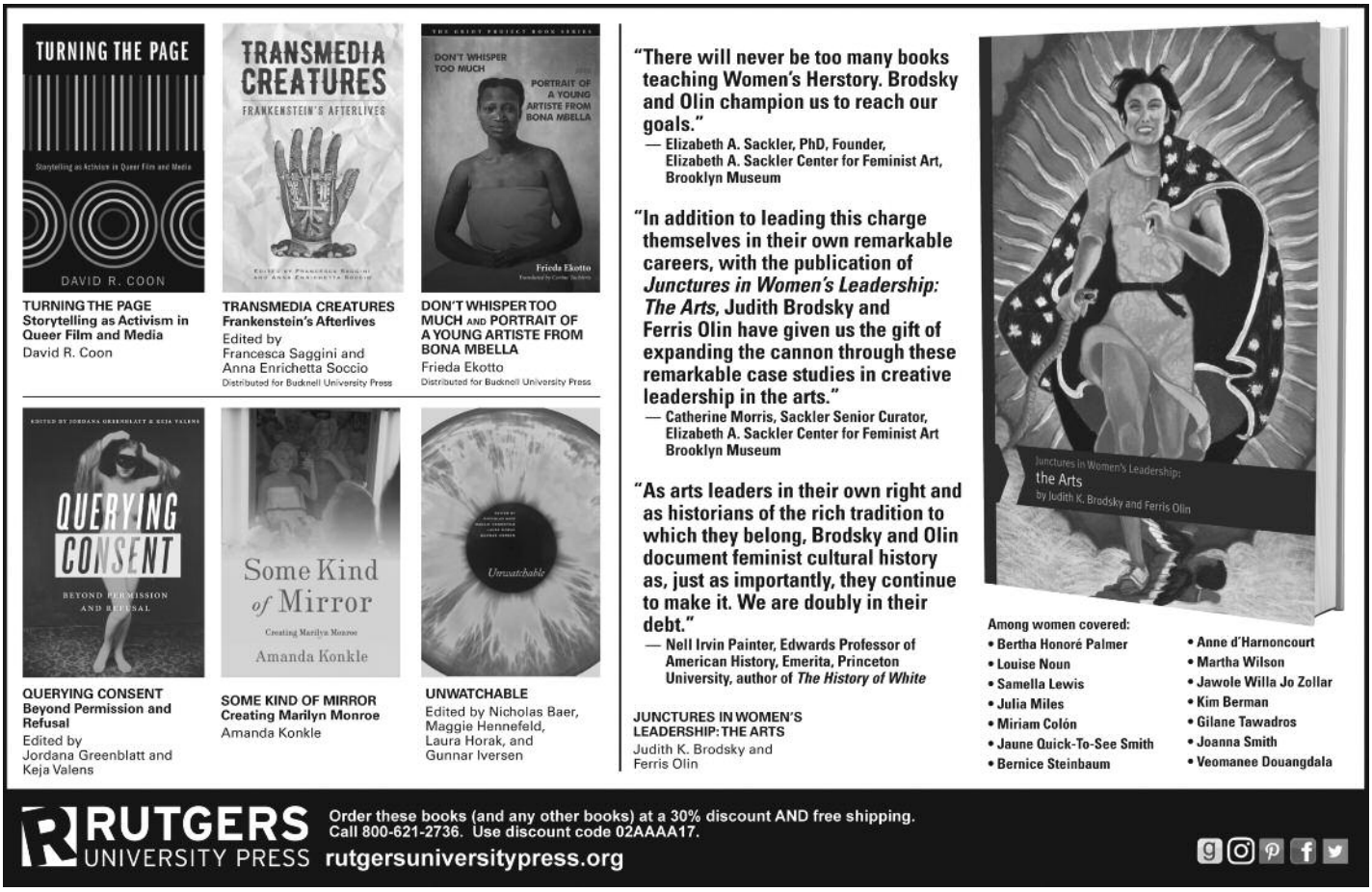
I am grateful to Amy Golahny for bringing me on board her project, providing information about her mother Berta as well as access to the artist's artwork, writings, and scrapbooks, and encouraging me to pursue my own interpretations. I am pleased that my work could be helpful for the catalogue that accompanied the 2018 exhibition "The Human Abstract" at the Lycoming College Art Gallery.

My gratitude also to Dr. Patricia Hills and Dr. Jonathan Ribner of Boston University for their guidance and excellent suggestions on the draft version of the essay. Finally, many thanks to those who graciously shared information from their archives, including Stephanie Cassidy, Archivist at the Art Students League; Karen Shafts, Assistant Keeper of Prints at the Boston Public Library; Denise Anderson, Special Collections Assistant, University of Iowa Libraries; and Renee Covalucci, Vice President of the Boston Printmakers.

1. Patricia Hills, "Painting, 1941-1980," in Patricia Hills and Roberta K. Tarbell, *The Figurative Tradition and the Whitney Museum of American Art: Paintings and Sculpture from the Permanent Collection* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1980), 108–51.
2. All biographical information, unless otherwise noted, provided by Amy Golahny. See also Berta Golahny, in *Benezit Dictionary of Artists,* Oxford Art Online, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015).
3. See for example Terry Smith, *Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993). Smith connects the industrial innovations of the Ford Motor Company in the early 1910s to the modern design practiced more widely by the late 1920s.
4. Alex Wohl, "Bringing Out the Beauty in Newton," *The Jewish Times,* Oct. 13, 1983.
5. Bertha Rosenbaum course records, the Art Students League of New York.
6. Bertha Rosenbaum, letter to Art Students League of New York, July 15, 1944, and Stephanie Cassidy (Art Students League of New York archivist), email message to author, July 7, 2014.
7. Art Institute of Chicago, "51st Annual Exhibition by Artists of Chicago and Vicinity," exh. cat. (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1947), n.p., cat. no. 132.
8. Mauricio Lasansky, John Thein, and Phillip Lasansky, *Lasansky: Printmaker* (Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press, 1975), 143. See also Carl Zigrosser, *Mauricio Lasansky,* exh. cat. (New York: American Federation of Arts, 1960), 5–6. Zigrosser notes that over the course of several months, Lasansky reviewed all 150,000 prints in the museum's collection. On Hayter, see for example, Joann Moser, "The Impact of Stanley William Hayter on Post-War American Art." *Archives of American Art Journal* 18, no. 1 (1978): 2–11.
9. Sarah N. M. Harris (Univ. of Iowa senior associate registrar), email messages to author, July 2014. The Iowa Print Group show inspired Golahny's SAIC married printmaking classmates Ellen Lanyon and Roland Ginzel to go to the University of Iowa. Like Golahny, Lanyon enrolled as a painting major. See *Paths to the Press: Printmaking and American Women Artists, 1910-1960*, ed. Elizabeth Gaede Seaton (Manhattan, KS: Mariana Kistler Beach Museum of Art, Kansas State University, 2006), 174.
10. William M. Friedman, "A New Direction," in *A New Direction in Intaglio: The Work of Mauricio Lasansky and His Students* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1949), 37, 39. See also James Watrous, *American Printmaking: A Century of American Printmaking, 1880–1980* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 163.
11. Berta R. Golahny, "The Affirmation (I)" in *Holocaust and Related Paintings,* unpublished mss (2003), n.p. She described the verse as written in Hebrew lettering along the top of the painting. The lettering is only partially visible in photographs.The painting itself, which she left at Iowa as was customary, is now lost.
12. Bertha Rosenbaum, "The Resurrection" (Iowa City: State Univ. of Iowa, 1950), 2.
13. Oskar Kokoschka, *My Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 198–99.
14. Harry Sternberg, "Craftsmanship, Printmaking, and Contemporary Education," *College Art Journal* 9, no. 2 (Winter 1949–1950): 204–05, doi:10.2307/772999.
15. Golahny's signatures chart her change in identity at this time. In addition to taking her husband's last name, she modified her first name. As a student, she had signed her work "Bertha Rosenbaum" or "B. Rosenbaum"; for a short time after marriage, "B. Rosenbaum-Golahny"; then she began to sign as "Berta R. Golahny," which would remain her primary imprimatur.
16. "Engraving in Wood Cuts It For Her," *Providence Sunday Journal*, April 29, 1979. At Iowa, Golahny's thesis painting *The Resurrection* had won the Ben Shahn Award, for which Shahn was a jurist.
17. Walker Art Center, Mauricio Lasansky, and Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, *A New Direction in Intaglio: The Work of Mauricio Lasansky and His Students*, 16.
18. James Watrous, *American Printmaking: A Century of American Printmaking, 1880-1980*, 173.
19. Judith Arlene Bookbinder, *Boston Modern: Figurative Expressionism as Alternative Modernism* (Lebanon, NH: Univ. Press

of New England, 2005). Bookbinder argues that Boston figurative expressionism was not only a vital alternative to New York abstraction, but also integral to American modernism as a whole. Certainly its prominence in Boston made the city a haven for figurative art and a friendlier environment for Golahny than she would have found had she pursued her career in New York.

20. Donald Judd, "Gallery artists," *ARTnews* (October 1959): 63.
21. Paul Tillich, "Prefatory Note," in *New Images of Man*, by Peter Howard Selz (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959), 9.
22. See Mauricio Lasansky, Edwin Honig, and Philadelphia Museum of Art, *The Nazi Drawings*, exh. cat. (Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press, 1966).
23. Nathan Ausubel and Marynn Ausubel, eds., *A Treasury of Jewish Poetry* (New York: Crown, 1957), 267.
24. Yehuda Golahny interview, July 22, 2014. Before this, for large prints and for editions, the artist pulled prints at George Lockwood's Impressions Workshop, located in Boston's Copley Square.
25. The trend toward larger prints had begun at mid-century. See Carl Zigrosser, "American Prints Since 1926: A Complete Revolution in the Making," *The Art Digest* 26, no. 3 (Nov. 1, 1951): 71.
26. Tom Dewey, "Development of the Meeker-McFee Etching Press... 1960," *Southeastern College Art Conference Review* 9, no. 2 (April 15, 1977): 90–94. Upon Golahny's passing, her family donated the press and her printmaking tools to the Student Art Association at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Yehuda's alma mater. Yehuda Golahny interview, July 22, 2014.
27. Ziva Amishai-Maisels, *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1993), 167–72.
28. This was unusual in her oeuvre. Although she worked in series, she rarely made editions of particular images or even successively labeled states. Most of her prints are labeled "artist proof," "unique proof," "trial proof," or simply titled in pencil.
29. In the 1990s, Golahny adopted the gender-neutral title *Landscape of Humankind in the Nuclear Age* for prints in the series that previously had not been hand-titled. Phone conversation with Amy Golahny, Dec. 31, 2014.
30. Helen Langa, "Bold Gazes, Lively Differences: Women Printmakers' Images of Women," in *Paths to the Press: Printmaking and American Women Artists, 1910-1960*, ed. Elizabeth Gaede Seaton, 51–63.
31. Berta R. Golahny, "Fifteen Years of Printmaking: A Selection from 1968-1983," literature for Harvard Law School Langdell Gallery Exhibition April 6–June 20, 1983.
32. Ibid.
33. Sternberg, "Craftsmanship, Printmaking, and Contemporary Education," 205.
34. Berta R. Golahny, "Landscape of Man in Nuclear Age," c. 1990s.
35. Ibid.
36. Berta R. Golahny, "How I Came to Paint the Crab Nebula: The Development of Cosmic Themes in My Oil Paintings," *Leonardo* 23, no. 4 (1990): 363–65.
37. Amishai-Maisels argues that this lack of reprieve is what made the sacrifice of Isaac such a problematic comparison for visual artists.



Marlow Moss

Transgender and the Double Line

By Jessica Schouela

"I did not know … whether Marlow Moss was a man, a woman, or a vegetable growth."

—John Russell[1]

After a breakdown thought to have been prompted by confronting her sexual orientation and a subsequent rift with her family, British Constructivist Marlow Moss (1889–1958), in 1919 left her studies at the Slade School of Fine Art.[2] She relocated to Cornwall before moving to Paris in 1927, where she met Piet Mondrian and was taught by Fernand Léger, and Amédée Ozenfant, among others, at the Académie Moderne, an institution that focused on avant-garde artistic practice.[3] Fleeing Paris during the war, she settled in Lamorna in Cornwall, in 1941, where there was a more conservative group of artists than those working within modernist parameters in nearby St. Ives, and lived there until her death.

Born Marjorie Jewel, in Kilburn, in 1889, her taking of the androgynous name 'Marlow' and her masculine appearance for most of her life has prompted scholars to consider her from the perspective of identity politics. Lucy Howarth, who has written the most extensive biography of Moss to date, writes that "Moss's adoption of 'Marlow' in preference to 'Marjorie Jewel' was not motivated by a wish to fool either direct associates or the art world into thinking she was a man, but rather was symbolic of her transgender identity. This is signified by the fact that 'Marlow' is an ambiguously gendered name, not a specifically masculine one."[4]

Moss often posed in photographs with short, slicked-back hair and wore a jacket and cravat with a half-smoked cigarette in her hand. Howarth observed that these portraits "invoke the country gentleman, the sportsman, and the aristocratic dandy."[5] In addition, Howarth has argued that a distinction can be drawn between the averted female gaze and the averted male gaze, writing that the former often signifies "modesty, submission, coquettishness, or a valuable state of reverie, but generally a complicity in her objectification," while the latter suggests a man's "preoccupation with his inner, intellectual life, and his indifference to the viewer."[6]

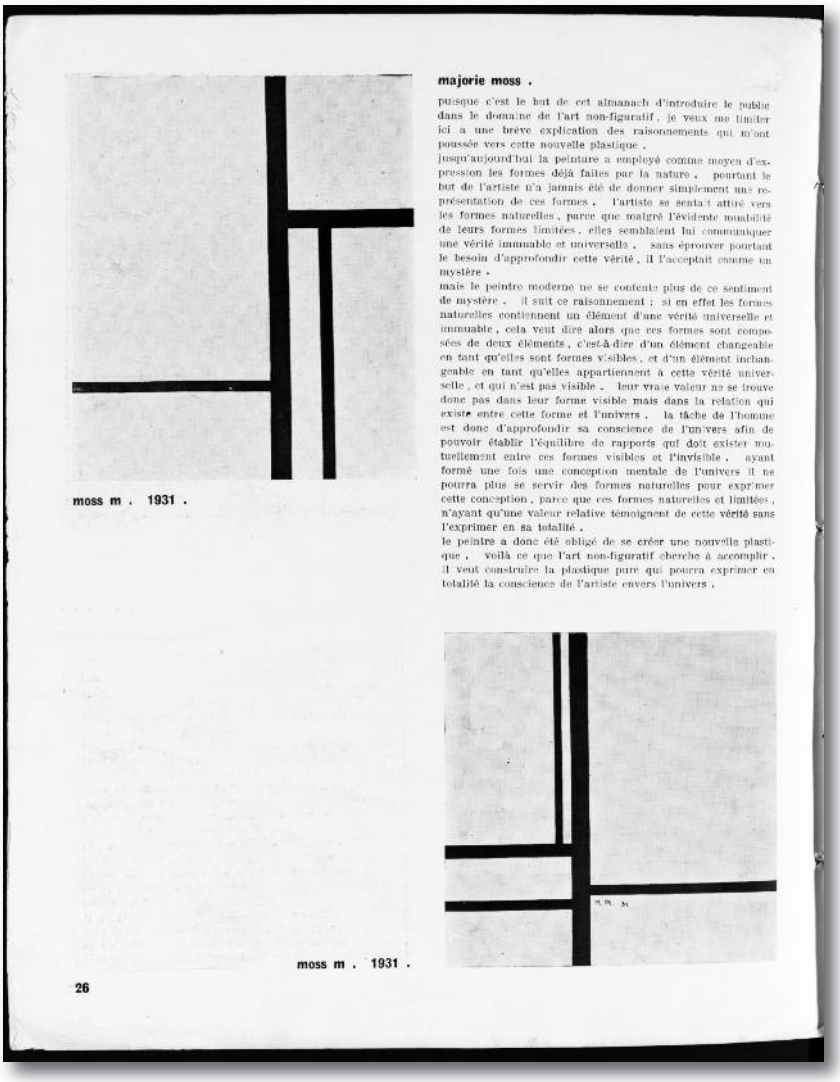
The cultural environment of Paris in the 1920s, as described by Anna C. Chave, facilitated "various forms of biopolitical activity, including transvestism and open displays of bisexuality and homosexuality" amongst artistic and literary expatriates. Chave has examined, for example, Brancusi's ambiguous "gender assignment" of his "simplified figures," as relaying issues related to "bisexuality, hermaphroditism, and androgyny."[7] Immersed in such an environment, Moss would have benefitted from its liberal climate, which would have allowed for transgendered identities to be explored, enacted, and lived, similar to manifestations such as Marcel Duchamp's female alter ego, Rrose Sélavy.

Approaching Marlow Moss from a biographical perspective is complicated by at least two key factors: the resistance of both her work and her character to neat categorization, and the lack of primary sources documenting her life. While Howarth has made an invaluable contribution in tracing Moss's life and legacy, my aim here is to explore Moss's artistic practice with regard to issues around gender and abstract representation, and to remedy her marginalization by prioritizing attention to the work itself. By attending to the ways in which Moss's transgender identity is echoed in certain formal aspects of her abstract work, I wish to distinguish a queer reading from a transgender one. 'Queer' attends to a general transgression of boundaries, with particular attention to non-normative sexualities and genders, while 'transgender' refers to a transformable gender identity—in this context, Moss's identification with something other than her biological sex. Moss's biography represents a point of departure from which to examine certain formal aspects of her art; however, I do not necessarily believe it essential to examine Moss and her work as transgender or to confirm a causal relationship between her transgender identification and abstract aesthetics. Nevertheless, it is productive to consider these elements together in order to propose that Moss's paintings, and particularly her use of the double line, challenge abstraction as a fundamentally gendered discourse. Moss breaks with firm gender identification in favor of a transformable gender through the employment of the double line, as early as 1930 in works such as her Black and White paintings. The double line can be seen as imploding both previous and subsequent allocations of gender to abstract forms, as in the female with the horizontal line and the male with the vertical, phallic line, by allowing for a reading that attends to multiplicity.

Howarth has attributed to Moss the 'invention' or 'discovery' of the double line, and claims that Mondrian subsequently adopted this tendency in 1931 after engaging in a written exchange with Moss about her use of it.[8] She

reproduced two black and white compositions from 1931, both exhibiting the double line and subsequently entitled *Black and White* (Fig. 1), in the first issue of *Abstraction Création: Art Non-Figuratif.*[9] The group Abstraction Création, which produced five publications, was founded in Paris in 1931 by Auguste Herbin and Georges Vantongerloo and aimed to advance and elevate abstract art by promoting group exhibitions. As their publication was organized alphabetically, Mondrian's text and two images of his Neo-plastic paintings (Fig. 2), which give no evidence of exploration into the double line—are presented one page before Moss's. Upon examining the works by Moss and Mondrian alongside one another, and comparing each one's use of the double line, it is clear that the two artists implemented the new Constructivist element in decidedly different ways. Ankie de Jongh-Vermeulen, who has studied Moss's work, wrote that for Moss the double line was exemplary of the Pythagorean notion of "a mathematically growing rhythm of spatial relationships," while "Mondrian split a black line into two lines of equal width, with a white line between them."[10] In 1934, Mondrian wrote to Jean Gorin "that he saw the double line as *one* line, even if that space between them was greater."[11] Gorin, a disciple of Mondrian, also worked within the neoplastic painting tradition and produced geometric reliefs, similar to Moss's efforts to explore the visual language further through relief, in later works with added string and rope for texture.

In comparing the use of the double line in Moss's *White, Black, Red and Grey* (1932; Fig. 3) and in Mondrian's *Composition B, with Double-line and Yellow and Grey* (1932), Howarth argues the following:


majorie moss .

puisque c'est le but de cet almanach d'introduire le public dans le domaine de l'art non-figuratif, je veux me limiter ici a une brève explication des raisonnements qui m'ont poussée vers cette nouvelle plastique .

jusqu'aujourd'hui la peinture a employé comme moyen d'expression les formes déjà faites par la nature . pourtant le but de l'artiste n'a jamais été de donner simplement une représentation de ces formes . l'artiste se sentait attiré vers les formes naturelles , parce que malgré l'évidente mouabilité de leurs formes limitées , elles semblaient lui communiquer une vérité immuable et universelle . sans éprouver pourtant le besoin d'approfondir cette vérité , il l'acceptait comme un mystère .

mais le peintre moderne ne se contente plus de ce sentiment de mystère . il suit ce raisonnement : si en effet les formes naturelles contiennent un élément d'une vérité universelle et immuable , cela veut dire alors que ces formes sont composées de deux éléments , c'est-à-dire d'un élément changeable en tant qu'elles sont formes visibles , et d'un élément inchangeable en tant qu'elles appartiennent à cette vérité universelle , et qui n'est pas visible . leur vraie valeur ne se trouve donc pas dans leur forme visible mais dans la relation qui existe entre cette forme et l'univers . la tâche de l'homme est donc d'approfondir sa conscience de l'univers afin de pouvoir établir l'équilibre de rapports qui doit exister mutuellement entre ces formes visibles et l'invisible . ayant formé une fois une conception mentale de l'univers il ne pourra plus se servir des formes naturelles pour exprimer cette conception , parce que ces formes naturelles et limitées , n'ayant qu'une valeur relative témoignent de cette vérité sans l'exprimer en sa totalité .

le peintre a donc été obligé de se créer une nouvelle plastique . voilà ce que l'art non-figuratif cherche à accomplir . il veut construire la plastique pure qui pourra exprimer en totalité la conscience de l'artiste envers l'univers .

moss m . 1931 .

moss m . 1931 .

26

Fig. 1. Marlow Moss, *Black and White* (both 1931), both oil on canvas, left: 17 3/4" x 20 1/2"; right: 17 3/4" x 17 3/4". *Abstraction-Création*, issue 1 (1931), p. 26. Obtained from the British Library.

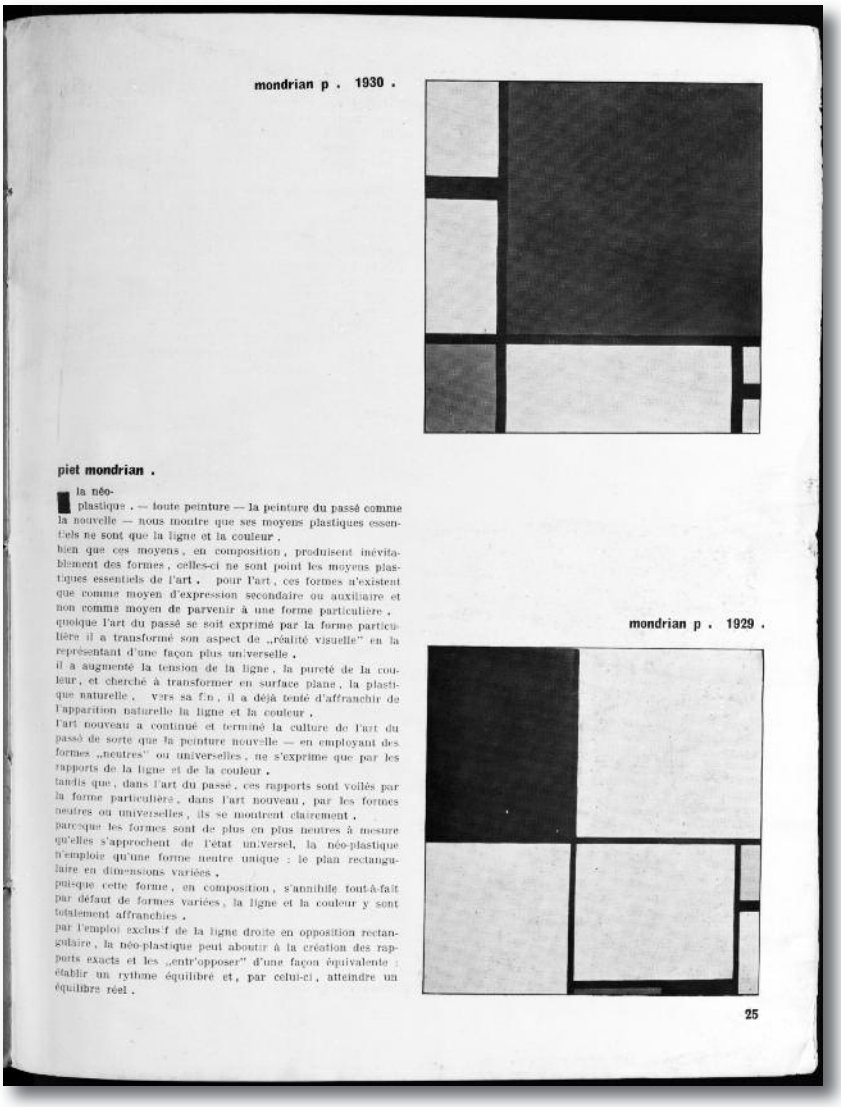
> Mondrian's double-line is bisected by a dominant vertical. This has the effect of visually pinning it down. Consequently the double-line remains, in fact, a line; the two lines form one single line. Moss's double-line, uninterrupted by the vertical, splits; the two lines belong to their corresponding areas, the upper and the lower, not to each other. The narrow strip of white space, allowed between the two lines becomes incredibly activated, and, like the force between two repellent magnetic surfaces, the composition explodes outwards, yet simultaneously remains bound together. A continuous energy is generated: a perpetual movement, in sharp contradistinction to Mondrian's locked-down composition.[12]

Howarth's visual analysis and de Jongh-Vermeulen's account describe how Mondrian's double line can be seen to fix his composition in a way that contrasts with Moss's act of opening up. While Mondrian's double line limits the canvas, Moss's extends it, rendering it dynamic and expansive.

Moss's partner, the Dutch author A.H. (Antoinette Hendrika, or Netty) Nijhoff, has delineated Moss's use of the double line as follows:

> Three considerations move her to take this step. First: single lines split up the canvas so that the composition falls apart into separate planes and the painting becomes a self-contained unit. Second: single lines make the composition static. Third: the double line or a multiplicity of lines renders 'a continuity of related and inter-related rhythm in space' possible, which makes the composition dynamic instead of static.[13]

While Moss's *White, Black, Red and Grey* employs the double line along the horizontal axis, many other instances feature it in a vertical position (such as in her other black and white compositions from 1930 and 1931), a placement that necessarily elicits its own unique series of associations and challenges. If the vertical line has been coded as phallocentric,



mondrian p . 1930 .

piet mondrian .

la néo-
plastique . — toute peinture — la peinture du passé comme la nouvelle — nous montre que ses moyens plastiques essentiels ne sont que la ligne et la couleur .
bien que ces moyens , en composition , produisent inévitablement des formes , celles-ci ne sont point les moyens plastiques essentiels de l'art . pour l'art , ces formes n'existent que comme moyen d'expression secondaire ou auxiliaire et non comme moyen de parvenir à une forme particulière .
quoique l'art du passé se soit exprimé par la forme particulière il a transformé son aspect de „réalité visuelle" en la représentant d'une façon plus universelle .
il a augmenté la tension de la ligne , la pureté de la couleur , et cherché à transformer en surface plane , la plastique naturelle . vers sa fin , il a déjà tenté d'affranchir de l'apparition naturelle la ligne et la couleur .
l'art nouveau a continué et terminé la culture de l'art du passé de sorte que la peinture nouvelle — en employant des formes „neutres" ou universelles , ne s'exprime que par les rapports de la ligne et de la couleur .
tandis que , dans l'art du passé , ces rapports sont voilés par la forme particulière , dans l'art nouveau , par les formes neutres ou universelles , ils se montrent clairement ,
parceque les formes sont de plus en plus neutres à mesure qu'elles s'approchent de l'état universel, la néo-plastique n'emploie qu'une forme neutre unique : le plan rectangulaire en dimensions variées ,
puisque cette forme , en composition , s'annihile tout-à-fait par défaut de formes variées , la ligne et la couleur y sont totalement affranchies .
par l'emploi exclusif de la ligne droite en opposition rectangulaire , la néo-plastique peut aboutir à la création des rapports exacts et les „entr'opposer" d'une façon équivalente : établir un rythme équilibré et, par celui-ci , atteindre un équilibre réel .

mondrian p . 1929 .

25

Fig. 2. Piet Mondrian, top: *Composition with Red Blue and Yellow* (1929 or 1930), oil and paper on canvas, 23 3/8" x 23 3/8"; bottom: *Composition No. III, with Red, Blue, Yellow, and Black* (1929), oil on canvas, 19.6 x 19.7". *Abstraction-Création*, issue 1 (1931). p. 25. Obtained from the British Library.

what happens when a second parallel line is added? Which comes first and which follows? If the single line is always in relation to the ground to which it is opposed, how might this change the relationship between figure and ground?

In an early implementation, Moss's *Black and White* (Fig. 1) features two instances of the double line. Both paintings present the double line vertically, with a thicker line spanning the length of the canvas, and a thinner parallel line commencing beside it and ending at the intersection of a horizontal line. To the right of the vertical is a thinner line, which comes down from the top edge of the frame and finishes where it hits the longer horizontal line. Here, the vertical pair is visually stronger, as the two lines are closer together, rendering the coupling more intentional and dramatic. The strong visual effect of this vertical double line is the result of the authority of the black lines as foreground and the consequent white rectangles that form a background. It appears that some black lines produce positive "subjects" while others, particularly the thin vertical line, seem to be further back, creating a sense of depth on the canvas.

Alex Pilcher has recently argued in a short passage on Moss that "[a] line has no gender. Neither does shape or colour."[14]

Further, Briony Fer has articulated that the only gendering of paintings is metaphorical and proposes instead the discussion of "a 'gendered' art practice," whereby "the imprint of gender may be left in the works, even inscribed in the means of representation."[15] While it may be that a line is ontologically genderless, it nonetheless remains charged with a history of gender assignment and with cultural associations that ought not be ignored if they are to be subverted. Indeed, Fer has argued that, in wanting to dispel corporeality as an implicitly gendered attribute from his work, Mondrian rejected "the 'feminine,' the outward, the individual, the material, the curved line."[16] Although he may have "envisaged a kind of spiritual hermaphrodite, a unity of the masculine and the feminine," these terms were never equal, as all binary models succumb to a hierarchy of positions.[17] Mondrian wrote in his sketchbooks the following note:

> Woman: matter-element
> Man: spirit-element
> Woman: horizontal line
> Man: vertical line
> Male artist: spiritual joy
> Female artist: material joy.[18]

Replete with gendered terminology, abstraction—despite its rejection of representation—holds onto visual difference. Asking the question "is the gesture male?" Griselda Pollock has theorized that:

> For those positioned through these terms as the Other to the One, what their difference, by which we must always only gesture at what difference might be, becomes logically unsignifiable. Thus feminists are presented with the impossible challenge of seeking to name feminine difference while they must also theorise it as an inessential, non-ontological effect of the social, psychic and symbolic production of subjectivity.[19]

It follows, then, that discussions of women artists are faced with the challenge of confronting difference without referring to broad or essential qualities that pertain to categories of 'man' and 'woman,' so as to avoid any possible exclusion.

With this in mind, I argue that Moss represents neither the female nor the male but rather a space in between, and that a recognition of this liminality is useful in attempts to elucidate certain curious components of her work, which often signify

her departure from Mondrian's strict Neoplasticism. Specifically, I wish to frame my analysis of Moss's use of the double line in her Constructivist paintings in reference to a consideration of her transgender identity (which included the possibility of dispelling a firm identification with either man or woman) and of her resistance against fitting in, which was certainly present in several aspects of her life. While Kati Röttger has referred to Moss's double line as a "queer line," I will suggest that it might instead be considered a transgendered gesture.[20] In particular, I wish to consider why it was so radical for Moss to implement a double line at this moment, and what it meant to have altered or added to a line associated with the masculine. What might it mean to approach a work of (abstract) art with reference to a transgender identity, form, or methodology? What might an occupation of both genders and anything in between look like, rendered in a high modernist aesthetic form? David J. Getsy has defined the "transgender capacity" as:

> the ability or the potential for making visible, bringing into experience, or knowing genders as mutable, successive, and multiple. It can be located or discerned in texts, objects, cultural forms, situations, systems, and images that support an interpretation or recognition of proliferative models of gender nonconformity, multiplicity, and temporality. In other words, transgender capacity is the trait of those many things that support or demand accounts of gender dynamism, plurality, and expansiveness.[21]

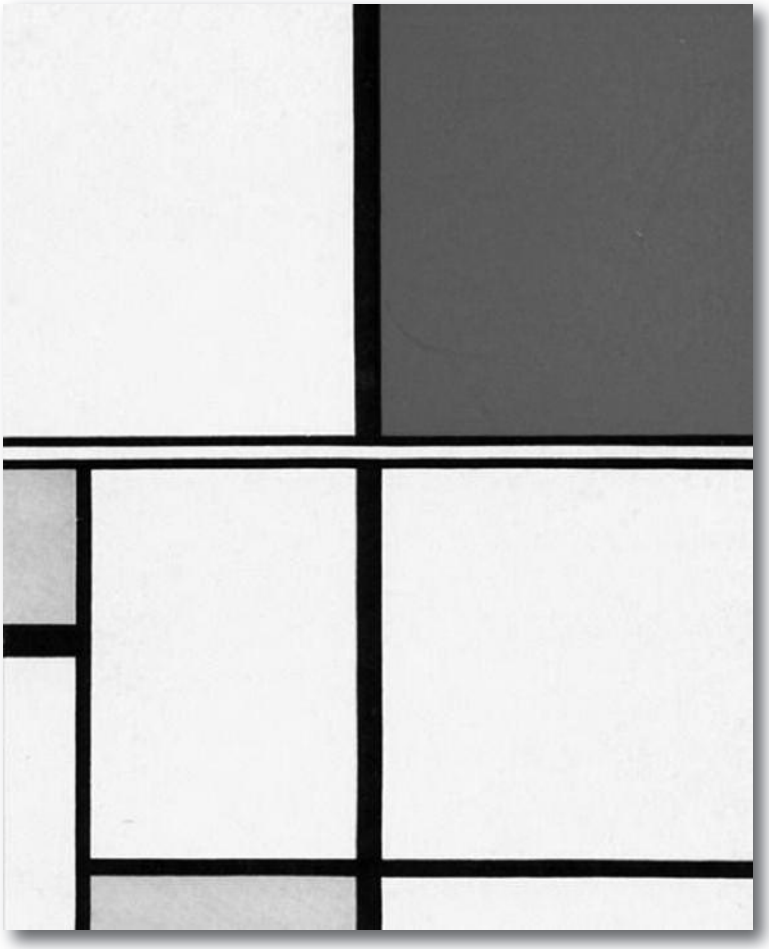


Fig. 3. *Marlow Moss,White, Black, Red and Grey* (1932), oil on canvas, 21 1/4" x 17 1/2". Collection Gemeente museum Den Haag.

The transgender position is, therefore, a system of variety and changeability. As Moss's descriptions of her work convey her concerns with exploring the dynamic and relational potential of "space, movement, light," the double line, exemplary of these concerns, participates in the investigation of multiplicity.[22] Getsy elaborates on his definition, not by way of averting anything definite, but by arguing for the potential of expansion at the moment binaries are dissolved:

> The dimorphic model of sex and the binary account of gender—not to mention the assertion of their static natures—are never adequate ways of knowing the sophisticated and divergent modes of existence that people enact. Such strictures always encode their own possibilities for collapse and deconstruction, and transgender capacity erupts at those moments when such reductive norms do not hold.[23]

With respect to both her life and her work, Moss eludes classification, resisting as she does the fixity of any one category. The transgender model, then, provides a framework that allows for crossovers between typically polarized positions, and can be seen as an effort to communicate an array of malleable positions in between. Such a discourse, then, may be useful in considering Moss's work, given that she incessantly sought to challenge the status quo. Just as Moss reinvented herself by cultivating an androgynous identity in such a way that she herself practiced a life *in between* dualities, her work too situates itself in the space between poles. This is exemplified in her manifestation of the double line, which behaves as an extension of her transgender manner and approach.

An examination of Abstract Expressionist Barnett Newman's verticals in conjunction with Moss's double line provides a generative complementary analysis of the ways in which the singular vertical line might be challenged. According to Michael Leja, for Newman, "masculinity is situated in the 'phallic' vertical bands of his paintings, the so-called zips—this term itself evokes not only speed and direction but also mundane openings onto male organs."[24] The introduction, then, of a second, or double line is an offensive challenge to phallocentric power, depleting its authority in the face of a competing multiple, squandering its singularity. Moss, practicing a transgendered life, refashioned herself as gender-neutral Marlow Moss, M. Moss or simply Moss. Her prolific use of the double line mirrors, in formal terms, the dissolution of the ease with which male and female, and vertical and horizontal, can be polarized and set as binary concepts as well as opposing actions.

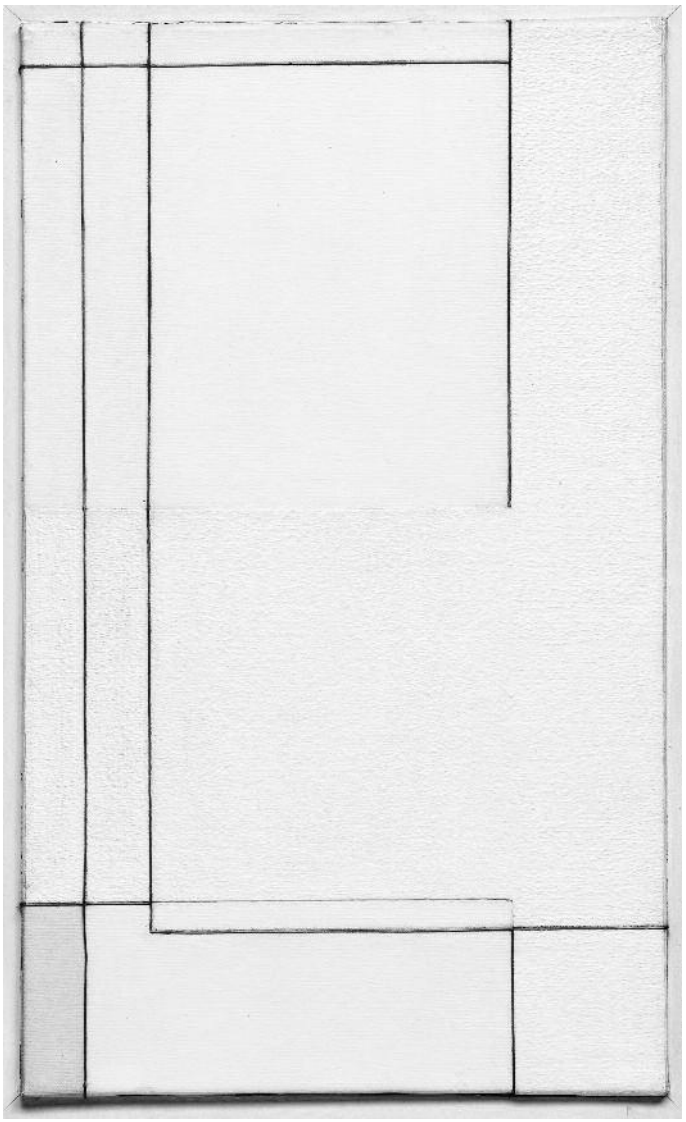


Fig. 4. Marlow Moss, *White and Yellow* (1935), oil paint, string and canvas on canvas, ca. 24 1/2" x 15 3/4". © Tate, London 2018.

It is useful at this juncture to consider Jonathan D. Katz's writing on Agnes Martin, including his effort to link Martin's formal abstract aesthetic with both her interest in Zen and her closeted lesbianism. Katz provides the following phenomenological account of the experience of spending time with Martin's *Night Sea* from 1963:

> Look long enough and it unemphatically reverses itself, transposing expected relations of identity and priority—the key themes of Martin's poetics. At some point in looking at the painting, unexpectedly and all at once, the image flips 180 degrees, and what we took to be the foreground— the thin white grid incised into an allover blue field—evaporates into a most delicate white reserve of gessoed canvas, a thin tracery ground peeking through an emerging thicket of painstakingly painted small blue rectangles.[25]

This oscillation between figure and ground rejects such a dialectical opposition; the painting becomes all ground or all figure so that it is at once both and neither and can be seen as parallel to Martin's avoidance of protocols of identifications that she navigated. Yve-Alain Bois makes a similar, yet diverting claim for Mondrian's "modular *all-over* grid" from 1918–19, writing that it "has the advantage of diminishing, or rather equalizing, any contrast—of preventing any individualization and of abolishing the figure/ground composition."[26] Bois, by suggesting that Mondrian's allover grids "diminish" rather than "equalize" difference, implies the impossibility of individualization. This is in contrast to Moss's demand for spaces in between and her challenge to polarities, resulting in the establishment of continuous difference and a multiplicity of positions.

Katz suggests that by immersing herself in Zen, Martin could choose the option of non-opposition through the quest for balance. Katz also alludes to a shared aspect of Martin's work with Zen thought as invested in "the implication of a binary (or bifurcated) reality": "This split conceptualization of what is generally understood as singular and whole implies an investment in a new, more accurate ontology that dismisses appearance as illusory and rewards renewed attentiveness to what lies beneath. Note too that this two-part purchase on the real is systematic and totalizing; it is not simply a part of *Night Sea* that changes, but rather its entire ontology as an object."[27] By materializing this balance in *Night Sea* through the reversal and oscillation of foreground and background described by Katz, Martin produces the possibility of visually dissolving what may otherwise be conceived of as oppositional. Thus, *Night Sea*, by way of its revision of the fixed and ultimate, proposes a new system of organization that relies not on the singular but rather accesses the space "beneath" and finds in it variability and multiples.

Katz proposes that the grid, "with its equilibrium of verticals and horizontals, its inherent limitlessness, its seamless incorporation of any singularity into a coherent overarching structure—is almost a metaphor for Zen's pursuit of that meditative, liminal state in which interiority and the outside world meet."[28] Katz's description of the grid and his reference to an interior and exterior function are, astonishingly, related to the kinds of oppositions that Mondrian sought to establish, but in a manner more severely gendered. Indeed, Mondrian wrote:

> [T]he extreme opposites that find their plastic expression in Abstract-Real painting can be seen not only as outwardness and inwardness, as nature and spirit, as individual and universal, but also as *female and male elements*. In art too it is important to see the duality of all life in this way, for this duality is then perceived from the viewpoint of *life itself*, and thus the unity of *life and art* within ourselves is clearly revealed.[29]

While Mondrian may not have overtly considered the male element as superior to its female counterpart, instead suggesting that a balance be struck between both, perhaps even

a merging of the two, his gendered allocation of oppositions maintains an unequal nuance. His pairing of the natural with the female and the spiritual with the male necessarily elicits a hierarchy of associations that Moss herself was both aware of and adopted in her own conceptualizations.[30] Even more firmly, Mondrian posits 'woman' as being in an antagonistic relation not only to art, but more urgently to abstract art: Man desires matter and nonetheless remains spirit. He continually yearns for matter and his spirit grows thereby. Woman continuously yearns for spirit, and her spirit thereby also grows. Woman is the real, man the unreal. Woman is against art, against abstraction— in her innermost being.[31]

Moss articulated this related conceptualization in the second issue of *Abstraction Création*:

> Atmosphere, earth, water, animals, minerals, plants— a chaotic universe, the movement of which determines destinies. Man is part of this universe. An accidental form whose aim remains unknown; yet he is in turn creator of a universe of names, of numbers and of Gods. Expressed in plastic forms according to the stages of his evolution: art.
>
> Primitive man based his conception on the appearance of elementary forces. His art: idols. Further evolved, man guessed at a spiritual goal and imposed a moral system on himself: religion: mystical art. Today, after centuries of decadence, the development of science and technology offers him a new horizon. No longer physical strength, nor moral strength, but cerebral strength has proved to be man's most powerful weapon. With the map of the world, he has an exact plan of the full extent of his domain. Through science and technology he will be capable of defeating his greatest enemy: NATURE.
>
> Once conscious of his own power, he foresees a new reality: the reconstruction of human life by man himself.
>
> It is this rapid development that pushes the artist towards a new plastic: non-figurative art. The basis of this new plastic: the balance on which this greatest work of art will be based: human life.[32]

By using the term "man" as the neutral or universal subject, Moss posits the male artist, concerned with intellectual or "cerebral strength," contesting nature, and perhaps by extension, the artist's female antithesis.[33] Selecting words such as "weapon" and "enemy," Moss appropriates aggressive language that suggests (male) domination. Moss's theorization and artistic practice are at odds in certain respects: while she asserts a male discourse, and while her paintings are responses to mathematical formulae, the formal aspects of her work are always in between. Her paintings continuously challenge the masculine and, by extension, binaries as a whole: viewed through a transgendered method as well as formally, her double line destabilizes the dominant vertical, opening up her compositions rather than pinning them down. In this way, she does not employ the vertical and horizontal in the same way as Mondrian. While her writing suggests extreme categorizations,

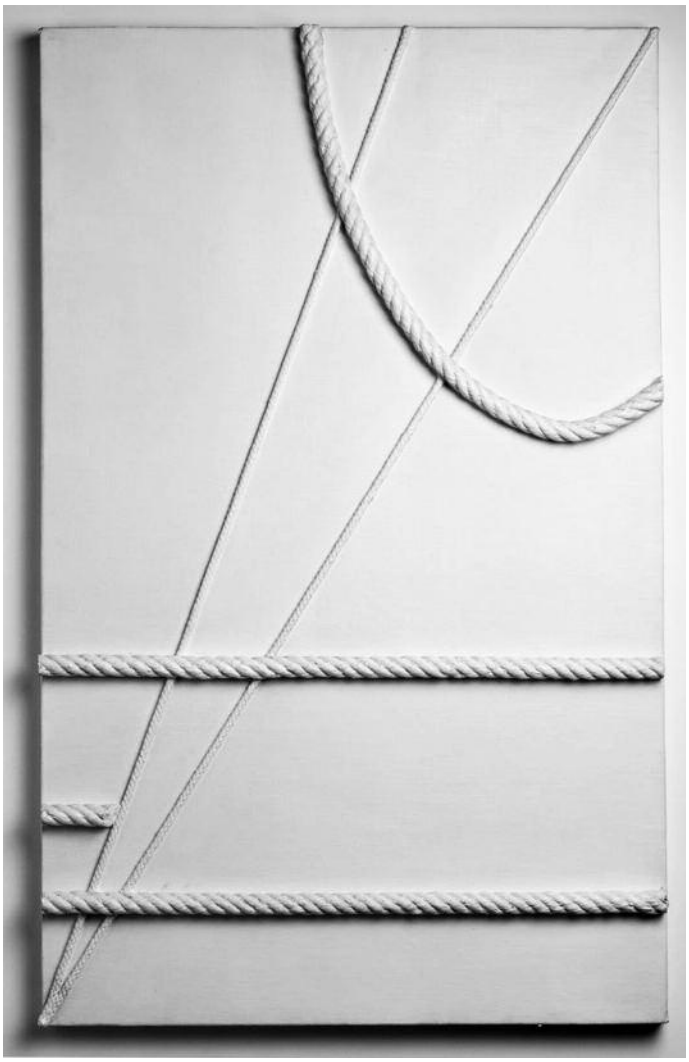


Fig. 5. Marlow Moss, *White with curved cord* (1936), oil on canvas and rope, 40 3/4" x 28 3/4". Kröller-Müller Museum.

her work departs from polar oppositions, not only in her employment of the double line, but also in her use of diagonals and, at times, curves.

While Moss certainly holds "human life" in high esteem and communicates the desired intent of nonfigurative art, this scheme necessarily relies on the disposal and rejection of natural phenomena: "atmosphere, earth, water, animals, minerals, plants—a chaotic universe." Moss, described by Howarth as "physically delicate and bird-like," could not participate in a masculinity determined by physical strength and, as a possible consequence (amongst other reasons), declared modern man the intellectual, a capacity in which she could include herself.[34] Further, it is through her abstract practice that she partakes in the task of describing human life in a manner devoid of nature that is fully designed by man and his authority over science and technology. For Moss, it is man's duty to transcend nature (and perhaps the feminine), in which he is implicated, a task to be fulfilled through the production of nonfigurative art. Despite these claims, Moss's

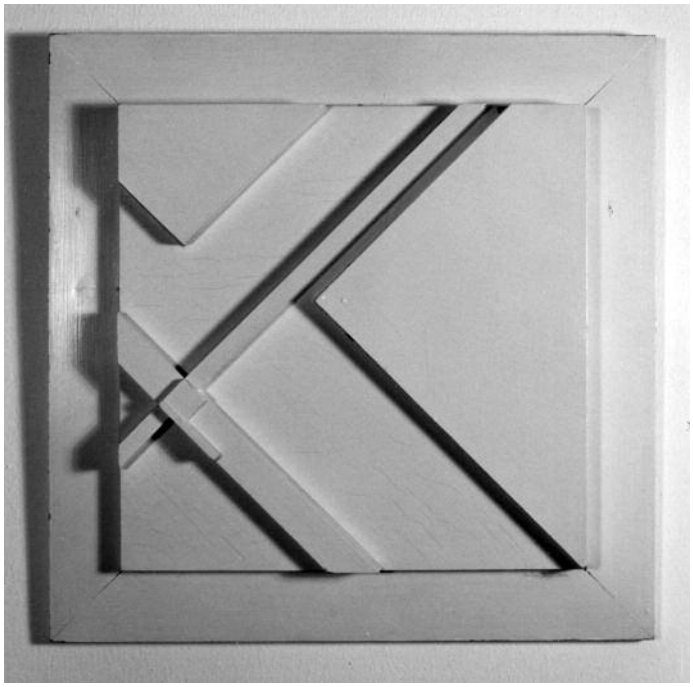


Fig. 6. Marlow Moss, White Relief (1940), oil on wood, 14 1/4" x 14 1/4" (with frame 18 7/8" x 18 7/8"). Photo: Courtesy of Florette Dijkstra.

relationship to nature is more personally complicated than she would have liked to admit. As revealed by Nijhoff:

> In contrast to Mondriaan, for whom even the scrawny trees lining the Paris boulevard were too reminiscent of nature, Marlow Moss preferred to live in the country. In Gauciel and Cornwall she worked in her garden daily and discovered, as she expressed it, that the secret of form lies not in form itself but in the continual changing and shifting of forms. This constant transformation was, for her, the vital process of 'becoming.'[35]

Unlike Mondrian, who thrived in the city, Moss sought a rural life and, according to Nijhoff, took the changing forces in nature to be a reflection of the mutability of forms, of processes and of becomings. While nature was not figuratively reflected in her work, Moss was certainly interested in how form was unfixed and changeable and could be observed in the nature that surrounded her.

Claiming that her work and ideology regarding the persona of the (male) artist and of "human life" were rooted in a celebration of science and technology and in stark opposition to nature, Moss was nonetheless concerned with the natural atmospheric factors that had direct implication on her work. Howarth has argued that "another development in Neoplasticism that originated with Moss was the vertically elongated canvas."[36] Moss did indeed privilege the vertical, orienting her canvas to be set erect. Even so, she could not escape her concern for elements that were subject to the natural world: her interest in "space, movement, light" is always palpable. At times, Moss added glued string and rope onto her canvases, as in *White and Yellow* (1935; Fig. 4 and Pl. 18). According to Howarth, "the relief technique was adopted in an effort to eliminate the use of black, which she felt hampered the expression of light, while retaining linear structure. Variations of the double line feature in the composition."[37]

Upon her arrival in Cornwall in 1941, Moss wrote to Ben Nicholson (at the suggestion of Mondrian), in hopes of making connections in the local artistic community and of exhibiting her work. Nicholson, who was at the center of the artistic haven for British Modernism in Cornwall, replied a year later, prompted by another letter from Moss, and conveyed little will to assist her.[38] Moss's white monochrome works such as, *White with curved cord* (1936; Fig. 5) and *White Relief* (1940; Fig. 6) lend themselves to a comparison with Nicholson's white reliefs despite their different approaches: Moss's theorizing was against nature, while Nicholson's, even in his most abstract works, was not. Moss was already using a limited palette of white, black, grey, and the primaries. Nicholson's white reliefs, which "repelled English critics, who found them devoid of human feeling," took inspiration from (his wife) Barbara Hepworth's "commitment to the practice of direct carving" and provided an outlet for Nicholson's love for working with his hands, according to Virginia Button,[39] who describes Nicholson's process. They were "roughly made, their irregular shapes in tune with Hepworth and [Henry] Moore's preference for natural forms. By February 1934 his oatmeal palette of muted brown, grey and cream had given way to startling white… His aim was to produce colour which 'runs through the material and comes out the other side.' Thus integrated, he hoped that form and colour might give a sense of space, and of the work as a real object."[40] Having come to white through the slow dismissal of organic colors, Nicholson did not remain with it as an end point to his exploration of color and form, returning as he did in 1966 to reliefs "scoured and enlivened with earthy colours such as moss green or terracotta," which "suggest a strong relationship to landscape and to the stones."[41] Within the context of a pure Constructivism, Nicholson was nonetheless attached to still life and landscape, so that his commitment to abstraction was less demanding than that invested in by Moss.

Button argues that Nicholson's "insistence on the handmade, intuitive aspect of his work was largely overlooked by English critics."[42] In an essay written for a 1937 volume entitled *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art* (edited by Nicholson, Naum Gabo and J. L. Martin), Mondrian, despite some reservation, embraces intuition, which would have spoken truer to the practice of Nicholson than that of Moss, who carefully calculated her compositions using mathematical formulas, often making small collages that sketched out her schemas. Mondrian wrote that:

> In spite of a world disorder, instinct and intuition are carrying humanity to a real equilibrium, but how much misery has been and is still being caused by primitive animal instinct. How many errors have been and are being committed through vague and confused intuition?

> Art certainly shows this clearly. But art shows that in the course of progress, intuition becomes more and more conscious and instinct more and more purified. Art and life illuminate each other more and more; they reveal more and more their laws according to which a real and living balance is created.[43]

If instinct and intuition constitute the counterpart to the contemplated, engineered, and devised, just as Moss would have viewed nature as opposing the Constructivist project, then Nicholson would have been associated with the former and Moss with the latter. This being said, such binary oppositions are necessarily harmful, despite Moss's insistence on the controlled and in spite of her typical intermediary position. As such, why would Moss want to distance herself so intently from the natural if she otherwise appears at home in an in-between position whereby dichotomies are disturbed? Perhaps in its close associations with the female, the natural as a point of embrace was too risky a formula on which to base her ideological approach.[44] Rather than turning to nature's conventional opposition, culture, to facilitate her cognitive practice, Moss instead found artistic stimulation in science.

Moss's thinking along these lines may be elucidated by Gabo, who wrote in *Circle* that "the creative processes in the domain of Art are as sovereign as the creative processes in Science. Even for many theorists of Art the fact remains unperceived that the same spiritual state propels artistic and scientific activity at the same time and in the same direction."[45] Gabo's take on nature also is reminiscent of Moss's critical approach, insisting on the sovereignty of Man. He wrote that:

> [T]he creative genius of Man is only a part of Nature, but from this part alone derives all energy necessary to construct his spiritual and material edifice. Being a result of Nature it has every right to be considered as a further cause of its growth. Obedient to Nature, it intends to become its master; attentive to the laws of Nature it intends to make its own laws, following the forms of Nature it re-forms them.[46]

Returning then to Moss's use of the double line, the artist's control over nature manifests itself for both Moss and Mondrian as a system of relations, a network of forms. Even in Moss's *White with curved cord* and *White Relief* there is a clear sense of a part-to-part relationship, so that each level impacts another, casting a shadow or framing portions of the ground to allow the reflection of light. As Mondrian wrote:

> Throughout the history of culture, art has demonstrated that universal beauty does not arise from the particular character of the form, but from the dynamic rhythm of its inherent relationships, or—in a composition—from the mutual relations of forms. Art has shown that it is a question of determining the relations. It has revealed that the forms exist only for the creation of new relationships: that forms create relations and that relations create forms.[47]

Similarly, Nijhoff recalled that "what [Moss] is searching for is a formula, not of geometric forms but of numbers … a line which is not a line, which has neither beginning nor end and which, therefore, does not enclose anything but only indicates relations and offers unlimited opportunities for variation."[48] It is this pursuit of opportunities, of multiples, and of systems that compels me to look further into Moss's transgender, not only in the advancement of an androgynous identity but also in the malleability of her work. Moss probes through her exploration of "a line which is not a line," a line which is in fact two lines and is part of a larger network of lines and forms. In doing so, she displaces the problematic gendering that often accompanies analyses of abstract works, proposing as she does, a visual inquiry into forms and theoretical approaches connected to transgender identity. •

Jessica Schouela is a doctoral candidate at the University of York (UK), working on modernism, photography, and abstraction.

Notes

1. John Russell, "Predicaments," *The Sunday Times*, Nov. 22, 1953.
2. This account of a rift is questionable. In discussions with Moss's relatives, Lucy Howarth gathered evidence that Moss still received family money, was in contact with her sisters, and met her nieces. See Lucy Howarth, "Marlow Moss" (PhD diss., Univ. of Plymouth, 2008), 65-66.
3. Howarth suggests that: "her collapse may have been due to her discovery of her sexual orientation, and seems to precipitate a further distancing from her family. Such a moment of crisis however should be recognised as a narrative trope, featuring as it does in Moss's biography of Nijhoff too." Howarth, "Marlow Moss," 68. Ankie de Jongh-Vermeulen has, moreover, emphasized "fierce clashes" between Moss and her "conservative" family, which she claims caused her to be depressed and break contact. See de Ankie de Jongh-Vermeulen, "Marlow Moss–The Construction of a New Reality," in *Marlow Moss: A Forgotten Maverick* (Zurich: Haus Konstructiv, 2017), 33.
4. Howarth, "Marlow Moss," 109.
5. Ibid., 111. See also Lucy Howarth, "Marlow Moss: Dress Address Name," in eds. Nina Kane and Jude Woods, *Reflections on Female and Trans* Masculinities and Other Queer Crossings* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2017), 16.
6. Howarth, "Marlow Moss: Dress Address Name," 17. Howarth has characterized Moss's cross-dressing and self-presentation in a variety of photographs as masculine, and a 2014 exhibition she curated at the Leeds Art Gallery, titled "Parallel Lives: Marlow Moss & Claude Cahun," explored, in part, the drag king and the plurality of gender. For more on Claude Cahun in the context of "gender transgression through performance," see Eve Gianoncelli, "Claude Cahun and the Practice(s) of Cross-Dressing, Drag and Passing: Gender, Eroticism and the Process of Becoming Subject" in eds. Kane and Woods, *Reflections on Female and Trans* Masculinities and Other Queer Crossings*, 182–97.
7. Anna C. Chave, "*Princess X*/ Prince's Sex: Repositioning Gender" in *Constantin Brancusi: Shifting the bases of art* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1993), 106. The first three quotations refer to David J. Getsy's "Introduction" to *Abstract Bodie*s (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2015), 20–21. Getsy discusses Anna Chave's argument on the destabilization of gender in Brancusi's suggestive, semi-abstract forms.

8. Howarth, "Marlow Moss," 176.
9. *Abstraction Création: Art Non-Figuratif*, premier issue 1, 1931.
10. De Jongh-Vermeulen, "Marlow Moss – The Construction of a New Reality," 45.
11. Letter from Mondrian to Jean Gorin, Jan. 31, 1934, in Marianne Le Pommeré, *The Work of Jean Gorin* (Zurich: Waswer Verlag, 1985), 499.
12. Howarth, "Marlow Moss," 179.
13. A.H. Nijhoff, *Marlow Moss* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1962), 5.
14. Alex Pilcher, "A Queer Little History of Art: Composition in Yellow, Black and White," online entry in association with the 2017 Tate exhibition, "Queer British Art 1861–1967."
15. Briony Fer, "What's in a Line? Gender and Modernity," *Oxford Art Journal* 13, no. 1 (1990): 77.
16. Briony Fer, *On Abstract Art* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1997), 41.
17. Ibid.
18. Piet Mondrian, *Two Mondrian Sketchbooks, 1912–1944*, eds. J. M. Joosten and Robert P. Welsh (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1969), 16.
19. Griselda Pollock, "Killing Men and Dying Women," in *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, eds. Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock (Manchester: Manchester Univ, Press, 1996), 253. Also see Katy Siegel, "Introduction: Contextually Boundless," in *The Heroine Paint: After Frankenthaler* (New York: Rizzoli, 2015), 20–21, for a brief overview of how women artists in the 1950s and later explored ambiguous gender positions, whether it be posing for pictures in masculine attire, or with a dildo, as did Lynda Benglis. Daniel Belasco touches briefly on form and gender with regard to one of Helen Frankenthaler's last oil paintings, which he claims "explored the way the certain esthetic qualities, such as curved lines and pinks and reds, are considered feminine, and supposedly neutral formalist distinctions have in fact segregated women artists by linking gender to style." See Daniel Belasco, "See Us Now: The Feminist Positions of Helen Frankenthaler and Grace Hartigan, 1957–1962," *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History* 83, no. 2 (2014): 78.
20. Kati Röttger, "Nachwort-Anmerkugen zum Titelbild: *White, Black, Red and Grey* von Marlow Moss," in *Differenzen in der Geschlecterdifferenz: Aktuelle Perspektiven der Geschlectforschung* (Differences within Gender Studies: Current Perspectives on Gender Research), eds. Röttger and Heike Paul (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1999).
21. Getsy, *Abstract Bodies*, 34.
22. This quote by Moss is repeated again and again. It is also the title of the curatorial essay by Lucy Howarth, published by Tate.
23. Getsy, *Abstract Bodies*, 34.
24. Michael Leja, "Barnett Newman's Solo Tango," *Critical Inquiry* 21, no. 3 (Spring 1995): 556.
25. Jonathan D. Katz, "Agnes Martin and the Sexuality of Abstraction," in *Agnes Martin*, eds. Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2009), 93.
26. Yve-Alain Bois, "The Iconoclast," in *Piet Mondrian (1872–1944)* (Boston: Bulfinch, 1994), 315.
27. Katz, "Agnes Martin and the Sexuality of Abstraction," 95.
28. Ibid., 100.
29. Piet Mondrian, "Conclusion: Nature and Spirit as Female and Male Elements," in *The new art—The new life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, ed. Harry Holtzman (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986), 64–65. Mondrian's italics.
30. Ibid., 65.
31. Mondrian, *Two Mondrian Sketchbooks, 1912–1944*, 19.
32. Marlow Moss, *Abstraction Création: Art Non-Figuratif*, no. 2, 1933. While this represents one of very few instances of Moss's writing, the sculptor Barbara Hepworth, Moss's contemporary in Cornwall, was included in *Circle*, breaking into the male world of cerebrality and theorization, acquiring credentials of an intellectual abstract artist. See Hepworth, "Sculpture" in *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, eds. J.L. Martin, Ben Nicholson, Naum Gabo (New York: Praeger, 1937), 46. *Circle* included writings and images by artists, architects, and critics. (Hereafter *Circle*.)
33. On the male artist, Griselda Pollock has written: "[M]odernism is structured around sexual politics but these are displaced by the manifest content of modernist discourse, the celebration of creative masculine individualism. The figure of the artist always assumed to be masculine in critical and economic practices around art is matched by the sign woman which is its signifier within representational systems"; see Pollock, *Vision and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 218.
34. Howarth, "Marlow Moss," 73.
35. Nijhoff, *Marlow Moss*, 1.
36. Howarth, "Marlow Moss: Space Movement, Light," Tate curatorial online essay, Oct. 13, 2014. Howarth quotes from Nijhoff, *Marlow Moss*.
37. Howarth, "Marlow Moss: Space Movement, Light," 12. The gluing technique with white rods or rope can also be seen in Moss's *White with curved cord*.
38. Lucy Howarth, "The lonely radical," *Tate Etc.* 28 (Aug. 20, 2013), 3.
39. Virginia Button, *Ben Nicholson* (London: Tate Publishing, 2007), 25.
40. Ibid, 38. Quote from Annette King, "Ben Nicholson's *1935 (white relief)* 1935," in *Paint and Purpose: A Study of Technique in British Art*, eds. Stephen Hackney, Roca Jones and Joyce Townsend (London: Tate Publishing, 1999), 161.
41. Button, *Ben Nicholson*, 32–33. As an illustration of Nicholson's return to color by way of his investment in landscape, Button claims that "*1966 (Zennor Quoit 2)*, for example, seems to evoke the mountainous landscape around Brissago as much as the Cornish standing stone which gives it its name."
42. Ibid., 38.
43. Piet Mondrian, "Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art: Figurative Art and Non-Figurative Art," in *Circle*, 46.
44. As per Mondrian's situating nature in opposition to the spirit, this would have been an element that Moss sought to dispel. In a similar vein, Joan Marter writes that the Abstract Expressionist artist Perle Fine "titled her paintings as though they were based on studies of nature, but the non-objective world was her inspiration, and as a follower of Mondrian's Neo-Plasticism, she emphasized an alternative to natural forms: the creation of pure abstractions." See Joan Marter, "Missing in Action: Abstract Expressionist Women," in *Women of Abstract Expressionism*. ed. Joan Marter (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2016), 22. On Georgia O'Keeffe and the false gendering of her abstract or floral work through Freudian interpretation, as well as scholarly efforts to view O'Keeffe outside the gendering of 'nature' as female, see the collected essays in Tanya Barson et al. *Georgia O'Keeffe* (London: Tate Publishing, 2016).
45. Naum Gabo, "The Constructive Idea in Art," in *Circle*, 2.
46. Ibid., 7–8.
47. Mondrian, "Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art," 41–42.
48. Nijhoff, *Marlow Moss*, 3–4.

Only Human
Judy Dater: 1964 to 2016
Portraits and Nudes

By Judy Dater,
Essays by Marilyn Symmes, Gloria Williams Sander and Donna Stein
Marymount Institute Press & TSEHAI Publishers, 2018

Reviewed by Ellen G. Landau

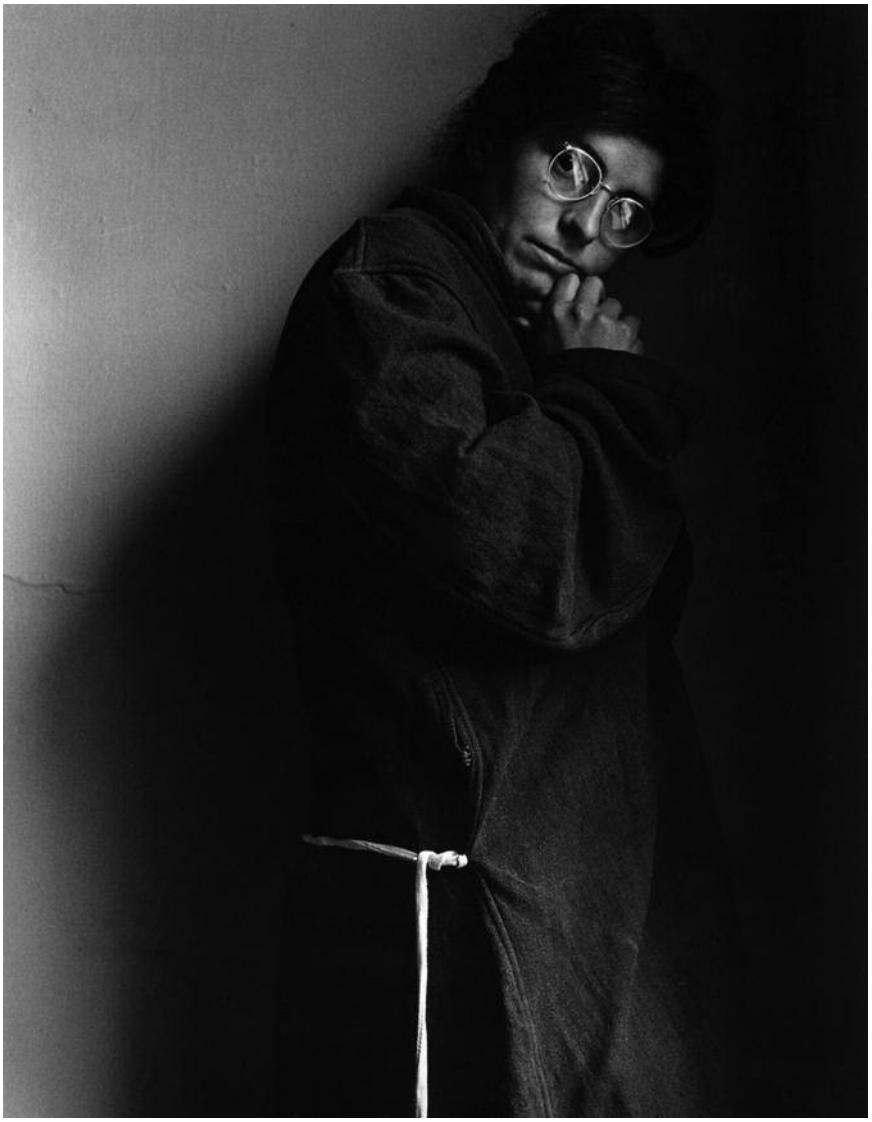


Fig. 1. Judy Dater, *Anna, Grass Valley, California* (1964). © Judy Dater.

In her lovely foreword to this beautifully produced exploration of the under-recognized career of West Coast-based portrait photographer Judy Dater (b. 1941), Theresia de Vroom, editor at Marymount Institute Press, associates the theme of this book—issued to accompany a retrospective of Dater's work at San Francisco's de Young Museum, April 7-September 16, 2018—with Shakespeare's Miranda, whom we meet as a young girl living on a deserted island in *The Tempest*. De Vroom refers to Act 5, scene 1, where Miranda, at age 15, finally encounters persons other than her father Prospero and his slave/servant Caliban, quoting her now-famous declaration: "How beautiful mankind is! O brave new world/That has such people in it." Miranda, awestruck, ultimately concludes, however, that the astonishing, wondrous, complex "goodly creatures" she has now met are, in the end, "only human," thus characterizing her, according to de Vroom, a perfect antecedent to Judy Dater. Over the course of an astonishing fifty-year career as a portraitist, de Vroom proclaims, Dater has fundamentally and profoundly revealed the variant nature of humanity, achieving this goal "truly, uniquely, magically, genuinely, simply, and miraculously" (9).

In her own remarks following the foreword, the artist herself recalls the start of a career-long preoccupation with interpreting what she deems the human soul through a "universal language of expression that the viewer can identify, connect and empathize with on an intuitive level." While living a counter-culture life in the Haight section of San Francisco, a particular picture she shot in 1964 of her friend Anna in Grass Valley, California (Fig. 1), posed a number of key questions to Dater's inquiring mind, starting with, "Who is this person, why is she standing there, what is going on?" Anna's pensively direct face and body voluminously enclosed in what appears an oversized robe commences the plate section of the current book (36). She "became a character in a drama of my imagination," Dater states, and "I have been photographing the human face and body, female, male and myself ever since" (10). *Only Human*, constituting the first single monographic study of Dater's portrait work since the early 1990s, features one hundred superb black and white prints—almost all depicting subjects who make psychically redolent eye contact with the viewer as did Anna. Dater apparently requests this of her subjects. Three essays by women scholars seek to place Judy Dater more firmly into a variety of interpretive contexts, including, among others, historical, psychological, and (sometimes *avant la lettre*) feminist. The latter perspective is obvious in Dater's compelling portraits of women of all ages and types and holds even (or perhaps especially) true when she pictures male subjects, similarly presented both clothed and nude, a decision somewhat ahead of her time.

As both Marilyn Symmes and Gloria Williams Sander point out in their respective essays, Dater's oeuvre

includes a range of masculinities seen from a woman artist's point of view that parallels the sensibility of more frequently discussed feminist pioneers, particularly painters Alice Neel and Sylvia Sleigh. Dater's *Nehemiah, Mill Valley California* (1975), for example, presents a both exotic and frankly erotic African American male posed as an odalisque, wearing nothing but bangle bracelets and a feather earring and, here reminiscent of Manet's *Olympia*, staring directly at the viewer (104). This image is far more daring for the era than Neel's reclining John Perrault or Sleigh's naked Paul Rosano portraits of around the same time, in part due to its inclusion and implied critique of the type of racial and colonialist overtones Edward Saïd would deconstruct in his book on Orientalism, published a few years later, in 1978.

Symmes, retired director of the Morse Research Center for Graphic Arts at Rutgers University's Zimmerli Museum, begins her essay, "The Portrait Within," explaining Dater's many links to time-honored portrait format conventions, from Roman busts through Botticelli, Dürer, Christian Schad, Neel and Frida Kahlo, among painters she deeply admired. Symmes cites Dater's 2006 description of her personal goals developed in line with theirs and others of this genre:

> [My] portraits rely on the face itself to tell the story.... The narrative is implied through the look in the eye, the tilt of the head, the contact one feels when confronting these images. My portraits usually depict subjects in a serious or contemplative frame of mind. The smiling face does not hold much interest for me photographically.... Smiling in front of the camera is like slipping on a mask. It does more to hide the person than reveal them. Regardless of the individual serving as my portrait subject, my goal is to make a portrait that can serve as a reflection of the viewer's own inner thoughts, moods and feelings. Such photographs are fascinating, enigmatic and timeless.[1]

Even if the viewer might feel somewhat like a voyeur, Symmes explains, Dater has chosen, like certain key forerunners from the Renaissance up through twentieth century photography masters like August Sander and Edward Weston, to heighten the realism of a person-to-person encounter.

The photographer whose impact has been most profound in her development was Dater's mentor, Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976), whom she met in the mid-1960s, and whose work she studied extensively, publishing a book on it in 1979. Cunningham herself, age 91, shown with a large camera around her neck, became a subject in what is perhaps Dater's best known picture, *Imogen and Twinka at Yosemite* (1974). In a riff on one of Dater's most unexpected sources, Thomas Hart Benton's somewhat kitschy 1938–39 canvas *Persephone*, a painting Dater loved as a child after seeing it in an art book owned by her parents, Cunningham can be interpreted as representing the archetype of "old age contemplating (or coveting) youth" (15). Unlike Benton's sleeping Persephone, unknowingly spied on by an old and wrinkled farmer, Twinka, the daughter of painter Wayne Thiebaud, who is also presented fully nude, strikes an upright, more active and coyly demonstrative pose for the little old lady she definitely notices emerging from behind the trunk of an immense California tree. The camera with huge lens Cunningham wears around her neck emphasizes her actively creative eye. As Symmes points out, based on Dater's connections to film (through her father's job owning and managing a Hollywood theater), there is additionally a cinematic feel to this work that carries over to many of Dater's single portraits as well.

In "The Archeology of a Photograph: Unearthing Judy Dater," Gloria Williams Sander, a curator at the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, describes how Dater's photos, in her opinion, "can be read as artifacts: portraits of the human face or the nude where the artifact of the photograph is both the work of 'art' and the work of 'fact'—an object of art which at the same time is embedded in the historical or cultural context in which it was created" (20). She places Dater's origins as a photographer in the 1960s in context with political and cultural change in that era, pointing out that, despite her relative critical neglect in those days, in 1974 Dater was the only woman photographer represented in a multi-image *Newsweek* cover on photography as a burgeoning form of artistic expression. Moreover, although some critics began situating her work at the intersection of photography and feminism, male writers in particular, Sander explains, often assigned clichéd essentialist meanings to her work. She adds nuance to interpretations of Dater's approach to exposing the humanity, sensuality, and vulnerability of her male as well as female subjects, citing in particular *Nehemiah* and the more overtly priapic photo *Offering, Berkeley California* (1988) (113). Sander reads the latter as both truth-telling and emblematic, calling to mind "the relationship between sexual energy and creative energy and its role, sometimes outsized, in the artist's life" (23) . In depicting with great intensity, authenticity, and honesty both male and female subjects, Dater communicates a narrative and "elicits a desire in the viewer, one that she likely felt herself, to uncover a mystery in their presence" (23). Eschewing neutral or vacant expressions more typical of portraiture in her day, Dater's images exhibit her uncanny ability to elicit from sitters what Sander calls "portrait behavior," with the result a self-fashioning mutually agreed upon by artist and subject.

The book's final text, "Looking Back: Judy Dater, The Last Fifty Years," was written by Donna Stein, an art historian and critic/curator who has known the photographer for many years and written several earlier essays on her oeuvre, including a 2014 article in this journal for which *Imogen and Twinka at Yosemite* provided the cover.[2] In that essay Stein provided a brief historical background for Dater's work, building toward a more in-depth analysis of her Memoir project (2009–12), in which she repurposed long-forgotten visual and textual material unearthed after the death of her parents, adding her own written commentary to what appear like

pages of a scrapbook. For *Only Human*, Stein explains more about how Dater's "working with feelings" has allowed the places and times she's lived in to influence and advance her work (26). Stein explores in greater detail the impact of movies on Dater's sensibility and, indeed, at least one of the more recognizable faces in *Only Human* is related to the film industry. Others were part of the world of photography in which Dater had a place: actress Liv Ullman as well as Ansel Adams, John Szarkowski and Minor White are represented with great care. In general, however, Dater explains that she has preferred not to depict famous subjects: "When I photograph unknown people they can represent concepts larger than themselves." Celebrity, Dater states, "tends to take away from the portrait and what I am trying to convey" (27).

As Donna Stein notes, however, in line with her father's profession, Dater was able to hold such movie house jobs as usher, popcorn and candy seller, and cashier in her early life. As well, she had many opportunities to attend previews and screenings. This exposure enabled Dater to become "an astute student of film ... analyzing camera angles, lighting, costumes, make-up, timing, cutting and editing" and, in effect, these formative experiences undergird her successful adoption of a directorial mode and her use of light as both a potent symbol and to set a mood throughout her signature work. Dater often has incorporated mirrors, all kind of glass and anything reflective including water, as well as its opposite, hard and durable stone, seen especially in a set of 1981 nude self-portraits modeled in the Badlands of South Dakota (148–53). Except in the scrapbook form of her Memoir series, any props (also potently evident in portrait photographs she shot in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in Egypt and Italy, a number of examples of which are included in this book) have all but disappeared from Dater's more recent work. The final image included in *Only Human* presents a major exception to this excision. Here Dater has atypically chosen to depict noted printmaker June Wayne (1918–2011; introduced to her by Stein) as seen from the rear (183). Emphasis is placed not on Wayne's face, but rather on her distinctive short and wavy white hair and her favorite accessory, a large, beautifully decorated magnifying glass suspended from a ribbon down her back. As Stein points out, this magnifying lens allows us to see what the sitter could not: a nearby copse of trees. June Wayne's representation incorporates both realism and allegory. Not unlike Imogen Cunningham and her camera as alter ego, so prominently featured in a mythic forest encounter of 1974, in *Looking Back, June Wayne* (2006), Dater has once again brilliantly conveyed a deeply felt belief in the power of women's creativity. ●

Ellen G. Landau is Andrew W. Mellon Professor Emerita in the Humanities, Case Western Reserve University. She is the author of *Jackson Pollock* (1989); *Lee Krasner: A Catalogue Raisonné* (1995); *Reading Abstract Expressionism: Context and Critique* (2005); and *Mexico and American Modernism* (2013).

Notes

1. Judy Dater, "Anatomy of a Portrait," *3 Humanscapes: Visions from the West Coast: June Wayne, Judy Dater, Kumiko Shindo*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: Tama Art University Museum, 2006), 103.
2. Donna Stein, "The Art of Judy Dater and Her Photographic *Memoir*," *Woman's Art Journal* 35, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2014), 3–13.

All The Things I Lost In The Flood: Essays on Pictures, Language and Code

By Laurie Anderson
Skira Rizzoli, 2018

Reviewed by Aliza Edelman

Laurie Anderson's (b. 1947) recent "artist book" operates as an expansive visual memoir and dialogue with her own vast stories. *All The Things I Lost In The Flood* is a large volume harnessed with great urgency and agility by the carefully wrought "essays" weaving together a four-decade-long career as an experimental performer and musician that begins in the 1970s and journeys backward and forward in time and geography through projects incorporating poetry, sound, projection, photography, and film. Its beauty underscores Anderson's unconventionality: it requires persistence to follow her winding chapters that privilege language as a constructive element in her processes of memory. Language is embedded in her written texts and spoken word; it is also the "DNA" or "complicated code" that binds our technological reality, a concept explored electronically in the design of Anderson's word software program, ERST (12–13). In her introduction, Anderson offers that the book explores the "catalytic relationships between pictures and stories and about the many codes we use to represent the world" (10). For example, in her partnership with the Kronos Quartet called *Landfall* (2012), Anderson utilized ERST as a digital list of extinct animal species and text projected behind the musicians, a startling juxtaposition of musical score and screen.

The deft book title refers to the devastation incurred by Hurricane Sandy in 2012, when the artist lost many of her material belongings and equipment in the flooding of her basement, and how the destruction of property subsequently engendered a "different meaning" in what was creatively salvaged as memories. In her work, Anderson's connection to water's shape-shifting and life-affirming nature is a charged metaphor, and likewise signals an earlier pivotal childhood experience during which she heroically rescued her younger brothers who, under her care, nearly drowned in a frozen lake near their home. Drawing upon life's "dreamlike" permeability, Anderson rejects an obvious chronological presentation of her career but rather conceives of her own artistic practice as a radical tool to stress narrative relationships and recurring



Fig. 1. Laurie Anderson, *Chalkroom* (2017), in collaboration with Hsin-Chien Huang, wall painting and detail of room installation for VR work, 27 1/2′ x 40 1/2′ x 11′. (dimensions variable); MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA.

patterns among her works, now refracted in a new light and from a new vantage point. In the first chapter "Out on the Ice," such intermingling of memory, longing, and dislocation are foregrounded in the playful articulation of words in *As: If* and descriptions of her modified self-playing violin in *Duets on Ice,* both formative international performances or "collection[s] of stories" from 1974; these are discussed alongside her more recent 75-minute documentary video *Heart of a Dog* (2015) that encapsulates the above childhood tale, the deaths of artist Gordon Matta-Clark and her late husband, Lou Reed, and her beloved and 'gifted' rat terrier, Lolabelle. Through the author's synchronous recollection of individual projects, the book calls to mind our shared sense of nostalgia identified by historian Svetlana Boym: a desire to "revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition."[1]

Equally motivated by the shifting patterns structuring our political and economic realities, the second chapter, "This Must Be the Place," suggests Anderson's ongoing endeavor to present a "portrait of the United States" (51), understood broadly in the relationships between her early multimedia shows, *United States Parts 1-4* (1979-83), for which she wrote, in part 2, her hit song *O Superman* (1980)—grave lyrics that resonated after the World Trade Center attacks of September 2001—and her "story performances" created during 2001–16. Anderson's fascination with the direction and manipulation of images through light, shadows, and non-traditionally shaped screens and projections, a sort of "immersive cinema," were often produced on stage in these early performances from the 1970s, and later recreated on a grander scale with multiple monitors, as in *Stories from the Nerve Bible* (1995) or *Sidewalk* (2012).

Relating these works to her growing interest in the immersive worlds of virtual reality, *Chalkroom* (2017; Fig. 1), a collaboration with Hsin-Chien Huang initially installed at MASS MoCA, translates her passion for language into an animated technological dimension: hand drawn chalk-graffiti scrawls of letters, words, and stories—a floating and kinetic spatial poetry accompanied by sound—surround the user whose "flight" throughout multiple spheres generates a temporary "disembodiment." A similar non-linear mediation of the landscape beyond corporeal limitations, what Anderson calls her "dream body," was thoughtfully invoked in *Heart of a Dog*; comparably, the "telepresence" and "virtual escape" of an Italian prisoner in San Vittore, projected onto a plaster cast sculpture, was utilized in the multimedia installation *Dal Vivo* or "made from life" in 1998 (88, 91). Anderson went on to challenge our misguided perceptions of interrogation techniques, torture, and media surveillance in her ambitious research on physical and psychological imprisonment with the Guantanamo detainee, Mohammed el Gharani; they subsequently produced the large-scale public art projection and performance called *Habeas Corpus* that successfully occupied the vast cavern of the Park Avenue Armory in 2015.

Naturally, Anderson's greatest medium is her voice, and here she knowingly acknowledges her well-deserved status as a master storyteller, through which "words ... retain their magic." A supreme command of her own voice is shown in the fascinating chapter "This Is Your Captain," realized in multiple personas or in drag as a digitally altered male 'alter-ego', in the use of 'second person' (learned directly from writer William S. Burroughs), and in her utilization of the voice of others. "For me the violin is the closest thing to the human voice. The human female voice," Anderson submits (208). Ultimately, her voice in the role of a wanderlust narrator guiding language, vocabulary, and pitch supports the formulation of dream-like scenarios, installations, poetry and songs, in *The Talking Book,* or the film *Home of the Brave* (1986), for example, and the multimedia opera *Songs and Stories from Moby Dick* (1999), as she was long under the influence of the great American writer Herman Melville. These were coupled with her investigations into the travel of sound waves and processing electronic sounds in the audio-engineered instrument *Tape Bow Violin* (1977) or the *Handphone Table* (1978), an interactive sound project executed at MoMA, as well as her deep understanding of how we perceive subtle yet complex shifts in vocal pitch when speaking, singing, or playing music, in *Concert for Dogs*. Yet perhaps it is most telling that her infectious and serpentine ramblings as a storyteller-artist take us to NASA, where she was the first (and last) artist-in-residence, a completely made up job description, and decided upon many hours talking to scientists and engineers who were busy examining the stars to simply write her own poem, *The End of the Moon*. Anderson is an aspirational guide to our universe's temporal relationships, past and future, using her deep gifts for sound and words to communicate life's memories (271). ●

Aliza Edelman is an independent curator and critic. Her most recent article in *WAJ* is "The Particle and the Wave: Sandra Lerner's Metaphysical Landscapes, Taoism, and the Calligraphic Impulse" (2016). In 2017, she curated "Judith Lauand: Brazilian Concrete Abstractions" and "Bruno Miguel: Seduction and Reason," both in New York City. In 2019, she becomes the *WAJ* Book Editor.

Notes

1. See Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xv.

Betye Saar: Still Tickin'

Edited by Sara Cochran
Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art and De Domijnen, 2017

Reviewed by Lisa Farrington



Fig. 1. Betye Saar, installation view of Scottsdale Museum. R., *Someones in the Kitchen with Dinah* (2014), mixed media assemblage, 16 1/2" x 6" x 10 1/2"; L., *Weight of Persistent Racism* (2014), mixed media, 25" x 6" x 9" x 7". Photo: Courtesy the artist and Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, CA.

Designed by the Phoenix based firm, ps:studio, *Betye Saar: Still Tickin'* presents itself as a one-of-a-kind artist's book rather than an exhibition catalogue. A sumptuous tome, despite its less-than-coffee-table-book dimensions, *Betye Saar: Still Tickin'* is bound in a heavyweight paperboard cover with raw exposed (though cleanly cut) edges, which gives the book a hand-cut quality. Also reminiscent of hand-made books is the endpaper pastedown, which is printed with an allover pattern of tiny black hand grenades on a wine-colored background. The pattern is not immediately discernible and appears, at first, to be only decorative leaves or insects. The fact that these repeated shapes are, in fact, weapons of destruction alters the meaning of the book's subtitle: "still tickin,'" suggesting an actual ticking time bomb as well as the longevity of the artist's amazing life and career. And, indeed, Saar's work has always been "explosive," if you will, and agitprop, as the contents of the catalogue reveal.

Subsidized, in part, by De Domijnen, a cultural enrichment and support institution in The Netherlands, the catalogue was produced in conjunction with a 2016 Scottsdale Museum retrospective (Fig. 1) that amassed 130 pivotal works of art spanning Saar's sixty-year career. Produced under the direction of the museum's Director and Chief Curator, Sara Cochran, the book consists of nearly 300 pages of glossy color images that show multiple views of works of art and installations (front and back shots, long and close-up views), so that the reader-viewer has an opportunity to best imagine the actual pieces. Organized into three sections—"Sanctified Visions," "Bridge of Memory," and "Tellin' It Like It Is"—the art is presented in thematic, rather than chronological groupings.

"Sanctified Visions" (32–82) includes works installations and framed pieces that suggest one is peering through dark windows, observing sacred memories, or overhearing whispered secrets. "Bridge of Memory" (84–140) includes more specific references such as portraits, faded family photos, and assemblages featuring old furniture and birdcages. Finally, "Tellin' It Like It Is" (142–226) gathers together the artist's politically themed art—assemblages replete with Mammys and Sambos eating watermelon and carrying guns; caged black crows, and slave chains—hallmarks of Saar's more radical aesthetic. The collections of images can be "read" like visual essays and reveal the depth and breadth of Saar's creativity and personality in a way that makes the usual scholarly catalogue essays seem gratuitous.

What focus there is on words is devoted to a foreword, a 20-page interview between the artist and the curator, and a chapter at the end of the book, just before the checklist, entitled "In Her Own Hand," which comprises artist's statements and poetry. In the Foreword, the reader is given a thoroughly accurate and stunningly succinct description of Saar's various leitmotifs—"African-American identity and racial politics; mysticism, magic, ritual…" (7), juxtaposed to a sepia photograph of Saar in her Los Angeles studio taken in 1966. The sweet innocence of her face belies the description and content of her work and helps to bracket the book, which ends with a 2016 photo of a white-haired Saar (266–67), who appears infinitely wiser and more uncompromising. In her interview with Cochran, Saar discusses specific works in the show, their history and configuration; this theme continues in "In Hew Own Hand," wherein Saar talks, over decades, about her process and her politics. A nonagenarian at the time of the exhibit, the book concludes with a quote that encapsulates Saar's life journey: "Still spinning on my ninetieth revolution around the sun" (266). ●

Lisa Farrington is Distinguished Professor and Founding Chair of the Department of Art and Music at John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York. Her many publications include *Creating Their Own Image: the History of African-American Women Artists* (2005; 2nd ed. 2011), and *African American Art: A Visual and Cultural History* (2016).

Alma Thomas

By Ian Berry and Lauren Haynes
DelMonico Books + Prestel, 2016

Reviewed by Ann Albritton

This large, illustrated catalogue was published in conjunction with the major exhibition of works by Alma Thomas (1891-1978) at The Studio Museum in Harlem and The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Gallery at Skidmore College. Though a practicing artist most of her life, Thomas only began painting the abstract works for which she is best known when she was 68 years old, after retiring from a long teaching career. In the catalogue preface, Director and Chief Curator of The Studio Museum Thelma Golden chronicles Thomas's life, beginning with growing up in the Deep South and moving with her family to Washington, D.C., where she taught in the public-school system, to her becoming an abstract painter. In 1972 the Whitney Museum of American Art recognized Thomas with a one-woman exhibition—the first there for an African-American woman; that same year the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., her hometown, also honored Thomas with a solo show. Her 1966 painting *Resurrection* was acquired in 2015 by the White House Historical Association for the White House Collection, and was chosen by President and Mrs. Obama to hang in the family dining room.

The catalogue, as did the exhibition, begins with the artist's "Move to Abstraction," followed by segments entitled "Earth," "Space," and "Mosaic," factors that relate to the artist's inspirations and also perhaps her intentions. Short essays, followed by brilliant, high-quality color images of the kinds of works discussed amplify the designated topics. In "Move to Abstraction," Ian Berry (Dayton Director of The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum) and Lauren Haynes chronicle Thomas's life, showing the importance of the formative years on her later work and offering enlightenment on the development of her abstract style. In high school Thomas especially liked science and mathematics and hoped to become an architect—to build bridges—which was not to be. At Howard University she first majored in home economics but transferred to the art department, where she studied with influential painter and educator Lois Mailou Jones (1905–98) and became the school's first graduate in art. Like many women of her era, she became a schoolteacher. Not until the early 1950s, after her retirement, while taking courses at American University, did Thomas first experiment with abstraction. Both the Washington Color School and Wassily Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* can be seen as inspirations for her earliest abstractions. (Although not mentioned by the authors, her untitled abstract paintings of 1958 and 1959 seem to me more influenced by the New-York-based Hans Hofmann.) By the mid-sixties, however, Thomas was developing her own signature style. Two paintings of the historic 1964 March on Washington show traces of figuration but with blocks of color forming figures; however, by the late sixties, as shown in the catalogue, she had moved completely into abstraction.

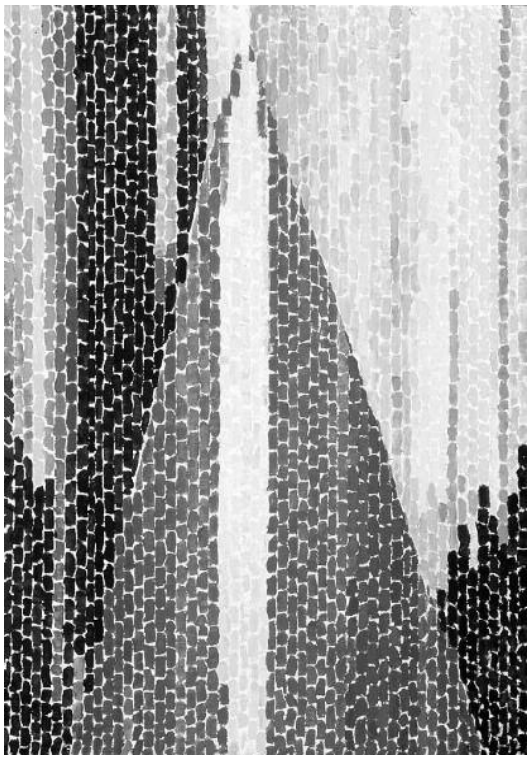


Fig. 1. Alma Thomas, *Blast Off* (1970), acrylic on canvas, 72" x 52". National Air and Space Museum Collection.

In the essay, "Earth," Nikki A. Greene writes that Thomas, looking out from the window of her Washington, DC, home, "transfigured the view into bird's eye, as if she were seeing it from an airplane" (53). Thomas referred to these paintings as her "earth paintings," reflecting gardens and all kinds of horticulture in different atmospheric conditions. Spatial arrangements as seen in *Wind, Sunshine, and Flowers* (1968) show mostly primary colors in vertical patterns; also in 1968 the artist used a circular format in *End of Autumn.* Greene proposes that Thomas's paintings "encourage a multisensory understanding of outdoor spaces," and that viewers should imagine the movement and sounds of petals and leaves in the breeze as well as their scent (59). The composition of *Iris, Tulips, Jonquils, and Crocuses* (1969), as described by Greene, reflects how the eye flits across a bed of such flowers in a garden (61).

Perhaps some of Thomas's most thrilling paintings are those in the Space series. The essay is by Lauren Haynes, who spoke about Thomas at the opening of the Whitney Museum of American Art's new building in 2015. Asked to talk about one work, she chose to discuss *Mars Dust* (1972). Haynes connected the Space paintings with Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin's 1969 walk on the moon. Haynes notes that Thomas's life spanned the Wright brothers' first airplane flight to the great moments in space exploration and the first steps on the moon. During the four years of NASA's Apollo missions, from 1968 to 1972, Thomas was exploring space in her studio. Haynes discusses the "Alma Stripe" as the vertical lines most often used by the artist in vertical brushstrokes. In the Space paintings, her color palette changed from the primary colors used in the Earth series to a color scheme of reds, pinks, and blues, though some like *Mars Dust* are almost

entirely red with shades of interspersed blue daubs. *Blast Off* (1970; Fig. 1), unlike many of the abstract works, actually suggests a rocket shape hurtling upward, and *Splash Down* of the same year suggests the rocket coming down to earth. *Starry Night and the Astronauts* (1972) connects Thomas's painting to Vincent van Gogh's magnificent *Starry Night,* while *Snoopy Sees Sunrise on Earth* (1971), done when she was 81, shows her attention not only to space but to art history as well as the comic pages. By 1972, Thomas's work was attracting the attention of the art world, such that the Whitney offered Thomas a solo exhibition—a rare occurrence for a woman artist and even rarer for an African-American woman artist.

In the Mosaic section of the catalogue, Bridget R. Cooks writes in her essay, "The Nature of Color," about the patterns of Thomas's brushwork, that perhaps caused her eclectic subject matter and experimental techniques to be overlooked in the history of twentieth-century abstraction. Cooks comments on the artist's use of white in *Starry Night and the Astronauts* to simulate twinkling stars peeking through the dark blue brushstrokes and also provide a semblance of depth to the painting. Cooks goes further to describe how color is form in Thomas's works as she constructs impressions of nature, and that the application of color actually sets up the compositions with repetitive brushstrokes that "activate the colors beneath so that they cohere as underpainting by looking between the lines" (151). In discussing a shift in Thomas's late work, *Scarlet Sage Dancing a Whirling Dervish* (1976), Cooks notes how the celestial and the floral merge in what can be seen as a birds-eye view of flowers, with the rhythmic mosaic patterning the artist uses to denote the sky (152).

During the 1970s, while most African American artists' works were addressing overt political issues and few were being acknowledged, Thomas was working to acclaim. Although her health was declining, she continued making art.

An "Archives" section at the end of the catalogue provides excellent research materials, including the artist's exhibition history, an artist statement, an unidentified broadcast about Thomas's biography, numerous interviews with the artist as well as a list of illustrations, and Richard Kalina's 2016 essay, "Through Color." Finally, the brilliant color plates and many black and white photographs of the artist at work provide a remarkable resource on Alma Thomas's life and work. One of the curators' stated aims for this exhibition was to bring Alma Thomas into the broad American canon of abstract artists. To that end, the exhibition was a success, and this catalogue will be a brilliant addition to the libraries of abstract art aficionados as well as college, university, and public library collections. ●

Ann Albritton teaches contemporary issues in art at the Ringling College of Art + Design, Sarasota. She writes articles and reviews for *Sculpture* magazine and is co-authoring a book on global art history.

Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon

By Henry Martin
Schaffner Press, 2018

Reviewed by Nancy G. Heller

Although her work has been exhibited, honored, and analyzed for six decades, until recently little was known about the early life of Canadian-American painter Agnes Martin (1912–2004)—especially the period before 1957, when she left New York City for New Mexico. Like most legends, the image of Martin living alone in her sparsely furnished adobe house in the southwestern desert, creating large, square, abstract canvases covered with subtle cream-colored grids or horizontal bands of soft pastels, is only part of the story, ignoring the first third of her life.

Martin was reluctant to divulge personal details, partly because she grew up at a time when her bisexuality and 40-year struggle with schizophrenia were not topics of polite conversation. The study of her artistic evolution has been further complicated by her tendency to destroy paintings (especially early ones) that failed to live up to her exacting standards. However, since Martin's death a flurry of materials have appeared, concerning both her and her art. These include exhibition catalogues, biographies, documentary films, and the first volume of a catalogue raisonné.[1] We can now add another volume to the list: *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon* by Henry Martin.

Unlike others who have written about this subject, Henry Martin (no relation to the painter) is neither an art historian nor a friend of the painter's. An award-winning Irish poet and playwright, in 2012 Henry Martin was working in London for Phaidon Press, helping to prepare the publicity for a book about the artist—with whom he was unfamiliar-—by Agnes Martin's longtime dealer, Arnold Glimcher. Her work, and her ideas, inspired him to write a play about Agnes Martin, and then to produce his own book about her. He quit his job and, with just a folding bicycle for transportation, blissfully unaware of the varied topography of the high desert in northern New Mexico, he embarked on what he thought would be a two-month research trip.

Over a period of several years Henry Martin managed to interview twenty-five of the painter's relatives and friends and incorporated their comments, plus those of several scholars—along with previously unpublished photographs—into the present volume.

Most photographs of Agnes Martin show her as a mature woman, square-jawed, with short steel-gray hair and a no-nonsense expression. Henry Martin's book includes 16 black-and-white photos of the artist, her family and friends; in the most interesting ones, including Figure 1, taken by her friend Mildred Tolbert, she is young, with long



Fig. 1. Mildred Tolbert, "Portrait of Agnes Martin in her Ledoux St. Studio, Taos, NM" (1954–55), Courtesy of the Harwood Museum of Art, Mildred Tolbert Archive, Taos, NM.

dark hair, and smiling. Such images humanize this icon of Modernism, as it does when Henry Martin reveals that the painter baked "famous" blueberry muffins; was a runner-up in the 1928 Olympic swimming trials; loved going to the movies—and Baskin-Robbins; and was so poor in the early years of her artistic career that she trash-picked groceries and had to take a bus from Taos to New York City in 1957, when Betty Parsons invited her to show at her prestigious gallery.

The Agnes Martin who emerges from the new material in this book is essentially the same person already known to her admirers: the fiercely independent woman who built two adobe houses with her own hands, refused to hire studio assistants, and valued solitude above all else, living alone, without even a pet for company—since a dog would distract from her working routine. The most valuable parts of Henry Martin's volume are the comments from Agnes Martin's longtime friends, who provide intriguing and illuminating perspectives on many aspects of the artist's life, notably her relationships—sexual and otherwise—with a series of female friends, including several fellow artists. The author also provides useful descriptions of, and unusually deep contexts for, topics such as the history of the Coenties Slip in Lower Manhattan, where the painter lived in the late 1950s.

The author re-introduces well-established information about formative influences on the young Agnes Martin—from the Zen writings and lectures of D. T. Suzuki to the paintings of her good friend Ad Reinhardt. He explains why Agnes Martin rejected the Minimalist label for her work, insisting that she was actually an Abstract Expressionist since, although they featured limited palettes and repeating forms, her paintings emphasized the irregularities of the human touch, rather than mechanical perfection, and were ultimately about emotions and (abstract) "meanings." Using excerpts from her own letters and published lectures, Henry Martin emphasizes Agnes Martin's essential belief—that what mattered most was not an artist, or even her work, but the viewer's reaction to that work.

In "A Note on Artwork" Henry Martin repeats the widely acknowledged point that this artist's pale, nuanced abstractions are particularly difficult to reproduce. Still, the decision to publish a book with no illustrations of Agnes Martin's work is problematic.

He writes: "I hope the reader looks at some of the artwork listed below and that they feel free to reference books, libraries, and online searches for other work…."(11–12). Henry Martin goes on to list the titles, mediums, dimensions, and locations of 35 works by Agnes Martin that he discusses in his text, twelve of which are simply identified as being in a "Private Collection." This makes it difficult to fully appreciate the author's visual analyses—without a copy of Glimcher's sumptuously illustrated volume, or Bell's digital catalogue, close at hand.

Initially, Henry Martin seems forthright about the difficulties inherent in trying to understand the impact of Agnes Martin's mental illness—which involved episodes of catatonia and amnesia, aural hallucinations, numerous hospitalizations and electroshock treatments—on her art. Yet later he seems to support the old chestnut that creativity and insanity are invariably linked, when he writes: "her body and mind were home to the marks of suffering and endurance that the great must bear"(18).

This book is sometimes confusing, as it moves back and forth through various places and periods in the artist's life. Of course, for many years Agnes Martin herself moved back and forth between New York and New Mexico, and she often made inconsistent and contradictory statements. But a surer editorial hand might have prevented the unnecessary repetition of certain points, and ensured consistency in the use of citations for quoted material plus the author's habit of identifying famous artists, but not others who are less well known.

As a poet, Henry Martin is able to provide unexpected, sometimes charming, turns of phrase. Consider, for instance, this description in his Prologue: "The desert grasses snap like uncooked spaghetti under the weight of footsteps…." (17), However, his tendency to simply list evocative words, as in an actual poem, is less successful (see, for example, page 144, where he writes: "Pursuing. Perceiving. Meeting. Leaping. Flying. Falling. Raining").

There are a few jarring moments, such as the author's reference to Agnes Martin's "sweet Canadian accent" (72), or his description of her searching for rivers to swim in as looking for "her own naturally occurring *mikvah*" (50). Moreover, it seems presumptuous for Henry Martin to consistently refer to his subject—whom he never met—as "Agnes."[3] ●

Nancy G. Heller is Professor of Art History at The University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA. Her books include *Women Artists: An Illustrated History* (Abbeville Press) and *Why a Painting is Like a Pizza: A Guide to Understanding*

and Enjoying Modern Art (Princeton University Press).

Notes

1. Several documentary films were released at the end of Martin's life: *On a Clear Day—Agnes Martin*, by Thomas Luechinger (Roses for You Productions, 2000); Mary Lance's *Agnes Martin: With My Back to the* World (New Deal Films, 2002); and *Agnes Martin: Between the Lines* by Leon d'Avigdor (Leon d'Avigdor Films, 2002). A later example is Kathleen Brennan and Jina Brenneman's *Agnes Martin: Before the Grid: The Life & Work of an Abstract Expressionist Painter* (Brennan Studio, 2016). Presumably because he narrated and helped research the latter film (based on a 2012-13 exhibition co-curated by Tiffany Bell and Jina Brenneman) it contains much of the same information as Henry Martin's book.

   Recent books about the artist include: Arnold B. Glimcher's *Agnes Martin: Paintings, Writings, Remembrances* (Phaidon, 2012); *Agnes Martin* by Francis Morris and Tiffany Bell, et al (D.A.P., 2015); and *Agnes Martin: Her Life and Art* by Nancy Princenthal (Thames & Hudson, 2015). [The books by Morris/Bell and Princenthal were reviewed by Deborah Frizzell in *Woman's Art Journal*, Spring/Summer 2017.] There is also an in-depth study of a single painting—*Agnes Martin: Night Sea*, by Suzanne Hudson (MIT Press, 2016); and Bell's digital catalogue raisonné of Martin's paintings, published by Artifex Press in February 2017.
2. A *mikvah* is a ritual bath for Orthodox Jewish women. Agnes Martin was not Jewish (she was raised in the Scottish Presbyterian tradition and later claimed to belong to no religion, although she was strongly influenced by Zen Buddhism), and—so far as we know—she did not believe that women's bodies were in need of regular purification. Therefore, this metaphor seems inappropriate.
3. To be fair, in this book the author refers to everyone, male and female, by his/her first name. Glimcher also refers to Agnes Martin as "Agnes," but he was her good friend for many decades, and his book is largely a personal memoir.

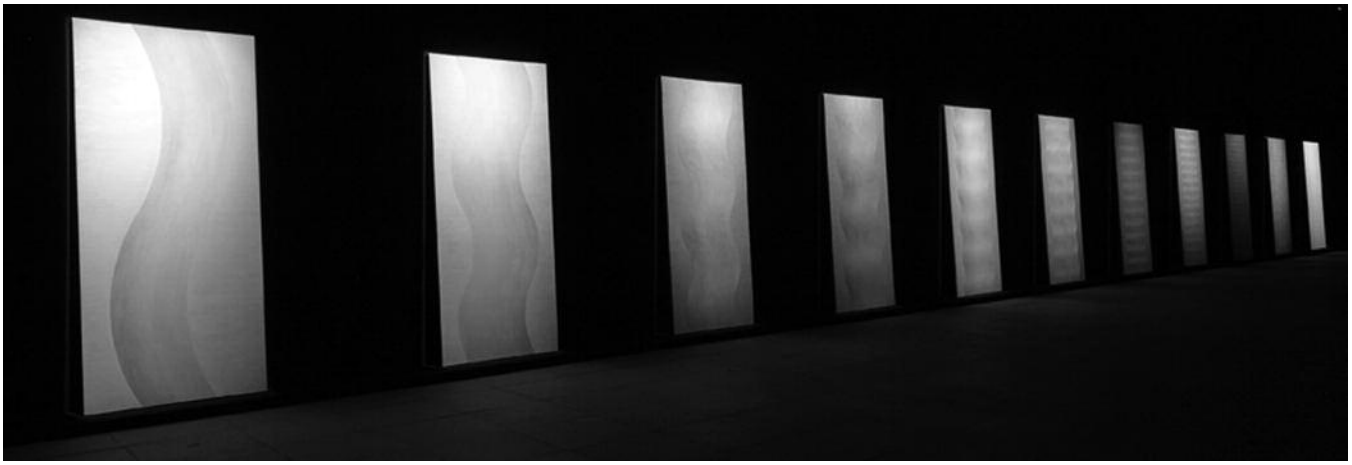


Fig. 1. Lee Lozano, *Wave Series* (1970) (Installation view, Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, May 31 – Sept. 25, 2017), oil on cotton duck, 11 panels, each 96" x 42".

Lee Lozano: Not Working

By Jo Applin
Yale University Press, 2018

Reviewed by Brenda Mitchell

Lee Lozano's art career coincided with the turbulent decade of the 1960s, including the nascent feminist movement. Lozano counted among her friends the movers and shakers in the 1960s New York art world: Carl Andre, Robert Morris, Sol Lewitt, Richard Serra, and Lucy Lippard, among others. Then, inexplicably it would seem, she abruptly dropped out of the art world in 1971, rejected feminism, and boycotted women until her death from ovarian cancer in 1999 at the age of 68. In *Lee Lozano: Not Working*, Jo Applin grapples with the complexities and contradictions of Lozano's contentious work and life through meticulous, comprehensive research and contextual analyses.[1] "Not Working" refers as much to Lozano's failed pieces as to her eventual withdrawal. In many ways, the subject parallels questions raised by Linda Nochlin's 1971 essay, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" These include how to define "greatness" and who is worthy of scholarly attention? Calling Lozano a "minor" artist, Applin answers, "instead of simply creating space for Lozano in the existing canon, asking other, better-known figures to budge up and make room to accommodate her work, I want to keep in play Lozano's status as something of an irritant—a critic, as much as a participant—in the New York art world of the 1960s" (18). Applin describes her attempt to "steer a route through Lozano's various encounters with the problems of work, feminism and ways of going about and doing things, attending to her failures as much as her successes, to dead ends reached and impasses hit, as much as those moments when efforts to make and represent an alternative way of living emerge" (31).

Applin's introduction, "Lee Lozano Versus the Art World," presents an overview of the artist's life and earliest work. Lozano was born Lenore Knaster to non-practicing Jewish parents in Newark, New Jersey, in 1930. She studied natural sciences and philosophy at the University of Chicago, receiving her degree in 1951, and later earned a degree at the Art Institute of Chicago. While working in design at the Container Corporation of America, she

met the architect Adrian Lozano, to whom she was briefly married. Her early interest in philosophy clearly influenced her later conceptual work, and according to Applin, even her earliest work regularly showed "contempt" for religion, the art world, and "all other organized politics" (17).

In 1962, Lozano produced a series of crude cartoon-like drawings, some scatological (bare buttocks projecting an ejaculating penis from inside an open mouth), some with obscene labels (cocks! cunts! tits! balls!). One which Lozano donated to an auction supporting the Black Panther members awaiting trial depicted hands squeezing fecal matter from a tube of toothpaste. Applin calls these "terrifying in terms of the vision of the world they invoke, but they are also funny wild and unashamedly puerile in their appeal to the body and the profane" (20).

Soon these evolved into drawings of sexualized tools: wrenches, screwdrivers, and hammers, among others. Sometimes the tools became sadistic and aggressive, other times they became soft and deflated. Applin interprets them as a "sly commentary on the working process of many of her close friends, including Carl Andre, Robert Morris and Richard Serra, whose minimalist sculpture … became associated with a kind of blue collar, industrial mode of labor—all forklifts and hard hats" (40). One untitled drawing depicts a nude human torso merging with a stapler in its buttocks—"the prominent butt cheeks fart metal staples" (42). Applin also situates these body-machines in the context of modernist mecanomorphism (for example, the work of Francis Picabia) and explores them in relation to the metaphorical associations of tools in the protest culture of the 1960s. The hammer, for instance "served as a key symbol of world-building, resistance and the fight for freedom" (43). Lozano's notebooks express her preoccupation with scatology and body functions: "the smell of menstrual fluids and farts, of her potentially rotten teeth, bad breath, body weight, and body odour" (44), what Julia Kristeva would eventually explore in *Powers of Horror: Essays on Abjection*. Applin concludes, "Just as Lozano imagined bodies as machines in anthropomorphic terms, so too a language of dirtiness and disorder frequently interrupted the cleanliness and orderly working of Lozano's 'tool' images" (44). Although Applin wished to avoid "a counterfactually theorized reflection on feminism, or work," we're left wanting a more in-depth questioning of these explicit images and thoughts about the distinctly non-mechanical aspects of the human body and gender. Applin does mention Lozano's two-year stint in psychoanalysis, from 1957 to 1959, first prompted by her boyfriend's sexual impotence (53). These explorations culminated in a series of large-scale, monochromatic oil paintings, in 1964, portraying menacing close-up views and play on the sexual slang associated with drills and screws. The largest of these, made in 1964, measured nearly five meters square and comprised two panels. A screw transforms into a monstrous phallus, anticipating later phallic works by Judith Bernstein and Nancy Spero protesting the military-industrial complex fueling the Vietnam War.

Lozano's first solo exhibition, consisting of geometric abstractions derived from her previous tool works took place in 1966 at the Bianchini Gallery. The following year, she began her Wave series, which was first shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970 (Fig. 1). Each painting, writes Applin, "combined two contrasting shades of metallic-looking paint, with one long, continuous band of colour running the height of the canvas in a continuous rippling ribbon or 'wave'" (73). Installed on black walls with a spotlight on each one, Lozano wanted to create a sense of being in space. Applin situates the Wave series in the context of Agnes Martin's and Joe Baer's minimalism and explores the critical reception of the paintings. "The 'Wave Series' is often held up as Lozano's most successful body of work," Applin writes, "but I want to highlight the extent to which the series was also marked by a sense of failure and breakdown, noted both by the artist and also contemporary critics" (84). In 1971, Kasha Linville published a harshly critical review in *Artforum*. According to Applin, "Linville took Lozano's 'curiously idiosyncratic' wave paintings seriously, even as she ultimately considered them to have failed…" (89). Ironically, for only her second solo show in New York—this major museum exhibition—the anxieties around its preparation, and its critical reception spurred Lozano's fantasies of disappearing from the art world.

Lozano kept spiral notebooks of graph paper for conceptual works beginning in the late 1960s, and reproductions of pages appear throughout the book, detailing her ideas and participatory pieces, including *Strike Piece* and *Dropout Piece*. In 1970, Lozano "determined to boycott all relations with other women" (129), and Applin notes that "anecdotal accounts… frequently allude to unspecified personal affairs that may have contributed to her withdrawals." The author finally concludes that Lozano's diverse body of work offers an ambivalent and at times frustrating investigation into the vexed questions of participation, work refusal and feminism, and that it was to "prove as idiosyncratic and wrong-footed as it was brilliant and brave" (161).

Densely packed with contextual information and interpretation, *Lee Lozano: Not Working* will appeal especially to those interested in the 1960s New York art scene. The book also provides insights into the enigma of the artist Lee Lozano, while raising unanswered, perhaps unanswerable, questions about her personal life and motivations. ●

Brenda Mitchell is an associate professor of art history and former Director of Women's Studies at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Notes

1. Jo Applin teaches modern and contemporary art at The Courtauld Institute of Art in London. Her previous books include *Eccentric Objects: Rethinking Sculpture in 1960s America* (Yale University Press, 2012), and *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirror Room-Phalli's Field* (Afterall and MIT Press, 2012). The National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. awarded *Lee Lozano: Not Working* its Suzanne and James Mellor Book Prize.

Sarah Charlesworth

Edited by Rochelle Steiner
Prestel, 2017

Reviewed by Megan Driscoll

In 1978, when Sarah Charlesworth (1947–2013) was working on her first photographic series, Modern History (1977–79), philosopher Paul Ricoeur published a challenge to the apparent objectivity of the archive and its primary object, the document. Ricoeur observed that all documents carry our assumptions and ideologies, and to preserve history is to institutionalize those perspectives.[1] Modern History makes a similar observation. For the series, Charlesworth collected newspaper pages, masking out all text except the masthead and reproducing them as photostats. The final works, such as *Herald Tribune* (1977; Fig. 1), offer a stark visual assessment of how editorial decisions as simple as the placement of an image can generate dramatically different interpretations of events. With this project, the artist challenged the apparent objectivity of the photograph, rejecting the popular notion that photography produces a faithful, and therefore neutral, historical record.

There is therefore a touch of irony in the fact that this monograph and its contemporaneous exhibition, "Doubleworld," emerged out of research into the archive Charlesworth left behind when she died unexpectedly in 2013.[2] As an obsessive image and object collector, intensive note keeper, and prolific writer, Charlesworth generated an immense trove of the kinds of documents that her own practice throws into doubt. But Ricoeur also reminds us that writing an ethical history does not require an absolutely objective record. Rather, we examine the past out of a "debt to the dead," a sense of responsibility to the people whose complex and often contradictory practices give meaning to our histories.[3] And that is the major accomplishment of this book. Its contributors delve into the artist's archive in order to produce a more detailed analysis of her four-decade career than would have been possible without it, but do not foreclose on further interpretation. Rather, the monograph

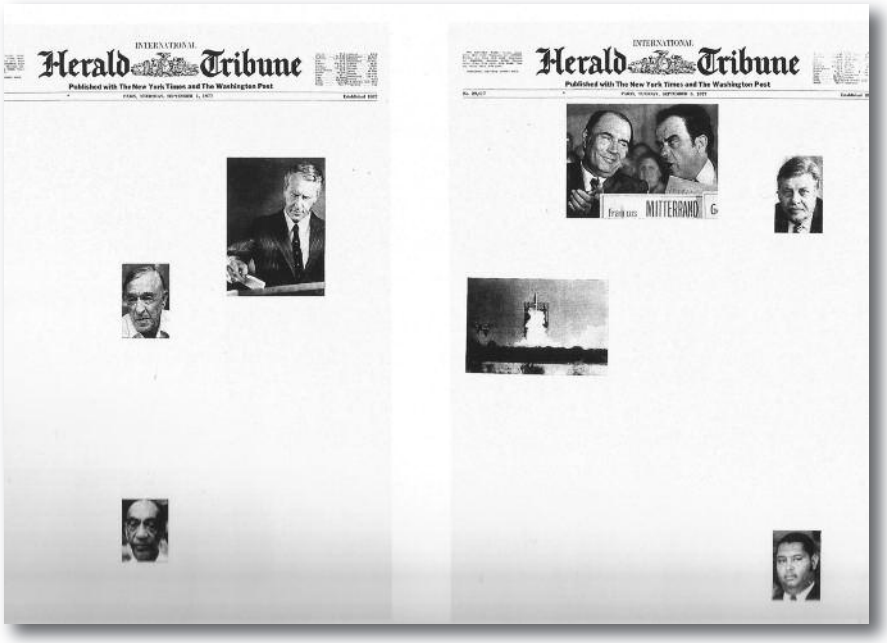


Fig. 1. Sarah Charlesworth, *Herald Tribune* (1977), (detail from installation of 26 prints), electrophotographic print, ca. 23" x 16". Installation view, Vancouver Art Gallery, 2005–06.

presents itself as just the beginning of the process of accounting for Charlesworth's large and highly varied body of work.

Printed in large format and wrapped in the vivid yellow of Charlesworth's *Teapot* (2002), *Sarah Charlesworth* features glossy plates with images from each of the series into which the artist organized her photographs. The monograph will thus appeal even to those only looking for a high quality collection of her work; but it also offers significant new scholarship in the form of five critical essays, ordered chronologically. This structure is clearly intended to help make sense of the high degree of formal heterogeneity in Charlesworth's practice, situating each series in the unfolding of what editor Rochelle Steiner identifies in the introductory essay as three major phases in the artist's career: conceptual photography (1970s), an embrace of quotation and appropriation that led to Charlesworth being oft-associated with the Pictures Generation artists (1980s), and a transition from the rephotography and collage-type strategies of these early phases into directorial studio photography (1990s, until her death). Zooming in to analyze key series from each phase, Steiner knits together a cogent career overview that provides an essential foundation for the rest of the monograph. Unfortunately, this foundation was not always trusted—as part of the chronological structure, authors seem to have been charged with covering as many series as possible within their timeframes, resulting in several otherwise tightly argued essays that rush through tenuously connected works at the end.

The second essay, by Thomas Lawson, discusses Charlesworth's life as a self-described conceptual artist in the 1960s and 1970s, before she launched her photography practice. Lawson explores how both the politics of the period and Charlesworth's interactions with other artists, in particular the Art & Language New York group, influenced the analytic and politically oriented approach of her early photography. However, the essay focuses more on the artist's personal life than her intellectual or artistic practices, perpetuating a longstanding bad habit in art historical narratives of female-identified artists.

Chronologically picking up where Lawson left off, Mark Godfrey dives deeply into Modern History and its relationship to other works on media and

representation, a close dialogue with the contemporaneous field of artistic practice that Charlesworth would maintain throughout her career. He observes that the series was also pioneering in several important ways, including in its use of formal strategies like repetition to explore subtle ways in which images are used to consolidate power. Godfrey thus articulates the main theoretical thread that the monograph traces through Charlesworth's practice. Even as she moved away from the overtly political subjects of her conceptual photography and into the highly formal studio experiments of her late career, Charlesworth maintained an ideological theory of photography in which every detail of an image produces and/or transforms our understanding of the world.

Rebecca Morse follows this thread into Charlesworth's experiments with magazine image sources, color, and glossy Cibachrome printing during the 1980s, mostly focusing on the In-Photography and Objects of Desire series. Morse offers rich visual analyses of specific works with which Charlesworth tested the effects of details like color and scale on the way photographic images signify across different contexts, from fashion magazines to the gallery wall to the artist's own changing formats. However, in an attempt to establish continuity between the 1980s series and Charlesworth's subsequent transition to the studio, the essay proposes a theory of photographic objecthood that asserts a sometimes fuzzy equivalence between the physicality of the found images Charlesworth used in her rephotography and the physicality of the found objects that she later used as studio props.

In the final essay, Eric Crosby covers Charlesworth's studio phase, which spanned the second half of her career. He provides fascinating detail about how the artist worked, from her intensive preparations to her growing repertoire of in-studio and digital photography techniques—one of the most interesting ways the book uses Charlesworth's notes is to piece together her many labor-intensive processes. The essay also highlights another formal quality through which Charlesworth investigated how images convey meaning: style, and what Crosby describes as the dialectical relationship between stylistic conventions and the construction of style. Crosby challenges the tendency to frame all of Charlesworth's post-1980 practice through the lens of commercial photography, using both the artist's writings and the work itself to demonstrate that this was just one among many sets of conventions with which she experimented.

This is where the monograph most effectively deploys Charlesworth's archive—not when the authors succumb to the temptation to use the artist's words as a definitive interpretive key, but when they pair archival evidence with careful analysis of her photographs to nuance the historical record. Out of these moments *Sarah Charlesworth* produces what Ricoeur would describe as an ethical history, a narrative that leaves room for the complexities of an individual's lived experience across forty years of artistic practice. ●

Megan Driscoll is an art historian, currently working as a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts. Her recent publications can be found in *VoCA Journal*, *The Black Scholar*, and *Shift: Graduate Journal of Visual and Material Culture*.

Notes

1. Paul Ricoeur, "Archives, Documents, Traces," in *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, vol. III (Chicago London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988), 118.
2. "Sarah Charlesworth: Doubleworld" originated at the New Museum in New York in 2015 and traveled to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2017. The retrospective was accompanied by a catalogue that is separate from this monograph.
3. Ricoeur, "Archives, Documents, Traces," 118.

Anni Albers: Notebook 1970–1980

Text by Brenda Danilowitz
David Zwirner Books, 2017

Reviewed by Lara Kuykendall

On opening Anni Albers's (1899–1994) recently published notebook from the 1970s, you will find no title page or introductory text. Rather, the small volume, modestly enclosed in a brown paper cover, begins with a blank sheet of graph paper. Turning the page again, you will see a sketch dated 1972 (Fig. 1) that consists of a large rectangular grid, 24 by 32 units, filled in with smaller configurations of tiny repeating triangles that occasionally join to form parallelograms. The pages that follow contain a seemingly infinite cast of abstract pencil sketches for related gridded works, meandering shapes, and delicate knots. Only a small number use color or have erasures that indicate a change of heart midway. Most of the 106 drawings are finished, as much as a sketch can be, until you come to the designs from 1975 or later, at the end. The very last sketch is pencil and ink, and depicts a series of rectangular tunnels that constitute a shape that is not quite square. As in Albers's other work, this form evokes a slippage between solid and void, negative and enclosed space. But the lines are jagged and imprecise, unlike most of the other designs in this notebook, and they poetically visualize the end of a sixty-year career that was persistently engaged with process and innovation.

In the afterword that follows, Brenda Danilowitz, chief curator of The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, encourages us to take our time examining the intricacies of Albers's decision-making process; she carefully refrains from prescribing a single interpretation of this collection of sketches. The brevity of her text and its placement at the end of the volume underscore the importance of letting Albers's work speak for itself. From Danilowitz, we also learn how unusual it

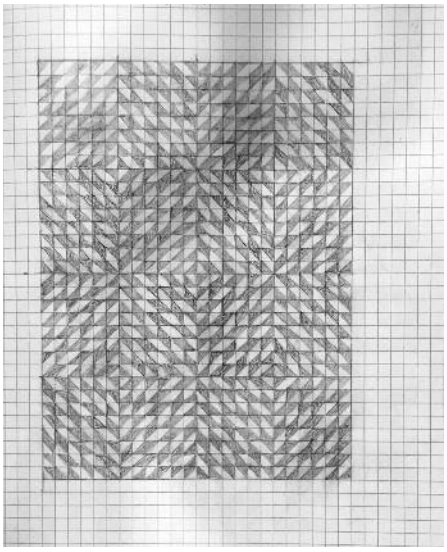


Fig. 1. Anni Albers, *Drawing from Anni Albers's notebook* (1972), pencil on graph paper, 10" x 7 3/4". The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

is to glimpse Albers's designs in progress. This notebook was discovered after her death in 1994, and is the only collection of sketches other than a handful of textile plans that stem from her earliest period of work at the Bauhaus in the 1920s and early 1930s. Albers is best known, of course, for her work as a textile designer, weaver, and author of key aesthetic texts like *On Weaving* (1965). After making her first lithographs in 1963, Albers turned to printmaking almost exclusively in 1970, around the age of 71.[1] For the next fourteen years she produced lithographs, etchings, aquatints, screenprints, and photo-offsets in a wide range of colors, patterns, and embossed textures.

This notebook stands largely on its own strengths as an unedited and minimally contextualized example of Albers's delicate attention to the way limitations—to graph paper and pencil, pen, or a single color—and decisions—beginning with a line or a shape, repeating, alternating, or altering—can yield revelations in abstract form. If you want to see the finished works to which many of the sketches in this notebook relate, or to read a history of Albers's engagement with that medium, you will have to look at the catalogue raisonné of her prints, published in 2009.[2] Amazingly, her notebook is a testament to restraint and unbounded creativity at the same time. It is rare to be able to see, let alone possess, an artifact like this, especially from a woman artist who worked outside the mainstream modernist mediums of painting and sculpture. Its publication should spark interest in Albers's late career and expand attention to the role planning and sketching played in her work across various media. •

Lara Kuykendall is associate professor of art history at Ball State University. She is currently writing articles on midcentury landscape painter Constance Coleman Richardson and Florine Stettheimer's Dada sense of patriotism.

Notes

1. Nicholas Fox Weber and Brenda Danilowitz, *The Prints of Anni Albers: A Catalogue Raisonné, 1963–1984* (Bethany, CT: The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, 2009), 190.
2. For example, on pages 132–33 of the catalogue raisonné, the black and blue copper plate etching and aquatint version of *Second Movement III* (1978)—the first sketch in the notebook—is reproduced in color.

Farewell to the Muse: Love, War, and the Women of Surrealism

By Whitney Chadwick
Thames & Hudson, 2017

Reviewed by Caitlin Davis

"You shouldn't write a book about the women … They weren't artists" (9). Whitney Chadwick sets the tone for her most recent book, *Farewell to the Muse: Love, War and the Women of Surrealism*, with the inclusion of this recommendation given her by the British Surrealist Roland Penrose. Thankfully, she did not heed his advice. Decades later, her volume easily upends Penrose's blithe conclusion: "Of course the women were important … but it was because they were our muses" (9).

Chadwick, the esteemed art historian renowned for her seminal writings on female artists, including *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (1985), has contributed once again to the ever-growing awareness of the value of women within the avant-garde. Throughout her decades-long study of the movement, certain salient points crystallized for Chadwick, including the essential disparity between the ability of a woman concurrently to serve as a muse and to exist as an artist in her own right. She also noted that, at the outbreak of the Second World War, many Surrealist women did not enjoy the security offered by marriage or extended family, and thus turned to female friendships for support during this time of great upheaval. *Farewell to the Muse* is divided into five chapters, arranged chronologically (with some overlap), each exploring the bonds between two (and in one case, three) women linked to Surrealism. The relationships of Valentine Penrose, former wife of Roland, bookend the volume. She is featured in the first chapter (with Alice Rahon Paalen), the last chapter (Lee Miller), as well as in the majority of the conclusion (Hélène Azenor). The remaining chapters examine the friendships shared by Leonora Carrington and Leonor Fini; Frida Kahlo and Jacqueline Lamba Breton; and Claude Cahun, Suzanne Malherbe and to a lesser extent, Jacqueline Lamba Breton. By drawing upon multiple sources, including fascinating personal correspondence between the women examined, Chadwick explores the essence of these relationships and their very real effects on artistic output.

The relationship between Valentine Penrose and Alice Rahon Paalen forms the primary focus of Chapter One. However, the essential nature of their relatively brief association, which culminated in a life-altering trip to India,

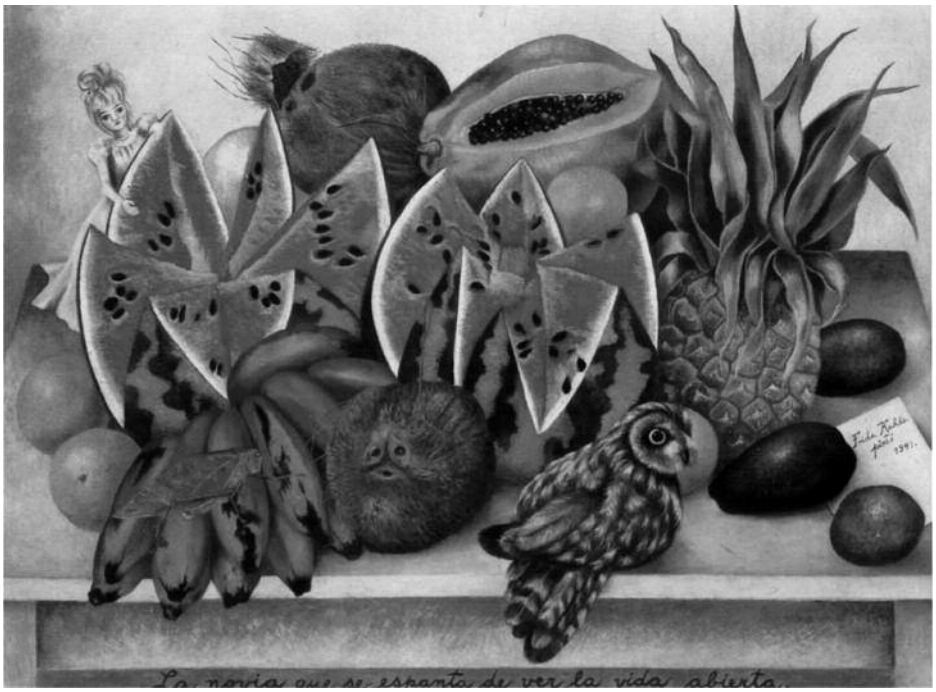


Fig. 1. Frida Kahlo, *The Bride Frightened at Seeing Life Opened* (1943), oil on canvas, 24 3/4" x 32". Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection, Mexico City, Mexico.

proves somewhat problematic to relate. By Chadwick's own admission, although this period is copiously documented by Penrose via a multitude of extant communications, "[n]o comparable body of letters survives to document Alice Rahon Paalen's daily life and work during the same years" (26). Chadwick is left to explore the hearts and essence of the two women through their contemporaneous poetry. Although the author presents a convincing argument for a shared affection and writing style, the reader is left somewhat uncertain and unconvinced about the importance each held in the other's life. After their brief voyage to the subcontinent, there is no suggestion that the women ever saw or even communicated with each other again, nor a clear sense that either artist's output was meaningfully impacted over the long-term. This chapter, which at times seems to grind on repetitively, was an intermittently frustrating and hazy start to a book that nevertheless contains important contributions to feminist art history as well as to the canon of surrealism.

The subsequent chapter picks up in pace and clarity. The history of the friendship between Leonora Carrington and Leonor Fini during the years 1938 through 1941 is well described, with the related footnotes proving especially helpful. The dramatic tale of the British Carrington living in France and attempting to cope and later to cling to her sanity while her lover Max Ernst is imprisoned as an enemy alien is remarkable, and the letters exchanged between her and Fini during this time are gripping; they detail Carrington's loss of mental stability and demonstrate Fini's assistance in comforting and intellectually stimulating her dear friend. Equally well delineated is the influence each woman had on the artistic output of the other throughout this time frame, including the ways in which Carrington's intense suffering affected both her own art as well as the art of her friend Fini, supplemented with illustrations of paintings by each artist.

The conclusion of the chapter, including Carrington's tormented journey through Spain, and departure from war-torn Europe, reads stranger and more heartbreaking than fiction. Chadwick tersely recites these facts, then abruptly drops the narrative. The disjointed chronicle leaves the reader unsettled and unsatisfied. The final ten pages of the chapter solely deal with Carrington. Fini's war experiences are not recounted, and her story concludes with the brusque statement that she died in Paris in 1996.

The longest and perhaps meatiest chapter explores the relationship between Frida Kahlo and Jacqueline Lamba Breton from 1938 to 1945, a friendship sparked when the Bretons visited Mexico in the summer of 1938 for a meeting with Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, facilitated by Kahlo and her husband, Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. Chadwick lucidly explains the fascination each woman held for the other as well as their common circumstances and characteristics: "Frida and Jacqueline shared a powerful desire to succeed as artists ... Lacking clear role models for professional lives that also included marriage, both would rely heavily on the lure of their sexuality and their unconventional behaviour to assert their place in a broader artistic culture" (122).

This chapter presents a thrilling chronology of the lives of seminal figures of the Surrealist movement, including an account of Kahlo's travels to New York and Paris in 1938 and 1939, as well as the Bretons' flight from France and eventual arrival in New York City in 1941. It concludes with a description of Kahlo and Lamba Breton's final meeting in 1943, including the story behind Kahlo's *The Bride Frightened at Seeing Life Opened* (1943; Fig. 1), which she painted for her friend.

Once again, it is with certain aspects of the author's style, and not at all with the content, that is cause for complaint. In this essay, the details surrounding the Bretons' move to Marseille are belabored and repetitive and the entire section poorly edited. Staccato and unclear mentions are made of the Riveras' divorce and reconciliation. The disjointed nature of these and other facts throughout the text lend an air of hazy uncertainty to the narrative. Adding to the lack of clarity, Chadwick hints at a romance between Kahlo and Lamba Breton, but rather mysteriously deems this "a friendship silenced by

deep needs and more powerful voices" (148–49) leaving the reader to fill in the blanks as to exactly which needs and whose voices those might be.

The section on Claude Cahun, Suzanne Malherbe and Jacqueline Lamba Breton was quite strong and certainly the most clear. This straightforward account focuses primarily on the brave resistance to the German Occupation of the Isle of Jersey mounted by the artists and lovers Cahun and Malherbe, as well as the visit paid the couple by Lamba Breton just before the invasion, which rosily contrasted with the grim reality to follow. The lives of Cahun and Malherbe, who never viewed themselves or were viewed by others as muses, present a bracing contrast with the other women profiled in the book, and the inclusion of the pair's relationship with Lamba Breton provides an interesting counterpoint and reinforces the singularity of their position within the avant-garde movement.

Chadwick's final account of friendship nicely brings the book full circle by recounting the relationship between the two wives of Roland Penrose: Lee Miller, and once again, Valentine. This is a description of a generosity of spirit on both sides, born out of the stressors of war, and continuing until death, as each expanded her idea of family and acted with kindness and goodwill toward the other.

There is no doubt that Chadwick is a strong scholar and no questioning the depth and thoroughness of her research. Likewise, it is incontrovertible that these stories of female friendship and artistic achievement within the Surrealist circle need to be incorporated into the art historical canon. Disappointingly, certain elements within the communication of these valuable accounts are uneven and disorienting. The weaknesses within the writing include sporadic repetitive passages as well as scant mention of certain relevant biographical details. Chadwick enjoys an enviable depth and breadth of expertise in her field, and her writing at times implies a presupposition of the reader's own knowledge through the oblique referencing of arcane events.

The only criticism with *Farewell to the Muse* rests not at all with the valuable, fascinating information and analyses contained within its pages, but the style of its conveyance. Unquestionably the lion's share of the book is strongly written, but unfortunately the passages interspersed throughout the text that alternate between choppy, incomplete, hazy or abrupt, are disconcerting enough to leave the reader with an uneasy sense of having missed the core of that which Chadwick wishes to convey and trusting that the meat of these extraordinary stories has been communicated. •

Caitlin Davis is an independent scholar; her doctoral thesis was on Lee Miller's war photography. She is the founder of Warfield Eliot, an art consulting firm.

Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985

By Cecilia Fajardo-Hill
and Andrea Giunta
Hammer Museum and DelMonico
Books + Prestel, 2017

Reviewed by Carol Damian

"The first major anthology of visual arts and radical practices by women in Latin America and Latino artists in the United States" (15), this well-illustrated catalogue accompanied the extraordinary exhibition of the same title, which opened at the Hammer Museum, University of California, Los Angeles.[1] "Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960-1985" was one of the many projects in Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, an initiative of the Getty Foundation involving arts institutions across Southern California in Fall 2017. The catalogue, written and edited by the curators, Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta, includes sixteen essays by artists and scholars who contribute to the dominant premise that women artists in Latin America have been marginalized. The essays present thought-provoking topics ranging from curatorial to constructive theoretical criticism that focus on the countries represented by the artists, including the historical discourses that have occupied the art history (or lack thereof) of those regions and that have indirectly affected both the interpretation and understanding of the artists and their work. Also included are an exhibition checklist and biographies of the 120 artists representing fifteen countries who were working in the US and Latin America between 1960 and 1985. These include well-known figures such as Lygia Clark (b. Brazil, 1920–88), Marisol (Venezuela, b. France, 1930–2018), Ana Mendieta (b. Cuba, 1948–85), and Marta Minujín (Argentina, b. 1943), to those known mainly in their own countries, such as Olga Blinder (b. Paraguay, 1921–2008) and Johanna Hamann (b. Peru, 1954–2017).[2] To whittle down an enormous list of artists, the curators decided to limit not only the time frame of the exhibition but their conceptual focus: "The new focus turned to the iconography of the body, proposing a different body, a researched and rediscovered body deeply bound to the political situation in much of the continent at the time, specifically in the many countries ruled by authoritarian governments that aimed to control behavior, thought, and bodies" (17).

The catalogue, unlike the exhibition, is organized around countries rather than themes. Although some essays are thematic, most address specific local art scenes. Because the primary purpose of *Radical Women* is to write a new chapter in twentieth-century art history, many of the essays propose a critical discourse for future studies (19). The nine exhibition themes—"The Self-Portrait," "Body Landscapes," "Performing the Body," "Mapping the Body," "Persistence & Fear," "The Power of Words," "Feminisms," "Social Places," and "The Erotic"—are given a regional focus in the catalogue, allowing different perspectives to emerge.

The first essay, "The Iconographic Turn: The Denormalization of Bodies and Sensibilities in the Work of Latin American Women Artists," by Andrea Giunta, provides a valuable introduction to the theme of the body. During the 1960s, artists began to produce



Fig. 1. Marta Minujín, *Colchón* (Mattress) (1964–1985), acrylic on fabric, foam rubber (reconstructed), 59 1/16" × 34 1/4" × 21 1/4". Collection of Jorge and Marion Helft. © Marta Minujín.

innovative representations of the body, taking a radical iconographic turn from traditional depictions of the female nude that objectified the female form to create images that shattered that culturally established norm with often shocking exposés. In Latin America, Giunta explains, women artists were not bound to the feminist art movement of the US but came to be more identified with their own political environments and revolutionary struggles, using their bodies as battlefields for the current rhetoric of their place and time. The relationship between body and violence thus emerges as a key descriptor, forcing the dissolution of the patriarchal gaze through fragmentation and a process of destruction before construction.

In their essay "Feminist Art and 'Activism' in Latin America: A Dialogue in Three Voices," Julia Antivilo Peña (Chile), Mónica Mayer (Mexico), and María Laura Rosa (Argentina) speak about their practices as artists and writers. Each details her relationship—critical, emotional and intellectual—with the concept of feminism as it came to be interpreted in her own career and in those of others. As in the US, many women artists questioned gender stereotypes and made alternative realities visible to women in their time (37). They also used their bodies to question identity, express themselves through performance and experimentation, and create works that shocked mainstream sensibilities while provoking open discourse not possible or allowable previously.

A thematic section of the exhibition, "Performing the Body," features works that coexist in the intersection between dance, performance, and theater. Many take a multidisciplinary approach to using the body as a tool to explore ideas that other artists in the exhibition present in painting, sculpture, photography, installation, and video. As is seen throughout the catalogue, the use of the body as performance makes some of the strongest statements about the inter-relational aesthetics that emerge from provocative acts and spectator responses. Performance artists throughout Latin America and the US found various ways to shock the sensibilities of the viewer into a type of submission for attention. The conceptual proposal of a monumental work for the island of Manhattan by Argentine artist Marta Minujín in 1979, centered on a full-scale replica of the Statue of Liberty with Lilliputian figures lining up to enter her cavernous body. It is only one of several sculptural projects that Minujín imagined, some realized and others not, that were extraordinary political fantasies that are icons of feminist activism (43). Symbols of power using the body were key to the works of many of the artists in the exhibition, found in performance, photographs, installations, and videos, and have long been significant to feminist rhetoric in art production in the Americas and beyond. Minujín's early works featured constructions with multicolored mattresses that called attention to intimate physical activities such as rest and sex, as in *Colchón (Mattress)* (1964–85; Fig. 1). Over the years, she continued to reference sex and the female anatomy to activate viewer participation (221).

Eleven US-born Latinas or Chicanas or Latin American-born women who were active in the United States represent various generations. These include Yolanda Lopez (b. US, 1942), Cecilia Alvarez Muñoz (b. US, 1937), Josely Carvalho (b. Brazil, 1942), María Martínez-Cañas (b. Cuba, 1960) and Liliana Porter (b. Argentina, 1941). Their contributions are not only significant to the exhibition but collectively point to a larger community, spread across the US (291), whose activism extends to participation in those revolutionary movements in American art that arose out of the social and political turmoil of the 1970s and 1980s. Artists like Patssi Valdez (b. 1951) and Barbara Carrasco (b. 1955), though born in the US, developed their careers in parallel with those born elsewhere, and it becomes evident that the two-way cultural relationship between the US and Latin American countries had a significant impact on their work. Despite their differences—birthplace, impacts of migration and exile, and various prejudices they faced—it is apparent that these artists share a legacy based on an aesthetic that addressed the marginalization of women during the revolutionary decades of the 1960s and 1970s (and beyond). Even so, the clear lack of progress on so many fronts—feminism, sexuality, workplace ethics and advancement, family and reproductive rights—outside the US was something artists who migrated from Latin America to pursue their careers were strongly aware of and reflected upon in their work (291).

The illustrations—more than 500—occupy over half of the book, allowing the reader to visit the exhibition through images that enrich the discussions. Color plates and figures throughout bring the reader into the exhibition in a scholarly and informative manner that makes it especially valuable. This important visual and documentary resource introduces the reader to artists and events not always familiar. It identifies regions of Latin America and the Caribbean that have produced their own unique artists and art movements in response to social and political situations. At the same time, it puts them into an historical construct from points of view that are not often recognized outside of the artists' small

circles. The catalogue thus supports the goal of the exhibition and is a major contribution to its success. •

Carol Damian is an independent curator and art writer specializing in the art of Latin America and the Caribbean and women artists. She is the former Professor of Art History and Director and Chief Curator at the Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University in Miami.

Note

1. After opening at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, Sept. 15–Dec. 31, 2017, the show traveled to the Brooklyn Museum, New York, April 13–July 22, 2018, and to Pinacoteca de São Paulo, São Paulo: Aug. 18–Nov. 19, 2018.
2. A complete list of the artists can be found at https://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2017/radical-women-latin-american-art-1960-1985/ (accessed July 20, 2018).

Radical Eroticism: Women, Art, and Sex in the 1960s

By Rachel Middleman
University of California Press, 2018

Reviewed by Erin Devine

The provocative title of Rachel Middleman's new book insinuates a forthright and even tantalizing discourse on sex and gender. Readers will find, however, that the title's operative word is *radical*, as the author sets out to evidence just how revolutionary it was for women artists of the 1960s to not only usurp the longstanding representations of woman as sexual object but to lay claim to their own sexuality as well. It is obvious to state that Middleman's research is timely in the moment of #MeToo, although this prescience may be burdened by any expectation that the book contributes some strategy toward gender parity. That would be much to ask of a first major publication, but Middleman's investigation of sexuality, and how early feminist artists arrested its aspect from visual culture, at least buoys the current challenges to patriarchal establishment.

Middleman gives mention to the primary activities and concerns of African-American women artists in this timeframe, aligned much as they were with civil rights, and to the contributions of gay male artists to the widespread interference of dominant heteronormativity. Her project, however, is fixed upon the interpretations of heterosexuality by straight women who would become increasingly involved in the feminist movement. Her analysis is developed through case studies on the work of five artists: Martha Edelheit (b. 1931), Carolee Schneemann (b. 1939), Anita Steckel (1930–2012), Marjorie Strider (1931–2014), and Hannah Wilke (1940–93). Selected in part for their different approaches to erotic themes, both materially and conceptually, each artist in her own way sought to unhinge the normative sexuality by which women's experiences as active subjects had been marginalized. Spurred by what then were recent foundational texts, such as Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962), the reports of Alfred Kinsey (1948), and later Kate Millet's watershed *Sexual Politics* (1970), the artists of Middleman's focus were representative of an emergent understanding of sex as a legitimate and pervasive tool of discrimination at the expansive moment of the feminist and sexual revolutions. By investigating specifically their works that addressed sex and sexuality, and the relational power dynamics enforced thereby, Middleman positions erotic art as operating within an important socio-political framework rather than the subgenre to which it is often diminished.

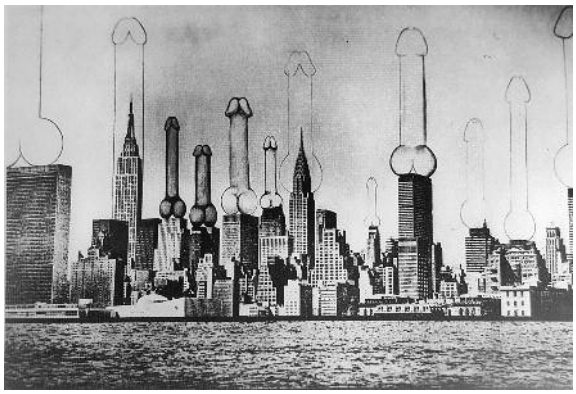


Fig. 1. Anita Steckel, *New York Skyline* (ca. 1971, no longer extant), oil on canvas silkscreened with found photo, 6 1/2′ x 8′. © Estate of Anita Steckel.

Of Middleman's survey, Wilke and Schneemann have already been given due attention. However, she offers an analysis of Wilke's lesser known sculptures that were produced at the crossroads of Minimalist and proto-Feminist art, rather than the "performalist" works for which the artist later became most known. Middleman's understanding of these incongruent, genital forms is hinged to Lucy Lippard's 1966 essay "Eccentric Abstraction," in which she outlined a tendency in contemporary and otherwise formalist sculpture toward the erotic, achieved through the sensual qualities of tactility and evocation rather than the directness of pictorialism.[1] With Lippard's help, Middleman rescues Wilke's sculpture from their reduction to vaginal portraits, heretofore viewed as a feminine intervention with the era's dominant aesthetic.

With equal attentiveness, Middleman reinvestigates Schneemann's 1964 *Meat Joy*, arguably one of the most enigmatic works of the twentieth century. Precisely breaking down its elements, she positions the work as a revelatory if not loosely ritualistic expression of sexual unrestraint, equally abandoned to by its male and female participants. If *Meat Joy* can be considered a celebratory heralding of 1960s sexual liberation, then Schneemann's *Fuses* (1964-67) offered a demystification of sex's import to power. Using the spaces of her home and personal relationship, *Fuses* was a filmic series that sought to embrace the everyday reality of sexual intimacy as well as emphasize equity in romantic partnership. Middleman locates these works in their time as signals to gender equality, both reclaiming the

power dynamics seen as inherent to heterosexual relationships.

Contingent with and reminiscent of *Meat Joy*, Martha Edelheit's early erotic paintings appear like a Klimtian panorama of bodies shown from above. The Bacchanalian character of both Schneemann's performance and Edelheit's paintings present a frenzied aesthetic, perhaps evocative of a burgeoning sexual awakening in which power differences are suffocated beneath forms. A visual metaphor for new modes of sexual relating, so palpably active are the energies of line and color in Edelheit's compositions that any reference to dominance/subordinance between male or female figures is undetectable. It is important that Middleman positions this period of Edelheit's output as an acute perception of the unfolding "personal and political" events of her time. Like painters Joan Semmel and Sylvia Sleigh, by the early seventies Edelheit will focus her work to the male nude, joining other feminist artists in the urgent project of disrupting the male gaze.

This redirection in the output of feminist painters is significant to Middleman's plotting of the evolution of the feminist art movement, from the early sixties through the early seventies. For instance, she notes that submissions of Edelheit's early work of male nudes were rejected while the female nudes were not, a condition that shifted considerably a decade later. And yet Anita Steckel's often humorous incorporation of the penis, outlined with oil paint onto huge silkscreened canvases of the New York City skyline (ca. 1971; Fig 1), was not too funny to local politicians or the trustees of Rockland Community College in Suffern, NY, where she was given a solo exhibition in 1972. With the support of artists, curators, and critics, the exhibition was saved from closure, but the message to Steckel was clear: women artists were still constrained by the propriety that had long excluded them from equal participation in the arts, and penises were certainly not on the menu for content. Noting the prevalent double-standard of sanctioned artistic content for male and female artists, Steckel addressed censorship in her statement to the exhibition:

> Women see and know and experience their bodies and men's bodies—and there is no shame in this. The only shame is the hypocrisy ... which pretends we don't even know a "dirty joke." ... We're the entire subject matter of all those jokes we're not supposed to know the meaning of (149).[2]

With the publicity surrounding the Rockland exhibition, and the subversive tactics of her photomontage, Steckel's work was less erotic than political. For instance, a phallus drawn onto a dollar bill beneath the words "Legal Gender" asserts, with Steckel's trademark wit, that the American economic system is inextricable from male privilege.

These points of labor and economics in relationship to artistic production cannot be underemphasized in Middleman's thesis of radical art. At a time when women already had fewer opportunities for exhibition, these women risked further exclusion by addressing the challenging if not forbidden subject of sexuality in their work. At the beginning of the sixties, eroticism in art featured predominantly in exhibitions of Pop Art, where the dynamics between sexuality and consumerism could be played out, and very few women were invited to participate. Included in the *First International Girlie Exhibition* (1964) at Pace Gallery, Marjorie Strider was able to break through that restriction, exhibiting her illustrative appropriations of the pin-up. Images associated with the objectification of women in popular culture, and participation in an exhibition that seemed to glorify them, would be problematic to feminist artists a decade later if not for Strider's treatment of the subject. With garish color over breasts made of foam that protrude toward the viewer, they stressed the artificiality and even ridiculousness of such formulaic images.

Middleman traces the changes in attitude toward and exhibition of erotic art from the Pop of the early sixties to the phenomenological, anti-image works after Minimalism, to the Photorealism of the early seventies. Reflective of the prevalent movements afoot, the approaches varied, from sensually suggestive to sardonic, experiential and autobiographical, but always contesting the representations of women as the object-not-subject of sex. The author falters to consistently craft her argument for the resistance of these works to modernist formalism, and much text is given to the reprise of seminal critics and historians of feminist art. Still, the resulting effort is foundational to reframing the importance of the erotic within the feminist art movement and the role it plays in gender equality.

Kenneth Clark's *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, published in 1956, set forth the standard concept of the nude as an expression of universal values. By the end of the 1960s, women artists upended those values and their consigned positions as allegory, muse, and sexual fantasy. As Middleman carefully outlines, they invented new forms by which to reengage with the erotic content from which they had been excluded, even daring to bring into that content the female experience of the male body. Crossing the clearly demarcated line of object/subject demanded their own liberty as sexual beings and thus maneuvered their power to discern some bodies over others, a formerly exclusive site of male privilege. At this propitious moment in women's history where we now find ourselves, Middleman's book reconsiders sex and the erotic if not as part of a revolutionary strategy toward gender parity then at least as essential to the struggle.

Erin Devine is an artist, curator, and critic based in Washington DC. Her work was recently included in the Venice International Performance Art Week, and a new work, *Contrab®and*, has been commissioned for the Torpedo Factory Art Center (Nov. 2018). She is curating "(In)Justice Systems" (March–May 2019) for the Brentwood Arts Exchange. ●

Notes

1. Lucy Lippard's essay originally appeared in *Art International* 10, no. 9 (Nov. 1966) and can be found in her book *Changing: essays in art criticism* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1971), 98 – 111. Lippard curated "Eccentric Abstraction" (Sept. 20 – Oct 8, 1966) for Fischbach Gallery, New York.
2. From the PAD/D Archive, Anita Steckel: "Announcement of the Artist's Views on Censorship." 1972.

Artemisia Gentileschi in a Changing Light

Edited by Sheila Barker
Harvey Miller / Brepols, 2017

Reviewed by Joyce de Vries



Fig. 1. Artemisia Gentileschi, *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy* (c. 1620–25 or 1630–35), oil on canvas, 31 1/2" x 41 3/4". Private collection, presently with the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp. Photo: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Artemisia_Gentileschi_-_Mary_Magdalene_in_Ecstasy.jpg

Artemisia Gentileschi is arguably now the most well-known female artist of Early Modern Italy. Her prominence in art history has been a long time coming. Roberto Longhi championed her paintings in a 1916 essay, but her current fame really took off with Mary D. Garrard's groundbreaking monograph, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (1989). Since then, Artemisia has been the focus of numerous essays, monographs, and museum exhibitions as scholars continue to identify and analyze her paintings, mine archival material related to her life and work, and contextualize her career and experiences. The field is indeed vibrant, with several recent attributions and important archival finds. This latest volume on the artist consists of eleven essays stemming from papers presented at the conference, "Artemisia Gentileschi: Interpreting New Evidence, Assessing New Attributions," held in Florence in May 2015. Attribution issues are indeed the subject of a few chapters, but the interpretation of new evidence, both visual and verbal, occupies all. The contributors to *Artemisia Gentileschi in a Changing Light* creatively consider a wide range of material, and are unified in their celebration of Artemisia as a successful, savvy artist.

The chapters begin with an incisive essay by Garrard, who challenges recent attributions of less than stellar paintings to Artemisia as well as allegations that the artist merely copied what was popular and had no style of her own, a long-standing way to demean female creativity. Garrard focuses on the clever inventions and references in Artemisia's work, such as the draperies in the Pitti *Judith* (ca. 1612–14 or 1618–19) that subtly echo those of Donatello's bronze version of the subject (ca. 1455). (Please note that dates of works provided in this review reflect the dates given by the authors of the anthology; several dates are under dispute.) Allusions like these were the hallmarks of a sophisticated artist, applauded when undertaken by male artists, and not mere mimicry. The unwillingness of some art historians to acknowledge the same level of intellect in Artemisia's work proves that feminist and gendered analysis is still crucial to the study of women artists. Dovetailing with Garrard, Riccardo Lattuada argues that Artemisia's stylistic idiosyncrasies were due in part to her flexibility when having to adapt to new markets as she moved to different cities. Evidence shows that, as with a number of seventeenth-century artists in very high demand, Artemisia collaborated with other painters during her years in Naples to better serve her clients and capitalize on her popularity. She developed the paintings' narratives, but left some of the execution to artists like Onofrio Palumbo, creating "a production-line brand" (201). Gianni Papi, like Lattuada, delves into classic Italian connoisseurship. Papi comments on two of Artemisia's canvases that he recently identified, including the *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy* (ca. 1620–25 or 1630–35; Fig. 1) discussed throughout the volume, and then makes a sharp case that she also painted the *Madonna of the Svezzamento* (ca. 1610 or 1612), more often given to her father Orazio or Caravaggio. These scholars expose the many issues that complicate attributions.

Looking at both signature and newly attributed works, several essays explore Artemisia's iconographic inventions. Patricia Simons grounds her discussion of the 1610 *Susanna*, Artemisia's first major work, in theological trends and current events in Counter-Reformation Rome. Artemisia painted this subject to showcase her unique skill in depicting a naturalistic female nude. If Susanna's story had been considered overtly erotic, as some scholars suggest, Artemisia's choice could have compromised her social standing as a virtuous woman, and her career would then have been over before it had even begun. Simons argues that seventeenth-century viewers understood Susanna as an exemplary figure and employed a "corrective gaze" that fostered personal reflection, not lust, when looking at paintings of the beautiful heroine (47). Furthermore, Simons suggests that

depictions of Susanna surged in response to the case of Beatrice Cenci, an innocent Roman falsely accused and executed for murder in 1599.

Artemisia's first important commission after she moved to Florence was similarly weighted. Laura Camille Agoston excavates the rich iconography of Artemisia's *Allegory of Inclination*, painted for the Casa Buonarotti, ca. 1615–16. A self-portrait that also quotes from a figure in Michelangelo's *Battle of the Lapiths* (ca. 1491–92), displayed in the same room, the *Allegory* alludes to artistic *virtù* and revival for both artists. Just as the *Battle* marks Michelangelo's turn toward sculpture, his preferred medium, the *Allegory* opens a new era in Artemisia's career. Agoston also touches on Artemisia's knowledge of humanism, a topic that Jesse Locker explores further in his essay. Although Artemisia was not formally educated in the liberal arts, he posits that she was nevertheless familiar with humanist culture via the lively oral traditions of Early Modern Italy. She would have known the works of Ovid, Petrarch, Ariosto, and others through popular songs, poetry recitations, and theatrical performances, and drew upon them in her paintings. Confirming the artist's intellectual acuity, Judith M. Mann discusses the specialized literary sources and visual precedents of three works newly attributed to Artemisia. From the emotional turmoil unique to her *Medea* (ca. 1626–27) to the intense psychological atmosphere in her singular take on *Achilles in the Palace of Lycomedes* (ca. 1638–40), or the deep personal satisfaction conveyed in the *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy*, Artemisia's narrative inventions were highly original.

Throughout her career, Artemisia cultivated patrons and clients, some of whom were particularly interested in the work of women artists. Consuelo Lollobrigida argues that Pope Urban VIII and members of his court, influenced by French feminist treatises that circulated in early seventeenth-century Rome, were quite supportive of women, commissioning paintings from Anna Maria Vaiani (ca. 1620- ca. 1660), Maddalena Corvini (1607–64), and Plautilla Bricci (1616–1705). Lollobrigida outlines their careers, as well as those of Virginia da Vezzo (1597–1638) and Isabella Parasole (ca. 1575–1617), the first woman to enter the Accademia di San Luca, and reconstructs the artistic context of professional women painters in Rome. In this era of social stratification, maintaining the right appearances was a crucial way for artists, and especially female artists, to impress clients. Scholars have cast the debts that Artemisia racked up in Florence as a sign of her fiscal irresponsibility, but Sheila Barker asserts that the artist used credit as a means to increase her social status via splendid clothing and furnishings, which in turn heightened her appeal to elite patrons. Artemisia eventually paid off her debts, which are better viewed as wise investments in her career and typical of this proto-capitalist era. Positive attention from influential critics could also boost an artist's reputation and legacy, although the language of praise was largely masculine, inherently biased against women. Adelina Modesti does a subtle reading of the early assessments of Artemisia's work, comparing them to those of Elisabetta Sirani (1638–65), Guido Reni, and other heralded contemporaries. She finds that the language used for Artemisia, celebrating her intelligence, inventions, coloring, strength, and more, is synonymous with the highest praise for artists, male or female.

The volume concludes with a chapter that presents the findings of the technical study by the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage in Brussels of Artemisia's newly restored *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy*. The team discusses Artemisia's materials and working methods for this painting; for instance, she used a dark ground but no underdrawings and adjusted the composition as she worked. They also consider whether the painting could be a self-portrait, as Artemisia embedded her own likeness in several other images of women.

Artemisia Gentileschi in a Changing Light is essential reading for scholars of Early Modern art history, and has much to recommend it. The authors employ a diverse array of methodologies, and the results offer not just fresh insights, but at times different, yet compatible ideas on the same painting or situation. The essays effectively dismantle sexist notions of Artemisia's life and productivity that persist despite the prominent impact of feminist and gendered analysis on her history; explore previously understudied moments of Artemisia's career, namely her time in Venice and Naples; and provide innovative interpretations of recent archival finds. The volumes's production values are outstanding, with dozens of color plates. Several images are the focus of different essays, and they appear repeatedly, so one does not have to flip around to see the work under discussion. On the other hand, the volume is somewhat disorganized. The order of the essays follows the conference schedule despite the fact that several participants chose not to publish their papers here; some of the cohesion of the conference panels is thus lost with these gaps. Although Barker's thoughtful introduction helps mitigate this issue, a reshuffling of the essays, emphasizing the thematic links of the current roster, would have strengthened the whole. But this is a minor criticism for a collection of essays that so successfully moves the scholarship forward on Artemisia. ●

Joyce de Vries, a professor of art history at Auburn University, specializes in gender and material culture in Italy, 1400–1700. She is the author of *Caterina Sforza and the Art of Appearances: Gender, Art, and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Ashgate, 2010), and currently works on art and material culture in the domestic sphere in Early Modern Bologna, focusing especially on the goods of artisan and elite women.

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The Devout Hand: Women, Virtue, and Visual Culture in Early Modern Italy

By Patricia Rocco
McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017

Reviewed by Amy E. Cymbala

Through archival study over the last fifty years, the careers of Early Modern women artists have been recovered and previously unknown personalities have been discovered. A wealth of evidence now supports how creative women navigated a patriarchal society to establish artistic reputations, secure commissions, and achieve fame. Publications on the topic of women and art have expanded the field by considering women as patrons, consumers, and subjects of art. Studies exploring everything from majolica ware of Renaissance "beauties" to the art patronage of prostitutes speak to the continued interest in gender within the evolving concerns of the field of Early Modern studies.

Bologna has been a touchstone for feminist art historians due to the remarkable number of women artists who worked there. Scholarship on Lavinia Fontana (1552–1614) by Caroline Murphy, and work on Elisabetta Sirani (1638–65) by Babette Bohn and Adelina Modesti has added new dimension by situating these artists within the patronage networks and particular culture of Bologna. Through this and other scholarship, significant insights have been offered, showing how these artists responded to their patrons and the language of spiritual reform in a time of religious crisis.

Patricia Rocco's *The Devout Hand: Women, Virtue, and Visual Culture in Early Modern Italy* is a valuable complement to this existing scholarship, providing a fresh methodology with new perspectives on women artists in this most particular of Italian cities. Rocco's volume is divided into five chapters which knit together discussion of two generations of Bolognese women artists, placing them within the confluences of natural philosophy, artistic culture, and church reform. As suggested by the title, "hands" are a connective thread throughout. Underpinning Rocco's text are the terms *maniera devota* ("the devout manner") and the *mano donnesca*, a thornier designation applied to art characterized by intricacy and precious ornament. The *mano donnesca* correlates women with a laborious mode of production, suggesting that for women, the process of art-making was slow and meticulous, requiring the steadiest and finest of hands to represent the smallest of details. Centering the works of female artists within this terminological framework, the author builds an effective structural device for the re-evaluation of the artistic "hand" and "handcraft" of Bolognese women artists.

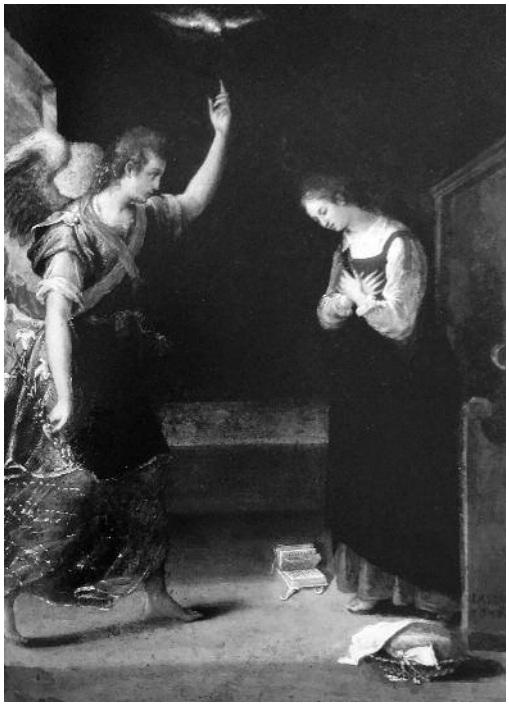


Fig. 1. Lavinia Fontana, *The Annunciation* (C. 1576–77), oil on copper, 14 1/8" x 10 2/3". Photo: Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

The first chapter inserts the reader within the scholarly climate of Bologna and the academic pursuits of its erudite citizens, most notably Ulisse Aldrovandi, the sixteenth-century Bolognese intellectual luminary whose impressive collection of natural curiosities and artifacts was a rich resource for artists and academics. Adding new contours to this narrative Rocco considers how women artists like Lavinia Fontana responded to the intellectual culture of this city. For example, in discussion of two sacred works by Fontana, *St Francis Adoring the Crucifix* (1580, Milan, Private Collection) and *St Francis Receiving the Stigmata* (1579, Bologna, Seminario Arcivescovile Bologna), Rocco provides convincing readings of the works' landscape details and rich descriptions of flora and fauna as evidence of Fontana's interests in naturalism and scientific observation. Examining how women artists were particularly adept at translating scientific knowledge into a female idiom, Rocco's chapter revises the idea that Bolognese intellectual exchange was confined to the masculine sphere.

The second chapter explores the context of spiritual reform and the discussion of sacred art in Bologna. Rocco gives special attention to the role of Cardinal Gabriele Paoletti, and his treatise, the *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane* (1582). This text has generally been dismissed as "repressive" to the arts or else overlooked by art historians entirely. Through close reading, Rocco re-examines Paoletti's text, arguing for its deep concern with the visual; the *Discorso* was, as Rocco notes, originally intended to be illustrated. Discussion of its function as a sourcebook for artists to achieve iconographic accuracy is again served by the example of Lavinia Fontana, a painter whose works align with descriptions of the *maniera devota* as offered by Paoletti, who would have approved her adherence to sacred narrative in *The Annunciation* (ca. 1576–77; Fig. 1), by her inclusion of just important details such as the book and sewing basket. The connection is especially strong in Rocco's analysis of Fontana's *Assumption* painted for Paoletti's own chapel in San Pietro in Bologna (1593, now in Pieve di Cento, Collegiata di Santa Maria Maggiore). Rocco demonstrates how Fontana's representation of this holy event coordinates with Paoletti's specific dictates on art and Marian doctrine.

This contrasts with Fontana's *Madonna of the Assumption of Ponte Santo* for the city of Imola (1584, Imola, Pinacoteca Civica), which depicts the subject of the Immaculate Conception, a doctrine contested by the church but supported by practices of popular piety. Rocco's analysis of these works with varying iconographic programs underscores Fontana's artistic dexterity, able to cater her style to patron and place.

A fascinating third chapter, "Stitching for Virtue: Women's Work in Embroidery for the Conservatori of Bologna," examines the production of embroidered textile art by women who resided in the various *conservatori* (reform houses for girls) in Bologna. A number of these surviving embroideries reproduce notable works by Fontana and Elisabetta Sirani, documenting the transmission of these artists' works by young women for female-specific viewership within the sacred spaces of their own residences. Rocco's original analysis of these embroideries shows how amateur artists also adjusted the visual schemes in this particular medium to fit their spiritual practices.

The last chapters center on the works and extended artistic legacy of Elisabetta Sirani. In the seventeenth century, the three modes of the *maniera devota*—the iconic, the sacred narrative and the historiated portrait—were expanded to include an additional mode: miracle painting. Rocco neatly inserts Sirani's work within contemporary discussions of female exemplarity, church reform and the production of sacred theater of Bologna. She shows how Sirani interpreted and invigorated the modes of the *maniera devota* to engage viewers within "virtual pilgrimages" that heightened and activated the senses during religious contemplation. The fifth and final chapter picks up the threads of the previous chapter, examining the generation of artists following Sirani working within the realm of the printed imagery. Examining the work of the little-known woodcut artist Veronica Fontana (1651–90), the text draws attention to her versatility in developing imagery for a variety of formats, from Jesuit religious tracts to illustrations of *wunderkammer* objects. Particularly effective is a discussion of Fontana's work alongside that of her male peers, especially the work of etcher Giuseppe Maria Mitelli. His printed works explored a variety of themes both high and low, including popular prints and broadsheets on the topic of women, which often were accompanied by elaborate textual puns, likely produced as tavern entertainments. Placing Fontana's work within the larger context of Bolognese print culture, Rocco uncovers the complex—and conflicting—dialogues that engaged a broad audience on the subject of female virtue and accomplishment.

The text is thoughtfully produced, with sixteen color plates. Two brief appendices aid the researcher. The first is a helpful list of all twenty-eight female artists working in Bologna between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries mentioned in Luigi Crespi's *Notizie,* the 1769 version of *Felsina Pittrice*. Each artist is grouped according to the number of works that they are known to have authored. Well over half the women represented in Rocco's appendix have no known extant works, revealing the many women artists whose careers are still yet to be acknowledged in scholarship. In the second appendix, the author has generously included a facsimile of the eighteenth-century copy of the letter from Julius II to the Opera dei Poveri Vergognosi in Bologna—a helpful pedagogical tool for graduate seminars that may adopt this book.

Grounding its visual arguments in rich discussion of the texts and current debates that engaged the most educated members of Bolognese society, this well-researched text will be of particular interest to Early Modern scholars working on the confluence of science, art, religion, and print culture. Rocco is especially to be commended for her careful research on the *conservatori* embroideries, bringing these overlooked examples of textile craft to light. The text will not only be of interest to scholars of gender, but also to art historians working on topics related to material culture and the history of textile production in Italy.

Through Rocco's accessible prose and visual analysis, the women artists under consideration here (whether famous painter or anonymous embroiderer) emerge as highly engaged with the visual language of reform, and able to coordinate their own visual interests with the requirements of a commission. By presenting a range of women working in a rich variety of media and artistic traditions, *The Devout Hand* reframes assumptions about the role of gender in the transmission of knowledge, artistic exchange, and spiritual renewal in Bologna. For the sake of argumentative coherence, Rocco has smartly confined her discussion to this one city, but the profound issues she raises about gender, reform, and art are not unique to Bologna. What remains to be seen and discussed is how these narratives presented here may intersect with those of others across Early Modern Italy (the career of seventeenth-century artist Lucrina Fetti, for instance, seems appropriate to mention here).

The Devout Hand exposes a rich body of artworks, testifying to the varied ways creative women imagined visual responses to religious doctrine. Vividly argued and wholly absorbing, Rocco's study gives further evidence to how Bolognese women calibrated their image-making within the visual traditions of their city. Rocco's text gives new meanings to their works and broadens our frame of reference for understanding the nature of women's artistic production within this dynamic period. ●

Amy Cymbala teaches art history at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. Her research areas include sculpted funerary memorials produced for Early Modern women in Rome and seventeenth-century women's tomb patronage in Naples and Bari.

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© Linda Stein *Legs Together and Apart* 925; 2018; fabric, archival pigment on canvas, leather, metal; 64" x 70" x 2"



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