

WOMAN'S ART JOURNAL

SPRING / SUMMER 2021 VOLUME 42, NUMBER 1 \$15.00





(Front cover) Mary Cassatt, *Reading "Le Figaro"* (Portrait of Mrs. Cassatt) (1878), oil on canvas 41" x 33". Private Collection, Washington, DC.

EDITORS

JOAN MARTER AND MARGARET BARLOW

BOOK EDITOR: ALIZA EDELMAN

FOUNDING EDITOR: ELSA HONIG FINE

EDITORIAL BOARD

NORMA BROUDE	ANN SUTHERLAND HARRIS
THERESE DOLAN	ELLEN G. LANDAU
BETSY FAHLMAN	NANCY MOWLL MATHEWS
MARY D. GARRARD	ROBERTA TARBELL
SALOMON GRIMBERG	JUDITH ZILCZER

PRODUCTION, AND DESIGN SERVICES

OLD CITY PUBLISHING, INC.

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

Subscriptions Web:
<http://www.oldcitypublishing.com/journals/waj-home/>

© 2021 Rutgers University, Department of Art History and Old City Publishing, Inc.,

Woman's Art Journal (ISSN 0270-7993) is published semiannually, Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter by Old City Publishing, Inc., a member of the Old City Publishing Group. All rights reserved.

Subscription rates \$47.00 per year for individuals and \$126.00 per year for institutions. Issues are shipped in May and November. Missed issues must be reported no later than three months after shipping date or we cannot be responsible for replacements. All rights reserved.

Indexed in Bibliography of the History of Art (BHA), Art Bibliographies Modern, Arts and Humanities Citation Index (ISI) and Wilson Full Text. The full text is also available through JSTOR's Arts & Sciences III Collection, www.jstor.org.

Except as permitted under national laws or under the photocopy license described below, no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, or stored in a retrieval system of any nature, without the advance written permission of the publisher.

Rights and Permissions/Reprints of Individual Articles

This publication and each of the articles contained herein are protected by copyright. Permission to reproduce and/or translate material contained in this journal must be obtained in writing from the publisher.

For permission to photocopy for internal use within your organization, or to make copies for external or academic use please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, USA; telephone: +1 978-750-8400 or online at <http://www.copyright.com/>.

Any unauthorized reproduction, transmission, or storage may result in civil or criminal liability.

SPRING / SUMMER 2021 VOLUME 42, NUMBER 1

2 PARALLEL PERSPECTIVES

By Joan Marter and Margaret Barlow

PORTRAITS, ISSUES AND INSIGHTS

3 MARY CASSATT'S *LA LECTURE*, THE NEW GRANDMOTHER

By Shira Gottlieb

11 MARY CASSATT, SEEKING INDEPENDENCE, HER EARLY EXHIBITION PRACTICE IN NEW YORK AND PARIS

By Genevieve Westerby

19 MARGUERITE GÉRARD'S *PORTRAIT OF A MAN AND WOMAN IN AN INTERIOR*: PORTRAITURE, LANDSCAPE AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

By Sarah Lees

27 WATERCOLOR AND WOMEN IN THE EARLY MODERN NETHERLANDS: BETWEEN MIRROR AND COMB

By Alison M. Kettering

36 ANNE RYAN: COLLAGE ARTIST, PAINTER, PRINTMAKER

By Olivia Armandroff

REVIEWS

42 *Sofonisba's Lesson: A Renaissance Artist and Her Work*

By Michael W. Cole Reviewed by Lois M. Eliason

44 *The Life and Work of Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757): The Queen of Pastel*

By Angela Oberer Reviewed by Rosie Razzall

46 *Angelica Kauffman* Edited by Bettina Baumgärtel, contributions by Helen Valentine et al. Reviewed by Wendy Wassyng Roworth

49 *Women in the Dark, Female Photographers in the US, 1850–1900*

By Katherine Manthorne Reviewed by Gabrielle Rose-Curti

51 *Hannah Ryggen: Threads of Defiance*

By Marit Paasche, translated by Katia Stieglitz

Reviewed by Anna Dumont

53 *Alice Trumbull Mason: Pioneer of American Abstraction*

Edited by Elisa Wouk Almino, with essays by Marilyn R. Brown et al.

Reviewed by Taylor L. Poulin

56 *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972–1985*

Edited by Anna Katz, with essays by Elissa Auther et al.

Reviewed by Ellen G. Landau

59 *Women Made Visible: Feminist Art and Media in Post-1968 Mexico City*

By Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda Reviewed by Teresa Eckmann

61 *Judy Chicago: New Views*

By Judy Chicago et al. Reviewed by Sally Brown

63 *Paula Rego: The Art of Story*

By Deryn Rees-Jones

Reviewed by Margarida Brito Alves and Giulia Lamoni

Feminists advocate empowerment, both for themselves and others. Women artists can pursue personal ambitions as well as contribute to the advancement of all women. These goals are relevant to our current issue. Many of our articles in recent years have focused on modern and contemporary women artists. In this issue, we look back on the history of women artists in earlier centuries. Were there traces of feminism in the creative interests and underlying mindsets of these artists as they struggled for recognition? What feminist threads can be uncovered in their art?

We open with two articles on Mary Cassatt, who is most often categorized as a painter of mother and child subjects during the late nineteenth century. In the first, Shira Gottlieb introduces a satisfying new interpretation of another group of Cassatt's subjects by identifying images of the "new grandmother." Although historically, as Gottlieb shows, depictions of grandmothers as "*la bonne maman*" projected passivity, Cassatt presents a different aspect. In *La Lecture* (Reading), the artist's mother, Katherine Cassatt, is shown fully engaged with her three rapt grandchildren as she reads to them. This active role as the "new grandmother" fits easily with the identification of the "New Woman" in the fin-de-siècle. Moreover, she is shown as supporting her daughter's ambitions as an artist by posing for her. Again, in *Reading "Le Figaro"* (on the cover), Cassatt portrays her mother as fully engaged in current events by her steady absorption in reading the French newspaper.

Incisive documentation of the young Mary Cassatt's career strategies, as described by Genevieve Westerby, reveals her driving ambition as she sought recognition in the US as well as in Paris. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, as Cassatt was sending works to the Paris Salon, she also was seeking inclusion in New York City venues, including the National Academy of Design, and later the Society of American Artists. Cassatt was not shy about utilizing the press to publicize her (infrequent) successes at the Salon to advance her reputation in the US, and she was energetic in shipping works to exhibitions in the US and abroad. More important to her personal ambition (not fueled by financial need) were the social connections and regard she maintained both in France and in New York and Philadelphia. The artist's efforts at self-empowerment eventually succeeded, as Cassatt found considerable acclaim in both New York and Paris, establishing her historic career.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Marguerite Gérard moved away from the genre scenes that had dominated her work in previous decades and established her reputation. Gérard had explored the subject of motherhood, and there were even hints of female sexuality in her paintings. In the "new" century she took a new direction, combining rather staid portrait studies with the latest rage in France and England: plein-air painting. The landscape paintings she introduced into her interiors were mostly based on informal studies in nature that attracted her attention. Author Sarah Lees does not speculate that Gérard sketched outdoors, but rather that she was influenced by artists whom she met and painted with at the Louvre. This new approach apparently intrigued Gérard, so that in some of her portrait studies, the sitters share a space with large paintings of naturalistic landscapes.

A number of talented early modern women artists in the Dutch Republic found that painting in watercolors was compatible with their roles in society. However, their works were often marginalized and not given the recognition they warranted. Alison

Kettering presents the artistic proficiency of several female watercolorists in a range of "acceptable" subjects. Included here are nature studies by Maria Sybilla Merian, an entomologist, who excelled in the field of scientific illustration while Catharina Backer and Gesina ter Borch's skillfully executed watercolors range from flower paintings to intimate genre scenes. Kettering argues the determination of these seventeenth-century women to create successful images in a medium that can be challenging.

In our one article from the mid-twentieth century, Olivia Armandroff writes about Anne Ryan, who is deserving of more attention in this period of the ascendancy of women Abstract Expressionists. Although Ryan is primarily known as a collage artist who tended to work on small studies on paper, this article describes a broader range of her production. Towards the end of her life Ryan's collage studies dramatically increased in scale and brilliance, but there also are more paintings from these later years than previously known.

Book review editor Aliza Edelman has once again brought together excellent reviewers to report on a fascinating array of books. Subjects range across continents and centuries, from Sofonisba Anguissola, Rosalba Carriera, and Angelica Kauffman to pioneering women photographers and multiple twentieth century artists.

As always, we thank our authors and reviewers for their valued contributions, our subscribers for their support, and our partners at Old City Publishing for making these issues possible.

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

Susan Landauer (1958–2020)

We note the passing of Dr. Susan Landauer. A champion of women artists on the West Coast, she was determined that they should receive the recognition they deserved. Her first major exhibition and publication was *The San Francisco School of Abstract Expressionism* (1996), shown at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Laguna Art Museum. As an associate curator at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and later chief curator at the San Jose Museum of Art, Susan advocated for the West Coast women artists, wrote about many of them, introduced their work into museum collections, and helped them receive national recognition. When I began preparations for the 2016 catalogue and exhibition, *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, for the Denver Art Museum, Susan was an essential partner in choosing and then documenting outstanding artists from the San Francisco area. She challenged the narrative of East Coast artists as the sole initiators of Abstract Expressionism by including Deborah Remington, Sonia Gechtoff, Jay de Feo, Claire Falkenstein, and others in the exhibition.

We remember Susan Landauer for her brilliant research, writing, and curating, and for her dedication to advancing the reputations of contemporary artists in California.

JMM

MARY CASSATT'S *LA LECTURE*

THE NEW GRANDMOTHER

By Shira Gottlieb



Fig. 1. Mary Cassatt, *Mrs. Cassatt Reading to Her Grandchildren (La Lecture)* (1880), oil on canvas, 22 3/4" x 39 1/4". Private collection.

Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) showed the painting now known as *Mrs. Cassatt Reading to Her Grandchildren* at the sixth Impressionist exhibition in 1881, under the title *La Lecture (Reading)* (Fig. 1 and Pl. 1). This composition depicts Cassatt's mother, Katherine, reading to the children of Cassatt's brother, Alexander. The critics praised the painting as "an excellent artwork," and noted Cassatt's talent for describing real moments in a natural and honest manner.¹ J.K. Huysmans went even further, glorifying *Reading* along with Cassatt's *Mother and Child* (1880) as "flawless pearls," declaring that this was the first time he saw depictions of children painted with such delicate tenderness.² Interestingly, six of the seven reviews that provided a detailed description of the depicted scene in *Reading* misidentified the elderly woman as the children's mother or teacher. Henry Trianon was the only one to note, not without reservations, that this figure might be their grandmother: "In *Reading* Cassatt shows us a grandmother or a teacher surrounded by three young boys [sic] who listen to her while looking at her... The closed lips of the reader suggest that she may be correcting homework."³

Given Cassatt's "emotional understanding of placid life" and "penetrating feeling of intimacy," it would be unreasonable to believe that she failed to properly depict a grandmother.⁴ So what was the reason for this misunderstanding? Didn't grandmothers take an active role in the life of their grandchildren? Was it not customary for grandmothers to read to their grandchildren? Although when the painting was first exhibited its original title did not disclose the identities and relationship of the represented figures, it was commonly believed at the time that women turn old in the fifth decade of their lives, when they are no longer able to give birth.⁵ So when Cassatt painted her sixty-four-year-old mother, Katherine was already considered old. The pince-nez and the subtle red patches on her face, which are typical of the fine skin of an older woman, reference her advanced age, particularly in relation to the three young children. It should also be noted that the reason for misreading the figure as a grandmother could not have stemmed from a low statistical possibility for children to have known their grandparents in this period. In fact, Vincent Gourdon has shown that as early as 1800, French



Fig. 2. Gustave Doré, *La Grandmère* (The Grandmother) (1870s), etching, 10 1/2" x 8". Photo: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF

children were likely to meet two of their grandparents—more likely their grandmothers—and that the chances of this increased in the upper classes.⁶ Therefore, the fact that the older woman was not recognized as the children's grandmother must have been due to other reasons.

Previous studies have mostly attended to this painting in the context of Cassatt's preoccupation with the theme of mothers and children and of her modern emphasis on children's natural behavior, which does not fall into the trap of nostalgia and sentimentality.⁷ Greg M. Thomas considers the representation of Cassatt's mother in this painting as a statement about the creation of a family community, in which her essence as a mother is related to her transmission of cultural knowledge.⁸ He focuses on the book's central position in the composition and on the gendered grouping of the grandmother and granddaughters on one side, with the grandson positioned on the other side. However, he does not analyze these motifs in relation to the role of grandmothers during this historical period. By analyzing the discourse on grandparenthood and child education in the nineteenth century, I will show that the figure of the grandmother in this painting combines different and contradictory aspects, which



Fig. 3. Hyacinthe Royet, cover illustration for *La bobine à grand-mère : petite pièce caractéristique pour le piano* (The grandmother's spool: A Small Piece for the Piano) (1898), Paris: L. Gregh. Photo: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

are featured in addition to characteristics of the New Woman. These aspects challenged the contemporary stereotypes of bourgeois grandmothers and their conventional roles in the lives of their grandchildren.

In nineteenth-century France, images of grandmothers were among the few positive representations of older women, if not the only one alternative to the old spinster—repellent, frightful, and grotesque. The joys of being a grandmother were extolled not only by men but also by women. The novelist and poet Anaïs Ségalas, for example, described the identity of older women as shaped by the children and grandchildren who give meaning to their life.⁹ Having carried out her "natural" childbearing duties, she embodied a different caring role with her grandchildren.¹⁰ This positive representation, often called *la bonne vieille* or *la bonne maman*,¹¹ centered on a calm, loving, desexualized elderly woman who did not cross gender boundaries or threaten social constructs. Her white hair pointed both to her advanced age and to her reconciliation with it, as she no longer tried to look younger than she really was.¹² Additionally, white hair signified an abandonment of her sexuality.¹³ As popular illustrations (Figs. 2, 3) from this period show, *la bonne maman* usually wears a bonnet and is

portrayed sitting in her chair in the company of her grandchildren, taking care of them or busying herself with other traditional feminine chores. The *bonne maman* has no other interests or aspirations other than being a grandmother, and devotion to the wellbeing of her grandchildren is her primary source of joy and happiness. In the eyes of her grandchildren *la bonne maman* is reassuring and comforting, entirely faultless, and always “good.” These stereotypes are clearly articulated in *Grandmère avait des défauts!* (Grandmother Had Flaws!), a moralizing children’s book aimed at educating a young audience. In each chapter, the grandmother tells her three granddaughters about her character flaws as a young girl, which correspond to their own faults, and reveals how she overcame them: “For the three girls, [their] grandmother and her house are very respectable figures, very old—and have always been wise and old—and very good too.”¹⁴ Nevertheless, despite her allegedly positive character, the *bonne maman*’s company was not always welcome.

In bourgeois families, grandparents played a complex role in the life of their grandchildren. During the first half of the nineteenth century, common approaches in child education advocated the transformation of a child into a “man” or a “woman.”¹⁵ Egoism and bad passions had to be eliminated, and children were to be educated to uphold justice and reason. In order to achieve these goals, they were to be primarily cared for by their parents or by tutors or teachers. Grandparents were the last resort—it was said that they “spoiled the children out of too much love and kindness,” and parents were advised to minimize their influence on children.¹⁶ Despite being a source for moral values and family history, their knowledge concerning infant health and childrearing was denounced as outdated.¹⁷ Furthermore, they were considered to be poor educators because of their “over spoiling.” The notion of the *grand-parent gâteau* (the tender grandparent), which had emerged in the eighteenth century, stereotyped grandparents as too soft, indulgent, and lacking any authority when facing the children. The French sociologist Louis Roussel summarized this approach as “pleasing without punishing.”¹⁸ Such qualities were believed to corrupt the character of a child, and the French educator Henriette Campan even recommended that parents reduce contact with grandparents, since their over-tenderness could damage the children’s discipline and even encourage them to turn against their parents’ authority.¹⁹ This attitude was also common in England, where John Wesley advised women not to let grandmothers take part in the rearing of their grandchildren. He warned that they would “undo all that you have done; [they] would humour them to the destruction of their souls, if not their bodies too.” Wesley concluded that “in four-score years, I have not met with one woman that knew how to manage grand-children.”²⁰ Thus, the contribution of the *grand-parent gâteau* was seen as ranging from negligible to destructive. Nevertheless, grandparents’ presence in bourgeois families gradually became more appreciated over the course of the nineteenth century.

In 1877 Victor Hugo, by then an acclaimed national figure, published *L’Art d’être grand-père* (The Art of Being a

Grandfather), a poetry collection inspired by his own experiences as he discovered grandparenthood. After the death of Hugo’s son, Charles, he wanted to be closer to his two grandchildren, Georges and Jeanne, and installed them, along with their mother, Charles’s widow, on a different floor of his Parisian apartment building on the Rue de Clichy. The poems in this collection celebrate emotions such as love and tenderness for the children, which often outbalance the traditional emphasis on discipline. One example is “Jeanne était au pain sec” (“Jeanne Was on a Dry Bread Diet”), in which the young girl is punished for some “crime”—later revealed to be picking her nose. Hugo goes to see her and sneaks her a jar of jam “against the rules”. The poem suggests the presence of other adult figures, likely including Jeanne’s mother, who protest Hugo’s actions and claim that he is not sufficiently strict and is acting childish: “This girl knows how weak and soft you are. She always sees you laugh when we are angry [at her].”²¹ And yet, *L’Art d’être grand-père*, which articulates all the allegations against the *grand-parent gâteau*, signals a shift in the values of the bourgeois family. No longer based solely on principles of strict authority, the family allowed manifestations of affection and concerns for a more egalitarian atmosphere. Consequently, the figure of the *grand-parent gâteau* was embraced, and bourgeois grandparents could play a positive role in the life of their grandchildren. Their presence balanced parental authority and fit the strategy of supervising the social world of children and those they come into contact with. The company of a grandparent was thus favored over that of strangers, since they shared the same moral values as the parents and sometimes supplied the children’s need for playmates.²²

Nevertheless, a grandparent’s role as educator or instructor was still marginal to nonexistent. Ségolène Le Men has noted that the theme of the grandmother teaching her grandchildren to read was absent from ABC books, while that of a mother reading to her children was underscored. Indeed, between 1880 and 1930, there existed no images of grandparents as instructors.²³ Gourdon has shown that the grandparent’s educational role was mainly consigned to assisting with homework during the holidays. Even then, they only served a “decorative” role, encouraging the children in their studies or taking an interest in their lessons, and were not expected to offer serious tutoring.²⁴ Having examined these notions of grandparents as overindulgent, lacking educational skills, and as maintaining a friendship with their grandchildren, it is interesting to turn back to and analyze Cassatt’s *Reading*.

In his review of the painting, Henry Trianon suggested that, based on her closed lips, the figure of the grandmother is correcting the children’s homework. Although this assumption may fit conventions concerning grandparents’ interest in their studies, it is unlikely that all three children would be sitting so attentively just to listen to their grandmother correcting their homework, normally an uninteresting burden for children. Moreover, given the age gaps between them—eleven-year-old Eddie (far left), nine-year-old Katherine (far right), and five-year-old Elsie (in between)—it is doubtful that they would be interested in each other’s homework. As a letter from



Fig. 4. Mary Cassatt, *Auguste Reading to her Daughter* (1910), oil on canvas, 45 1/2" x 35". Photo: wikiart.

Katherine Cassatt reveals, she was actually reading fairy tales to her grandchildren in order to keep them still as they posed for their aunt, Mary Cassatt.²⁵ However, this detail should not affect the reading of either the composition or the grandmother's representation. For not only does the book lack any visible images, but Mrs. Cassatt's serious expression does not correspond to the facial gestures that one would adopt when reading such a book to a young audience. Given the original title of the painting, *La Lecture*, and the red book's central placement as the pivot of the composition, I argue that Cassatt is concerned in this case with the representation of a grandmother as sharing knowledge with her grandchildren and tutoring them. At the same time, her performance of this educational role lacks the authority and rigor that were believed to be obligatory in child education and instead embraces affection and love. The three grandchildren sit close and are attentive, clearly comfortable in the company of their grandmother. Although the scene takes place next to a large window, which offers a view of the outdoors, none of the children is tempted to look outside or daydream. Their attention is especially noticeable when compared to another painting depicting a similar scene painted by Cassatt. In both paintings, children are listening to an adult reading, but in *Auguste Reading to her Daughter* (Fig. 4, Pl. 2), the girl



Fig. 5. Jean-François Raffaëlli, *Le Vieillard avec amis* (The Old Man with Friends) (1880s), oil on panel, 19 3/4" x 16". Photo: Brame & Lorenceau, Paris.

comfortably reclines on her mother, and it is not clear whether she is listening to her or thinking of something else. If it were not for the title, it might seem as if the mother is reading for herself.²⁶ However, in *Reading*, the children are all looking and listening attentively while their grandmother reads to them. This portrayal shows her sharing knowledge with her grandchildren as well as closeness and affection.

The scene depicted in *Reading* differs remarkably from those in which grandparents, or older people more generally, are represented with childish characteristics aimed, perhaps, at enhancing the friendly nature of the relationship, while nevertheless infantilizing them. In *Le Grand-papa Guérin*, a theatrical play from 1839, Charles, Louise's suitor, admires her grandfather and his cheerfulness when the latter plays with Louise's younger brother, Lucien. Charles is thinking to himself that had he not been embarrassed to play like that at the age of twenty-three, he would have happily joined the grandfather and his young grandson.²⁷ In other words, the cheerful or childish behavior of the grandfather is not appropriate for an adult man. Another example is Jean-François Raffaëlli's *Le Vieillard avec amis* (The Old Man with Friends) (1880s; Fig. 5), which represents an elderly man strolling on the outskirts of a town along with two young children. The title alludes not only to a close relationship between the elderly man and the children but in fact to an

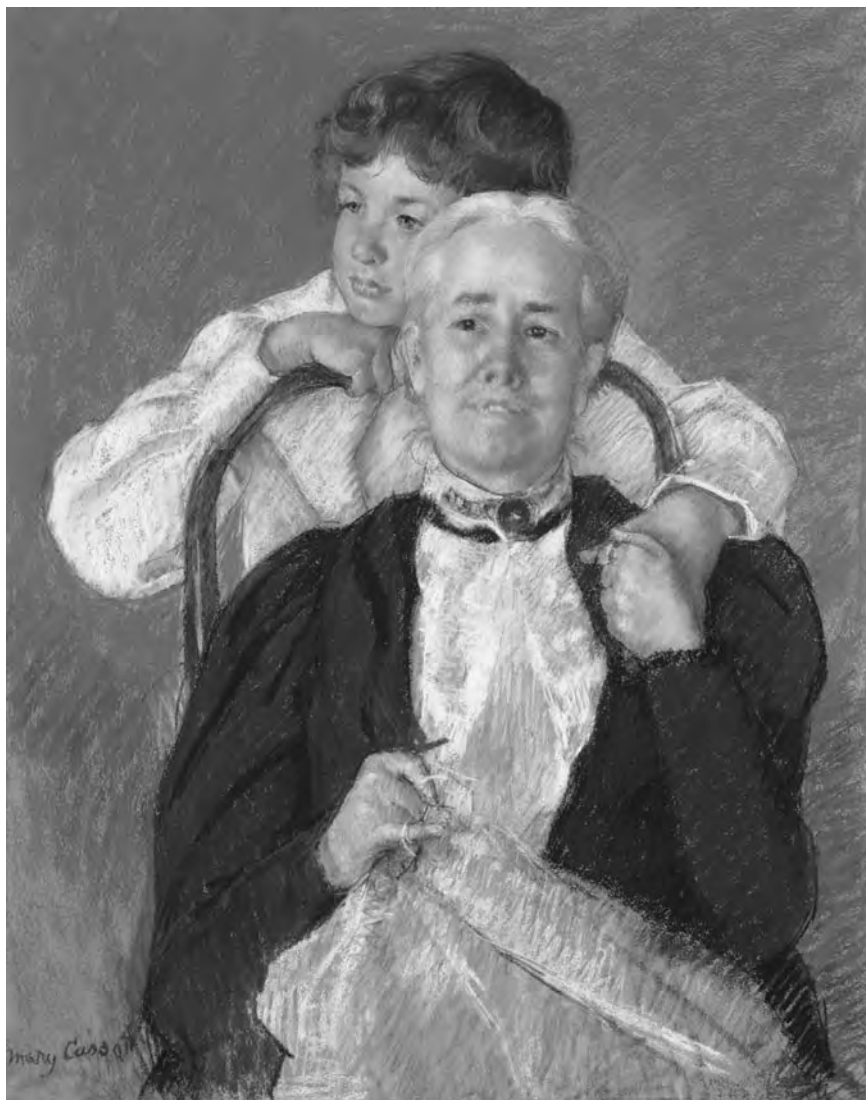


Fig. 7. Mary Cassatt, *Portrait of Mrs. Cyrus J. Lawrence with Her Grandson R. Lawrence Oakley* (c. 1898), pastel on tan paper, 28" x 23". Photo: Courtesy Clark Art Institute.

gendered conventions that were associated with grandmothers and their traditional female roles.

The contribution of grandparents was mainly limited to moral values. Whereas grandfathers were portrayed as instilling philosophical and civil ideals, grandmothers were seen as a source for domestic skills and familial knowledge.²⁹ In some cases, grandmothers acted as instillers of good manners, as articulated in *Grandmère avait des défauts!* Here, for example, her educational role is limited to etiquette: throughout the book the grandmother helps her three granddaughters eliminate bad manners, such as anger or gluttony, by patiently telling them detailed anecdotes based on her own life experience. The *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire* (Dictionary of Primary Pedagogy and Education) of 1887 illustrates similar ideas.³⁰ Under the term *Femme*, a grandmother's role is said to be "entirely different and complementary" to that of a mother. Since parents (interestingly, at this point the discussion shifts from "mother"

to "parents" in general) are passionate and impatient to see their children excel, they might agitate and push them to learn something too quickly, eventually causing a delay in their progress. On the other hand, the grandmother, "calmed by age," understands the importance of time in the intellectual and moral development of a child.³¹ She is there to reassure the mother (focus shifts back to the mother), based on her own past experience, that intervals and slowdowns are normal stages of every developmental process. The paragraph summarizes the grandmother's role by admitting that her positive influence consists of patience, experience, and therefore hope.³² In other words, it seems that a grandmother does not have any direct influence on a child's education and is reduced merely to "positive" stereotypical attributes of age such as calmness and experience. Moreover, since these stereotypes are shared both by older men and older women, the discussion deviates from its original purpose in the same way it shifted focus from "mother" to "parents."

This approach is expressed in a painting by Marguerite Gérard (1761–1837) and her brother-in-law Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The First Steps* (1780–85; Fig. 6), although painted a century earlier. This work shows a toddler taking his first steps while approaching his elegant young mother. The other figures present in the scene are a little girl, likely the older sister, a young woman dressed more casually than the mother, implying that she might be a governess, and an older woman, identified as a grandmother, leaning on a hedge and attentively watching the child.³³ The governess's raised hands, proud face, and

proximity to both the cradle and the toddler suggest that it was she who initiated the child's activity, by taking him out of his bed and placing him on the soft red blanket. From across, the mother's facial expression, forward leaning position and open arms suggest that she is energizing her child's paces. The grandmother does not actively encourage the child's progress but patiently reassures him from afar. While patience is indeed needed when reading a book to three young children, the figure of the grandmother in *Reading* is not reduced to this trait in an age-related context. Instead, her expression is serious and engaged, imbuing her activity a sense of significance. Evidently, this New Grandmother stands out in terms of the knowledge she passes on to her grandchildren.

When comparing *Reading* to another grandmother-grandchild scene, this innovative representation becomes more evident. Cassatt painted *Portrait of Mrs. Cyrus J. Lawrence with Her Grandson* (Fig. 7, Pl. 3) in 1898, during a visit to the United States. The painting was commissioned by

the sitter's husband, Cyrus Lawrence, and shows the elegant Emily Lawrence interrupting her knitting in order to grasp her grandson's hand while he stands behind her, leaning over her chair. Similar to *Reading*, the scene depicts a spontaneous, genuine moment of warmth and affection between the two figures. They are united in a pyramidal composition, with their heads at its vertex. Yet unlike the shared concentration in *Reading*, with the focused gaze of the grandchildren, it does not seem that Mrs. Lawrence and her grandson look in the same direction or share the same interest. The child looks absorbed in his own thoughts, while the grandmother continues knitting. Members of Mrs. Lawrence's family remembered her as a warm and loving grandmother who used to knit sweaters for her many grandchildren.³⁴ Indeed, the only objects in this minimal composition are a chair and the knitting accessories. The fact that she was remembered for her knitting, and that she is represented at this activity, testifies not only to the accuracy of the painting, but also to her traditional womanly role as a caring grandmother. The young boy's distracted gaze echoes the perceived division between feminine and masculine activities. (The painting's title, which refers to Mrs. Lawrence by her husband's name, is another reminder of a woman's traditional place during this period and in the context of the bourgeois social class.) Unlike that of Mrs. Cassatt in *Reading*, the representation of Mrs. Lawrence does not challenge any social norms, locating her in a "natural" and conventional role. In fact, she could be an American equivalent of the French *bonne maman*: a married woman and a grandmother whose main concern is evidently taking care of her family, while her white hair and the blurred contours of her body desexualize her and disclose her age. Although Katherine Cassatt is also a grandmother and a married woman, she does not have white hair, and she wears a ruffled white dress instead of the "shapeless black" of older Frenchwomen.³⁵ Moreover, she is reading to her grandchildren—an activity that was neither associated with grandmothers nor defined as "feminine," and her audience is mixed—two girls and a boy. The emphasis, in this case, is on the transmission of knowledge whose source is books and the intellect rather than traditional female wisdom and gendered skills that are directed at young girls.

Finally, although the purpose of this article was to analyze the representation of the grandmother in *Reading* and the possible sources for misreadings of this figure when it was first exhibited in 1881, I believe that the characteristics of the New Woman as delineated here also had a solid basis in Cassatt's private world.³⁶ Katherine Cassatt's willingness to keep her grandchildren occupied so that they would pose for Cassatt is undoubtedly an act of assisting her daughter in her work, and speaking more broadly, in her career as an artist. Cassatt never married or had children.³⁷ She left her native United States and crossed the ocean to live in France and pursue a career as a painter. Given this exceptional life course for a woman in the nineteenth century, support from her mother should not be taken for granted, especially given their bourgeois background.³⁸ In a similar situation, the mother of

Berthe and Edma Morisot was famously warned that having a daughter as a professional painter would be a revolution, or even a catastrophe, in their social milieu.³⁹ Yet Katherine Cassatt is seen here providing not only passive support, but active assistance in the realization of her daughter's artistic career, revealing her own nature as a New Woman.

Trianon's review, despite his uncertainty, addressed the two main subjects of *Reading*, contradictory as they were in 1881: a grandmother's affection and a teacher's educational role. Whereas softness was generally perceived as undesirable and obstructive in child education, and grandparents were seen as lacking the authority needed to fulfill any meaningful educational role, the figure of the grandmother in *Reading* combines the two in an innovative, "hybrid" figure. This figure is also detached from any gendered conventions that assigned grandmothers to the traditional role of passively caring for the needs of their grandchildren. This grandmother manifests characteristics that would later be associated with the New Woman, such as an interest in or possession of knowledge that originates from books and an education. And by passing this on to her grandchildren, regardless of their gender, the New Grandmother embodies contrasting aspects that challenged not only contemporary conventions but also the reviewers of the sixth Impressionist exhibition. •

Shira Gottlieb is a PhD candidate in the department of the arts at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. Her dissertation focuses on representations of aging and old age in French painting from the second half of the nineteenth century. She is a *Chateaubriand* laureate completing a six-month research residency at the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA) in Paris.

Notes

1. "La Lecture est une œuvre excellente," Gustave Goëtschy, *Le Voltaire* (April 5, 1881), 1–2. Quoted in Ruth Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886: Documentation*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Museum of Fine Arts of San Francisco, 1996), 344. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.
2. "Irréprochables perles," J.K. Huysmans, *L'Art moderne*, 2nd ed. (Paris: P.-V. Stock, 1902), 257.
3. "Dans La Lecture elle nous montre une grand'mère ou une institutrice entourée de trois jeunes garçons qui l'écoutent en la regardant.... Les lèvres closes de la liseuse donneraient plutôt à penser qu'elle corrige un devoir," Henry Trianon, "Sixième Exposition de peinture par un groupe d'artistes: 35, boulevard des Capucines," *Le Constitutionnel*, April 24, 1881, 2–3. Reprinted in Berson, *The New Painting*, vol. 1, 367. The identification of "three young boys" is mistaken. The children pictured, left to right, are Katherine (age 9), Elsie (5), and Eddie (11).
4. Huysmans, *L'Art moderne*, 257.
5. Peter N. Stearns, "Old Women: Some Historical Observations," in *Journal of Family History* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 45.
6. Vincent Gourdon, "Are Grandparents Really Absent from the Family Tradition? Forbears in the Region of Vernon (France) around 1800," in *The History of the Family* 4, no. 1 (1999): 77–91; In 1900, grandmothers overlapped for twelve years with their grandchildren. Stearns, "Old Women," 54.

7. On Cassatt's modern approach to the theme of mothers and children, and specifically to *Reading*, see Griselda Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998); Judith Barther and Judith A. Hirshler, *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman* (Chicago and New York: Art Institute of Chicago and H.N. Abrams, 1998); Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt* (New York: Abrams, 1987).
8. Greg M. Thomas, *Impressionist Children: Childhood, Family, and Modern Identity in French Art* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2010), 188–90.
9. For a discussion of different representations of older women in nineteenth-century French poetry, see Gretchen Schultz, "Through the Looking Glass: Reflections of Ageing Women in the Poetry of Nineteenth-Century France," *Romance Studies* 6, no. 3 (July 2008): 242.
10. France faced a falling birthrate during the nineteenth century. Following the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the concern with this fact began to expand beyond medical circles to politicians and the public at large. In this light, the reproductive duty of the French woman was enhanced. The favorable image of grandmothers during this period stemmed in part from these ideas. On the French depopulation and the role of motherhood, see Joshua H. Cole, "'There Are Only Good Mothers': The Ideological Work of Women's Fertility in France Before World War I," *French Historical Studies* 19, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 639–72.
11. The literal translation of *bonne vieille* is "good old woman." *La bonne maman*, or "good mother," is attributed to grandmothers in French parlance.
12. Women's magazines such as the *Gazette des femmes* advised their elderly readers not to proclaim their real age and to dye their hair and use cosmetics to appear younger. See Stearns, "Old Women," 47. On grey hair and coloring, see Carol de Dobay Rifelj, *Coiffures: Hair in Nineteenth-Century French Literature and Culture* (Newark, DE: Univ. of Delaware Press, 2010), 123–25.
13. Gourdon, *Histoire des grands-parents* (Paris: Perrin, 2001), 208.
14. "Pour les trois fillettes, grand'mère, et sa maison, ce sont des personnes très respectables, très vieilles—qui ont toujours été sages et vieilles — et très bonnes aussi," in Louis Morin, *Grandmère avait des défauts!* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1906), 2.
15. Children's education in the nineteenth century continued to be segregated by sex, as had been the case in the eighteenth century. While young bourgeois boys could attend a variety of secondary schools, both private and public, which prepared them for the baccalauréat, or matriculation exams required for universities, girls had only private institutions to choose from. Even when public middle schools and high schools for girls opened in 1880, following the Sée law, they did not prepare their students for the baccalauréat. See Rebecca Rogers, *From the Salon to the Schoolroom: Educating Bourgeois Girls in Nineteenth-century France* (University Park, PA: Penn State Univ. Press, 2005); For a related example from children literature, see Gourdon, *Histoire des grands-parents*, 147.
16. "Par trop de bonté, gâtent les petit-enfants," Stéphanie Félicité, Comtesse de Genlis, quoted in Vincent Gourdon, "La Vision des grand-parents éducateurs au XIX siècle: du repoussoir au modèle," *Revue internationale de l'éducation familiale* 5, no. 1 (2001): 15–16.
17. Stearns, "Old Women," 54.
18. "faire plaisir sans corriger," Louis Roussel quoted in Gourdon, "Les grands-parents en France du XVIIe siècle au début du XXe siècle," *Histoire, économie et société* 18, no. 3 (1999): 512.
19. Gourdon, *Histoire des grands-parents*, 157.
20. Linda W. Rosenzweig, "'If They Have Any Orders, I Am Theirs to Command: Indulgent Middle-Class Grandparents in American Society," in *American Behavioral History: An Introduction*, ed. Peter N. Stearns (New York: NYU Press, 2005), 62.
21. "Elle sait à quel point vous êtes faible et lâche. Elle vous voit toujours rire quand on se fâche." Victor Hugo, "Jeanne était au pain sec," in *L'Art d'être grand-père*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1877), 130.
22. Gourdon, *Histoire des grands-parents*, 144–45.
23. *Ibid.*, 166.
24. *Ibid.*, 168.
25. Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Cassatt and Her Circle: Selected Letters* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 159.
26. Interestingly, the reader's lips are also closed in *Auguste Reading to Her Daughter*. I believe that the reason for this choice is a formal one, since an open mouth would imply the presence of a voice, which cannot be transmitted to the viewer, and which would thus break the unity of painting as a whole.
27. Gourdon, *Histoire des grands-parents*, 104.
28. Ruth E. Iskin, "Cassatt's Singular Women: Reading *Le Figaro* and the Older New Woman," in Michelle Facos (ed.), *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Art* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019), 467, 480. On Cassatt's paintings of her mother as a strong intellectual woman, see Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999), 230–34.
29. Gourdon, *Histoire des grands-parents*, 169.
30. "Femmes" in *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire*, vol. 1, ed. Ferdinand Buisson (Paris: Hachette, 1887), 998.
31. "calmè par l'âge," in *Dictionnaire de pédagogie*, 998.
32. "c'est ainsi que l'heureuse influence de la grand-mère est faite de patience, d'expérience, et par conséquent, d'espérance," in *Dictionnaire de pédagogie*, 998.
33. Mary Sheriff, "Fragonard's Erotic Mothers and the Politics of Reproduction," in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *Eroticism and the Body Politic* (Baltimore and London [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1991]), 38.
34. Margaret C. Conrads, *American Paintings and Sculpture at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990), 32.
35. Peter Stearns, "Old Women," 48.
36. For a detailed account of Cassatt's exceptional life, see Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1998).
37. As Cassatt did not have any children, Norma Broude suggests that the choice to focus on mothers and children in her work was in fact a conscious strategy through which she could define for herself a professional status and identity that was socially acceptable for an upper-class woman artist. See Norma Broude, "Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman or the Cult of True Womanhood?" in *Woman's Art Journal* 21, no. 2 (Fall 2000 - Winter 2001): 39.
38. Katherine Cassatt joined her daughter in France in 1877, and lived there until her death in 1895.
39. Armand Fourreau, *Berthe Morisot* (Paris, Rieder, 1925), 11–12.

MARY CASSATT, SEEKING INDEPENDENCE

HER EARLY EXHIBITION PRACTICE IN NEW YORK AND PARIS

By Genevieve Westerby

The 1870s was a critical period in Mary Cassatt's (1844–1926) artistic career. Following her formative studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) in Philadelphia, the artist spent eight years—from 1866 to 1874—studying art in France, Spain, and Italy. Although Cassatt's first submission to the annual Paris Salon in 1867 was rejected, she went on to exhibit work there with some regularity over the next decade. Bookending her engagement with the institution, the jury likewise rejected the artist's two submissions in 1877. As Cassatt would later recount to her biographer, Achille Segard, it was this final affront that galvanized her decision to leave the official Salon system and accept an invitation from her new friend, Edgar Degas, to join a group of independent artists called the Impressionists.¹

This journey from Salon participant to the lone American member of the Impressionist group has come to dominate the discussion of the artist's early career. Griselda Pollock, for example, has described Cassatt's "dramatic decision to join the Impressionists and turn her back on a career in the Salon."² Like many independent-minded colleagues, Cassatt did indeed end her engagement with the annual, state-sponsored exhibition in favor of a different path.³

The Paris Salon, however, was not the only jury to which Cassatt subjected her work, and the Impressionists were not the only independent group to whom she looked for support. Considering Cassatt's participation in official and independent exhibitions in New York, along with her better-known activities in Paris, allows for a richer understanding of her artistic practice and ambitions. Essential to such an approach is a review of how she utilized the press and her early Salon appearances to advance her reputation in her native country, and how her understanding of the French and American art markets influenced her exhibition entries.

It is my argument that only with a transnational framing of Cassatt's early artistic and exhibition practice can we understand the significance of her participation in two sets of exhibitions. An examination of her inclusion in the Paris Salon of 1873 together with that of her debut at the National Academy of Design in New York the following year demonstrates her



Fig. 1. Mary Cassatt, *The Mandolin Player* (1868), oil on canvas, 36 1/2" x 28 3/4". Private collection. Courtesy Adelson Galleries.

international engagement with official exhibition systems. Likewise, her first showing with the Impressionists at their fourth exhibition in 1879 viewed alongside her participation in the Society of American Artists' exhibition in New York that same year reveals that Cassatt was seeking artistic independence on both sides of the Atlantic. Even so, and despite the positive reviews her works received at these early New York



Fig. 2. Mary Cassatt, *Eddy Cassatt (Edward Buchanan Cassatt)* (1875), oil on canvas, 58 1/4" x 43 1/4". National Gallery of Art, gift from the Family of Col. Edward Buchanan Cassatt, 2015.41.1.

venues, neither features in the first biography of the artist, published in French in 1913. It appears that as Cassatt attempted to cement her place among the Impressionists, she did so by marginalizing her exhibitions in America, which in turn obscured the international foundation of her early career and the extent of her turn to an independent path.

The American artists who relocated to Europe, mostly to Paris, in the nineteenth century found access to a higher level of instruction and to richer and more expansive museum collections. They approached their Parisian sojourn deliberately and strategically, working towards a coveted spot in the annual Salon.⁴ These artists understood that acceptance to the juried exhibition not only marked their transition from student to professional but would further provide a launching point for their career—leading to press coverage, attention from collectors and patrons, and a better chance of acceptance to juried exhibitions back home. This was certainly the case for Cassatt, who was keen to gain entry to this esteemed space.

Following the rejection of her first submission in 1867, Cassatt had success the next year with *The Mandolin Player* (1868; Fig. 1).⁵ The darkly hued genre picture depicts a young peasant girl strumming her mandolin. In the Salon catalogue, Cassatt listed herself as a student of Charles Chaplin and Paul



Fig. 3. Carolus-Duran (Charles-Auguste-Émile Durand), *Marie-Anne Carolus-Duran (The artist's daughter)* (1874), oil on canvas, 51 1/4" x 33 1/2". The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Mildred Anna Williams Collection, 1941.26. Photo: Courtesy the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Constance Soyer, both of whom operated independent ateliers that accepted women students.⁶ In subject and handling, the picture was as much a tribute to these instructors as a demonstration of Cassatt's skills.

Eliza Haldeman, a fellow PAFA student also studying with Soyer, described her friend's success in a letter home, noting that "Mary has also been successful even more so than I as her picture is well hung and was not painted on."⁷ Cassatt's picture being "well hung" meant that she had earned a coveted spot "on the line," rather than being "skied" or hung high-up near the ceiling and banished to relative obscurity, and she was quick to capitalize on this honor. Through Haldeman, Cassatt had recently met a correspondent of the *New York Times* posted in Paris,⁸ with whom she coordinated a favorable review that announced her achievement. *The Mandolin Player* had "obtained a place on the line, and well



Fig. 4. Mary Cassatt, *Offering the Panal to the Bullfighter* (1873), oil on canvas, 39 5/8" x 33 1/2". The Clark Art Institute, 1955.1. Photo: Courtesy Clark Art Institute. clarkart.edu.



Fig. 5. Mary Cassatt, *On the Balcony* (1873), oil on canvas, 39 3/4" x 32 1/2". Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of John G. Johnson for the W. P. Wiltach Collection, 1906, W1906-1-7.

deserves it, for its vigor of treatment and fine qualities of color. Miss Stevenson [Cassatt] has been a pupil of Gerome, and proposes shortly to visit Italy to improve herself."⁹ One might note the conspicuous omission of the instructors that Cassatt listed in the catalogue in favor of her former teacher, Jean-Léon Gérôme. While his distinctive, highly finished style is decidedly less apparent in *The Mandolin Player*, he was a well-known and respected artist in America.¹⁰ The reference may also be a subtle nod to Cassatt's superior talent. Immediately following the mention of her picture, the reviewer writes: "Another Pennsylvanian girl, Miss Haldeman, has a small interior which displays unmistakable talent. Miss Haldeman belongs to the Écouen school, and was a pupil of Soyer."¹¹

The Salon was Cassatt's only outlet to present her work to the public in Paris during the earliest phase of her career, while in America she was able to place paintings in a wider range of venues. Following the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in July 1870, Cassatt was forced to flee Paris and soon found herself back in America. Eager to continue her work, she reconnected with her old artistic circles in Philadelphia and set up a studio. She placed two paintings in the New York branch of Goupil's Paris gallery but, presumably having received little interest from collectors, she took the paintings with her to Chicago in the fall of 1871. After placing them in the display window of a jewelry store, she boasted to her artist friend

Emily Sartain that "I met with more encouragement than anywhere else since I have been home" and that she had "every hope, both for orders and selling my pictures."¹² Those hopes were dashed when fire swept across the city at the beginning of October, destroying both pictures.¹³

Selling her work and attracting clients were frequent concerns for the artist.¹⁴ It has been suggested, for example, that she submitted the full-length portrait *Mlle E.C.* to the 1875 Salon to advertise her facility in this genre, with the goal of attracting portrait clients.¹⁵ Such a strategy had been successful for one of the preeminent portraitists in Paris at this time, Carolus-Duran, whose career was launched thanks to the successful reception of a portrait of his wife shown at the Paris Salon in 1869.¹⁶ Unfortunately, *Mlle E.C.* is now lost and known only through a caricature printed in *Le journal amusant*, which shows a full-length portrait of a finely dressed young girl, leaning jauntily on the arm of a chair. The caricaturist draws our attention to the saccharine quality of the portrait, with the young girl's (likely exaggerated) sweet and innocent glance. The point is further emphasized with the accompanying caption, which is an imagined quote from Cassatt herself: "What I find charming about childhood is its naiveté."¹⁷

The artist's portrait of her nephew, Edward Buchanan Cassatt (Eddy) (1875; Fig. 2) offers an example of the artist's ambitions. Set against a somber brown curtain, six-year-old



Fig. 6. Mary Cassatt, *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge* (1879), oil on canvas, 32" x 23 1/2". Philadelphia Museum of Art: Bequest of Charlotte Dorrance Wright, 1978, 1978-1-5.

Eddy looks out with a composure and sternness that seem incongruent with his young age. Dressed in an extravagant suit of crushed red velvet, with coordinating socks and sash, he stands with his shaggy dog, holding a riding crop, likely a connection to his father's activities as a horse breeder.¹⁸ This elegant staging may reflect a standard presentation of society children in full-length portraits. Indeed, Carolus-Duran's 1874 portrait of his daughter (Fig. 3) reveals many similarities, from the dark curtain backdrop and patterned carpet to her fluffy white dog and arresting gaze.

Cassatt was well attuned to the divergent preferences of the collectors and patrons in the French and American markets that she pursued, including a differing appetite for sentimentality.¹⁹ Her exhibition choices for a group of Spanish themed pictures completed during a year-long stay in Seville, for example, suggests this awareness.²⁰ She sent one of these—*Offering the Panal to the Bullfighter* (1873; Fig. 4)—to the Salon of 1873. Favoring a simple, dark studio backdrop to the bright and frenzied ring of the bullfight, the artist focuses our attention on a flirtatious moment between a bullfighter and an adoring fan, who offers him *panal*, a drink sweetened with honeycomb. Cassatt delights in the variety of textures and

colors found in their costumes with passages of bold and loose brushwork, a technique Sartain thought was "entirely too slashing,—[it] snubs all modern Art."²¹ A *New York Times* critic, however, wrote that the Spanish scene "must be noticed as a conscientious study."²²

That summer, Cassatt sent another Spanish scene, the far more sentimental *On the Balcony* (1873; Pl. 4, Fig. 5), to America. Audiences saw the cloying smile of the woman in the white floral shawl first in Philadelphia, at the jewelry store Bailey and Co., and later that fall at the Cincinnati Industrial Exposition.²³ The setting and configuration of the three figures are reminiscent of Manet's *The Balcony* (1868), which had been exhibited at the 1869 Salon, where Cassatt likely made a point of seeing it. She was in Paris that spring, and had studied briefly with Manet's former teacher, Thomas Couture, the previous year.

For her 1874 debut at the annual National Academy of Design exhibition in New York, Cassatt submitted both pictures.²⁴ While *Offering the Panal* had received positive attention in the local press from its display at the Salon, it was *On the Balcony* that now caught reviewers' attention. Further, it was not to Manet's influence that the American critics of the academy's exhibition looked first, but rather to that of the seventeenth-century genre painter Bartolomé Murillo. As one observed, "the Spanish subjects by Mary Cassatt are remarkable ... there is a leaning girl's head, full of sombre power, and painted with the best traditions of Murillo."²⁵

The prospect of selling these pictures may have influenced Cassatt's decision to participate, although in past years, inclusion in the Academy's annual exhibition was seen to injure the prospects of a picture's sale. As one reviewer of the 1874 exhibition explained, "no gentleman cares to purchase a picture with which the public is already familiar." He went on, however, to note a recent shift in this perspective, reporting that "this year some twelve or fifteen thousand dollars worth of pictures were sold while they hung upon the Academy walls, showing that good pictures will find purchasers anywhere."²⁶ Having failed to find buyers the previous year, Cassatt tried her luck in the New York market.²⁷ She knew that collectors were eager to purchase pictures with a Spanish subject, thanks to the efforts of the Goupil gallery, which had cultivated a taste for such paintings, with a particular focus on Mariano Fortuny's views of bullfights and scenes of peasant life.²⁸ This fascination was further fueled by the American collector William Hood Steward, who was a personal friend of Fortuny and held weekly gatherings of artists, including Cassatt, at his Paris apartment. Even so, neither picture sold, and Cassatt was forced to ship them back to Paris.²⁹

The financial failure of her debut at the National Academy of Design apparently made Cassatt wary of further participation, as she sent work there only once more, in 1878.³⁰ Her lack of additional engagement with this organization may also reflect her increasingly sour attitude toward the official art system writ large, a position that was aggravated by her experiences back in Paris. For the next three years (1875–77), she continued to submit to the Salon with little success.³¹ It was the rejection of her 1877 submissions that finally prompted Cassatt to turn her back on the Salon and join with the Impressionists.

The Impressionists were not the only group of independent artists with whom Cassatt aligned herself, however. On the American front, she was eager to participate in the Society of American Artists' inaugural exhibition in 1878.³² The group was founded to advance the interests of art in America and to hold annual exhibitions of paintings, sculpture, and other works of art, in New York.³³ The Society, like the Impressionists, was formed primarily to offer a venue for exhibitions outside the stagnant and inflexible official system, in this case the National Academy of Design, and Cassatt was invited to participate by one of the founders, Julian Alden Weir, another former student of Gérôme and an American artist active in Paris in the 1870s. In response, Cassatt wrote to Weir, "your exhibition interests me very much. I wish I could have sent something, I am afraid it is too late now."³⁴ The next year, she sent two pictures: *Reading "Le Figaro"* (*Portrait of Mrs. Cassatt*) (1878; front cover) and her Salon-debut picture *The Mandolin Player*.³⁵

That year, 1879, Cassatt also exhibited for the first time with the Impressionists in Paris. It was the group's fourth exhibition, and while Ronald Pickvance has suggested that it "lacked the trail-blazing bravado of the first, the substantial presence of the second, and the expansive panache of the third," it was unquestionably an important moment for Cassatt.³⁶ She showed eleven works in total—seven paintings and four works on paper. *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge* (1879; Pl. 5, Fig. 6) received the most critical attention, notably from the novelist and art critic Arsène Houssaye, who praised her modeling of flesh by reflection, which for him revealed Cassatt's individual talent.³⁷

This twinned showing of independence provides an opportunity to observe the negotiations Cassatt was performing at this moment in her career. Comparing *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* (1878; Pl. 6, Fig. 7), which was included in the 1879 Impressionist exhibition, and *Reading "Le Figaro,"* destined for New York, demonstrates how the artist was balancing her desire to exhibit work in her new style, while at the same time choosing pieces that would suit the American taste.

Little Girl in a Blue Armchair, featuring a child slouched in a loudly printed chair, clearly displays the artist's acceptance of the major precepts of the Impressionist group—loose brushwork, a vibrant palette, and a tilted perspective to depict a scene of modern, daily life. Most likely it was these very qualities that led to the jury's rejection of the picture from the American pavilion at the 1878 Exposition Universelle, where Cassatt had first planned to exhibit it. She later expressed to the art dealer Ambrose Vollard her frustration and confusion at its rejection, explaining that "since M. Degas had thought it good I was furious, especially because he had worked on it—[and] at the time it seemed new."³⁸ Therefore, when considering which works to send to the Society's exhibition in New York, having learned something about the American opinion of the new Impressionist style, Cassatt apparently



Fig. 7. Mary Cassatt, *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* (1878), oil on canvas, 35 1/4" x 51 1/8". National Gallery of Art, D. C., collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, 1983.1.18.

decided on a less avant-garde approach.³⁹ For *Reading "Le Figaro,"* she had used a muted palette of beiges and earth tones to depict her mother sitting in a similarly patterned armchair, while still preserving her loose brushwork, evident in the cursory description of the newspaper's print and the texture of her mother's dress.⁴⁰

Praise for the work suggests that she made the right decision. One reviewer noted that "Miss Cassatt's large study of a middle-aged lady in a white dress, seated reading a newspaper, near an almost white wall, is a daring problem, well solved and exceedingly clever in general treatment."⁴¹ Moreover, her nearly concurrent showing with the Impressionists received a more positive assessment from the French press than from its American correspondents. As her father noted in a letter home: "Every one of the leading daily French papers mentioned the Exposition & nearly all named Mame [Mary]—most of them in terms of praise, only one of the American papers noticed it and it named her rather disparagingly!!!"⁴² The disparaging coverage to which he refers is surely an anonymous review in the *New York Times* of April 27, that takes a critical view of the Impressionist group in general but indeed makes these directed and scathing remarks regarding Cassatt's work: "I am sorry for Mary Cassatt; she is a Philadelphian, and has had her place in the Salon—a great triumph for a woman and a foreigner; but why has she thus gone astray." Regarding *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge*, the reviewer further described "a nasty representation of a dirty-faced female, in variegated raiment, who in real life, would never have been admitted in any decent society until she had washed her face and shoulders, while the background looks as though painted with the yolk of an egg."⁴³

Despite negative reviews like this, New York, with its diverse venues, reviewers, and collectors, was an important outlet for the artist at the start of her career. Cassatt's mother relayed her daughter's desire to make New York her sole

American venue, writing to her son that it was a place where “there is some chance and where she is known [and] acknowledged to have some talent.”⁴⁴ How, then, did the Paris-focused account come to dominate our understanding of her career?

The diminishing of Cassatt’s association with New York seems to have started with the publication of the 1913 biography of the artist. Fearing her exclusion from the Impressionist group as it was being written into history, the biography represented Cassatt’s efforts to regain control of her reputation and settle her status as an Impressionist.⁴⁵ She recruited the enthusiastic young art critic Achille Segard, who conducted numerous interviews with the artist prior to writing his account. During these meetings, and through numerous letters, Cassatt struggled to maintain control of the project.⁴⁶ In the final product, Cassatt’s French ancestry and perfect use of the language are foregrounded, while references to America, and to New York in particular, are minimized.⁴⁷

Left unrecorded in her first biography, by the end of the 1870s Cassatt had certainly cultivated a reputation as an accomplished artist in both Paris and in New York. As seen here, this was thanks to a range of factors, from early Salon successes to favorable coverage in the press, but ultimately stems from her decision to actively participate in exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, foregrounding the international nature of Cassatt’s dynamic early career enriches and strengthens our understanding of her choice to leave the official exhibition system in favor of an independent path. •

Genevieve Westerby is a PhD Candidate and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Curatorial Track Fellow at the University of Delaware. Specializing in nineteenth-century European art, her research is often directed by questions related to transnational cultural exchange and artist networks, late nineteenth century collecting, institutional and exhibition history, and technical art history.

Notes

I thank Wendy Bellion and Margaret Werth for their thoughtful comments and guidance throughout the writing process, as well as my graduate student colleagues for their support and thoughtful, probing questions. This project comes out of a seminar led by Professor Bellion on the rise of New York as a cultural center.

1. “I accepted with joy. Finally I could work with absolute independence, without worrying about the eventual opinion of a jury!” (J’acceptai avec joie. Enfin je pouvais travailler avec une indépendance absolue sans m’occuper de l’opinion éventuelle d’un jury!), Achille Segard, *Mary Cassatt: Un peintre des enfants et des mères* (Paris: P. Ollendorff, 1913), 8. Unless otherwise noted all translations are my own.
2. Griselda Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 91. See also George T. M. Shackelford, “Pas de deux: Mary Cassatt and Edgar Degas,” in *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman*, ed. Judith A. Barter (Chicago and New York: The Art Institute of Chicago and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998), 110; and Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1994), 100.

3. For the reception of modern painting at the Paris Salon in the years leading up to the first exhibition of the group of independent artists that would soon become known as the Impressionists, see Jane Mayo Roos, *Early Impressionism and the French State (1866–1874)* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996). See also Albert Boime, “The Salon des Refusés and the Evolution of Modern Art,” *Art Quarterly* 32 (Winter 1969): 411–26, who notes that the number of independent-minded artists who criticized the conservative jury system and sought a venue in which their work may be judged by the public was more numerous than just those that we typically associate with the Impressionist group.
4. Such a characterization of an artist’s approach—as deliberate and strategic—exposes an underlying tenet of the following discussion: that we must consider the issue of intention. It is of course impossible to give a comprehensive account of any artist’s aims and engaging with an artist’s intentions is less than stable ground. It is equally, however, a loss to completely disregard such an approach. John House has likewise argued that the decisions an artist makes “must be discussed in terms of [a] conscious, deliberate strategy, and viewed as considered, self-aware interventions into the wider frameworks of the art world.” See John House, *Impressionism: Paint and Politics* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2004), 3.
5. Cassatt submitted this picture under the name “Mary Stevenson,” her middle name, suggesting either that she was still unsure about her talents and of the reception the picture would receive, or that when news of her success reached back home to America, she wanted her achievement to come on her own merits, divorced from her fame as a member of the prominent and powerful Cassatt family.
6. On the professionalism of women artists, their exclusion from the official academy of the École des Beaux-Arts, and their difficulty in finding skilled instructors, see Kirsten Swinth, *Painting Professional: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870–1930* (Chapel Hill and London: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2001), see especially 37–57; and Amanda Cathryne Burdan, “Américaines in Paris: The Role of Women Artists in the Formation of America’s Culture Identity, 1865–1880.” (PhD diss., Brown University, 2005). For Cassatt’s early biography and training, see Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life*, 29–61. It should be noted that independent ateliers were also an avenue for male art students who either had been refused admission by the École or were in preparation for an initial application.
7. Eliza Haldeman to Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Haldeman, May 8, 1868, Nancy Mowll Mathews, ed., *Cassatt and her Circle* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 53–54. Soyer apparently felt confident enough in Cassatt’s submission that he did not make any adjustments or changes, as he had done to Haldeman’s pictures. This practice of instructors adding to the work of their students before submitting a work to the Salon was known to the Salon jury and increasingly discouraged. Whether it was exclusively done to the work of female students warrants further study.
8. Eliza Haldeman to Alice Haldeman, May 13, 1868, Mathews, ed., *Cassatt and her Circle*, 55. See also Swinth, *Painting Professional*, 54, who notes that Paris fostered a coalescing of the diverse regions of the American art world. This clearly extended beyond the interconnections made between Boston-, New York-, and Philadelphia-based artists. Artists also gained access to, and attention from, journalists from these major markets.
9. See “France: American Artists at the Salon,” *New York Times* (June 7, 1868), 8.
10. Gérôme was known as a successful artist and instructor with whom many American artist’s studied. Additionally, his father-in-law, Adolphe Goupil, a Parisian art dealer, had opened a New York branch in 1848 and aggressively promoted Gérôme’s work.

11. See "France: American Artists at the Salon," 8.
12. See Mary Cassatt to Emily Sartain, October 21 [1871], in Mathews, ed., *Cassatt and her Circle*, 76–77.
13. Cassatt mentions in a subsequent letter to Sartain, October 27, that the pictures were nearly saved; see Mathews, ed., *Cassatt and her Circle*, 77. With scant references, the two paintings have yet to be identified.
14. While Cassatt's family had considerable financial means, the sale of her work signaled her position as a professional artist and allowed her some degree of financial independence; see Andrew J. Walker, "Mary Cassatt's Modern Education: The United States, France, Italy, and Spain, 1860–1873," in Barter, ed. *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman*, 28.
15. Rebecca Bailey Bedell, in *Moved to Tears: Rethinking the Art of the Sentimental in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2019), 155–60, has suggested such a motive.
16. See Steven Kern, *The Clark: Selections from the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1996), 114.
17. See STOP [L. P. G. B. Morel-Retz], *Le journal amusant* (June 26, 1875), 3: "Ce qui me charme dans l'enfance, c'est la naïveté." This portrait may have fallen victim to a group of works that Cassatt chose to burn in the early part of the twentieth century—works that the art dealer Ambroise Vollard did not take when the two began their partnership. Cassatt explained her actions simply: "to save my heirs the trouble." See Kevin Sharp, "How Mary Cassatt Became an American Artist," in Barter, ed., *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman*, 164, who mentions that Cassatt destroyed the works that she deemed unsaleable.
18. Eddy was the eldest son of Mary's brother Alexander Johnston Cassatt, the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. In addition to taking over his father's role as a thoroughbred horse breeder, he was also highly decorated for his military service, see "Col. Edw. B. Cassatt Dies Suddenly at 53," *New York Times* (February 1, 1922), 17.
19. For the continued interest in sentimental subjects in America, long after the anti-sentimental turn within the French avant-garde, see Bedell, *Moved to Tears*, 155–60.
20. For a thorough analysis of these pictures, see M. Elizabeth Boone, "Bullfights and Balconies: Flirtation and Majismo in Mary Cassatt's Spanish Paintings of 1872–73," *American Art* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1995), 54–71.
21. Emily Sartain to John Sartain, May 8, 1873, in Mathews, ed., *Cassatt and her Circle*, 117–18. An even more biting critique, however, came from the history painter Évariste Vital Luminais, whom Sartain took to the Salon to view Cassatt's picture. In his opinion, as recounted in Sartain's letter, "there was no personality in her painting—he felt in her work, Goya, Couture, etc., etc., not Miss Cassatt."
22. An Occasional Correspondent [G.G.], "Art in France: The Paris Salon, Works of American Painters, English Artists, A French Illustration of American History," *New York Times* (June 16, 1873), 1.
23. In Philadelphia, *On the Balcony* was shown alongside the more reserved *Spanish Dancer Wearing a Lace Mantilla* (1873), which is now held by the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The pair of pictures went on to the Cincinnati Industrial Exposition along with *Offering the Panal*, following the close of the Salon in Paris; see Barter, ed., "Lifetime Exhibition History," in *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman*, 356.
24. Modeled after the English Royal Academy, the National Academy of Design was established in 1825 as an artist-run organization to promote the fine arts; see Kenneth John Myers, "The Public Display of Art in New York City, 1664–1914," in *Rave Reviews: American Art and Its Critics, 1826–1925*, David B. Dearinger, ed. (New York: National Academy of Design, 2000), 31–51.
25. "Fine Arts: The National Academy Exhibition, II," *Nation* 18 (May 14, 1874), 321. Elizabeth Boone has argued convincingly that Cassatt would have known Murillo's *Two Women at a Window* (c. 1655/60), held by the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Not having access to the painting directly, Boone suggests that the artist likely knew the composition from one of the several engravings that were made during the 18th and 19th centuries. See Boone, "Bullfights and Balconies," 60.
26. "Art: National Academy Annual Exhibition," *The Aldine: The Art Journal of America* (June 1, 1874), 128.
27. The works were listed as "for sale" in the exhibition catalogue, see National Academy of Design, *Catalogue for the Forty-Ninth Annual Exhibition* (New York: E. Wells Sackett & Bro., 1874), nos. 280 and 286.
28. On Goupil's efforts, see Nancy Mowll Mathews, "The Making of an Impressionist," in *Mary Cassatt: An American Impressionist in Paris*, Nancy Mowll Mathews and Pierre Curie, eds. (Paris and New Haven: Musée Jacquemart-André, in association with Fonds Mercator and Yale Univ. Press, 2018), 45. See also Richard L. Kagan, *The Spanish Craze: America's Fascination with the Hispanic World, 1779–1939* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2019).
29. *Offering the Panal* was sold some time after December 1878 to a M. Engrand of Paris, and *On the Balcony* was in the Wiltach Collection of Philadelphia by 1906, see Barter, ed., *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman*, 316. The summer of 1874 is also when Cassatt met Louisine Elder (later Havemeyer), who would become one of Cassatt's most vocal advocates, ardent collectors, and powerful allies in New York.
30. She sent a painting titled *Mrs. W. D. Birney*, which has yet to be identified. See Barter, ed., *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman*, 356. She continued to exhibit in venues in other major American cities in this decade. For example, she showed work at her alma mater, PAFA, in 1876, 1878, and 1879, and in Boston at the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association in 1878.
31. In 1875, only one of the two pictures she submitted was accepted, the highly sentimental *Mlle E.C.*, discussed earlier. In 1876 she was bitterly amused to learn that a previously rejected painting was now deemed acceptable following her darkening of the background, see Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life*, 100.
32. See Mary Cassatt to J. Alden Weir, March 10, 1878, in Mathews, ed., *Cassatt and her Circle*, 137. For the formation and early years of the Society, see Jennifer A. Martin Bienenstock, "The Formation and Early Years of the Society of American Artists: 1877–1884," (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1983.)
33. George William Sheldon, "A New Departure in American Art," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 56 (April 1878), 764–68.
34. Mary Cassatt to J. Alden Weir, March 10, 1878, in Mathews, ed., *Cassatt and her Circle*, 137.
35. It is unclear how many times Cassatt participated with the Society. Jennifer A. Martin Bienenstock states that Cassatt *only* exhibited with the group in 1879 and 1892. In her estimation, this was a choice Cassatt made so that she could devote a greater commitment to the French Impressionist group; see Bienenstock, "The Formation and Early Years of the Society of American Artists," 114n76 and 114n81. Nancy Mowll Mathews states that "Cassatt, as promised, participated in the second exhibition of this group in 1879 and continued to send something every year until 1894," see Mathews, ed., *Cassatt and her Circle*, 137n3. While not listed in the exhibition catalogue, Rebecca Bailey Bedell has suggested that Cassatt's *In the Loge* (1878) was exhibited in the Society's 1881 exhibition, based on contemporary reviews of the picture; see Bedell, *Moved to Tears*, 159. My review of the Society's exhibition records revealed that Cassatt remained at least a listed member of the group until 1894; see Society of American Artists, 1878–1906, Box 56 and 57, National Academy of Design Records, Archives of

American Art. This aspect of Cassatt's exhibition practice is surprisingly under-researched and warrants further investigation.

36. Ronald Pickvance, "Contemporary Popularity and Posthumous Neglect," in Charles S. Moffett, *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874–1886* (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986), 243.
37. See F.-C. de Syène [Arsène Houssaye], "Salon de 1879," *L'artiste*, May 1, 1879, 289–93, in Ruth Berson, ed., *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886, Documentation*, vol. 1, *Reviews* (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), 243.
38. Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life*, 131. Technical investigations undertaken by conservators at the National Gallery of Art have confirmed and clarified these comments from Cassatt regarding Degas's contributions, see Ann Hoenigswald and Kimberly A. Jones, "'All the Vocabularies of Painting': Adaptation and Experimentation, 1878–1879," in Kimberly A. Jones, *Degas Cassatt* (Washington, DC and New York: National Gallery of Art and Prestel, 2014), 114–27.
39. This opinion would soon be shifted by incoming dealers to the New York market, most notably Paul Durand-Ruel, who marketed Impressionist works heavily to American collectors in the late 1880s and 1890s; see Jennifer A. Thompson, "Durand-Ruel and America," in *Inventing Impressionism: Paul Durand-Ruel and the Modern Art Market*, ed. Sylvie Patry (London and New Haven: National Gallery Co. and Yale Univ. Press, 2015), 136–51.
40. It should be noted that part of the decision to include this picture may have been a practical one—the portrait was already in the possession of the artist's brother, Alexander, in Philadelphia. Its transatlantic journey, according to Tamar Garb, was "made not for profit ... but as a gift to a brother, for whom it served as a token of maternal presence." See Garb, *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France, 1814–1914* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2007), 113. Garb has further suggested (*The Painted Face*, 129) that by leaving the title of the newspaper legible, the artist was not only locating this picture in Paris but establishing its language as French.
41. "Fine Arts: Second Exhibition of the Society of American Artists," *New York Herald* (March 8, 1879).
42. Robert Cassatt to Alexander Cassatt, Paris, May 21, 1879, in Mathews, ed., *Cassatt and her Circle*, 144.
43. See "Symptoms of Revolution ... Attempts at Revolution in Art," *New York Times* (April 27, 1879), 2.
44. Katherine Cassatt to Alexander Cassatt, Paris, Nov. 22, 1878, in Mathews, ed., *Cassatt and her Circle*, 141.
45. Sharp, "How Mary Cassatt Became an American Artist," 146, discusses rising French nationalism in 1891, and how Cassatt was excluded from certain exhibiting groups as a result. Hadrien Viraben, "Constructing a Reputation, Achille Segard's 1913 biography of Mary Cassatt," *American Art* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2017), 98–113, discusses the historicizing of the Impressionist movement in the early part of the 20th century and how these efforts were just as much about promoting a nationalist ideology, which equally led to an editing out of Cassatt's activities with the group.
46. See Viraben, "Constructing a Reputation," 98–113.
47. Segard, *Mary Cassatt*. Segard makes passing references to Louise Elder Havemeyer (Cassatt's New York-based friend and patron), mentions Cassatt's brother's association with the New York railroads, and includes a list of her exhibitions that starts with her 1895 show at the New York branch of the Durand-Ruel gallery.

BOLD Ideas, ESSENTIAL Reading

CALLING MEMORY INTO PLACE

Dora Apel

"*Calling Memory into Place* is written out of a deep conviction in the emancipatory and reparative potentials of memory. Building on the trauma and the resilience inherited from her mother's survival of the Holocaust, Dora Apel powerfully explores how memorials, visual artworks, and personal narratives of illness and recovery can mobilize us in the struggle for social justice."

—Marianne Hirsch, co-author of *School Photos in Liquid Time: Reframing Difference*

cloth \$29.95



THE THINKING WOMAN

Julienne van Loon

"*The Thinking Woman*, the first work of non-fiction by acclaimed novelist Julienne van Loon (whose career began with a Vogel win for her first novel, *Road Story*, in 2004) is a knotty, charismatic exploration of the intersection between ideas and lived experience, through six central themes...a surprising and resonant work that cements van Loon's status as a thinking woman well worth reading and following."

—Jo Case, *The Sydney Morning Herald*

paper \$29.95



WOMEN ARTISTS ON THE LEADING EDGE

Visual Arts at Douglass College

Joan M. Marter

This book explores the achievements of a group of young women artists who learned about the New Art through an extraordinary faculty of innovators at Douglass College. New Art rejected the dominance of Abstract Expressionism, advocating that art should be based on everyday life and that "anything can be art."

cloth \$49.95



IRINA NAKHOVA

Museum on the Edge

Edited by Jane A. Sharp and Julia Tulovsky

Released in conjunction with Russian conceptual artist Irina Nakhova's first museum retrospective exhibition in the United States, this book includes many full-color illustrations of her work—spanning the entirety of her forty-year career and demonstrating her facility with a variety of media—plus essays by world-renowned curators and an interview with the artist herself. Published in partnership with the Zimmerli Museum.

cloth \$49.95



RUTGERS
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Order these books (and any other books) on our website at a 30% discount AND free shipping (in the US). Use discount code RNWSA20.

rutgersuniversitypress.org



MARGUERITE GÉRARD'S *Portrait of a Man and Woman in an Interior*

PORTRAITURE, LANDSCAPE, AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

By Sarah Lees

The French painter Marguerite Gérard (1761–1837) is best known for her domestic genre scenes, both today and in her own time, when she established her reputation primarily with such pleasing, anecdotal images. While these paintings make up the largest percentage of her output, portraiture holds an equally significant place in her oeuvre. From 1787 to 1791 she produced a series of small-scale, freely brushed portraits that marked a stylistic departure from the highly finished, meticulously detailed genre scenes she had previously painted, often in collaboration with her brother-in-law and instructor Jean Honoré Fragonard, with whom she lived and shared a studio in the Louvre beginning in 1775. While to some degree inspired and facilitated by Fragonard, these portraits also signaled Gérard's greater independence from her teacher.¹

Gérard's portrait series of over thirty works included likenesses of some of the other artists who resided in the Louvre, as well as writers, performers, and the patrons who supported them. Made at the beginning of the enormous political and social upheavals produced by the French Revolution, these portraits functioned both as private, intimate images of the sitters' characters and values, and as more public statements of their positions in society, and of Gérard's own position in producing their portraits. The series effectively gave both visual and literal form to a network of friendships that served as an alternative to the institutional affiliation available to male artists—and to just four women—in the Académie royale.² Gérard chose to base her career on the more varied patrons and affiliations her portrait series represented rather than seeking official recognition and royal and aristocratic patrons. Her choice may have been made in part because membership in the Académie was closed to her in 1783, following the acceptance of Elisabeth Louise Vigée-LeBrun (1755–1842) and



Fig. 1. Marguerite Gérard, *Portrait of a Man and Woman in an Interior* (1818), oil on canvas, 27 1/8" x 22 1/8". Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OK, Museum purchase, Taber Art Fund, 2019.9.

Adélaïde Labille-Guiard (1749–1803), filling the quota of female members. The choice may also have reflected her personal predilection, perhaps swayed by the example of her



Fig. 2. Marguerite Gérard, *Portrait of Doctor François Thiery* (c. 1787), oil on panel, 8 1/4" x 6 1/4". Lynda and Stewart Resnick collection, Los Angeles.

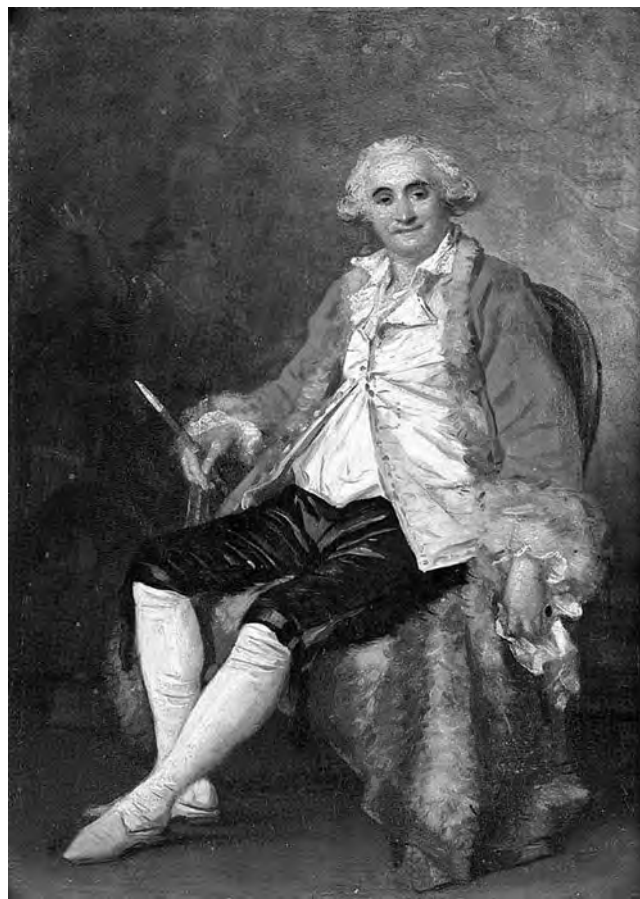


Fig. 3. Marguerite Gérard, *Portrait of Antoine François Callet* (c. 1788–89), oil on panel, 8 1/4" x 6 1/4". Private collection.

brother-in-law, who by the late 1770s and 1780s was largely spurning the Académie and its Salon exhibitions in favor of making works for private clients. In addition, the established foundations of official recognition were being overturned in this period by the Revolution and the emigration of aristocratic patrons.

While the portrait series established some framework of professional and financial support, Gérard painted fewer portraits in the following years—about a dozen miniatures and twenty-five full size works.³ Many of these depict family groups and are less aligned with the earlier portraits than with her genre scenes, which focused on the pleasures and virtues of motherhood during the Revolutionary period and evolved toward a broader view of the social function of families in the new century. Of about ten known portraits Gérard made after 1810, three are sympathetic depictions of her own family members, while the rest picture other families, many painted in a seemingly detached manner, with figures in somewhat stiff, awkward poses.⁴ Two stand out from this group. One is a family portrait of a family in mourning (1816–18, Baltimore MoA) that shows a husband gently supporting his wife as their son looks on. The second is the subject of this article, *Portrait of a Man and Woman in an Interior* (1818; Fig. 1, Pl. 7),

recently acquired by Philbrook Museum of Art, pictures an unidentified couple. Rather than highlighting the couple's role as parents or their romantic bonds, the setting and details appear to speak to a more professional or intellectual connection between them and with the artist. This double portrait seems to function more like the earlier portraits of Gérard's creative community, revealing some evidence of the sitters' status and interests as well as of Gérard's own position in the art world as her career was nearing its end. The *Portrait of a Family in Mourning* (1816–18, Baltimore Museum of Art) shows a husband gently supporting his wife, as their son and dog look on. Here again, the figures are individualized and seem to be portrayed in a deeply empathetic manner, although in a minimalist setting, and lacking identifying features, they remain mysterious.

A brief examination of several portraits in the early series reveals some of the primary characteristics of Gérard's approach to portraiture. Like others in the series, the *Portrait of Claude-Nicolas Ledoux* (c. 1787) and the *Portrait of Doctor François Thiery* (c. 1787; Fig. 2) are painted on wood panels of about 21 x 16 cm. The subjects pose before softly defined, unadorned grayish walls, accompanied by a few pieces of furniture and additional accoutrements—both feature a gilded

console table (only the legs are visible in Ledoux's portrait), one of several pieces of furniture Gérard regularly used as a prop.⁵ A version of the Jacob armchair in which Doctor Thiery sits also appears frequently—including in Philbrook's portrait—often with different colored upholstery or wood finish. These recurring features indicate that many of Gérard's portraits were painted in her studio. This fact results in a blurring of lines between the sitter's character and tastes—which the portrait ostensibly presents—and those of the artist, whose belongings are literally depicted, and it further reinforces the sense of shared sympathies and social status between artist and sitter. This new kind of intersubjectivity reflects some of the profound changes that the genre of portraiture underwent in the late eighteenth century, when the form shifted from primarily depicting the heritage or official rank of royalty and aristocracy, to reflecting the accomplishments and values of a broader range of citizens.⁶ Often the incidental objects that accompany the sitter function as attributes that shed light on his or her identity, when that can be determined. As Carole Blumenfeld notes, the architect Ledoux leans on the plans for his *barrière de Reuilly*, while Thiery holds his publication, *La vie de l'homme respectée et défendue dans ses derniers momens* (Human Life Respected and Defended in its Final Moments).⁷

Nearly all these small portraits present the sitters in the same type of indoor space, with occasional variations in the background details; even when Gérard painted subjects in their own homes, she arranged the compositions according to the same basic formula. Architect and designer Charles de Wailly, for example, appears in his rue la Boétie home, seated, like Doctor Thiery, in an armchair next to a table, furniture he himself designed, in front of a large painting that appears to depict classical monuments.⁸ Similarly, artist Antoine François Callet (1788–89; Fig. 3) is seated in a casual pose in his Louvre studio, holding a chalk holder and rag, in front of a wall-filling sketch for his ceiling decoration for the *galerie d'Apollon* on the main floor of the same building.⁹ Gérard varied this formula in only a few of the portraits, including a pendant pair of an unidentified man and woman, both seated outdoors on a stone terrace with softly painted trees and sky in the background, and her depiction of fellow Louvre resident Hubert Robert (1788–89; Fig. 4). Robert is presented from a low vantage point, seated on a rock in a darkening landscape and silhouetted against a cloud-filled sunset, a scene he appears to have just sketched on the sheet at his feet, highlighting his role as one of the leading landscape painters of the time.

Although it was completed almost three decades after Gérard's portrait series, Philbrook's *Portrait of a Man and Woman in an Interior* shares many of the same defining features. The elegantly dressed figures are presumably husband and wife, and despite somewhat idealized facial features, they seem to represent distinct individuals. Their clothes are of the period if not precisely datable; the generously sized shoulders and extra-long sleeves of the man's jacket had been a popular style since about 1800, and innumerable versions of the woman's white *à la grecque* dress and richly patterned cashmere shawl had been staples of

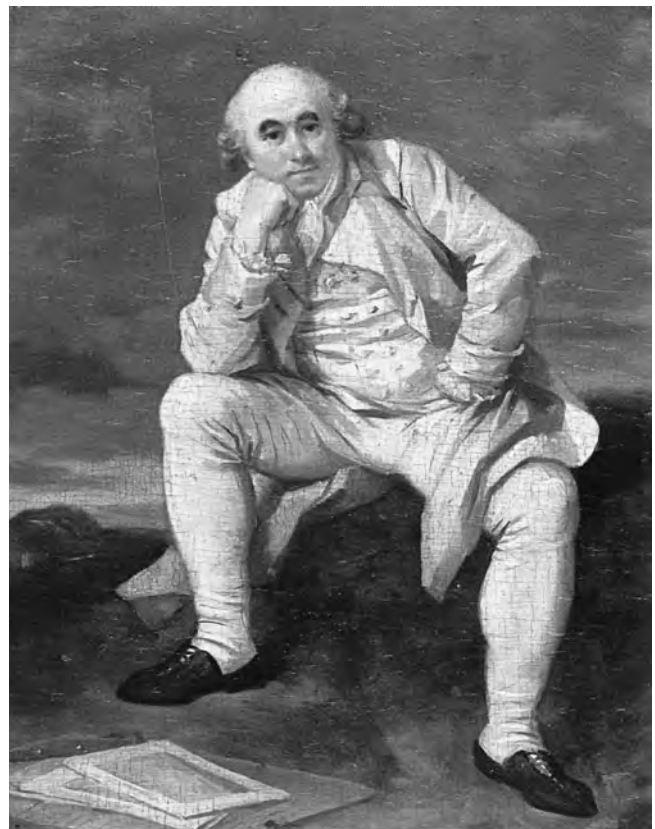


Fig. 4. Marguerite Gérard, *Portrait of Hubert Robert* (c. 1788–89), oil on panel, 8 1/2" x 6 1/4". Private collection.

fashionable women's wardrobes since the 1790s.¹⁰ The setting is likely Gérard's studio since 1808, on the rue Neuve des Petits Champs, outfitted with a carpet, Gérard's familiar furniture, a vase and covered bowl probably of Paris porcelain, two floral bouquets, a reticule or basket beside the woman, and two landscape paintings on the wall. The doubled elements, from the pair of paintings to the flowers at both figures' elbows to their similarly confident, level gazes, accord both man and woman a notably equal status, yet they reveal little about their identity. The man wears a watch at his waist and, like Doctor Thiery, holds a pamphlet, suggesting his cultivated nature, although the illegible lines on the pages offer no clue to his interests. The provenance of the painting is no more illuminating, and an inscription on the reverse specifies the date of its execution only.¹¹

The unusual feature that seems to define this work is its multiple representations of nature, and a broader focus on the process of representation itself. Landscape depictions appear not just in the paintings on the wall (see Figs. 5a and b, details of Fig. 1), but also on the porcelain vase beside the man, which features a full-color landscape image across virtually all of its visible surface, in a style that echoes the naturalistic appearance of the paintings behind it (Fig. 6, detail of Fig. 1). These are juxtaposed with the flower bouquets beside both figures. As in Gérard's other portraits, these seemingly incidental objects presumably function as attributes, reflecting



Figs. 5 a and b. Details of Marguerite Gérard, *Portrait of a Man and Woman in an Interior* (1818).

the sitters' interests and identities. Exploring the role of landscape within Gérard's oeuvre, then, is a key to further understanding the portrait.

As secondary elements, the two embedded landscapes in Philbrook's double portrait belong to a long history of paintings-within-the-painting that Gérard found in seventeenth-century Dutch art, from which she had drawn inspiration since the beginning of her career.¹² Like those of her Dutch predecessors, many of the artist's portraits and genre scenes include paintings, prints, or maps on the walls, as one would expect to find in a well-appointed bourgeois home. Few of these embedded images, however, are identifiable as pure landscapes. One of the first appears in *Portrait of a Seated Woman with a Poodle* (1787; Fig. 7). Here the landscape covers virtually the entire background (it might also be taken as an outdoor setting) and presents a wide expanse of cloud-dotted sky and some low hills at what might be the edge of a body of water. The composition recalls Dutch landscapes, although Blumenfeld notes that it does not seem to copy any Dutch print directly.¹³ The background scene may refer to the sitter's native region, or perhaps the woman is an artist's wife, seated in front of a painting of his.¹⁴ Another portrait from 1799–1804 depicts Fragonard in just such a position, seated before an easel with a canvas that appears to be a landscape. The painting is in poor condition, however, and it is difficult to read anything in the embedded image beyond perhaps some tree branches and a bright sky.¹⁵

Among the few other depictions of landscape paintings in Gérard's oeuvre, two genre scenes reinforce the association of such images with an artist or a studio context. *The Drawing Lesson* (1814–16; Fig. 8, Pl. 8) contains two framed works, again a logical feature for a young artist's impromptu studio. Here, as Blumenfeld has noted, the oval format landscape on the wall and the small canvas of a putto refer more or less explicitly to Fragonard and his pre-Revolutionary work. A sheet protruding from the portfolio at the lower right edge of the canvas even bears an inscription that reads both "Mte Gérard" and "frago," creating what Blumenfeld calls an

Fig. 6. (right). Detail of Marguerite Gérard, *Portrait of a Man and Woman in an Interior* (1818).



"enigmatic" play of cross-references and allusions to the artists' earlier collaborations.¹⁶ Similarly, *The Letter and the Drawing* (*La lettre et le dessin*) (1820; Pl. 9) features three figures around a table, each absorbed in a different pursuit, while an easel in the background holds a large canvas. The presence of this painting, a large landscape, along with the young boy holding his *porte-crayon*, again establishes the scene as an informal studio. Although somewhat indistinct, this landscape seems more contemporary, representing a roughly composed mass of trees against a cloudy sky rather than alluding to the Dutch tradition or to Fragonard's rococo style.

This embedded landscape also resembles those hanging on the wall in the Philbrook portrait, pure landscapes of hilly terrain with distant views of mountains framed by trees in the fore- and middle ground. Even allowing for the need to render them less sharply, so that they recede visually into the background, these landscapes appear to be executed in a notably freely brushed, naturalistic manner. They are also relatively large and vertical in format, perhaps two to two and a half feet tall, judging them relative to the figures. With their irregular compositions and lack of figures, architecture, topographical precision, or narrative content, they evoke neither the flat landscapes and open skies of Dutch art, nor more recent examples by Fragonard and Robert, which are most often centered on architecture and figures. They seem instead to recall the tradition of open-air painting that traces back at least as far as seventeenth-century artists Salvator Rosa and Claude Lorrain and that was promoted in Gérard's time most prominently by Claude-Joseph Vernet. As Gérard's neighbor in the Louvre until his death in 1789, Vernet and his ideas about landscape painting were likely well known to her. Although he tended to focus on



Fig. 7. Marguerite Gérard, *Portrait of a Seated Woman with a Poodle* (1787), oil on panel, 9 3/4" x 7 1/2". Private collection.

more incident-filled subject matter—picturesque sites and stormy seas, often peopled with numerous figures—Vernet advocated studying nature and painting outdoors, so as to capture effectively the light, color, and atmosphere of the landscape.

Gérard herself became increasingly engaged with landscape over the course of her career. After setting the portraits of Robert and the couple in the small portrait series within loosely defined landscapes, she began more frequently to situate her genre scenes outdoors. When the engraver and print seller Jacques Louis Bance commissioned two paintings from Gérard in 1796 to make prints after them, he requested scenes that would act as pendants to two earlier paintings, *First Steps* (1786–87; see Fig. 6 on page 7) and *The Beloved Child* (1786–87). These are works on which Gérard collaborated with Fragonard, who probably painted much of their landscape settings, and thus the tree-lined bowers pierced by distant views of sky in *L'Elan de la nature* (1796) and *The Kiss of Innocence* (1796; Fig. 9), painted for Bance, clearly echo those in the earlier works. Gérard continued to use landscape backgrounds, setting scenes like *Woman Contemplating Two Doves* (1800–1801) and *Reading the Gazette* (1810–13), as well as a number of her late paintings of the 1820s in lush, parklike spaces reminiscent of Fragonard's luxurious gardens of the previous century. In each of these works, the natural setting is as carefully composed and meticulously rendered as the figures, and the landscape serves a supporting role as a backdrop for the figures, not as an independent composition, as in the Philbrook portrait.



Fig. 8. Marguerite Gérard, *The Drawing Lesson* (1814–16), oil on canvas, 19" x 15 3/4". Lynda and Stewart Resnick collection, Los Angeles.

By omitting reference to Italianate or rococo styles and presenting the pair of naturalistic landscapes in the Philbrook portrait as completed works, framed and prominently displayed, Gérard seems to be pointing to a contemporary trend that was emerging in part thanks to Vernet's influence. Drawing and oil sketching outdoors had been encouraged among French artists studying at the Académie de France in Rome since at least the early eighteenth century, but toward the end of the century artists such as Pierre Henri de Valenciennes began producing larger-scale compositions of natural scenes sketched directly from nature.¹⁷ In his influential 1800 book *Elémens de perspective pratique*, Valenciennes advocated sketching outdoors as a means of capturing a faithful record of the natural world, a practice he promoted further when he started teaching at the Académie in Paris in 1812. While he instructed that such realistic views should be subsumed into the idealized depiction that constituted the artist's true goal, the initial studies were increasingly valued for their own qualities. As French art historian Vincent Pomarède has noted, "around 1800, [the study from nature] became an independent phenomenon ... which one could study, copy, collect and exhibit."¹⁸



Fig. 9. Marguerite Gérard, *The Kiss of Innocence, or The Swing* (c. 1796), oil on canvas, 18 3/16" x 21 3/4". The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens. Adele S. Browning Memorial Collection, gift of Mildred Browning Green and Honorable Lucius Peyton Green, 78.20.7.

It was rare for women artists to follow this academic practice and to choose landscape as their primary subject matter and, in fact, Gérard executed no known landscape studies.¹⁹ Given the similarity between the paintings in the Philbrook portrait and the one in *The Letter and the Drawing*, however, it is possible that Gérard made landscape canvases that have not survived or entered the record of her works, and that she represented them in the two paintings just as she regularly depicted her own furniture. One could even imagine that these verdant, hilly views might reflect the topography near Gérard's native Grasse, to which her last recorded visit had been in 1811–12.²⁰

The vase and covered bowl in the portrait are easier to identify: they are likely to be Paris porcelain, perhaps from the Dagoty manufacture.²¹ Drawings in the Victoria and Albert collection show several Dagoty designs for beaker-shaped (or *jasmin*) vases that feature landscapes across most of the visible surface, including one dated c. 1800 (Fig. 10) with a gold rim and a band with a leaf-shaped gold pattern around the foot, much like the vase Gérard depicts. While similar to Gérard's vase, with a tall tree along the left side and a distant view to the right, the Dagoty design centers on a figure of a man fishing, with an Italianate building in the background. Gérard—who could, when she wished, capture minute details of textiles, jewelry, or reflections in a mirror—here eliminated such anecdotal elements to render a pure landscape on her vase. This may have been an



Fig. 10. Dagoty porcelain manufacture, detail, one of three designs for vases (c. 1800), pen and wash, Victoria and Albert Museum, D.607-1901.

accurate depiction of a particular piece, but it is more likely to be her interpretation of one, which she rendered more freely and naturalistically than her source material.

Gérard's highlighting of naturalistic landscapes might have been additionally inspired by the increasing presence of British artists in Paris. British artists tended to place greater emphasis on observing the natural world and humans' place in it, rather than prioritizing the idealization of nature. By the early nineteenth century, artists including Joseph Mallord William Turner and John Constable were making broadly painted landscapes from direct observation. While they may have considered such studies as preparatory, they often retained some sketch-like immediacy in their final canvases. This more informal approach began to exert greater influence in France around the turn of the century, particularly after Napoleon's final defeat in 1815 allowed artists to cross the channel more freely in both directions.

Gérard's use of landscape backdrops in a few of her small portraits of the late 1780s suggests an early awareness of the established British practice of situating portraits in landscapes. She likely stayed abreast of newer developments in landscape painting in response both to the genre's growing popularity among French and British artists and to an increasing number of collectors affected by the "Anglomanie" that emerged in France after 1815.²² Gérard's successful connections with collectors and dealers, and even her physical location within



Fig. 11. Reverse of Marguerite Gérard, *Portrait of a Man and Woman in an Interior* (1818), showing lower stretcher bar with inscription partially visible under the word “Bas” in another hand.

an artistic community made her well-situated to absorb new trends. Her home at 18–20, rue Neuve des Petits Champs was around the corner from Galignani’s English bookstore at 18, rue Vivienne, frequented by visiting artists, at the center of what was becoming Paris’s British quarter.²³ Gérard’s likely involvement with this network of artists could have exposed her to new British practices well before the full-scale arrival of British art in Paris at the Salon of 1824, known as the “English Salon,” at which Constable exhibited *The Hay Wain* among many other British works.

Interest in the practice of outdoor sketching, which placed greater emphasis on artistic process than on a high degree of finish, was emerging as a significant trend in just the period that the Philbrook portrait was made. The portrait’s focus on the representation of nature, then, can be read as reflecting this trend. Although Gérard would not have conceived it in such schematic terms, the bouquets of flowers can be understood as real elements of the natural world, while the two landscape paintings suggest a direct recording of that world, and the decoration on the porcelain vase stands as a further step in the process of representing nature, requiring the manufacturer to interpret an artist’s design.²⁴ Gérard’s use of landscape depictions to signal a site of artistic creation in this way is consistent with her other works, as demonstrated by nearly all of the examples of embedded landscapes already cited, from the portrait of Fragonard to the two genre scenes of amateur artists (Pls. 8 and 9).

Although the elegant couple in Philbrook’s portrait appears in this creative context, nothing about the presentation suggests that either of them authored the paintings behind them. Given the setting, they are probably members of Gérard’s artistic community but must play a different role within it, perhaps as writers or collectors. Their connection to the vase and the canvases, then, might be to support and invest in the artistic process, perhaps with a particular focus on naturalistic landscape painting. By

suggesting Gérard’s interest in this creative practice and portraying a couple who seem to share this interest, Philbrook’s canvas situates Gérard as a still-active member of her artistic and social community. For an artist who did not travel outside her native country, this image seems to embody the extensive network Gérard cultivated from her Paris studio, as it suggests a productive exchange of ideas, professional support, and even friendship.

One further detail reinforces the idea that the artist and her sitters shared a sympathetic friendship and further underscores the process of creation. On the reverse of the lower stretcher bar, written in ink in what appears to be Gérard’s hand, is “commencé le 28 juillet 1818 Mte gerard” (Fig. 11). Such an inscription is not known on any other work in her oeuvre, according to Blumenfeld, and Wells-Robertson (who did not catalogue this work) noted that Gérard “never advertently dated her paintings and signed

them only irregularly.”²⁵ This unusual inscription marks the exact span of time in which the work was created and suggests that Gérard or her sitters wished to commemorate its making as a significant event. The artist signed the painting on the front but dated it (and signed again) only on the reverse, creating a memento that originally only she and her subjects would have shared.

In the years that followed, Gérard painted no more portraits. She did, however, increase her artistic exchanges and collaboration with her nephew, Alexandre Evariste Fragonard, himself an artist, sculptor, and designer of Sèvres porcelain. He worked in a highly finished style comparable to Gérard’s and often chose historical subjects, in keeping with the broader trend during the Restoration to reestablish links to the pre-Revolutionary past. Together they revisited some of the themes and styles that had inspired Gérard’s earliest works, including those of seventeenth century Dutch artists and of Fragonard père. As Blumenfeld noted, “Alexandre Evariste and Marguerite seem to have embarked in the 1820s on a series of playful formal and stylistic citations” of their shared artistic history.²⁶ This returned Gérard’s practice to a familial and self-referential context, and the resulting paintings tended to present generalized references to an unspecified past, giving Gérard’s late works a certain timeless quality. In contrast, although the identity of the couple in the *Portrait of a Man and Woman in an Interior* remains elusive, the painting speaks directly of its time and its making. Like Gérard’s earlier images of the varied society of her friends and associates, this double portrait—distinguished particularly by the innovative landscapes pictured within it—is one of the last of her works that seems to give form to her ongoing engagement with the extended network of artists, dealers, collectors, and supporters that sustained her career. ●

Sarah Lees is an independent scholar and curator.

Notes

For their generous help with this article, I would like to thank Melissa Hyde, Anna Kamplain, Karen Leiter, Iris Moon, Kirsten Olds, Richard Rand, Susan Stein, Edward Whelan, and Catherine Whitney.

1. Carole Blumenfeld explored this series of portraits in the 2009 exhibition *Marguerite Gérard, artiste en 1789, dans l'atelier de Fragonard* (Paris: Musée Cognacq-Jay, 2009).
2. The number of women permitted as members of the Académie was officially limited to four in 1770. Jessica Frapp notes the use of portraits to construct alternative artistic networks by artists marginalized by the Académie royale during the ancien régime. Jessica Lynn Frapp, "Portraits of Artists and the Social Commerce of Friendship in Eighteenth Century France," (PhD diss., Univ. of Michigan, 2012), 32–33.
3. This count is based on Carole Blumenfeld's catalogue raisonné, *Marguerite Gérard (1761–1837)* (Montreuil: Gourcuff Gradenigo, 2019).
4. Ibid. The ten portraits Blumenfeld identified as dated 1810 or later are: 217 P (*Tiercelin Family*), 240 P and 241 P (*A Man and A Woman in Ceremonial Dress*), 242 P (*A Family in Mourning*), 243 P (*A Family*), 244 P (*Roze Family*), 245 P (*Portrait of a Man and Woman in an Interior*), 246 P (*Léonie Fragonard*), 247 P (*Marie-Anne Fragonard and her Grandchildren*), 248 P (*A Young Woman, possibly Julie Fragonard*).
5. Sally Wells-Robertson lists many of these items in an appendix to her dissertation, which was the first detailed study of the artist's work. Sally Wells-Robertson, "Marguerite Gérard, 1761–1837," (PhD diss., New York University, 1978), 290.
6. Musée Cognacq-Jay, *Marguerite Gérard*, 20–21.
7. Ibid., 78, 82.
8. Blumenfeld, *Marguerite Gérard*, 89. He is also accompanied by a bust portrait of his wife by Augustin Pajou.
9. The sitter was first identified by Brigitte Gallini, "A propos d'un portrait de Marguerite Gérard: enquête sur l'identité d'un modèle," *La Tribune de l'art*, 7 Nov. 2016. <https://latribunedelart.com/a-propos-d-un-portrait-de-marguerite-gerard-enquete-sur-l-identite-d-un-modele> (accessed May 2020).
10. See Aileen Ribeiro, *The Art of Dress: Fashion in England and France, 1750–1820* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), 102, 114. Comparable depictions of these styles include Anne-Louis Girodet's portrait of René de Chateaubriand (1809; Musée d'histoire et du Pays Malouin, Saint Malo), and, among many others, François Gérard's portrait of Caroline Murat and her children (1808; location unknown; replica c. 1809–10, Musée National du Chateau de Fontainebleau), which features a far more elaborate dress but a similar flat bodice, rather than the more common gathered style.
11. The inscription reads: "commencé le 28 juillet terminé le 11 août 1818 Mte Gerard." Prior to its acquisition by Philbrook, the painting had been on the market in New York in the 1990s, then purchased by a dealer and sold to a private collector in Chicago in 1998. This type of limited provenance is common for Gérard's paintings, particularly for portraits of unknown sitters, which often remained with the original owner and their descendants for some time.
12. Wells-Robertson explores this aspect of Gérard's work in a chapter. Wells-Robertson, "Marguerite Gérard," 87–120. Carol Eliel discusses the French taste for Dutch art in this period in "Genre Painting during the Revolution and the *Goût hollandais*," in 1789: *French Art during the Revolution* (New York: Colnaghi, 1989), 47–61.
13. Musée Cognacq-Jay, *Marguerite Gérard*, 73.
14. In the 2009 exhibition, Blumenfeld proposed the former reading, Musée Cognacq-Jay, *Marguerite Gérard*, 73; while in the 2019 catalogue raisonné she suggests the latter, Blumenfeld, *Marguerite Gérard*, 217, no. 54 P.
15. Blumenfeld notes that the background seems to have been damaged by an improper conservation treatment. Blumenfeld, *Marguerite Gérard*, 100, 229, no. 140 P.
16. Ibid., 170.
17. Conisbee discusses Vernet's influence on Valenciennes in Philip Conisbee, et al., *In the Light of Italy: Corot and Early Open-Air Painting* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1996), 46. Paula Rea Radisich also discusses the emergence of plein air landscapes known as "compositions d'après nature" that were larger than simple sketches and thus more closely comparable to the paintings in Philbrook's portrait. Paula Rea Radisich, "Eighteenth-Century Plein-Air Painting and the Sketches of Pierre Henri de Valenciennes," *The Art Bulletin* 64, no. 1 (Mar. 1982): 100. These artists and their practice of oil sketching are surveyed in Conisbee et al., *In the Light of Italy* and Ger Luijten, Mary Morton, et al., *True to Nature: Open-air Painting in Europe, 1780–1870* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art; London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2020).
18. Vincent Pomarède in Conisbee et al., *In the Light of Italy*, 95.
19. Blumenfeld lists only one work, now lost, titled simply *Landscape*, B 255 P. Although nothing is known about this work, Blumenfeld suggests that it may not be a pure landscape despite the title, but rather an image similar to *The Butterfly* (B 257 P), a sketch of figures within a landscape. Blumenfeld, *Marguerite Gérard*, 244.
20. Noted in the chronology in *ibid.*, 262.
21. Many thanks to Iris Moon for her suggestions on identifying the probable porcelain type.
22. Patrick Noon, *Crossing the Channel: British and French Painting in the Age of Romanticism* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), 29. British collectors had purchased works by Gérard in the period between the 1802 Treaty of Amiens and 1818, but all five works listed in Blumenfeld's catalogue whose earliest purchasers were identifiably British featured interior scenes of women and children.
23. Ibid., 46.
24. My thanks to Melissa Hyde for pointing out this idea.
25. Blumenfeld describes it as a "détail presque unique." Blumenfeld, *Marguerite Gérard*, 242, no. 245 P. Wells-Robertson, "Marguerite Gérard," 47.
26. "Alexandre Evariste et Marguerite semblent s'être embarqués dans les années 1820 dans une série de jeux de citations formelles et stylistique." Blumenfeld, *Marguerite Gérard*, 184.

WATERCOLOR AND WOMEN IN THE EARLY MODERN NETHERLANDS

BETWEEN MIRROR AND COMB

By Alison M. Kettering

Where are the watercolors? Wandering through an art museum today, you can expect to see some prints and drawings among the paintings on its walls, but watercolors tend to be displayed primarily in special exhibitions. For year-round access, you typically must apply to print and drawing study rooms, where watercolors are stored in boxes alongside other works on paper.

Inaccessibility has not been the only challenge to our contemporary understanding and appreciation of these works. Watercolor, which straddles the line between drawing and painting, has long been seen as the lesser sister of oil painting.¹ Attitudes about gender, status, and class have also limited its acceptance. In eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain and America, watercolor was often viewed as the private domain of amateur hobbyists and dilettantes. It was thus especially appropriate as a leisure-time activity for well-to-do women (or as therapy for the vulnerable). When English and American professional artists finally organized societies for the advancement of watercolor painting, the men in charge restricted access for women precisely in order to elevate the status of the medium.²

In the Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century, oil painting likewise predominated among artists who earned a living by their art. Few professional “fine” artists concentrated enough on the watercolor medium to qualify as specialists.³ On the other hand, water-based paint was widely used for utilitarian and commercial purposes—by tradespeople and artisans (*afsetters*) who colored prints, maps, and atlases for their livelihood; by tapestry and stained-glass designers; by jewelers, architects, school masters, and botanical illustrators. In their hands, watercolor served some practical purpose, such as conveying information or supporting another profession. Yet watercolor also flourished in the Netherlands as elsewhere in one quite separate group, namely amateurs, among them a good number of female amateurs, such as Gesina ter Borch (1633–90) (Pl. 10) and Catharina Backer (1689–1766 (Fig. 1). Gender conventions almost inevitably shaped this phenomenon. The present article addresses the origins of the relative marginalization of watercolor, gender attitudes governing media and genres, and the circumstances under which a few dedicated women persisted.



Fig. 1. Catharina Backer, *Flowers* (c.1710), watercolor on paper. de Stichting Backer, Amsterdam Museum, Amsterdam.

Today we know much more about “lady enthusiasts” (and their male counterparts) of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries than about their forerunners.⁴ But two little-known, linked publications from the Dutch Republic hint at their numbers and at the attitudes that had developed by that time. The first is the *Verlichtery Kunst-Boeck* (Art of Illumination, 1616; Fig. 2) by Gerhard ter Brugghen, a professional illuminist (miniaturist) familiar with conventional studio practice as well as with contemporary attitudes toward his medium.⁵



Fig. 2. Title plate of Gerhard ter Brugghen, *Verlichtery Kunst-Boeck*, Amsterdam, 1616.

Addressed to *rycke lief-hebberen* (rich art-loving amateurs, connoisseurs, collectors), the preface of his booklet articulates Ter Brugghen's aims: to provide easy instruction for anyone wanting a water-based, artistic pursuit. This audience, he maintains, had no need for learning how to manufacture colors from scratch when paints were available from local merchants. Instead, he offers instruction on the characteristics of the colors and how and where to lay them on.⁶ He adds that such a pleasurable pursuit exercises the brain and senses and, importantly, dispels their phantasms (*fantasyen*) and deep-seated melancholy, even as it protects from idleness, the mother of all evils. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, then, watercolor painting had, according to Ter Brugghen, the potential to be a convalescing agent, an appropriate activity to help invalids back to health and to divert patients from the difficulty and tedium of their condition.⁷

The second publication explicitly built on the first. Art theorist Willem Goeree's booklet, *Verlichterie-Kunde* (The Art of Limning) (1670), specifically mentions women (Fig. 3).⁸ His foreword identifies the manual's target audience—again amateurs with time on their hands: boys needing worthy distraction from “obnoxious behavior” and older people in search of a meaningful pursuit.⁹ Echoing Ter Brugghen, Goeree claims that water-coloring is “pleasant to do and gives great satisfaction if something special has been achieved.” Then, revealing his bias, Goeree narrows his focus to privileged women who desire an activity “between mirror and comb of greater importance than what usually engages their time.”

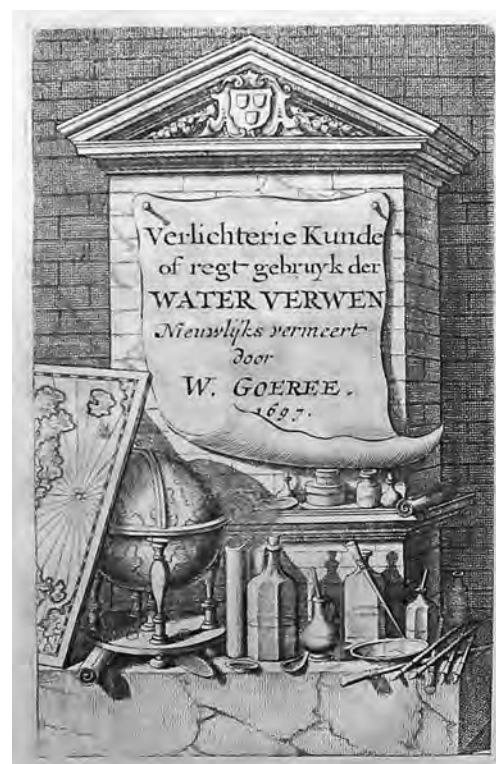


Fig. 3. Title plate of Willem Goeree, *Verlichterie-Kunde*, Amsterdam, 1670.

(Mirror and comb were associated with good grooming and beauty, but also with worldliness and vanity.) For these “young daughters” and “distinguished ladies,” he writes, this pleasant and satisfying enterprise can be practiced with modest effort, for there is little need for much drawing instruction. It can be pursued in a small space and requires minimal muss and fuss. This is especially so if one tackles such unchallenging subjects as fruit, flowers, and birds. Goeree maintains that more difficult subjects—portraits, narratives, and landscapes—are best engaged by men. He admits, though, that *geestige* (insightful, imaginative) ladies would want to penetrate more deeply into the water-based arts.¹⁰ This afterthought offers a first stirring of encouragement for a lady inclined to push beyond the usual gender stereotypes and cultural norms.

It bears emphasizing that Goeree's *Verlichterie-Kunde* supplemented his much longer *Inleydinge tot Teyckenkonst* (Introduction to the Art of Drawing, 1670), a general introduction to draftsmanship for beginners that treats drawing as the “Fountain from whence all...the other Arts do flow” and details step-by-step instruction. It barely mentions water-based application, offering only brief sections on washes and tints.¹¹ Because of his attention to colors (pigments, *verwen*) in *Verlichterie-Kunde*, Goeree necessarily positioned it as an appendix, and it was one he freely admitted to having adapted from Ter Brugghen's manual.¹² Opaque watercolor used water-based colors thickened with a filler for greater density, a medium today called gouache or bodycolor or opaque



Fig. 4. Anna Ceters?, *Fortuna Non Mutat Genus* (Monkeys surrounding cat), *Album amicorum* of Anna van Ceters, (c.1600–20), gouache and transparent watercolor, gold framing, Koninklijk Oudheidkundig Genootschap, Amsterdam (KOG HS80).

watercolor. As a further layer of complexity, Goeree's decision to separate out gouache may have responded indirectly to contemporary debates about color as opposed to line—with its implicit demand for invention and its association with the mind rather than the senses. In making the separation, Goeree reveals an ambivalence about color, which at the time was considered more deceptive, seductive, and pleasurable than line and less subject to rules and systematic learning. This was a binary with roots in Vasari that continued into the eighteenth century and beyond.¹³

Both Ter Brugghen's and Goeree's booklets refer to the sorts of craftsmen mentioned above, who used gouache for utilitarian purposes, as well as to "fine" artists, who would have learned watercolor illumination alongside oil painting as apprentices in their masters' studios. The target reader, though, was the amateur. The two related publications were premised on the conviction that the audience of amateurs was sufficiently well-established to welcome instruction. By singling out well-to-do daughters and ladies (and gentlemen), Goeree tapped into the enthusiasm within the upper ranks of Dutch society in the second half of the century. He published his manual at the zenith of seventeenth-century Dutch prosperity. His was a small but growing audience, whose wealth allowed leisure time for creative pursuits.

One contemporary female amateur was Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678), highly educated in the sciences, classical literature, and the arts, who tried her hand at gouache painting, line engraving, glass engraving, pastel, and sculpture, many of which she handled in inventive ways. She is the only woman whose articulation of the prevailing attitude toward watercolor survives, and it is not all that positive. In the autobiographical account of her cultural activities written late in life (1673), she underscored the notion

of the medium as a "simple, easy craft" (this in regard to the watercolors of flowers and animals that she made in her youth). She preferred what she considered the more demanding activity of making miniatures in oil. Schurman's bias might well have been influenced by her increasingly ascetic religious orientation and consequent denigration of unserious pastimes. Alternatively, she wanted to disassociate herself from what she considered a typically feminine artistic pastime and to identify as a gender-neutral virtuoso, proficient in a broad range of arts and sciences.¹⁴

Admittedly, it is difficult in any time period to make clear distinctions between professional artists and amateurs. The description is (usefully) fluid rather than binary. Today some defining characteristics of amateurs are their lack of public identity as artists—even those who are highly skilled; the relative modesty of their ambition; their interest in pursuing art for its own sake; and their expectation to work without payment in a predominantly private environment.¹⁵ In *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), Evelyn Waugh has the narrator's father dividing painters into "serious" and "amateur" according to medium, serious if oil, amateur if watercolor.¹⁶ In the early modern period, before the founding of watercolor societies in the nineteenth century, amateurs and professionals who worked in aqueous media were more closely associated with one another than later. But for women working with watercolor, societal norms, attitudes, and restrictions by professional organizations presented obstacles to elevating their status from amateur to professional. At the same time, amateur art-making ran no risk of violating cultural codes governing these gender norms. Here I am referring to women of privilege, rather than to the female artisans who must have been employed in considerable numbers, at low pay, to use colors for embellishing the works (especially prints) of others.



Fig. 5. Margareta de Heer (1640–55), *Insects on a branch*, signed *Margareta D Heer fecit*, gouache and watercolor on vellum 6 1/2" x 5". Fries Museum, Leeuwarden Collectie Het Koninklijk Fries Genootschap. inv. no. S07872.

While the identities of none of the latter women artisans have survived, we do know something about a few of those who practiced more or less opaque watercolor to create works in their own right. In the early modern Netherlands, such amateurs included both women from privileged social spheres and those from artistic families. In fact, one scholar, Katlijne Van der Stighelen, writing today about women amateurs' engagement with the arts, has distinguished between "intentional" amateurs—those from more socially elevated, humanist environments, such as Schurman—and "circumstantial" female artists—those born into artists' households.¹⁷ At the same time, we must recognize that distinctions between professional and non-professional women artists (and between intentional and circumstantial) were sometimes blurred.

Amateur status is unambiguous for the many affluent men and women who adopted watercolor for *alba amicorum*. These friendship albums, owned and created by women, even formed a sub-group which earned its own rubric: *vrouwenalba*.¹⁸ Constructed of paper or vellum sheets bound in leather, these small albums were rich in coats of arms, illustrations to poems, inscriptions, and epigrams. The line of descent, ultimately, from secular manuscript illumination is clear from the paint application and consistency (opaque or mixture of opaque and transparent), choice of support, and (occasional) gold framing. Examples include the albums (c. 1600) of the aristocrats Cornelia van der Hooghe and her cousin Anna van Ceters, filled with

brightly colored coats of arms, mythological scenes, animal fables (Fig. 4), emblems, and, on one page, an elaborately costumed lady.¹⁹

Among the later "intentional" amateurs, Catharina Backer stands out for several reasons. The daughter of a wealthy collector and a collector herself in adulthood, Backer produced a few paintings and numerous drawings at an early age. Willem Backer, her father, likely encouraged her involvement. She seems to have focused on flowers and plants.²⁰ Although many of her albums are no longer extant, one album (assembled in 1722) and an assortment of loose drawings have survived. Produced around 1710, these include colored renderings on vellum and paper in watercolor and/or oil (Fig. 1).²¹ After her marriage in 1711, Backer stopped her artistic activity, prompting her concerned father to write a remarkable letter the next year. Her father claimed that art making had previously kept her busy and, more pointedly, "distracted her from melancholy," a disposition to which the fragile Catharina was all too prone. He hoped (in vain, as it turned out) that she would take up creating art "after life" again. This advice makes specific and personal the generalized observation that Gerhard ter Brugghen had enunciated years earlier, that making art "dispelled melancholy." Such ideas about art's restorative powers circulated throughout the seventeenth century and continued to be powerful for generations thereafter.²²

In Amsterdam, Backer had likely been taught both oil painting and watercolor, even though the former was considered a more difficult medium, less appropriate for young ladies. Her teacher was probably a local still life artist who would have offered this instruction in watercolor as a matter of course, either in his studio or in visits to her parents' home.²³ Goeree's chapter in the *Verlichterie-Kunde* on the "natural" coloring of all manner of flowers would have provided a supplement, if she chose to use it, by suggesting pigment combinations as well as the correct laying on of those colors. Quite apart from learning to make natural history watercolors, she might also have consulted Goeree's *Teykenkonst* for general instruction on how to draw.²⁴ To judge by the number of editions, Goeree's *Teykenkonst* enjoyed considerable success, to which the *Verlichterie-Kunde* could have made its contribution.²⁵

For women from artistic families, home instruction in watercolor might have sufficed. "Circumstantial" amateurs have been identified far more often than such "intentional" art makers as Schurman, Ceters, and Backer.²⁶ Time and again, sources indicate that women amateurs belonged to the families of professional male artists. Margareta de Heer (c.1600 – c. 1665), Sara Saftleven (1645/50–c.1691, Alida Withoos (1662–1730), and Sara Troost (1732–1803) count among them.²⁷ Many of these women devoted themselves to fruit, flowers, and birds, an artistic practice Goeree remarked upon in his comments about gender norms. Typical of this "simple, easy craft" (as Goeree put it) were Saftleven's flower still lifes (mostly lost) and natural history drawings.²⁸

Unusually, De Heer produced gouaches on paper, vellum, and panel on a wide array of subjects, including history subjects, portraits, and farmyard scenes set against airy backgrounds, although she also earned fame with flowers and insects (Fig 5). Born into an artistic family and married to a painter, she worked in the northern Dutch cities of Leeuwarden and Groningen, where she earned accolades of all sorts. The diversity of her subject matter, the number of dated watercolors, and the attention drawn to her studio have prompted scholars to suggest an ambition beyond amateur status.²⁹ Tellingly, encomia appeared in contemporary anthologies, with verses by well-known poets. One poet marvels over her depiction of “Peewit, Jackdaw, Rabbit, Cow, Horse, Hart, Hind, Hound, Hare or Pig.”³⁰ For the foregrounds of these scenes, De Heer exploited gouache’s potential for detail in her descriptions of the creatures’ textures and colors. For the backgrounds, she subtly applied washes, using a fluid pictorial technique for atmospheric effects. These are rare examples of an early modern woman’s engagement with landscape (Pl. 11).³¹

Withoos concentrated on meticulously detailed botanical illustrations, likewise attracting the attention of collectors who would hardly have called them “simple” and “easy” (Pl. 12). The daughter of painter Mathias Withoos, she belonged to a circle of naturalists engaged with botanical illustration. One collector commissioned several of her botanical drawings for an Art Book.³² Agnes Block (1629–1704), the Amsterdam collector and horticulturist, provided Withoos with a residency at her estate and commissioned several botanical depictions documenting plants for her numerous albums.³³ Even more significantly, Withoos contributed watercolored drawings to a vast nine-volume pictorial record of plants in the Hortus Botanicus, Amsterdam, around 1694. Titled the Moninckx Atlas after the lead artist Jan Moninckx, this painted herbarium contained drawings by his daughter Maria Moninckx (1673/1676–1757) and quite a number of others, including two other women.³⁴

Troost, the daughter of Cornelis Troost, specialized in producing copies in watercolor of works by professional artists, thus engaging in an activity pursued by a legion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women copyists. Predictably, as these women assumed increasing responsibility for reproducing art, such copying tended to become feminized and thus depreciated.³⁵

Within this group, De Heer and Withoos straddled the line between amateur and professional. Only one early modern, northern woman turned fully professional as a watercolorist, and not surprisingly, her subjects were *naturalia*: the acclaimed Maria Sybilla Merian (1647–1717).³⁶ Merian received training in Germany from her stepfather, after which she became a flower painter herself and instructed the art of flower painting to amateur women. Working in Nuremberg and Frankfurt, and then settling in Amsterdam, she expanded her scope and developed a successful business producing some of the most brilliant natural history works of the period. Many were loose sheets in opaque watercolor on vellum of plants alive with insects that she bred or collected. A research naturalist, she was

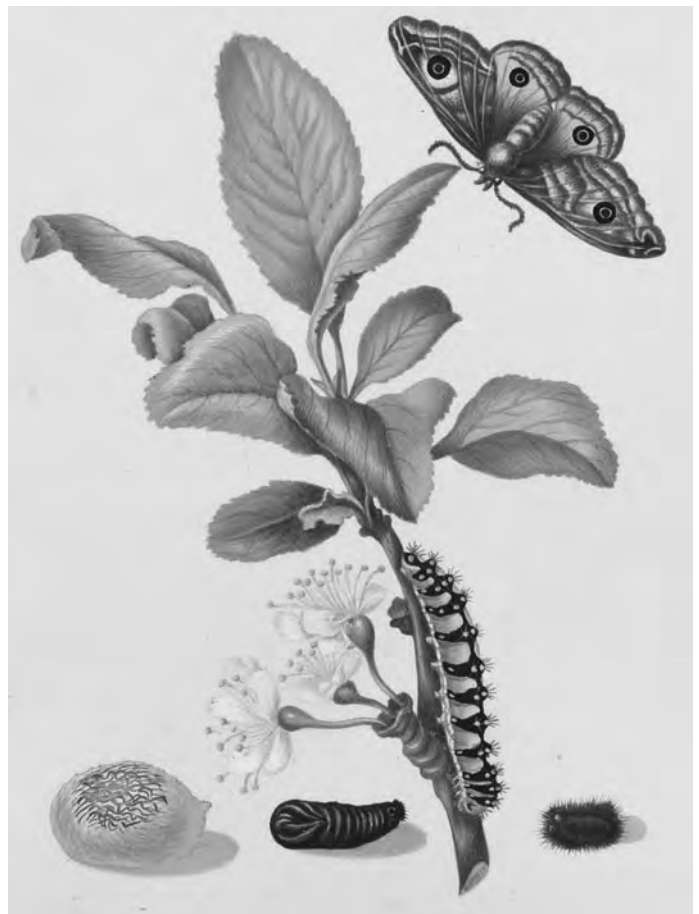


Fig. 6. Maria Sibylla Merian, *Metamorphosis of a Small Emperor Moth on a Damson Plum*, gouache over counterproof print on vellum, 7 3/8" x 5 7/8", J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, plate 13 of the Caterpillar Book, 1679, sold as a unique work.

driven to understand the life cycles of the insects and then record whole ecosystems, arranged aesthetically on a single sheet; this distinguished her illustrations from flower drawings by De Heer, Withoos, and others. As a further distinction, she etched many of her studies of flowers and caterpillars in books whose pages she or members of her workshop hand-colored (for a price).³⁷ Sometimes she created a gouache by adding colors to counterproof prints taken from a plate and then sold the sheet as a unique work. In an example derived from the Caterpillar Book, she illustrated the life cycle of the moth next to one of its favorite foods, the damson plum tree, along with the egg, caterpillar, and cocoon stages of the insect (Fig. 6). Her fame increased with the publication on the flora and fauna of the Dutch colony of Suriname, *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium* (1705). This was the product of an expedition in 1699–1701 undertaken with her younger daughter, Dorothea Maria Graff (1678–1743). The book opens with pineapples, one of which includes cockroaches crawling on its spiky leaves (Pl. 13). She thus paired what she called “the most outstanding of all edible fruits” with “the most infamous of all insects in America.”³⁸ Although she never brought to fruition her book on Surinamese reptiles, she did produce brilliant watercolors

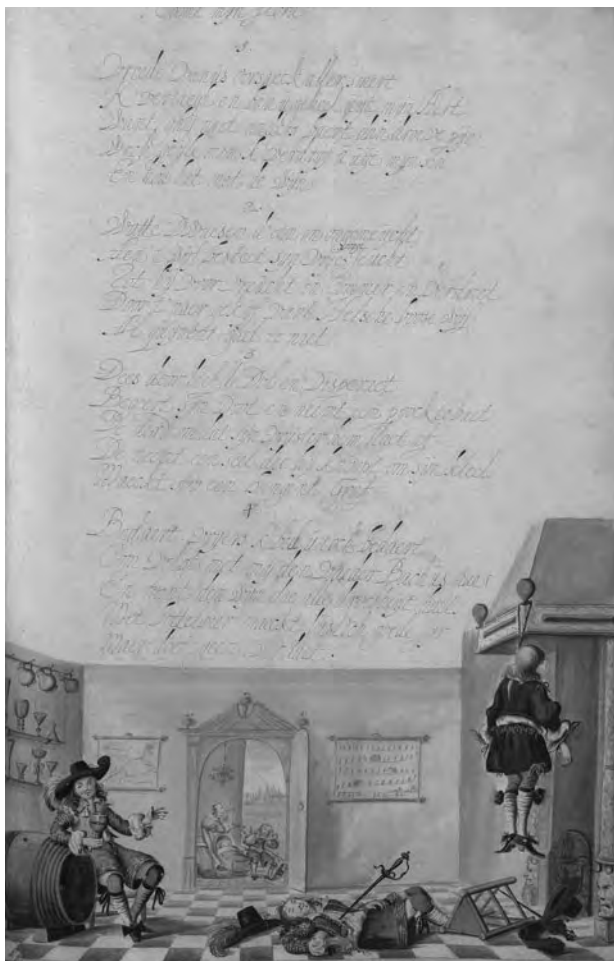


Fig. 7. Gesina ter Borch, *Tavern Interior* (1650s), Poetry Album, fol. 83r, watercolor over pencil, 12 1/2" x 8 1/4". Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

related to the project, many of them colored by her older daughter, Johanna Helena Graff Herolt (1668–after 1723).³⁹ Altogether, she and her daughters made highly consequential contributions to botanical and entomological illustration, a genre whose taxonomic classification and aesthetic presentation positioned it between natural history and art.⁴⁰

The case of Gesina ter Borch could hardly have been more different. She was that odd amateur from an artistic family who also belonged to the regent class. She produced watercolor drawings on an even wider range of subjects than De Heer, comprising several miniature portraits and a wealth of genre scenes; her repertoire never centered on flowers, fruits, insects, and other creatures. She inserted almost all of her watercolors into albums, which are among the most unusual such books from the seventeenth century. Works on paper were routinely stored loose within the sheets of albums. But Gesina drew her watercolor drawings directly on the pages and presumably, because of her status as a purely local amateur, they were never removed and sold separately. Like Backer's watercolors later on, Gesina's survived because of their inclusion in these albums—and a good measure of luck.

Ter Borch grew up in Zwolle in the eastern Dutch Republic,

where her position as a woman from the upper echelons of society ruled out a professional career. All evidence supports her acceptance of her role as an amateur, oriented to the private sphere of family, friends, and admirers. Her father, Gerard Sr., having given up art for civil service, actively encouraged his sons to follow traditional study based on drawing as foundational for oil painting. Gesina's older half-brother, Gerard Jr., went on to earn fame as a portrait and genre painter. Because expectations differed profoundly for girls, the father left his daughter to her own devices. She exhibited her greatest skill in small-scale, watercolored drawings, demonstrating ambition and tenaciousness over the decades. Her very lack of professional training granted her freedom to invent. In due course, she assumed guardianship of the whole family's artistic output, hence the survival of her own art.⁴¹ As a result, we know more about Ter Borch than any other Dutch amateur woman.

In 1652, Ter Borch began a poetry anthology, which eventually numbered about one hundred poems, mostly love songs. The majority of these she illustrated with colorful *bas de page* drawings (1650s; Fig. 7). She seems to have drawn inspiration from printed songbooks and emblem books, some colored.⁴² Closer to hand as models were her father's watercolors.⁴³

As she gained experience in watercolor, Ter Borch moved away from transparent washes to make drawings with thickened paint, intensified color, and fuller settings. Her interest in color prompted her to devote one page to listing nine colors and their associations.⁴⁴ By 1658, she produced full-fledged scenes, handling the paint with a miniaturist's sense of delineation. Perhaps in response to her father's wit as well as to the charming artifice of certain songbook illustrations, she played up the amusing aspect of her scenes, in some cases styling her figures in the more absurd fashions of the day and indulging in a rich fantasy of bucolic courtship.

In the early 1660s, Ter Borch turned to a larger album, her *Artbook* (*Konstboek*). About twenty pages of full-size gouaches exhibit an emphatic graphic vocabulary and bold, opaque color application (Pl. 10). The scenes' brilliance of color, preoccupation with decorative detail, and minimal attention to light reduce their verisimilitude. They chronicle the domestic rituals of (mostly) propertied households and the manners and costumes of small-town life. Importantly, they break free from the conventions that shaped contemporary genre painting. With their display in an album for viewing by family and friends, the *Artbook* scenes reveal a different purpose from professional "high" art.⁴⁵ They allow glimpses into Ter Borch's mental world and her self-conception as daughter, sister, friend, and purveyor of time-honored moral and cultural beliefs.

Around the time of Ter Borch's death, but apparently independent of her endeavors, a circle of similarly inclined, well-to-do women amateurs organized an artistic "club" in Zwolle. They sought instruction from a local professional artist, focusing on oil painting rather than watercolor.⁴⁶

A number of local admirers entered encomia into Ter Borch's albums. Some of the laudatory poems amount to conventional praise reserved for women: virtue, propriety, and

spiritual beauty. One writer found her success to be all the more praiseworthy in a daughter (rather than a son).⁴⁷ This was the head of the Latin School, who, along with several others, emphasized the single-mindedness with which she pursued art.⁴⁸ The entry by one female admirer (1674) went further by coupling Gesina's artistic devotion with her unmarried state.⁴⁹ This "solitude" released her from the maternal obligations that put a stop to art making for many. Gesina's insightfulness and wit comprised another strand. One admirer called her a *geestige juffrou* (intelligent, imaginative lady) and acknowledged not only her talent but her drive, he implied, to persist in a category set apart from the norms of high art.⁵⁰

That returns us to Willem Goeree's *Verlichterie kunde*, with its compliment for *geestige* ladies who "penetrated more deeply into the water-based arts." Margareta de Heer, Alida Withoos, and Gesina ter Borch were just such ladies. More typical for Goeree's target audience was Ter Borch's relative, Anna Cornelia Moda (1600–99), who produced gouache drawings of a tulip, dog, and peasant woman, the latter a clumsy copy of a watercolor drawing by Ter Borch (all inserted into the Artbook). Goeree's foreword betrays a mixture of attitudes toward that important female component of his audience. It consists, on the one hand, of ladies looking for something pleasant, even meaningful, between domestic and personal obligations, a readership Goeree values yet ultimately dismisses as incapable of more. On the other, he addresses those unusual ladies with aspirations that aim higher.

In addition to directing *Verlichterie-kunde* to certain types of user, Goeree chose to relegate gouache to an appendix. That decision, too, was likely based not only on medium but also on gender and class. By contrast, the readers of the *Inleydinge tot Teyckenkonst*, many of whom probably included aspiring young male artists, would have appreciated the book's transmission of Renaissance theory, as well as its learning program, which emphasized drawing as the foundation for larger-scale oil painting. Goeree's 1670 edition of *Verlichterie-kunde*, the edition which singled out the ladies among his audience, added the subtitle *Oock het Coloreeren en Schilderen met Water-Verwen* (Also Coloring and Painting with Water-Pigments). It is worth remembering that color, by this time, had accumulated a cluster of associations all linked with women: embellishment, emotion, pleasure, and the senses.

The short manuals on watercolor by Gerhard ter Brugghen and Willem Goeree responded directly to past generations of artistic practice and thinking. Ter Brugghen built on common studio practices, and Goeree augmented these with his own insights and refinements. What distinguishes their two handbooks, however, is the specificity of their address to amateur watercolorists: the rich art lovers of the prosperous Dutch Republic. Goeree's *Verlichterie-kunde*, in particular, was unprecedented in its articulation of the societal attitudes about women and watercolor that had accrued by the mid-seventeenth century. This, even as Goeree offered women a path to overcoming the very attitudes he expressed. More broadly, his booklet reveals that when it came to watercolor, amateurism was becoming gendered. •

Alison M. Kettering is William R. Kenan Professor of Art History Emerita at Carleton College. From 2008 to 2021, she served as Editor-in-Chief of the open access, semi-annual, refereed e-journal, *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* (www.jhna.org). She is author of *The Dutch Arcadia: Pastoral Art and Its Audience in the Golden Age; Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate in the Rijksmuseum*; and *Gerard ter Borch and the Treaty of Münster*, and numerous published articles on Rembrandt, Gerard ter Borch, hybrid still lifes, women artists, and gender issues.

Notes

This article developed out of research presented at the Harvard Art Museums in October 2018. Both at the Fogg and ever since, Susan Anderson has come to my aid. As well, I thank Perry Chapman for reading an earlier version; Hans Luijten for help translating primary sources; and at a crucial moment Catherine Powell, Lisa Kirch, Erika Gaffney, Channah Hofste, and Heidi Eyestone.

1. Kathleen A Foster, *American Watercolor in the Age of Homer and Sargent*, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2017), 22, 39, 41, 60.
2. Alison Smith, *Watercolour* (London: Tate Publications, 2011), 15. The British Society of Painters in Water-Colours, founded in 1804, barred women from full membership until 1889. See also Jan Marsh, Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite women artists* (London: Virago, 1989); Jan Marsh, Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite women artists* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999). For the American Watercolor Society, founded in 1866, see Foster, *American Watercolor*, Introduction, Chs. 1, 2; on women watercolorists, 22–23.
3. Exceptions in the 17th century: such professional Dutch artists as Gerrit Battem, Johannes Bronckhorst and Herman Henstenburgh (amateurs turned semi-professional), Pieter Holsteyn II, Gerardus and Rochus van Veen. Medieval and early modern forerunners include (among others) numerous Flemish illuminators; Pieter Bruegel I's mother-in-law Mayken Verhulst (documented for large paintings on cloth in watercolor [*water-verwen*]); and Hans Bol who specialized in gouache in the late 16th century. To date, no comprehensive exhibition has been mounted on 16th- and 17th-century Dutch and Flemish watercolored drawings.
4. Foster, *American Watercolor*, and Smith, *Watercolour*. See also Anne Higonnet, "Images of Feminine Experience in Nineteenth-century Europe" in Norma Broude and Mary Garrard, *The Expanding Discourse* (New York: Icon Editions, 1992), 171–85.
5. Gerhard ter Brugghen, *Verlichtery Kunst-Boeck*, Amsterdam, 1616 (reprinted in 1634 and 1667). On forerunners, see Truusje Goedings, *Kunst in Kaart, decoratieve aspecten van de cartografie*, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1989), 98–101; also Mark Clarke, *The Art of all Colours: Medieval Recipe Books for Painters and Illuminators* (London: Archetype, 2001). Goedings (112–13) notes that Ter Brugghen might be identical with the illuminist Marcus Gheeraerts.
6. Goedings, *Kunst in Kaart*, 105–06, on two other segments of his audience: print collectors who colored their prints and *afsetters* (professional print colorers). Also Truusje Goedings, *Afsetters en meester-afsetters, De kunst van het kleuren 1480–1720* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2015).
7. Ter Brugghen, *Verlichtery Kunst-Boeck*, 1616, Introduction. " ... sy verdrijft hem fantasyen ende sware melancolien, ende behoedt hem voor ledichheydt, een moeder aller quaden, ende benefens allen desen soo oeffent hy zijn memorie, zijn sinnen, ende brenght hem tot goede occupatie..." Smith, *Watercolour*, 16, on the 19th-century

- physician William Browne, who prescribed watercolor as a cognitive exercise for the mentally ill; Maureen Park, *Art in Madness: Dr W.A.F. Browne's Collection of Patient Art at Crichton Royal Institution, Dumfries* (Dumfries: Dumfries and Galloway Health Board, 2010), xvi, 63; Frances Gage, *Painting as Medicine in Early Modern Rome* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2016). On drawing for exercising the brain, P. Knolle, "Dilettanten en hun rol in de 18e-eeuse Noord Nederlandse tekenacademies," *Leids kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 5–6 (1986–87): 290.
8. Michael Kwakkelstein, ed., *Willem Goeree, Inleydinge tot de alghemeene teycken-konst* (1680) (Leiden: Primavera Press, 1998), which discusses the appendix only briefly. The English translation: *The Art of Limning* (London: R. Pricke, 1674). Limning was nearly synonymous with producing miniatures.
 9. Kim Sloan, *A Noble Art, Amateur Artists and Drawing Masters, c. 1600–1800* (London: British Museum Press, 2000), 15, on similar attitudes in England.
 10. Willem Goeree, *Verlichterie-kunde*, addendum to the 2nd edition of *Inleydinge tot ... Teyckenkonst* (Middelburgh: 1670): "Oock insonderheydt voor longe Dochters, en aensienelijcke Dames, die vele ledigen tijdt hebben, en die doch wel tusschen de Spiegel en de Kam, in dingen van minder aensien haer besich houden." The first edition of *Verlichterie-kunde* (1668) contains no foreword. Also Sloan, *Noble Art*, 24, and Goedings, *Afsetters*, 25, who cites Cathérine Perrot's (much-used) *Traité de la Mignature* (1725) which echoes Goeree and others: watercolor was for "hommes de qualité" who could enjoy a pastime free of the smell and mess of oil painting (introduction).
 11. On wassen (washes) (1670 edition), Goeree names indigo and red; the 1698 edition adds a few more details about colors. Kwakkelstein, *Goeree*, 39: the direct forerunner for Goeree was Henry Peacham's manual for amateurs, *The Art of Drawing* (or *Graphice; or, the most auncient and excellent art of drawing and limning*, etc. (London: 1612).
 12. His decision to differentiate colorful, denser "illumination" in *Verlichterie-Kunde* from the practice of lightly washing drawings (in *Teyckenkonst*) provides an early indication of the contested nature of watercolor: opaque vs transparent.
 13. Thijs Weststeijn, "The gender of colors in Dutch art theory," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 62 (2013): 177–201.
 14. Anna Maria van Schurman, *Eucleria of uitkiezing van het beste deel* (Amsterdam: 1684), 26. See Mirjam de Baar et al, eds, *Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678). Een uitzonderlijk geleerde vrouw* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1992); Katlijne Van der Stighelen, *Anna Maria van Schurman of 'Hoe hooge dat een maeght kan in de konsten stijgen'* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 1987); Martine van Elk, "Female Glass Engravers in the Early Modern Dutch Republic," *Renaissance Quarterly* 73 (2020): 165–211.
 15. On amateurism: Kim Grant, "Amateur Status? George W. Bush as Contemporary Artist," *Panorama* 5:1 (Spring 2019).
 16. Cited by various authors, including Smith, *Watercolour*, 15 (Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* [London: Chapman & Hall, 1946], 135). As late as 1995, David Guterson associated watercolor and amateur ladies: *Snow Falling on Cedars* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 341. His Helen Chambers belongs to a hypothetical pair of "dainty old ladies... We'll wear painters' smocks, and blue berets and do watercolors next... Are you ready to be an old biddy with her paints?"
 17. Katlijne Van der Stighelen, "Amateur Artists, the 16th and 17th centuries," in Delia Gaze, *Dictionary of Women Artists*, vol. 1 (London/Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), 66–70.
 18. Truusje Goedings, "Ingekleurde prenten en boeken," *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 1995: 168–71. On women's *alba amicora*, M.-A. Delen, "Vrouwenalba in de zestiende en vroege zeventiende eeuw," in K. Thomassen, *Alba Amicorum* (The Hague/Maarssen: USW Schwartz, 1990). And *Alba Amicorum, Vijf eeuwen vriendschap op papier gezet: Het Album Amicorum en het Poeziealbum in de Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum Meermann-Westreenianum/Museum van het Boek, Maarssen/The Hague: G.Schwartz/SDU, 1990).
 19. Goedings, *ibid*, 128–39: KOG HS 82 and HS 80, respectively. Hooghe's suitor, later husband, created many of the entries, including the watercolors; Ceters herself might well have made the drawings in her own album.
 20. C. Willemijn Fock, "De Stilleven van Catharina Backer of de Verdrijving van de Melancholie," *Leids Jaarboekje* 72 (1980): n 15.
 21. Fock, "Backer," 75–76; Gilian Sluiter, "Catharina Backer (1689–1766). Het 'bewogen leven' van een rijke dilettante," in Els Kloek, ed., *Vrouwen en Kunst in de Republiek, een Overzicht* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1998), 47–54. The Amsterdam Museum owns a portfolio of Backer's loose drawings— one dated 1706— and the extant album, which probably includes other album material mentioned in documents (TB 5955, TB 6533). The best drawings depicted flowers, fruits, and birds after life in gouache. Her husband Allard's inventory noted these: "Een boek in Parkementen band gebonden 1722 op 't plat waepen van hier in leggen alle de teekeningen en door Catharina gedaan voor haar trouwen, 250 stuks."
 22. Benjamin Roberts, "Dutch affective parent-child relations in the eighteenth century, Catharina Backer and her family," *History of Education* 56 (1995): 17–26; more generally Frances Gage, *Painting as Medicine*.
 23. Fock, "Backer," 82. Lisa Kloosterman, "Een onderzoek van het tekeningenalbum uit 1722 van Catharina Backer," thesis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2019.
 24. Kloosterman, Ch. 2, on Backer's course of instruction, which follows Goeree.
 25. Goeree's *Teyckenkonst*: 1668 (without *Verlichterie-Kunde*), 1670, 1697, and re-printings. Jacob Berents (16[5]9–1747) owned three copies of Goeree's *Teyckenkonst* in German. See J. S. Turner and R. te Rijdt, eds., *Home and Abroad, Dutch and Flemish Landscape Drawings from the John and Marine van Vlissingen Art Foundation*, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum; Paris: Fondation Custodia, 2015), 158. Goeree dedicated the second edition of *Verlichterie-kunde*, 1670, to Constantijn Huygens, either father or son; the latter was an amateur draftsman who used monochrome washes. Claudia Swan, *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in early modern Holland, Jacques de Gheyn II (1565–1629)* (New York, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005), 77.
 26. Els Kloek, *Vrouwen en Kunst in de Republiek, een Overzicht*, (Hilversum: Verloren, 1998). Ceters does not appear in her lexicon.
 27. Saftleven, the daughter of painter Herman Saftleven, made flower pieces in watercolor. The status of artists (whether amateurs or professionals) or their media are not always clear from Kloek's lexicon. See also Online Dictionary of Dutch Women: resources: Huygens.knaw.nl.
 28. Two extant watercolored drawings are held in the Museum Boijmans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, SS 1 (PK), SS 2 (PK).
 29. P. Breuker, P. Karstkarel, V. Mans, *Margareta de Heer (circa 1600–circa 1665), dé Friese kunstenares van de zeventiende eeuw*, exh. cat. (Leeuwarden: Fries Museum, 2002); the oeuvre catalogue includes 90 works on vellum and panel, mostly watercolors. In 1636, the French diplomat Charles Ogier visited her Groningen studio, indicating recognition even at this early date. During her period of greatest productivity—1644–1658—she signed and often dated over forty works. She appears to have enjoyed an active engagement with the cultural sphere of Groningen and Leeuwarden. See *Margareta de Heer*, 23.

30. Nine encomia are included in *Klioos Kraam* (Leeuwarden: Rintjes, 1656), vol. 1. For the Frisian poet Gysbert Japicx's poem on the "artful" Margareta, a reaction to visiting her studio (1650s), see P. Breuker et al, *Margareta de Heer*, 91. For the English translation of Japicx's enumeration of creatures, see K. Van der Stighelen's entry on De Heer in Gaze, ed., *Dictionary of Women Artists*, vol. 1, 657.
31. The catalogue P. Breuker et al, *Margareta de Heer*, 122–24, lists eighteen signed landscapes.
32. Simon Schijnvoet (1653–1727) was a collector of art and *naturalia*. For his *Konstboek: images.wur.nl/digital/collection/coll2/id/504*. On Withoos generally, Catherine Powell, <https://artherstory.net/alida-withoos-creator-of-beauty-and-of-visual-knowledge/> (accessed Feb 6, 2021). See also http://library.wur.nl/speccol/Alida/Alida_Main/AlidaMain_h1_3.htm [16-2-2015 12:33:46] (accessed Feb. 6, 2021).
33. A large number of artists contributed to Block's albums, among them Maria Sybilla Merian, her daughter Johanna Helena Graff Herolt, Maria Moninckx. On Block, E.A. Honig, "The Art of Being 'Artistic': Dutch Women's Creative Practices in the 17th Century," *Woman's Art Journal* 22:2 (Fall 2001–Winter 2002): 36. E. Reitsma, *Maria Sibylla Merian and Daughters, Women of Art and Science*, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Rembrandt House Museum; Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008), 123–26, 228–30.
34. Johanna Helena Graff Herolt, and Dorothea Storm-Kreps (1734–1772), as well as a good number of men. For part of the Album: <https://www.uvaerfgoed.nl/beeldbank/nl/xview/?identifier=hdl:11245/3.27217;keyword=Moninckx+atlas> (accessed Feb. 6, 2021).
35. Lisa Heer, in Gaze, ed., *Dictionary of Women Artists*, vol. 1, 59.
36. Natalie Davis, *Women on the Margins* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995); Goedings, *Afsetters*, 39–40, 165–166; Reitsma, *Maria Sibylla Merian & Daughters*; Martha Moffatt Peacock, review of *Maria Sibylla Merian & Daughters*, by E. Reitsma, *Woman's Art Journal* 31:2 (Fall/Winter 2010): 65–66.
37. *Neues Blumenbuch*, 3 vols., Nuremberg, 1675–80; *Der Raupen wunderbare Verwandlung und sonderbare Blummennahrung*, 3 vols., Nuremberg/Frankfurt/Leipzig, 1679–1717. Kay Etheridge, *The Flowering of Ecology: Maria Sibylla Merian's Caterpillar Book* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020), Ch. 3, on preparatory sheets for the Caterpillar Book, their transformation in each print, indeed the entire process from field work to publication.
38. Translation from Elizabeth Rücker and William T. Stearn, *Maria Sibylla Merian in Surinam* (London: Pion Ltd., 1982).
39. Watercolor designs for the projected book on Surinamese reptiles were in some cases published posthumously in later editions of the *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium*.
40. Tabitha Barber, "The Natural World," in Smith, *Watercolour*. Honig, "Art of Being 'Artistic,'" 36.
41. Alison M. Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate in the Rijksmuseum* (Amsterdam, Staatsuitgeverij, 1988), vol. 2.
42. The Poetry Album's relatively large size, upright format, and simple binding distinguish it from *alba amicorum*. Kettering, *ibid*, vol. 2, 416, on the uniqueness of the Poetry Album.
43. Around 1621, Gerard Sr. executed designs for an illustrated amatory songbook, now *Atlas van Stolk*, Rotterdam. D.P. Snoep, "Een 17de eeuws liedboek met tekeningen van Gerard ter Borch de Oude en Pieter en Roeland van Laer," *Simiolus* 3 (1968/69): 77–134. Kettering, *ibid*, vol. 1, GSr 88–90.
44. Poetry Album, fol. 39v – plus two greys, black, and white, a list probably derived from heraldry. The list is repeated several times in the family collection. See Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Colour Symbolism in Seventeenth-century Dutch Painting," in M. van der Doel, N. van Eck, G. Korevaar, eds, *The Learned Eye, Regarding Art, Theory and the Artist's Reputation* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Univ. Press, 2005).
45. Higonnet, "Secluded vision," 183, made a similar observation about 19th-century amateur women's visual culture, which was destined to remain within the artists' families.
46. Burgomaster Hendrik Wolfsen provided the one interconnection: the laudatory poem (fol.9r, Artbook). He was the father of Aleijda Wolfsen (1648–92), active in The Hague and Zwolle. Honig, "Art of Being Artistic," 36–37; Jan ten Hove, *Het Vrouwenhuis te Zwolle* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1994), 70–71; Lamberthe de Jong, "'Mijn vermaak en kroone': Schilderessen in het Vrouwenhuis in Zwolle in Kloek," *Vrouwen en kunst*, 58–59, n61.
47. Kettering, *Ter Borch*, vol. 2, 626. Such talent and learning are remarkable enough in sons, he wrote, but when daughters have learned so much, it deserves all the more praise.
48. This drive and inborn creative dedication was a standard characteristic attributed to women; Honig, "Art of Being Artistic," 32.
49. Adriana Geerdinx, Artbook, fol.13r.
50. Artbook, fol. 11 (H. Fisscher, 1660). In 1659, the same writer marveled at a woman's ability, fol. 99, Poetry Album.

Kyra Belán

Ed.D., M.F.A., B.F.A.

E.R.A. NOW acrylic on canvas 40"x30" 2018



Social Issues Art

Ceres Gallery 547 W 27th St #201, New York, NY 10001

kyrabelan.com • kyrabelan2013@gmail.com

ANNE RYAN

COLLAGE ARTIST, PAINTER, PRINTMAKER

By Olivia Armandroff

Throughout her life Anne Ryan (1889–1954) sought out various ways to support herself through creative means, mostly visual but also written forms of expression. The narrative of her life is too often essentialized, establishing clear-cut stages of production, culminating in her well-known collages, such as *Collage No. 452* (ca. 1948–54; Fig. 1, Pl. 14), made in the last few years of her life. And the stimuli that galvanized changes in her art are too often attributed not to Ryan's own creative energies but to the celebrated figures she encountered, including canonized male artists whose innovations ostensibly set her off in a new direction.

Born in Hoboken, New Jersey, Ryan began creating art late in life. Orphaned at age thirteen, she was schooled in a convent, married in 1911, and the mother of three by 1919, separating from her husband soon after. In 1931, she moved with her children to Mallorca, Spain, where she wrote poetry and prose, but after two years, with the rise of Franco, the family returned to New Jersey. In 1935, she settled in New York's Greenwich Village, at 174 West Fourth Street. Reveling in this creative milieu around Hans Hofmann and other Abstract Expressionists, she was lured into the visual arts at the age of forty-nine.

Ryan's artistic production is often categorically divided between an early period, during which she was painting and making prints at Stanley William Hayter's Atelier 17, and her so-called epiphany, in February 1948, at Rose Fried's Pinacotheca Gallery, where she encountered the collages of Kurt Schwitters, not unlike his *Merzz 19* (1920; Fig. 2).¹ In this narrative arc, Ryan's final six years reign supreme—a period of furious production of four hundred collage pieces that was cut short by a stroke.² Her legacy as a collage artist has obscured her other production and marginalized her vision as an artist.³ Ryan's production, like the work itself, is layered and calls for contextualization. Her identity as a collage artist needs to be viewed within her larger biographical narrative to reveal the common practices that define her total oeuvre and her artistic vision.

Following Ryan's death, her work remained in the hands of her family. Her daughter, Elizabeth McFadden (b. 1912), who largely shaped Ryan's artistic legacy, defined the collages as her mother's "mature work." In a posthumous (1956) unpublished

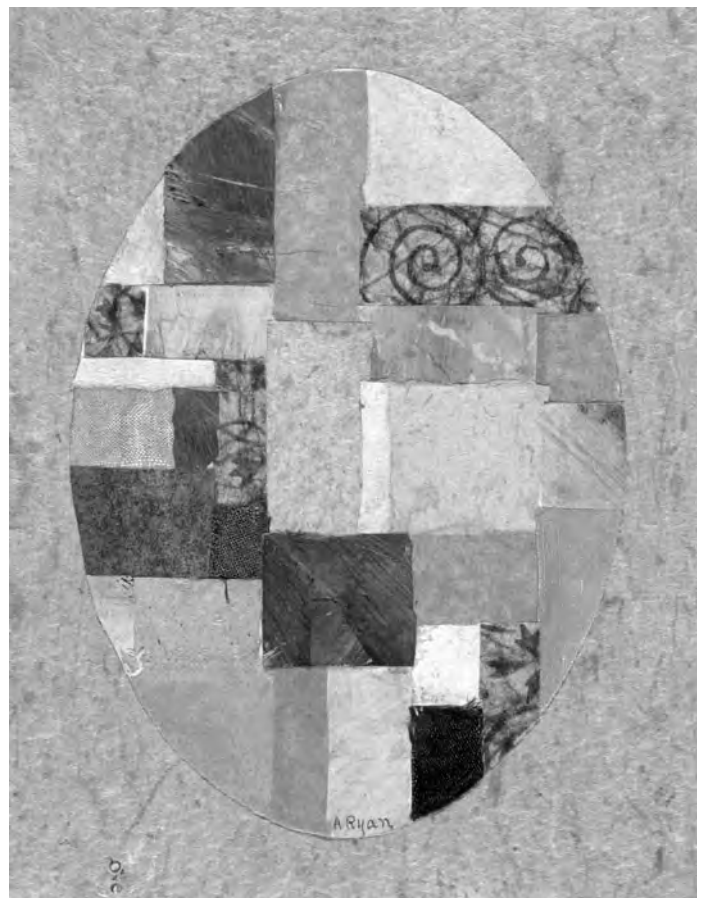


Fig. 1. Anne Ryan, *Collage No. 452* (ca. 1948–54), collage of hand- and machine-made papers, natural and synthetic fabrics, and watercolor and oil paint, on hand-made wove paper, 6 5/8" × 5 1/8". Photo: Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery.

essay, McFadden begins her mother's story with the Schwitters collage exhibition, featuring it as if it were a rebirth, and describing how her mother "began doing collages ... immediately after coming home." She goes on to describe in detail Ryan's movement through the exhibition space, "exclaiming over each one in a passion of delight," how she returned three times, and that it "ignited her abruptly and

fully.”⁴ Such an origin story invests complete responsibility for Ryan’s subsequent production in Schwitters, so that Ryan’s collages, such as *Collage No. 2* (1948; Pl. 15), have been described since as Schwitters-like, compromising her artistic agency. Ryan’s legendary epiphany also served to devalue her earlier work, the many paintings and prints made between 1938 and 1948.

It was to her daughter’s advantage that her mother be appreciated as a collage artist, as McFadden herself was making collages and had her first solo show in 1956.⁵ Like Ryan’s, her collages incorporated scraps of fabric shaped in irregular geometric patterns. In 1968, at Seton Hall University, McFadden’s collages were exhibited alongside her more famous mother’s, helping to establish McFadden as an artist.⁶

Two decades after her death, in 1974, Ryan’s art received fresh interest when Marlborough Gallery, the Brooklyn Museum, and the National Collection of Fine Arts exhibited her collages. The catalogue claimed it was “the first occasion on which a full range of her work in this medium has been exposed to a wider public.”⁷ This recognition marked the beginning of the distribution of Ryan’s estate into public collections. Following the exhibition, four collages entered both the Brooklyn Museum collection and the National Collection of Fine Arts (now the Smithsonian American Art Museum). A series of additional donations and purchases led to exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Yale University Art Gallery,⁸ and the Walker Art Institute (all 1979), and the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (1980).⁹ Because a sizeable collection of paintings, prints, and other media was excluded from this distribution to public institutions,¹⁰ the interest generated in Ryan was entirely through the lens of her collage production.

Still today Ryan’s legacy is inextricably linked to her collages through more recent exhibitions of her work, including at the Musée d’Art Américain in Giverny (France) (2001),¹¹ and in New York at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2010)¹² and the Davis and Langdale Galleries (2017).¹³ Furthermore, Ryan’s representation in group shows, such as “Making Space: Women Artists and Postwar Abstraction” (2017) at MoMA, has featured her collages.

Ryan’s revival in the 1970s corresponded with a moment when collages were playing an important role in the feminist art movement. She used fabric in her collages, something artist-activists Miriam Schapiro (1923–2015) and Melissa Meyer (b. 1946) championed in 1978, coining the term “femmage.”¹⁴ These artists argued that women through time had preserved and gathered scraps of fabrics, making them uniquely prepared to create fabric collages. In this context, Ryan herself became a prescient artist and the ideal prototype for any woman artist of the late 1970s.

At her death, Ryan was celebrated as both a collage artist and a printmaker.¹⁵ In addition to the four hundred collages, Ryan created more than a hundred prints, many of which were done in editions of thirty. During her lifetime, Ryan showed the prints at various New York galleries



Fig. 2. Kurt Schwitters, *Merzz. 19* (1920), collage, 15 15/16" × 11 1/4". Photo: Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery.

(including the Marquie, Laurel, Willard, George Binet, and Kraushaar galleries), and the Betty Parsons Gallery exhibited her collages on three occasions.¹⁶

There were important parallels between Ryan’s printmaking and collage practices. Recent scholarship by Christina Weyl on the inventive techniques of female printmakers at Atelier 17 has made an important contribution in this regard. Investigating Sue Fuller’s soft-ground techniques, Weyl discusses how the women of Atelier 17 were introducing netting, lace, and various fabrics in the preparation of their copper plates for etchings. Thus Ryan likely would have been aware of the use of fabric in the creation of abstractions well before encountering Schwitters’s work. Weyl also found that Ryan carved her woodblocks out of discarded shingles and doors,¹⁷ demonstrating her early predilection for scavenging and using found materials.

Describing the early *Collage, 27: The Flower* (1948, MoMA), in which Ryan made a charcoal drawing on its paper support before affixing translucent swaths of fabric and transforming the sketch into a collage, Weyl likens Ryan’s process to that of a printmaker scratching into an etched plate with a needle.¹⁸ Ryan also used charcoal in *No. 25* (ca. 1948–54; Fig. 3) and several other collages. Weyl pinpointed Ryan’s *Number 319* (1949, Metropolitan Museum of Art) for its inclusion of fishnet, which Ryan had used for her soft-ground plate for *Beside the Sea*.¹⁹ (This fishnet element also appears in *No. 582* in the Yale



Fig. 3. Anne Ryan, *No. 25*, ca. 1948–54, collage of papers, fabrics, with some paint and charcoal on paper, 8" × 6 3/4". Photo: Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery.

University Art Gallery collection.²⁰) Furthermore, Ryan did not abandon wood, which she used extensively in her printmaking—on a list of materials for her collages in the archives is wood shavings.²¹ This annotation may refer to *Collage No. 40* in the Yale University Art Gallery collection, which includes wood splinters.

Ryan's work in both mediums demonstrates an interest in paper. Her woodblocks were frequently printed on the black wrappers from photographic paper, showing an innovative use of alternative, often-discarded papers that continued into her time as a collage artist. (*No. 559* [ca. 1948–54, Yale University Art Gallery] was produced on an envelope, another paper scrap.) While Ryan would iron the black wrappers to flatten the surface, some wrinkles were retained, disrupting the printing of the image and creating new and unforeseen lines and patterns.²² She would continue to subvert the aesthetic of smoothness in her collages, using heavily creased or crumpled sheets, and in several cases cardboard and sandpaper. The gold and silver foil that might have evoked luxury and glitz in *Collage No. 291* (ca. 1948–54; Pl. 16) is instead crushed into pocked crevices, revealing its past life.

At Atelier 17, in 1946, Ryan first met the papermaker Douglass Howell.²³ They developed an enduring relationship

and planned to produce a book together. Howell's experiments with fibers and other ingredients as well as with production techniques resulted in richly textured paper that is among the most frequently recurring components of Ryan's collages. (In 1951, viewing simultaneous exhibitions of Ryan's collages and Lee Krasner's work at Betty Parsons Gallery, Jackson Pollock was inspired to seek out Howell, with whom he also developed a lasting friendship.)

While the common narrative of Ryan's life emphasizes the precedents set by Hayter and Schwitters, attention to her other creative output illuminates her internal drive to teach herself new techniques—creating and innovating, not just following. Her journals are filled with recipes and instructions for various creative projects, such as lamp bases,²⁴ and batik, along with twenty-four stencils which she may have used for that process. She also devoted significant time to decorating tiles with abstract designs that closely resemble the prints she was producing concurrently in the 1940s, for example, *Tile, Number 8* (1948–50, Fig. 4) and *Constellation – Triangulum* (Yale Art Gallery).

Ryan sewed all her own clothes and made jewelry. Her archive includes notes from October 1944 for costuming a ballet production of *Beauty and the Beast*. Her clothing and costume-making endeavors had familiarized Ryan with the qualities of different fabrics before she embarked on her collage work. She used a range of clothing fabrics for her collages as well as fishnet and leather, as in *Number 176* (ca. 1949, Metropolitan Museum of Art), MoMA's *Collage, 102* (1948), and the Yale University Art Gallery's *No. 104* (ca. 1948–54).

Ryan's significant production in painting has received scant scholarly attention. Three years before joining Hayter's studio, with Hans Hofmann's encouragement she had begun to paint. When her paintings were exhibited in New York in 1941 at the Pinacotheca Gallery, where she would encounter Schwitters's work seven years later, a reviewer described: "displays in oil and pastel, range from the faintly representational to the thoroughly non-objective. Design is lively and her color often vivid."²⁵ McFadden largely disparaged her mother's paintings, writing that, "Using small pasteboard canvases, her first oils were primitive landscapes and portraits."²⁶ In fact, Ryan's lack of training resulted in inadequate grounds, leading to severe condition issues for many of her early works.²⁷ *Still Life folded in a Cloth* (1939; Fig. 5) was completed in oil and chalk on an artist's board with a surface irregularly and incompletely covered with plaster, resembling a fresco.²⁸ Similarly, Ryan had left her artist board exposed behind *Spanish Noon* (1938) suggesting she may have had an interest in revealing her artistic materials.²⁹ Even in these early compositions, Ryan was piecing compositional elements together as she would later in her collages. An early series of seated women, done in 1940, including *Woman at Table*, *Woman in Black*, and *Portrait (Woman with Muff)*, shows her capturing pattern and achieving simplified, abstracted lines in her representation of



Fig. 4. Anne Ryan, *Tile, Number 8* (1948–50), ceramic, 4 1/4" x 4 1/4". Photo: Courtesy of Susan Teller Gallery.

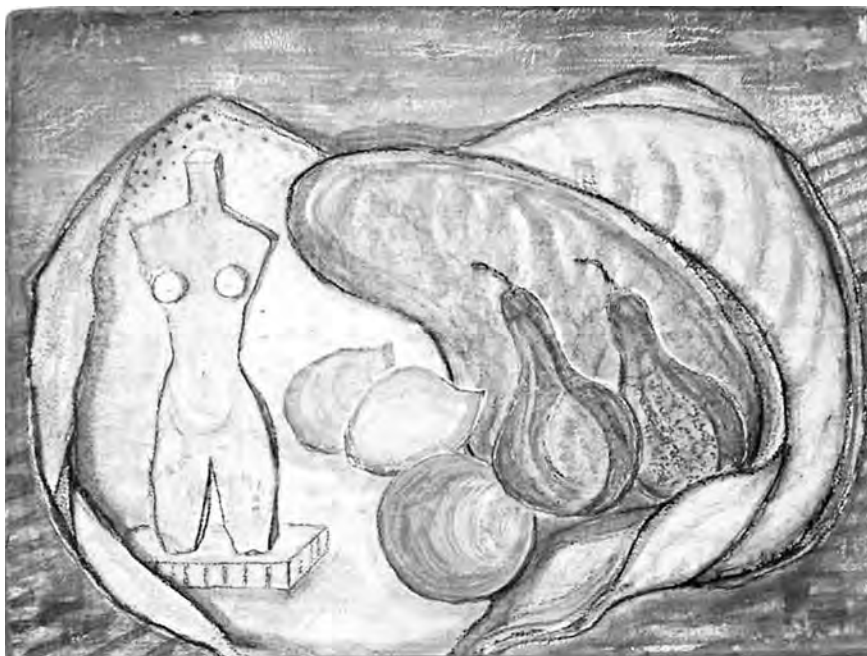


Fig. 5. Anne Ryan, *Still Life Folded in a Cloth* (1939), oil and chalk on plaster on artist's board, 9" x 12". Photo: Courtesy of Susan Teller Gallery.

forms.³⁰ The color combinations in *Surrealist Landscape* (ca. 1941–45, Los Angeles County Museum of Art), featuring curving tan shapes set against a dark, black background, echo what she was doing at the same time with her woodblocks, where the strong contrasts contributed to an eerie, disquieting effect.

Unusual for the Abstract Expressionists, Ryan's paintings were small—even smaller than some of her prints. Her journals include lists of painting titles, which like her print titles indicate that she was creating representational as well as abstract work.³¹ While in some instances, paintings and prints share a title, other times they are more closely related,³² as seen in a photograph of "Painting / Wine glass," which has the same composition as a similarly titled woodcut (1948; Fig. 6).³³ This constellation of objects was one Ryan frequently experimented with in other paintings (1942; Pl. 17), drawings, and prints. Ryan never abandoned painting and showed these works at Laurel Gallery in 1948, the same year as her first exhibition of collages at Marquie Gallery.

She continued to paint and exhibit until her death.³⁴ At the end of her life, Ryan was working on a new series of oils, titled, like her contemporaneous collages, with roman numerals. Based on photographs in her archives, the paintings were abstracts, and a typed list of prices includes twelve works. With titles ranging between *Painting I* and *Painting XXII*,³⁵ the largest measure 36 by 51 inches, which corresponds with a similar change in her collage production at the time. Only one of these, *Painting X* (1953) survives in a public collection, at the Newark Museum. An inscription in her journal above the list identifies these as the paintings intended for a display at Betty Parsons Gallery beginning in January 1954. Reviews of the exhibit emphasized the difference between her paintings and collages. One critic noted how, "released from the self-imposed severity of her collages, Miss Ryan's oils are a freely organized but more rewarding chromatic experience. The best of these are marked by soaring movement of forms and color,

overlaid with geometric segments. Further agitated by rising geysers of black confetti spatter, these may suggest the fireworks of a distant carnival, or evoke the stirrings of a brave new world, as you wish."³⁶ Another reviewer wrote:

She has managed to break clearly away from the rules of her collage and in three large paintings, Numbers 1, 2 and 10, has expressed the art of the sudden wish. This is wish-fulfillment brought clearly from all that she has known about painting into a revelatory style in which the preconceived idea is never present; everything takes place directly before us on the canvas, by accident, by the inner wish to relate what can be found in the interior. The thin colors move intuitively, a small triangle is sketched inadvertently and then suddenly a dark line precedes from technique overtly used, but discovered almost by chance.³⁷

An undated list for what seems to be twenty-five paintings includes "ballet dancer" and "blue landscape," with the remainder described by their colors. Several of these cite Mondrian: "1. whites + black (Mondrian) / 2. Blues blk white (Mondrian)" and "s w blk lines (Mondrian)."³⁸ Color was important, and she used a great many hues—blue, yellow, rose, green, purple, red, aqua, orange, along with grey, white, and black (once qualified as "stark"). It seems likely that, had she lived, she would have continued to pursue these free, abstract paintings along with her collages.

Ryan's painterly technique seems to have shaped the way she understood her print production. In an article for *The Tiger's Eye* about her woodcut practice, Ryan begins by relating it to painting: "Color woodblock is attractive to me because the



Fig. 6. Anne Ryan, *The Wine Glass*, (1948), color woodcut, 19" x 26". Photo: Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery.

simple method I use is almost as effective as painting." She goes on to describe "the ink being put on with very small rollers," and that "oil base ink can be applied as heavy as paint or as thin as needed."³⁹ For *Woman in a Blue Stock* (1945), from an edition of forty-five, including one in the Brooklyn Museum, Ryan describes her application of colors for each block, suggesting she was blending different pigments as she would for a painting: "color for background little red mixed in to redish-purple [sic]," or the "face color – red a touch of yellow + white."⁴⁰ While she describes the use of rollers, her notes call for a more painterly application for the face color and the blue and white—to be "put on with fingers."⁴¹ It seems Ryan experimented with using oils because she wrote, "Note: it is best to use colored inks for color, not oil paints."⁴² But as her notes for the five blocks used in *Acrobat* (ca. 1946, MoMA), suggest, she used varying thicknesses of inks, writing that for the first block "black must be thin ink to let the white show through" while in the second block she describes "yellow, thick inks, 2 coats, 5 hours apart, Let dry over night."⁴³

The relationship between Ryan's painting and collage production is less clear, although her skill with the paintbrush is evident in her collages, as in the late, large-scale Collage #707 (1953; Pl. 18). Again, her chief preoccupation was color, and she never ceased to explore its application. Many collages include paint among their many materials, and Ryan frequently painted the scraps of paper before setting them into a composition. In other cases, the supports are lavished with washes of watercolor before collaged elements are applied, and, more frequently, Ryan applied oil, watercolor, and india ink paint over the compositional elements to create independent designs.

In writing about her mother's legacy McFadden

emphasizes Ryan's "pure joy" and "purity of spirit" when creating collages.⁴⁴ She denied that her mother "gave any indication of seeing in Schwitters's work a philosophical content." She described her mother's "battle against gadgets" and ultimately concluded her mother's artwork had "naivete." This characterization of her mother as simplistic and anti-intellectual dangerously suggests that Ryan lacked a deeper purpose when creating art, placing the complete value of her work in its aesthetic qualities and her technique. But Ryan was not creating art in a vacuum.

Analyses that focus on Ryan exclusively through her collages and her production of abstract compositions ignore the earlier representational works. Ryan's prints and paintings were more diverse. Her paintings included religious and architectural subjects (often inspired by her years in Spain), and her prints were issued in series dedicated to constellations, religious subjects, and the circus. A note in her archives reflects her desire to keep the series intact rather than letting them be sold piecemeal, suggesting the importance Ryan invested in their narrative purpose.⁴⁵ Her interest

in plot can easily be explained given her career as a writer. (Ryan continued her writing, and in her last years published three short stories: "Fear" (1952), "She was Divorced" (1954), and "Ludivica" (1954), while a fourth, "The Darkest Leaf," was published posthumously, in 1958.⁴⁶)

It can be said that Ryan's interest in architecture parallels her layered approach to her paintings, prints, and collages. Based on her notes on printing, she looked at the woodblock as a ground upon which to build up an image. This layered construction is most evident in her collages, of course, where she collected material, planned compositions, and fitted parts together as a whole, often setting multiple scraps on top of one another. Thoughtful, meditative, and deeply personal, Ryan's work has a continuity through the resurgence of various themes and preoccupations—from narrative storylines, to religious and architectural subjects. Whether in her abstractions or her representational work, Anne Ryan's practice was far from naïve.

Throughout her career, Ryan's art built upon her past experiences. Always engaged with the world around her and reflecting upon her environment, she loved discovering new materials to work with. It is important to acknowledge the diversity and creative spirit that drove her artistic production, including bodies of work in ceramics, paint, multiple print media, and collage. While her collages represent her best known and possibly most accomplished output, they are but one component of Ryan's rich and diverse artistic career. Ryan's various practices informed each other, resulting in a unified body of work at the end of her life. •

Olivia Armandroff is a Ph.D. student in Art History at the University of Southern California.

Notes

- Katherine S. Dreier and the Pinacotheca Gallery, *Kurt Schwitters* exh. cat. (New York, NY: January 1948).
- Anne Ryan, Sarah Faunce, and Brooklyn Museum, *Anne Ryan, Collages* (Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Museum, 1974), 5–6.
- Ann Gibson, "Universality and Difference in Women's Abstract Painting: Krasner, Ryan, Sekula, Piper, and Streat," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 117.
- Elizabeth Eaton McFadden, "Anne Ryan," *The Saint Elizabeth Alumna* (Spring 1956): 2–4. Anne Ryan Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, reel 88, grid 610. (hereafter: Anne Ryan Papers). This unpublished manuscript by her daughter constitutes a primary source of biographical and other information on the artist.
- "Current Show a 'First' in New Jersey," 1968. Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 978.
- Signed Agreement for the exhibition "Anne Ryan and Elizabeth McFadden Collages" at the Student Center Art Gallery / Seton Hall University, January 11, 1967, Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 450. From this exhibition, a work by McFadden entered the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. See "Banners of the Sun," New York: Museum of Modern Art, https://www.moma.org/collection/works/37376?artist_id=3882&locale=en&page=1&sov_referrer=artist, accessed Aug. 12, 2019.
- Ryan, Faunce, and Brooklyn Museum, *Anne Ryan, Collages*, 3.
- "Acquisitions," *Art Journal* 39, no. 1 (1979): 62–63, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/776333>, accessed July 14, 2019.
- "Anne Ryan – Biography," New York: Washburn Gallery, <http://origin.www.washburngallery.com/artists/anne-ryan/biography>, accessed July 14, 2019.
- The Yale University Art Gallery seems to also have received a set of Ryan's etchings, *Constellations* and two woodcuts, which were mentioned in the gallery's press release but seem not to have been included in the exhibition.
- Claudine Armand, *Anne Ryan: Collages* (Giverny, FR: Musée d'Art Américain, 2001).
- "The Prismatic Eye," New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2010/anne-ryan>, accessed July 14, 2019.
- "Anne Ryan—Collages," New York: Davis & Langdale Company Inc., <http://www.davisandlangdale.com/Pages/AnneRyanCollagesW17.html>, accessed July 14, 2019.
- Miriam Schapiro and Melissa Meyer, "Waste Not Want Not: An Inquiry into what Women Saved and Assembled—FEMMAGE," *Heresies* I, no. 4 (Winter 1977–78): 66–69, <https://www.in-terms-of.com/pdf/femmage.pdf>, accessed July 14, 2019.
- Betty Parsons Gallery hosted a memorial show in 1955 that included her collages. The Kraushaar Gallery hosted a memorial show in 1957 featuring 102 woodblock prints.
- "Anne Ryan: Partial List of One-Man Shows of Anne Ryan," April 1967, Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 265–66.
- Christina Weyl, "Innovation and Abstraction: Women Artists and Atelier 17," e-catalogue essay for exhibition at Pollock-Krasner House & Study Center (Summer 2016): 13, http://www.zimmerlimuseum.rutgers.edu/sites/zimmerli/files/Atelier%2017.PKPub_.pdf, accessed July 14, 2019.
- Christina Weyl, *The Women of Atelier 17: Modernist Printmaking in Midcentury New York* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2019), 115.
- Christina Weyl, "The Printed Collage," in Alex Taylor (ed.), *In Focus: String Composition 128 1964 by Sue Fuller*, Tate Research Publication, 2018, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/in-focus/string-composition-128/printed-collage>, accessed July 14, 2019.
- "No. 582," Yale University Art Gallery, <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/56605>, accessed July 14, 2019.
- "2 -- ARyan Collages show – Betty Parsons Gallery, N. Y. April 4–24, 1955," Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 332.
- Susan Teller, "Anne Ryan: The Black-Line Woodcuts 1945–48," New York: Susan Teller Gallery, <http://susantellergallery.blogspot.com/p/black-line-woodcuts-1945-48.html>, accessed July 14, 2019.
- American Craft Council, *Douglass Morse Howell Retrospective* (New York: American Craft Council, 1982), 6.
- "Directions for making Lamp Base," Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 126.
- "Abstract Shows Flood 57th Street," *The Art Digest* (March 15, 1941), 9, Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 1006.
- McFadden, "Anne Ryan."
- Susan Teller, phone conversation with the author, July 30, 2019.
- "Anne Ryan," Susan Teller Gallery, http://www.susantellergallery.com/cgi/STG_art.pl?artist=ryan, accessed August 12, 2019.
- Katherine Degen (at Kraushaar Galleries), email conversation with the author, July 17, 2019.
- Ibid.
- "Engravings," Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 104.
- It is interesting to compare two similarly titled works, both dated 1948, in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in this regard. *Number 14*, an oil on canvas, bears a close connection to *Study after "Number 14,"* a collage. The designation of the collage as a "study," may suggest that Ryan sometimes used collage as a device to help her to conceptualize her oil compositions. McFadden identifies this painting as the one her mother was working on when she visited the Schwitters exhibition. See Elizabeth McFadden, "Anne Ryan: A Personal Remembrance," ca. mid-1980s, 199, manuscript excerpt courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- "Painting / Wine Glass," Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 835. Engravings.
- This fact was incorrectly reported in 1992, in a biographical statement claiming that "Anne Ryan devoted herself completely to making collages during the years 1948 to 1954, abandoning the oil painting and printmaking she had been doing since the 1930s." See Lisa Mintz Messinger, *Abstract Expressionism: Works on Paper: Selections from the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), 123.
- "Show at Betty Parsons Gallery / 15 E 57 St / Jan 4-23-54," Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 323 (a typed note of her own, not a publication).
- Michael Lenson, "The Realm of Art - - 3 Solo Shows - - 3 Viewpoints," January 1954, Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 966 (clipping without a newspaper acknowledgement).
- Art News* (January 1954), 69, Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 1025.
- "Paintings," Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 304.
- "Anne Ryan," April 2, 1941, Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 1045.
- "Details of Printing," Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 24.
- "Mark Sheet of Pap," Anne Ryan Papers.
- "Colored Wood Block Printing," Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 22.
- "Details of Printing of the Three Blocks of The Circus," Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 23.
- McFadden, "Anne Ryan."
- "Circus Prints," Anne Ryan Papers, reel 88, grid 306.
- "Anne Ryan – Biography," Washburn Gallery.

Sofonisba's Lesson: A Renaissance Artist and Her Work

By Michael W. Cole
Princeton University Press, 2019

Reviewed by Lois M. Eliason

In 1558, Annibale Caro wrote to the aspiring Cremonese nobleman Amilcare Anguissola, that he made a special trip to the Anguissola household but “a single visit” wouldn’t be satisfactory (29). In his letter Annibale also expressed the desire to own a painting by the hand of Sofonisba, Amilcare’s daughter, whose artistic reputation had made the household a destination for patrons. At this point in her career, esteemed individuals had already sat for Sofonisba, and samples of her work were received by other artists and patrons including Pope Julius III, Michelangelo, and Philip II, king of Spain.

In this monograph, *Sofonisba's Lesson: A Renaissance Artist and Her Work*, Michael Cole seeks to consolidate the scholarship on the painter and to define her crucial role in a family that was incredibly motivated to secure status, wealth, and an enduring legacy in and beyond Italy. For these reasons, the book is a valuable resource for future scholarship on Sofonisba Anguissola (ca. 1535–1625) and the role of women in Renaissance society. It is filled with high-quality illustrations and includes a comprehensive and fully illustrated color catalogue that is organized into four sections: paintings and drawings securely attributed to Sofonisba, works largely accepted by specialists, works with less scholarly consensus regarding attribution, and works attributed to Sofonisba in modern scholarship but accepted by only a few specialists since 1994. This final section is followed by an unillustrated list of works in private collections that have been attributed to Sofonisba since 1900, including paintings (mostly of unidentified identities) that assumed an attribution to Sofonisba in nineteenth-century source material, and works mentioned by early sources but that are currently untraced or without certain identification.



Fig. 1 Sofonisba Anguissola, *The Chess Game* (1555), oil on canvas, 28 3/8" x 38 1/8". Muzeum Narodowe, Poznań.

The book is structured around the general themes of teaching and learning as a way to uncover Sofonisba’s familial and professional relationships. From her schooling in the workshop of Bernardino Campi, to her becoming a painting teacher to her younger sisters as well as the queen of Spain, Cole underlines how Sofonisba’s oeuvre reflects these pedagogical relationships. In the Introduction, Cole admits, however, that structuring Sofonisba’s career around these specific themes is limiting (13), especially as Sofonisba was competing for commissions in a male-dominated profession during a time period that valued and celebrated the individual accomplishments of men.

Writing this in the wake of the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements, which calls for a reevaluation of how we receive and reiterate histories and subjects, I can’t help but wonder about how scholars can begin to rethink the study of Italian Renaissance art, which is largely built up by the personalities and talents that produced its well-known heroes like Leonardo and Michelangelo.

While there is no doubt that Sofonisba encountered more hurdles in her profession than men, nontraditional approaches (such as feminist and global perspectives) could further illuminate Cole’s work on how historically underrepresented bodies from the time period navigated the complicated network of social and economic systems for personal and intellectual freedom.

In chapter one, Cole demonstrates how much of Sofonisba’s professional success was enabled by her father, an aspiring noble who couldn’t afford dowries for his daughters. As the oldest of seven children (six girls and one boy), Sofonisba was a co-conspirator and agent of a family corporation that sought to elevate and secure its status and reputation through art.

This cultivation of family honor is further addressed in the discussion of *The Chess Game* (1555; Fig. 1), which bears the inscription on the chessboard “by the maiden Sephonisba Angussola [sic], daughter of Amilcare, painted from the true effigies of three of her sisters and of her maidservant, 1555” (25). The painting was in the family’s

home by the 1560s, and was seen by Vasari, who wrote about it in the 1568 edition of *Lives*, where he also mentions the noble reputation of Amilcare.

The specificity of the brocades and silks of the sisters' costumes along with the pearls and gemstones highlight the noble status of the sisters. Popular in aristocratic circles, Sofonisba would continue to explore this genre in her portraits of Queen Isabel de Valois that she painted during the mid-1560s. Cole suggests that Sofonisba's careful studies of textiles made the painting a promotional tool advertising the intellectual pastimes that took place in the Anguissola household (90–91). Documents support the fact that Amilcare was not wealthy, and additional works reveal that Sofonisba reused her props for other portraits. Here, the oriental tapestry covering the table, a central feature in the painting, was a widely understood signifier of wealth by the mid-1550s. The same textile reappears in Sofonisba's *Portrait of a Bearded Man* (c. 1557–60), where the sitter's status as a noble intellectual is confirmed by his costume and setting (cat. 30). In addition to reusing props, Sofonisba's oeuvre shows that her subjects are largely interchangeable because of the way she depicted them. One cannot dismiss the similarities amongst her figures' poses and gestures, whether they are playing the keyboard, in the act of painting or writing, or even playing a game of chess.

Recent restorations of the double portrait in Siena showing Campi painting a portrait of Sofonisba (dated to the late 1550s) reveal that the artist painted her left arm in different positions (including the familiar bent-at-elbow position) before arriving at the final version that shows her holding a pair of gloves. Chapter two delves into post-restoration discoveries that also revealed an extravagant red costume underneath the overpainting of a plain dress that was similar to many of Sofonisba's self-portraits from 1554–58. Cole suggests that Campi could be the creator of the painting, and in turn, the inventor of Sofonisba's public image (64–67). The newly restored surface highlights the costume's extravagant textiles and reveals that the sitter was fashioned in a manner that is highly



Fig. 2. Sofonisba Anguissola, *Portrait of a Nun (Elena Anguissola?)* (1551), oil on canvas, 27" x 21". Southampton City Art Gallery.

reminiscent of Titian. In this sense, the portrait is seen as an attempt to seal Campi's fading reputation as an artist and mentor. Whether the portrait was painted by Sofonisba or Campi (or both), it undoubtedly presents the image of a noblewoman rather than a professional female artist. In her late career Sofonisba would, in fact, serve as a noble consort (not an artist) in the court of Isabel de Valois.

Chapters three and four explore the ways in which Sofonisba and other women sought avenues that were available to female professionals and social climbers during the mid 1500s. Sofonisba was named after a Carthaginian heroine,

and we know Amilcare took great care in choosing auspicious names for all his children (including Elena, Minerva, Lucia, Anna Maria, and Asdrubale). In light of this detail, her sister Elena's eventual adoption of the name Minerva is significant. Sisters Elena and Minerva were used frequently as models for Sofonisba's portraits, which makes sense, given the fact that Elena was sent to train in Campi's workshop with Sofonisba. However, by 1557 (at latest), Elena decided to take orders at a convent in Mantua, where she took on the name of their younger sister Minerva, named for the ancient goddess of wisdom. The fact that Elena took on a pagan name when she

took religious orders is interesting and might suggest that she was seeking a type of intellectual and financial mobility more than a refuge for her religious devotion.¹ Since the fifteenth century, convents provided a legitimate alternative to traditional marriage, and they were understood as spaces where young women could access social, intellectual, and financial freedom. Sofonisba painted at least two portraits (cats. 12, 128) that show the sitter, most likely Elena, wearing a nun's habit and holding various props that display (but do not confirm) her religious devotion (1551 Fig. 2).

The importance of name association is also seen in Sofonisba's *Portrait of a Woman* (c. 1558–59). Here, the sitter, possibly her sister Minerva, is bedecked in a noble costume and jewels, with a large pendant depicting the goddess clearly visible (81).² In *The Chess Game* Minerva, seated right, is featured prominently before a landscape that resembles those made by Leonardo. Cole points out that the painting adopts other compositional devices from Leonardo, and that dreamy landscapes like the one featured in the *Mona Lisa* may have been intended to evoke the intellectual and Humanist mindset that was analogous with the Renaissance. The landscape in *The Chess Game* that frames Minerva's portrait becomes suggestive that Sofonisba saw herself as

an artist who was intellectual and artistically on a par with the masters in her field.

More discussion on the prominence of the costumes and textiles in the painting as well as a general attentiveness to surface details in many of Sofonisba's paintings that "encouraged a confrontation between paintings and textiles" could be illuminating (80). Cole mentions that needlepoint and embroidery (typically associated with women) were looked down upon. Recent scholarship shows, however, that these "amateur arts" could provide a lucrative form of income. It would be interesting to explore if and how Sofonisba (and her family) navigated the divergent practices of painting and amateur art making as a means for financial stability.

Chapters five and six deal with Sofonisba's time in the Spanish court and how she paved the way for women artists to have a professional life in Italy during the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Sofonisba was regarded as "not just a famous individual but also an example, a model of what a woman with the right inclination, skill, and parental support could become" (154). In this regard, it is useful to rethink how her works cemented her role as a creative collaborator within a familial corporation that was seeking financial stability as well as an enduring legacy. •

Lois M. Eliason is an independent scholar and adjunct professor based in Minneapolis, MN. Her interests include the influence of non-western arts in shaping the Italian Renaissance. She is currently leading a project on building a comprehensive bibliographic resource on this topic with a team of graduate students (available in 2021).

Notes

1. For agency of nuns or lay women associated with convents, see Mary D. Garrard, "Who was Ginevra de' Benci? Leonardo's Portrait and Its Sitter Recontextualized," *Artibus et Historiae* 27, no. 53 (2006): 23–56, for Ginevra's association with Le Murate, a powerful Benedictine convent in Florence that established an ongoing and extensive business relationship with the Medici family. See also Nicholas A. Eckstein, "The Widows' Might: Women's Identity and Devotion in the Brancacci Chapel," *Oxford Art Journal* 28, no. 1 (2005): 101–18, for lay female devotion to S.M. del Carmine, Florence, and the powerful financial agency of widows.
2. Cole's discussion on needlework and embroidery reinforces their inferior status to the professional arts. However, Elizabeth Alice Honig, in "The Art of Being 'Artistic': Dutch Women's Creative Practices in the 17th Century," *Woman's Art Journal* 22, no. 2 (Fall 2001–Winter 2002): 31–39, illustrates the financial stability the amateur arts could provide by revealing the high prices experienced Dutch women needleworkers and (paper-cutting) scissor artists were paid for their works.

The Life and Work of Rosalba Carriera (1673–1757): The Queen of Pastel

By Angela Oberer
Amsterdam University Press, 2020

Reviewed by Rosie Razzall

I have been attacked by the English: I need to do their portraits and for this reason, I am not able to send anything else" (118). This complaint in 1721 by the Venetian pastellist Rosalba Carriera to the French painter Nicolas Vleughels captures the clamoring demands of Carriera's English patrons, whose overwhelming desire to obtain one of her

pastels left her swamped with work. But while Carriera enjoyed the position of international female *peintre-du-jour* in the early eighteenth century, by the twentieth century her reputation had suffered from multiple marginalizations, not least that of her gender. Her choice of pastel as a medium also contributed to her being sidelined in histories of eighteenth-century painting. More generally, her style and subjects—portraits, allegories, and personifications, mainly of women and often with attributes such as fruit, flowers, and birds—belong to the 'elegant eroticism' of the Rococo that was so disliked by Diderot and Voltaire, and later disdained by modernist sensibilities. In art historical scholarship, especially material

published in English, Carriera and her work have been neglected in ways that the Grand Tourist from the 1720s, competing to gain a sitting with this famous Venetian artist, might struggle to comprehend. As the first monograph on Rosalba Carriera to be published in English, this new study goes some way to address this lacuna.

As Oberer sets out in her introduction, the Italian art historian Bernardina Sani carried out important work in the 1980s to assemble many of the surviving sources, letters, and diaries relating to Rosalba Carriera, and published in 1988 a catalogue raisonné of her miniatures and pastels that was updated in 2007. Both Thea Burns and Neil Jeffares have made outstanding contributions to under-

standing the technical aspects of Carriera's work, compiling and interrogating the source material, and situating her work among a detailed history of pastellists and pastel-making. Recent bibliography also exists in German and French, including another new biography by Albane Julien (2019). A handful of scholars, notably Shearer West, have begun to regard Carriera and her work in the context of wider questions of gender, agency, and self-fashioning; and while Carriera has begun to be considered as a powerful example of how a female artist achieved great autonomy, much more can yet be done to resurrect Carriera from the periphery and fully situate her in a feminist history of art.

Oberer's book weaves together elements of this remarkable artist's biography, with extended discussion of a few key pastels and broader questions about her self-fashioning. Spread throughout the book are sections covering Carriera's upbringing as the well-educated daughter of a lawyer and a lacemaker, her early career as a miniature painter, and her acceptance to the Accademia di San Luca in Rome in 1705. The author outlines Carriera's three visits "abroad," to Paris, Modena, and Vienna, and the cultivation of a highly successful business based from her home on the Grand Canal. Oberer summarizes Carriera's international networks, setting out her three main groups of patrons—in Britain, France, and Germany—and touches on her friendships with scholars, amateurs, and collectors such as Anton Maria Zanetti, Apostolo Zeno, Pierre Crozat, and Pierre-Jean Mariette. She also sets out the artist's connections with the court in Dresden, and the obsessive collecting of her pastels by Augustus the Strong and his son, Prince Frederick Christian of Saxony, that ensured the foundation of the largest collection of her works displayed in the *Kabinett der Rosalba* (now the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden). By the time she died in 1757, Carriera was an extraordinarily wealthy artist. Inventories show that on her death she had 24,556 ducats, far more than the equally successful Antonio Canaletto, who left only 2,588, or Sebastiano Ricci, with 7,196 ducats (108).



Fig. 1. Rosalba Carriera, *A Nymph from the retinue of Apollo* (1721), pastel on paper, 24 1/4" x 21 1/2". Paris, Louvre, Cabinet des dessins, inv. 4800. © bpk/Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden/Elke Estel/Hans-Peter Klut.

Much of this material can be found in resources elsewhere, not least Jeffares's indefatigable online *Dictionary of Pastellists*, and though Oberer provides a convenient synthesis of existing information, this book occasionally misses details that should make the scholar wary of relying on it as a definitive biography. The author discusses as autograph, for example, a treatise on the fabrication of pastel colors that was published in 2005 as a manuscript by Carriera (102), but which Jeffares has recently suggested is a copy after a treatise by Christian Ludwig Agricola from 1784 and has no connection with Carriera. In fact, it is characteristic of the approach throughout the book that the author summarizes key primary sources, rather

than interrogating their contents afresh. This will provide a useful springboard for those newly discovering the artist but is one that existing Carriera scholars might find unsatisfying.

Oberer's book nevertheless fits well among recent attempts to ask valuable broader questions about the nature of Carriera's business, her ability as a female artist to navigate societal expectations, and the shrewd ways in which she appears to have taken control of her image and identity. The final chapter includes an insightful section on Carriera's house and studio on the Grand Canal, a richly furnished small palazzo that was simultaneously a respectable home, a studio attended by pupils, a gallery for displaying and advertising her works, and a fashion-

able space for entertaining, receiving visitors, and serving tea, coffee, and chocolate. As well as the reputational controls that could be exercised through this physical space, Oberer discusses the role that her many self-portraits played in projecting an image of the artist. In chapter three, Oberer describes the importance of “owning a Carriera,” emphasizing the fact that many patrons were so keen to get their hands on a work by her that the subject of the work, even its quality, was immaterial. In 1712, for example, Giorgio Maria Rapparini wrote to ask for anything he could get his hands on, “some beautiful Nymph, or Bacchante, or little farmer woman ... like I saw at your place, when I passed by to see you in your house” (129). The popularity of Carriera’s work often was wrapped up with the celebrity and identity of the artist herself.

In fact, it is a paradox that many of the factors that have contributed to Carriera’s being undervalued in art history are the same ones that she was able to exploit to her commercial benefit. Carriera chose to work in pastel, a medium considered suitable for women but less valued academically. However, the advantages of pastel (speed of execution; portable works that could be easily shipped from Venice across the continent) meant that she was to carve out a successful corner of the market, one that was unthreatening to male colleagues as well as bound up with her womanhood. Oberer also explores the importance of Carriera’s decision to remain unmarried in maintaining autonomy over her business and career. Picking up on themes that were first proposed by Shearer West, she argues that, contrary to the persistent trope

propounded by her earliest biographers that Carriera’s regrettable ‘ugliness’ was what freed her to pursue her art, refusing to marry was a personal decision that gave her the freedom to continue with her business (236). In this respect, Carriera is compared with other female painters—Giovanna Garzoni (1600–70), Maria van Oosterwijck (1630–93), or Elisabetta Sirani (1638–65)—who also shunned marriage and its limitations (218). Oberer proposes that Carriera was instead able to cultivate a persona as “a virginal celibate woman who lived the exemplary life of a ‘holy’ painter” (222), living faithfully with her mother and sisters in Venice. Indeed, Carriera seems to have successfully combined several elements of feminine virtue—piety, modesty, domesticity, the polite arts—in developing her thriving home-based business.

The author rightly emphasizes the significance of Carriera’s acceptance to the prestigious French Académie Royale in 1720, the first foreign female artist to receive this honor (148). An extensive discussion of the piece that Carriera sent to the academy, as was required as a condition of her membership, demonstrates the ways in which Carriera carefully trod the necessary boundaries of respectability, modesty, and humility in sending a work to this strictly hierarchical and male-dominated organisation. The pastel shows a nymph from Apollo’s retinue, carrying a laurel wreath (1721; Fig. 1). By choosing a female subject, Carriera was able not only to escape the problem of being judged on her accuracy in anatomy but also to prompt a connection between the subject and its female creator. In a description of the work sent in advance of its arrival, Carriera wrote that the

nymph “is about to present to the Academy of Painting ... a laurel crown,” but that she prefers “the lowest position in this very illustrious Academy to the heights of Parnassus” (153). Oberer suggests that “she flattered her hosts and publicized herself as an intellectual, professional, and worthy member of the Academy” (162), though she might also be said to be carefully positioning herself as a modest nymph, unthreatening to the higher ranks of male painters who occupied the summit of the mountain.

There are frequent comparisons between Carriera and the female artists who went before and after, particularly Sirani, Angelica Kauffman (1741–1807) and Elisabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun (1755–1842). While some may feel this comes at the expense of a detailed contextual analysis of the specific conditions of eighteenth-century Venice, the repeated focus on Carriera’s complex methods of self-fashioning makes a valid point about the need to pull her out of the occasionally rarefied technical study of the history of pastel, and into the equally fruitful context of female artistic production. Oberer ends by noting that the book offers “scholars on art history, gender studies, sociology, psychology and material culture a broader base for more in-depth research on the various themes” (298), a fair self-assessment that opens the floor to further reappraisal of an artist who so effectively managed to exploit many of the apparent disadvantages of her gender. •

Rosie Razzall is Curator of Prints and Drawings at Royal Collection Trust, Windsor Castle, and is co-author of *Canaletto and the Art of Venice* (2017).

Angelica Kauffman

Edited by Bettina Baumgärtel, with contributions by Helen Valentine, Johannes Myssok, and Inken Maria Holubec
Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, and Royal Academy of Arts, London with Hirmer, 2020

Reviewed by Wendy Wassying Roworth

The Swiss-Austrian painter Angelica Kauffman (1741–1807) was one of the most successful and celebrated artists in the second half of the eighteenth century. After early studies in Italy, where she established her career and reputation under the guidance of her artist-father, she spent fifteen years in England. She became a fashionable portrait painter, though her

more significant achievement was as a history painter of classical, literary, and religious subjects, a rare distinction for a woman artist. Kauffman became a Founding Member of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768, one of only two women, along with Mary Moser (1744–1819). She was a prolific artist, and many of her compositions were reproduced as engravings and widely

collected. In 1781 she returned to Italy as a wealthy woman at the top of her profession, and her career continued to flourish with an international clientele of Grand Tourists and European royalty and friendships with leading artists, writers, poets, and scholars.

This catalogue was intended to accompany an exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, scheduled to open in June 2020, until the pandemic forced cancellation. The exhibit originated at the Kunstpalast Museum, Düsseldorf, where curator and editor Bettina Baumgärtel is head of the painting collection and founder of the Angelica Kauffman Research Project. The publication consists of four short introductory essays, followed by eighty-one catalogue entries accompanied by 144 color illustrations. The bibliography includes only sources cited in the text, primarily exhibition and collection catalogues.

Baumgärtel's lead essay is a brief introductory overview of Kauffman's life, training, and her career and work in Italy and England. The second essay, by Helen Valentine, head curator of painting at the Royal Academy, focuses on Kauffman's four allegorical paintings of *Invention*, *Colouring*, *Design*, and *Composition* that were part of the decorative scheme for the Council Chamber of the Royal Academy of Arts in Somerset House. She discusses the 1779–80 commission, the paintings' original placement and how the images portrayed the theoretical foundation of the arts under President Joshua Reynolds's leadership. The four paintings along with Kauffman's preparatory *grisaille* oil sketches (103–09) were included in the Düsseldorf exhibition, the first time they ever left England. Johannes Myssok's essay examines Kauffman's friendship with the younger Venetian sculptor Antonio Canova, considering their relationship through their correspondence, including some unpublished letters, contemporary accounts, and Kauffman's 1795 portrait of Canova. Myssok's examination of one of Kauffman's most interesting personal and professional relationships illuminates an important moment in the history of art in Rome at the end of the



Fig. 1. Angelica Kauffman, *Portrait of Caterina Odescalchi, Duchessa de Bracciano, Sirmio e Ceri* (1783), oil on canvas, 24 1/2" x 20 1/2". Private Collection.

eighteenth century. Inken Maria Holubec, a painting conservator in Düsseldorf, contributed "Angelica Kauffman and the Neoclassical Picture, Material, Technology and Painting Process." She conducted a scientific analysis of two Kauffman paintings in the Kunstpalast collection, *Agrippina Mourning over the Ashes of Germanicus* (1793) (140–41) and a portrait of the artist's friend, the improvising poet Teresa Bandettini (1794) (176–77). She analyzed canvases, stretchers, priming, underdrawing, and layers of paint, and explains Kauffman's strategies for execution and technique. Holubec's findings are illustrated with details in

infrared and ultraviolet imaging and confirm Kauffman's reputation as a highly accomplished professional.

The catalogue is organized into nine thematic sections that span the range of subjects she produced both in Italy and England, which included self-portraits, portraits, allegories, and history paintings. Each section is preceded by a brief introduction followed by the catalogue of paintings and drawings from public and private collections in Europe and America. Most of the paintings are well known from previous exhibitions and publications, except for five portraits shown for the first time.

The first section, "Stagings of the

Self," featured nine self-portraits, from Kauffman's earliest as a twelve-year-old girl (44–45) to both versions of her *Self-Portrait choosing between Music and Painting* (1791 and 1794), (40–43) which commemorated her youthful choice to pursue a painting career. Her well known self-portrait with a bust of Minerva (c. 1780) (54–55) and the portrait she presented to the Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1787 for the Medici collection of artists' portraits (56–57) represent a high point in her career.

Two portraits published for the first time portray women attired in Turkish clothing. In one, Martha Cocks wears a white robe under a blue gold-trimmed Turkish coat (*curdee*) and is seated at leisure beside an embroidery frame in a half-length composition (c. 1772) (118–19). The other is a smaller head portrait of a beautiful young woman in a white robe and pale blue gold-trimmed *curdee*. Baumgärtel identified this previously anonymous, unsigned and undated portrait as *Caterina Odescalchi, Duchess of Bracciano, Sirmio, and Ceri* (Fig. 1) painted in Rome in 1783 (122–23), though evidence for the sitter's identity and the date are inconclusive. Her Turkish clothing and appearance closely resemble Kauffman's work in England during the early and mid-1770s, when it was fashionable for aristocratic ladies to be portrayed in Turkish dress, such as *Martha Cocks* and the *Duchess of Richmond* (1774). The women in Kauffman's later Italian portraits wear fashions of the time or loose, unconstructed, classically inspired dresses, such as those worn by the three Coutts sisters posing in a woodland setting with a bust of Minerva, another portrait exhibited for the first time (1790–91) (160–62).

Many of Kauffman's large-format history paintings, as Baumgärtel states, feature exemplary women such as Homer's faithful wife Penelope (135). Two examples commissioned by Empress Catherine of Russia in 1785 represent Roman matrons who demonstrate devotion to family and state, *Julia, Wife of Pompey, Fainting* (137–39) and *Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi*. (136–38), one of the three versions she painted of Cornelia. In contrast,

Kauffman's male protagonists were often represented in sentimental scenes of conflict between duty and desire, love and war, such as *Achilles Hidden among the Daughters of Lycomedes discovered by Ulysses* (1787–88) (184–85), dressed in women's clothing to avoid his prophesized death in battle, and love-struck Paris reluctant to leave Helen in *Hector Calling Paris to Battle* (1775) (76–77). Kauffman received some criticism in the British press for lack of proficiency in male anatomy, though as Baumgärtel notes, her smooth-limbed male figures conformed to Winckelmann's classical ideal rather than anatomical accuracy (155). As a woman, Kauffman could not study figure drawing from male models, which was standard practice for male artists in academies, but she was able to gain proficiency by copying nude figure studies by other artists. Baumgärtel makes the unsupported claim that Kauffman's training in Italy included "lessons in nude drawing and painting with Pompeo Batoni," (12) a prominent painter of Grand Tourists in Rome. Batoni did pay a visit to Kauffman in 1763, according to Johann Fiorillo, a young German artist who accompanied him. Batoni admired her portraits, advised her to draw and copy after masters of art, and presented her with some of his own life drawings. Her 1764 painting *Bacchus Discovers Ariadne Abandoned by Theseus* (62–63), one of her first history paintings, depicts Bacchus in a pose that is nearly identical to Bacchus in Batoni's painting of the same subject made almost ten years later, an intriguing similarity noted by other scholars. Kauffman could have modeled her Bacchus after one of the drawings Batoni gave her in 1763, the year she painted it, but there is no evidence she took lessons in nude drawing and painting with him or was his "pupil" as Baumgärtel states (62).

Baumgärtel identifies a drawing (no. 31, British Museum) Kauffman signed and dated in 1771 as her "only known life drawing" and evidence Kauffman used a male model (98). It depicts a semi-reclining young man with bare chest, shoulders, arms, and legs, with only his lower torso loosely covered by drapery. Baumgärtel supports her

assertion with a report from Joseph Nollekens, a sculptor Kauffman knew in London, who wished to counter malicious rumors of Kauffman's impropriety. Nollekens interviewed the academy model, who by then was an old man. He stated he did pose for Kauffman in her studio but only exposed his head, shoulders, arms, and legs, and always in the presence of her father (12). Kauffman's reclining man could be seen as a nearly nude life model, but the figure's idealized features, imploring gesture and expression, and slender limbs resemble reclining male figures in the work of artists she knew well, including Annibale Carracci, Poussin, and her contemporaries Batoni, Nathaniel Dance, and Benjamin West. Her drawing is especially close to West's Adonis in his painting *Venus Lamenting the Death of Adonis* (1768), exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1769 and published as an engraving in 1771, the year of Kauffman's drawing.

One of Kauffman's late paintings and the last in the catalogue portrays a Biblical subject, *David and the Prophet Nathan* (1806–67) (198–99). The two large figures fill the composition, with Nathan extending his arm to point at King David, who reacts with fear and shock at his accusation. This painting was carried in Kauffman's funeral procession in Rome in 1807, in a ceremony arranged by Antonio Canova. This catalogue does not offer much new and does not include any of the engravings that helped to spread Angelica Kauffman's reputation and influence, but it provides a good introduction to Angelica Kauffman with a well-chosen range of paintings and drawings and high-quality illustrations. •

Wendy Wassyng Roworth is Professor Emerita of Art History at the University of Rhode Island. Her publications include *Angelica Kauffman: A Continental Artist in Georgian England* (1992), and numerous chapters, articles, and catalogue essays on Kauffman.

Women in the Dark, Female Photographers in the US, 1850–1900

By Katherine Manthorne
Schiffer Publishing, 2020

Reviewed by Gabrielle Rose-Curti

Katherine Manthorne's unique study reclaims the vibrant, predominantly lost history of two generations of professional women photographers from the second half of the nineteenth century. The accomplishments of these pioneering women have fallen victim to scholarly omission, and even in their own time they were largely left out of journalistic coverage, honorific organizations, and other trappings of officialdom. Distinctively, this study starts earlier than most in recovering women photographers. It also exposes the profound, yet little recognized fact that the very novelty of photography as medium and professional venture, its very lack of "a priori hierarchy," enabled women to "get in on the ground floor" (17). Their unrestricted entry in the 1850s alongside men into the uncharted and unformalized field of photography—at once technical, artistic, and entrepreneurial—set the course for subsequent decades. Having learned firsthand photography's emergent technologies and related processes, and having seized opportunity through a variety of circumstances, women took the helm of their own professional practices. Manthorne, importantly, brings us down to the *street*, in towns and major cities across the United States, where female-owned photography studios were both conspicuous and commonplace. The book's apt title, *Women in the Dark*, might well be followed with a paradoxical second: "... in Plain View."

In combing several major photographic archives, including the Peter Palmquist Collection and Julia Driver Collection of Women in Photography, both housed in Yale University's Beinecke Library, Manthorne resurrects the lives and work of numerous women photographers of this period. Indeed, they represent the thousands of women who, by century's end, had successfully honed

their craft and livelihood. Working chronologically and thematically, the author achieves related goals: to recontextualize the medium over this five-decade period and to address the myriad ways in which women's photographic omnipresence mediated other unprecedented developments in US history—the Civil War, the reconstruction and rapid expansion of towns and cities, an accelerating material culture, and a shifting social landscape.

Coverage in the first two chapters of some of the first women photographers working in the 1850s and 1860s adds valuably to the paltry scholarship existing on the subject. Here we learn of the accessible studios of Mary Ann Jube (1820–81) and Matilda Moore (1832–83) in New York City, Mrs. O. Bennett (n.d.) in Hamilton, Illinois, Elizabeth Israel (n.d.) in Baltimore, and Helen F. Stuart (1832–1912) in Boston, that served the demand for Civil War portraiture through the new and portable forms of the ambrotype, tintype, and paper photograph. As Manthorne emphasizes, their commercial studios catered to Union and Confederate men alike, of all ages and ranks, producing in every case dignified images of remembrance and potential memorialization to leave to their loved ones. As portraits "through female eyes" (as one section in Chapter Two is titled), Manthorne offers little qualitative distinction to those produced by men. But perhaps that is the point; her assessment of these women's images—as technically expert and artfully adherent to the contemporary conventions of portraiture—asserts their makers' competitive stature alongside the men in this lucrative photographic market.

Chapter Three examines the exploding business of family portraiture after the war and over the remaining decades. Not only was this facilitated by the growing numbers of female-run studios, it profited almost exclusively from women who took the role of photographic compiler and curator of a new good in the economy of remembrance: the family



Fig. 1. Rose A. Goodwin (Saint Johnsbury, VT), *Mother and Child*, carte de visite (n.d.). Private collection.

album. Through photographic examples authored by a variety of later-generation women, Manthorne lays out an extensive typology of portrait subjects and modes of representation, exploring their emergence and evolution. She also offers insight to the ways these images subtly communicated familial dynamics between husband and wife, mother and children, and siblings, through composition, pose, dress and emblematic prop—dynamics, she suggests, to which women photographers may have been uniquely attuned. In a more evidentiary manner, she points to women's acknowledged interpersonal edge when it came to easing the sitter's nerves and coaxing a natural demeanor, and significantly, placating the irritable or squirming child to get the desired shot. In fact, this latter 'knack' accounted for women photographers' dominant market share when it came to portraits of mothers with babies (Fig. 1) or of infants and children by themselves.



Fig. 2. Eliza W. Withington (lone City, California), *Exchequer Croppings* (ca. 1872–76), stereoview. Peter Palmquist Collection of Women in Photography, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

Importantly, and throughout the book, Manthorne exposes the acumen with which women capitalized upon and promoted their photographic enterprise. Among many strategies, fresh attention is drawn to the variety of logos conspicuously adorning the cardboard mountings of tintypes and paper photographs. The logo and mounting—as graphic and physical accoutrements—make demonstratively clear that the photograph functioned as much as commodity as it did image. The distinctive features by way of photographic service and product were amplified by wide-ranging advertisement modes. Among the variant approaches in content, tone, and tactic, the ads of Rosa Vreeland-Whitlock (1852–1925), who ran her studio from 1881 to 1911 in McPherson, Kansas, stand out in the book for their cunning use of the psychological ‘hook.’ Notably, Chicago-based Beatrice Tonnesen (1871–1958; introduced in Chapter Six) took it full circle by merging her self-promotional talents with the industry of promotion itself, thus leading the new niche of advertising photography.

Manthorne’s acute eye to the ground yields surprising facts about the technical, logistic, and experiential operations of the photographic studio from the perspective of the photographer and her clientele. Her finds are concentrated in Chapter Four, particularly in the illumi-

nating account of photographer, Mrs. G.W. (Elizabeth) Sittler (1850–1916) and her Springfield, Missouri, portrait gallery, of which she took exclusive ownership upon her husband’s death in 1887. With rare, ca. 1880 images of the gallery’s exterior and interior, along with other primary source material, Manthorne vividly recreates its inner workings—“equal parts creative, technical and commercial” (71)—undertaken by Sittler and (as was typical of other female-owned studios) an all-female staff. With entertaining detail, Manthorne points to the sense of strangeness customers felt within these photographic realms, with their idiosyncratic features, odors, and noises. Considered, too, particularly as it was undertaken by a female photographer and staff, was the sitter’s “relinquishing agency of their photographic represent-ation” (72) by way of physical manipulation of pose, the control of the shot, development of image, and the retouching afterward. Ultimately, the author “unsettles” (71) the supposition of the photographic studio as male domain and credits the “gyno-social environment” (75) of Sittler’s and other female-owned studios as instrumental to their success.

Photography’s increasing inclination toward new subjects, purposes, and sensibilities over the latter half of the nineteenth century is encompassed in the last two chapters. Chapter Five moves

beyond studio confines, highlighting five intrepid women over the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s who were exceptionally innovative visually and methodologically. Notable is Mary Jane Wyatt (ca 1841–1910s), the first female itinerant photographer who exploited the expanding railroad lines, as she traveled with her railroad-car portrait studio to fledgling towns and communities across Nebraska. The remaining women whom Manthorne presents sought out artful souvenirs of landscape, architecture, and culture. With the exception of Marian Hooper Adams’s (1843–85) unpublished landscapes of New England, the chapter continues its frontier theme with Eliza Withington (1825–77), Sarah Short Addis (active ca. 1875–90), and Mary E. Jacobson (n.d.). Collectively and with unconventional eyes, these women captured the sights of California, Texas, and Mexico, for both personal edification and the growing tourist market. The account of Withington’s treks to photograph the mined landscapes and miners in Alpine County, California, is one of the more documented and interesting (ca. 1872–76; Fig. 2). Not only an apt visual strategist in “compress[ing] a range of visual information” (94) in artful arrangement, Withington was also an ingenious logistic strategist in packing and deploying equipment and chemicals for use in the out-of-doors. The book’s appendix contains her 1876 article, “How a Woman Makes Landscape Photographs,” in which she lays bare her advice and ‘hacks,’ including engineering a thick dress skirt into a darkroom tent. The book’s Conclusion bookends the stories of these migratory women with camera in tote, in addressing the Kodak camera as the century’s last word in the democratization and portability of the medium, particularly as it concerned growing numbers of amateur women photographers.

The final chapter is dedicated to examining the inroads made toward women’s rights and “changing gender norms” (120) in the latter half of the nineteenth century, which unquestionably facilitated the rise of women in the photographic field. Manthorne presents a variety of case studies: photographic work by women bearing direct and tangential witness to key figures, initiatives, or contexts of reform. With the intensified emergence of

the “new woman” as autonomous and professional in the 1890s, the author concludes with two emblematic photographers: Tonnesen, as mentioned earlier, and the more recognized, if not formidable, Frances Benjamin Johnston (1864–1952). Johnston brings the study to a fitting end as the total package of technical and entrepreneurial prowess and, notably, new formalistic concerns; in sum, as the harbinger of new breed of modern women photographers to come.

Between the broad strokes, as outlined here, Manthorne’s highly accessible read is laden with additional

morsels of information and insights. Worth mentioning are the useful textual explanations and bibliography for the many formats, technical forms, and chemo-mechanical processes these women employed. Besides a few areas of coverage that beg for more, the book on the whole is rife with high-quality reproductions. Its ambitious interlayering of “photo history, social history, material culture and historical biography” (15) perhaps errs in taking on too much, as organizational cohesion suffers a bit, and development and analysis are uneven in places. Despite

these criticisms, *Women in the Dark* deserves accolades for uprooting the histories and production of so many women and laying new ground in understanding women’s visibility and impact during this formative period of photography and American history. •

Gabrielle Rose-Curti received her Ph.D. in Art History from Rutgers University. She is the author of “Writing the French Sculptor: The Operations of Exclusivity in the Critical Discourse of Émile-Antoine Bourdelle, 1918–1931,” *Word & Image* (2020).

Hannah Ryggen: Threads of Defiance

By Marit Paasche,
translated by Katia Stieglitz
University of Chicago Press, 2019

Reviewed by Anna Dumont

In January 1923, the Swedish-Norwegian artist Hannah Ryggen (1894–1970) gave up painting for tapestry weaving. She was at the time a passably talented oil painter, enrolled at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts. Her only explanation for her decisive change in medium was this: “Suddenly there awoke in me a desire to do something with my hands. I could not paint ... and still be myself. It suddenly occurred to me that I could weave pictures” (26). Later that year she would marry a fellow artist, Hans Ryggen, and move to the remote farm on the Norwegian coast where she spent the rest of her life. What it meant to be herself unfolded in dozens of large-scale tapestries of staggering visual impact and wit, reworking the pictorial idiom of tapestry to depict contemporary events from the Spanish Civil War to the formation of NATO. They were woven with wool from her own sheep and translated directly, sans cartoon, from mind to loom.

Ryggen is among the many female artists now subject to wider attention, though often as much for their charismatic lives as for their work. Ryggen herself recognized the risks of

biography. “Writing about oneself,” she warns, “is like watching the great big ocean coming towards you full of arms eyes ears to grab you.” In her case, the biographical effluence of critics and art historians has formed two distinct channels. The first is a primitivizing fascination with the purity of her rural isolation, tinged with a prurient emphasis on her use of human urine as a dyestuff (a drunk man’s was best, we often read). For an artist steeped in the latest currents of European modernism, who measured herself against Gauguin and Picasso, the trope of Ryggen as a “holy hex” is egregiously misleading. The second, more substantive, biographical draw is Ryggen’s anti-fascism. Certainly, her political convictions are inextricable from her weavings, which contain remarkable depictions of the political and cultural events of her day. To see her work in any kind of chronological order is to feel fascist violence grow less and less abstract. Tapestries of the 1930s showing scenes of the invasion of Ethiopia and the execution of German dissident Liselotte Hermann give way to those of the 1940s, heavy with personal loss after the German invasion of Norway, and culminating in Hans’s arrest by occupying Nazi troops in 1944. Yet it is also for precisely this reason that Ryggen’s work deserves to be really seen, not used as an illustration of conscience, but felt in all of its formal complexity, depth of color, and self-sure

pictorial ambition. In *Grini* (1945), it is not just the image of Hans in prison that lodges deep under the viewer’s skin. The tapestry, woven in wool and linen, pulses with strips of red and orange, dissolving the borders between his cell, the space of death, and the world of life carried towards him by their daughter, Mona, bedecked in geometric chains of flowers on the back of a chestnut horse.

Marit Paasche’s new monograph is steadfast in its attention to Ryggen’s work. First published in Norwegian as *Hannah Ryggen En Fri* in 2016, it now appears in an excellent translation by Katia Stieglitz. This is the first critical study of Ryggen in English, and while the book may be pitched as a biography by its publisher, Paasche is, refreshingly, more interested in art historical analysis than in the narrative of Ryggen’s life. The author is a curator as well as a historian, responsible for recent shows on the artist in Oslo and Frankfurt, and her familiarity with what it is like to share a gallery with many of these tapestries serves her readers. In chronological sequence, each chapter is structured around one or two major works, an effect not unlike moving through a well-curated exhibition. These discrete moments with the objects open into insightful examinations of the historical and political contexts in which Ryggen’s works were made and circulated, aided by dozens of lush full-color illustrations.

In Norway of the 1920s, tapestry was not a neglected minor art but a major



Fig. 1. Hannah Ryggen, *Us and Our Animals (Vi og våre dyr)* (1934), tapestry woven in wool and linen, 73 3/4" x 193 3/8". Collection of Malmö Museum.

nationalist project. Prominent artists like Gerhard Munthe and his weaver wife Sigrun (1869–1957), egged on by the nationalist Lysaker Circle, set Norse gods and fairy-tale kings galloping across wool forests and seas. Ryggen's first weavings share this folkloric idiom, her early compositions a mix of biblical scenes and those from myth, for instance *The Sinner* (1926) and *The Three Graces* (1925). Quickly, however, different figures appear—debt collectors, museum directors (both friend and foe), Henrik Ibsen and Edvard Munch—and give way to others, still more recognizable: Pierre Laval, Joseph Goebbels, and Benito Mussolini's head on the pike of an Ethiopian soldier. What remains from the Norwegian tradition is the flatness of her picture plane and her figures' eyes. Straight from the medieval Baldishol tapestry, they are slightly squared off, deep-pupiled, and wide open, even in death.

From painting Ryggen took what she pleased. In a fascinating section on dyeing, Paasche recounts the artist's early experiments in recreating the technique of glazing in oil painting, in which color is applied in a series of thin washes. By applying multiple baths of tree lichen and madder to her yarns, Ryggen found she could approximate the depth of pigment in the Old Master paintings by Vermeer and Van Eyck she

had studied at the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden. Yet she also embraced the mutable qualities of her organic materials, celebrating the "procedure of light" that would slowly weaken her colors over the life of her tapestries.

While Ryggen and her family, especially in their early years at Ørlandet, struggled to escape debt, Paasche shows that the weaver had little trouble making her way in Norway's artistic establishment. Hailed as brilliant by critics and shown in private juried exhibitions and state museums, she seems to have regularly outshone her painter husband. In 1937, the same year *Guernica* debuted at the Paris International Exhibition, Ryggen's monumental tapestry *Ethiopia* (1935) was hung in the Norwegian pavilion, though the panel with Mussolini's grisly comeuppance was censored. The Venice Biennale beckoned in 1964. Any marginalization, Paasche suggests, was in fact a more recent development, and has certainly been reversed in the last decade, with Ryggen's inclusion in Documenta 13 (2013), and a cascade of international shows, including a UK retrospective at Modern Art Oxford in 2018.

Some of Ryggen's economic hardship was imposed by her principled refusal to sell to private collectors, insisting on hanging her work in the public spaces of schools, museums, and government buildings. That she could not make a living doing so was, she felt, an

unfairness of life as an artist under capitalism. Paasche's account stands out in the literature on Ryggen for the seriousness with which she treats the artist's politics. This distinguishes her from previous critics who have engaged in general hand-waving about anti-fascism while avoiding Ryggen's broader leftism. While evidence for Ryggen's formal membership in the Norwegian Communist Party is equivocal, statements like this, written to a friend in 1937, are not: "You sure aren't suggesting that there is even one employer who doesn't use his workers like machines, flesh and blood machines, driving them as hard as possible for the biggest possible return?" (92).

Not only an anti-fascist, Ryggen was a Communist, if one of a humanist bent, and her rejection of capitalism, with all of its subsidiary ills, is at the heart of her work. Ryggen's subjects and style, her choice of materials, and working methods are bound up in this ideological position. It is the throughline linking her self-sufficient working methods with the subjects of works such as *May Day Parade* (1935). Paasche shows that the works of the 1930s chronicling foreign injustices can only be fully understood through the internationalism that suffused that decade's Left.

Ryggen's politics also suffuse seemingly more personal works. *Us and Our Animals* (1934; Fig. 1) is on the surface

a record of life lived alongside animals on a working farm. To one side, Hannah scatters feed to her flock, and at the center the family gathers to eat a roasted bird. But for her, farming is laden with the pain of emotional attachment to her animals, and the unfairness of an economic system in which she has no choice but to end their lives. The severed heads of her geese cry out plaintively beneath the table, and her plate drips something that might be blood. Ryggen's self-portrait covers her eyes in shame. There are few depictions more moving in Western art of the moral complexity of raising animals for meat. When the Malmö Museum bought the work a decade later, Ryggen's grief was still fresh: "If I could have one wish, it would be to see my animals again, well and thriving, my chicken Kakeleja, Nussa [the foal], Metta [the cow] and my graylag goose. To run with them—and not have to sell or kill them" (73).

Threads of Defiance crackles with Ryggen's idiosyncratic voice, made possible by Paasche's extensive work in the artist's personal archive. Once private, these papers are now accessible at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology Library in Trondheim. Not only does Paasche make rich use of them in allowing Ryggen to recount her

own life, the book's notes also correct previously published inaccuracies. Scholars will find an appendix with a newly compiled list of Ryggen's textile works an invaluable resource, the first for an artist with no formal catalogue raisonné.

An alternate genealogy of modernism unfolds in Paasche's text. For Ryggen, abstraction was hardly Kandinsky and Mondrian's gateway to the absolute realm of the spiritual. It was, instead, decisively material, indistinguishable from decoration, and "suitable for ceramics, rugs and wallpaper" (215). As Paasche shows, Ryggen's patterns make meanings of their own. An apt section ties such modernist pattern to the theories on ornament of Siegfried Kracauer, for whom new media, especially film and photography, promulgated a dangerous abstraction composed of massed fragments of bodies, from marching soldiers to the legs of female dancers. This new kind of ornament, he argued, visually subordinated the individual to the systematic rhythms of capitalist production and mass politics. Certain repeated forms in Ryggen's work, for example, a regimented panel of swastikas in the lower section of *Death of Dreams* (1936), seem to explicitly take up the problem of this kind of visual order.

Ryggen's consistent solution is the intrusion of what is unruly and human. In *Death of Dreams*, the bare feet of the imprisoned German writer and Nobel Peace Prize winner Carl von Ossietzky dangle from a prison window. It is in his curled toes that we see his personhood most acutely, and their irregular, curled forms disrupt the rigid structure beneath. There is no more basic form of visual order than weaving's grid, yet Ryggen consistently relies on tapestry's propensity to be wobbly, variegated, and approximate, a play of conformity and resistance. In her work, the twentieth century's pitched battles between politically committed art and formal invention fall away, with consequences far beyond the fields of textile history or Scandinavian modernism. In making her radical critique newly available to readers in English, this volume by Paasche is indispensable to art historians and general readers alike. •

Anna Dumont is a PhD candidate at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, and 2020–21 Lily Auchincloss Rome Prize Fellow of the American Academy in Rome. She is writing a dissertation on gendered textile labor in Italian art from the nineteenth-century craft revival to the Fascist period.

Alice Trumbull Mason: Pioneer of American Abstraction

Edited by Elisa Wouk Almino, with essays by Marilyn R. Brown, Will Heinrich, Meghan Forbes, Thomas Micchelli, and Christina Weyl
Rizzoli Electa, 2020

Reviewed by Taylor L. Poulin

But when you are faced with only the canvas and the colors and what you are placing on that canvas then you have a tremendous proposition to face, much more less deceptive, let us say, than realistic painting.... [Abstraction] is the true realism, in case anybody is interested to know.

—Alice Trumbull Mason (39–40)

Alice Trumbull Mason (1904–71) was one of the most engaged, connected, prolific, and pioneering painters of mid-twentieth century abstraction. This new monograph of her life and work is an excellent addition to recent scholarship that has centered women artists who previously occupied the margins of the artistic canon.

Following a foreword by the artist's daughter, the artist Emily Mason (1932–2019), six essays, a chronology of the artist's life, and nearly 200 beautifully printed plates and additional illustrations help communicate the development of Alice Trumbull Mason's artistic vision, which extended beyond painting to include printmaking, poetry, and writing. The book braids together these lines of artistic output to offer a picture

of an artist fully invested in her creativity and in her visual and verbal translation of it.

The first essay, "Art and Life," by Marilyn R. Brown, gives a comprehensive overview of Mason's life. The artist's early biography, briefly summed up—born in Connecticut, well-traveled in Europe, studies in New York City at the National Academy of Design and the Grand Central Art Galleries under Charles W. Hawthorne and Arshile Gorky, respectively, marriage at twenty-six to a merchant seaman followed quickly by two children—does not necessarily lay the foundation for the life of an artistic pioneer. Nor, with the exception of a late exhibition of her woodblock prints in 1952 at Wittenborn and Company, New York, was she widely



Fig. 1. Alice Trumbull Mason, *Emergent Form* (1945), oil on board, mounted on wooden strainer, 28" x 23". The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection [45.996].

lauded during her lifetime. As a woman, Mason felt she was overlooked as an artist. As an abstract painter in the 1930s US, she was actively edging along the ostracized "un-American" hem of an art world that was still dressing in the social realism of the Depression era; and as a mother who frequently parented alone while her husband was at sea, Mason often put her painting practice on pause in favor of her poetry and writing, which were more easily accomplished while caring for her young children.

In what ways, then, does Alice Trumbull Mason fit the designation of "pioneer"? Her work itself, as well as her active engagement with the art world and others in it, epitomize her lifelong

forward-thinking approach to painting in the mid-twentieth century. Mason's exploration of abstraction was individualistic, unapologetic, and uniquely multifaceted. Her singular approach to abstraction was as entrenched in her writing as in her painting and printmaking and lay outside of any monolithic influence of spirituality or geometricity that motivated many of her European peers; in her painting, printmaking, and poetry alike, she engaged instead in an abstraction rooted firmly in materials and form: paint on canvas, woodblock cuts and plate etchings, layered shapes, words on a page.

Brown's second essay "Abstraction and the American Abstract Artists"

examines Mason's particular path to abstraction, writing: "[H]er abstraction was not apparently based on the dualism of the theosophy of Piet Mondrian, the oriental mysticism of Charmion von Wiegand, or the platonism of Ilya Bolotowsky.... [The] meanings of her abstraction lie elsewhere" (35). Mason's own words from a 1952 essay explain her interest in what the artist called "Architectural abstract art": "In the middle of the 20th century an American abstract artist ... may choose to make a painting a positive, architectural construction. It is building not destroying. It is making color, density, dark and light, rhythm and balance work together without depending on references and associations" (39). Focusing on the materiality of Mason's work and her involvement in the American Abstract Artists (AAA), Brown concludes that the artist's work was rooted not in spiritual or political expression, positing that her theories "partake little of the utopian future orientation of these [other] artists and emphasize instead a solid architectural reality built of tangible materials in the present" (39).

Other essays reflect on the literal constructive nature of Mason's creative output. In "The Print Connection," Christina Weyl discusses Mason's time spent at printmaker Stanley William Hayter's famed New York workshop, Atelier 17. Weyl discusses how Mason saw her printmaking as an extension of her "architectural" abstraction, describing the artist's fascination with impressing materials like cheesecloth onto her etching plate, creating a delicate lattice of thin lines looping around the composition. Weyl also turns to Mason's own words, quoting from a speech the artist gave in the 1960s: "'My greatest interest [in printmaking] is in playing one texture against another as I do with colors in painting'" (183). Weyl offers additional formal analyses of Mason's prints throughout the essay, reinforcing the artist's focus on the materiality of her prints, just as she built up her paintings from their various elements.

Will Heinrich's essay, "Painting Motion from Stillness," is an outlier in describing Mason's work. With a heavy-

handed interpretive approach, Heinrich appears to place Mason's work in a framework that references the spiritually driven mysticism of her time, which she herself does not cite as an inspiration. The other essayists draw on the artist's own words indicating how her abstraction was the result of an examination of material, form, and color. While Heinrich does nod to this, he mostly conceptualizes Mason's work in a way that detracts instead of adds to an understanding of the artist's motivation toward abstraction. The essay also toggles between third- and second-person points of view to describe Mason and her career and the author or general viewer's experience with her work, which is stylistically confusing and makes for unwieldy reading.

Mason's pioneering qualities extended to her engagement with the art world around her. Brown's essay "Life and Art" illustrates Mason's involvement with the American Abstract Artists group. Along with artists such as Ilya Bolotowsky, Byron Browne, George L.K. Morris, Ibram Lassaw, and Esphyr Slobodkina (1908–2002), Mason was a founder of the AAA, which first exhibited in 1937, and later counted Josef Albers, Piet Mondrian, Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010), Robert Motherwell, and Ad Reinhardt among its members. A key participant in the early meetings that formalized the goals and ideologies of the group, Mason took on leadership roles, serving as its treasurer, secretary, and president for a combined twelve years between 1939 and 1963.

Mason engaged with avant-garde writers, too, trading poems with William Carlos Williams and letters with Gertrude Stein; her admiration of Stein infused her own abstract poetry. Elisa Wouk Almino focuses on the materiality and non-representational focus of this work in her essay, "A Dedicated Poet," writing that the artist "treat[ed] words like strokes of a brush or flashes of color-like forms" (217) and offers Mason's own words to explain her beginnings with abstraction: "My objective was to paint a painting that was strong and real.... It made me very happy to be free to paint as I chose and not as I would have had to if I were representing an object or a person in

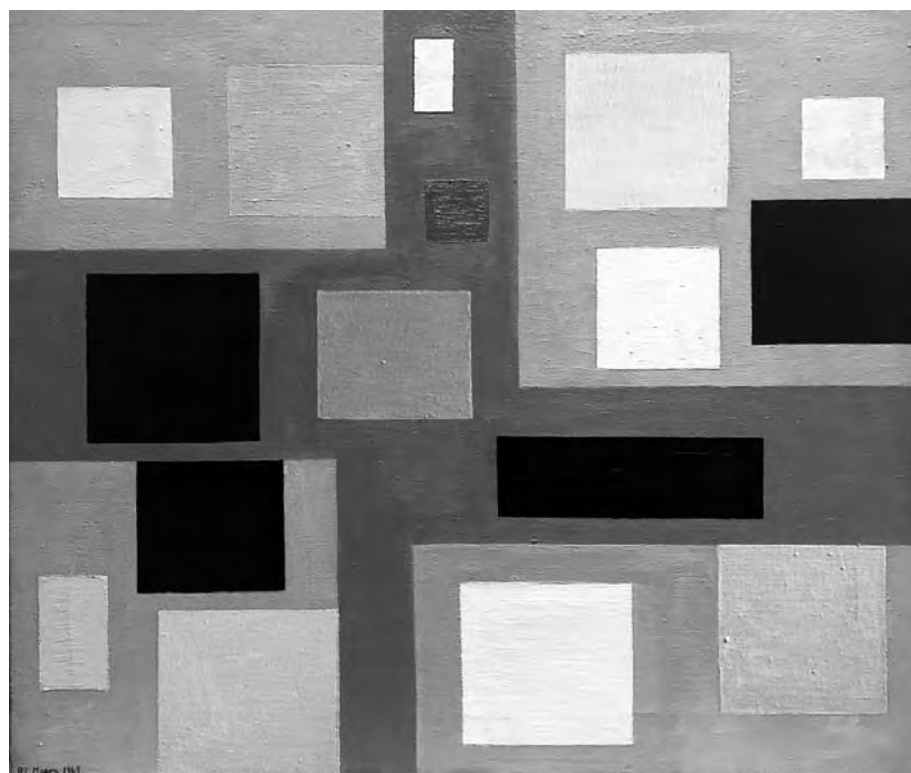


Fig. 2. Alice Trumbull Mason, *No. 1 towards a Paradox* (1969), oil on canvas, 19" x 22". © 2019 Alice Trumbull Mason/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

landscape...." (218). Almino contends that Mason's non-representational process of writing mirrored that of her painting: "Letting go of 'representing things' brought Mason to a place that was 'strong and real.' Her use of painterly words and abstraction was not merely an aesthetic, but part of a larger search for truth" (218).

Meghan Forbes's essay, "'My Mind is Full of Ships,'" examines Mason's personal letters to illustrate the joy and struggles that she experienced as a woman, a mother, and an artist. It is again through Mason's own words that the reader can comprehend the personal and internal motivations for her life and work. Mason was an excited mother-to-be in letters written to her husband before their daughter Emily was born; later letters to Emily express their bond through art and literature. Forbes goes on to explain that, "Mason's self-understanding and interpretation of circumstances seem to have been perpetually filtered through her art" (226), highlighting a color-based code that Mason invented in a letter to her

husband to express her various feelings for him. This acute examination of Mason's letters reveals that the artist's focus on the materiality of her art also facilitated a focus on her emotional and psychological realities.

The final essay in the catalogue, "From Universal Reality to the Forever Now," by Thomas Micchelli, charts the legacy that followed in Alice Trumbull Mason's wake and is valuable in defending her contributions as a pioneer. Micchelli lays out a compelling argument for the ways in which Mason's work preceded, anticipated, and played against subsequent movements, from Abstract Expressionism to Conceptualism. The view of an artist deliberately moving forward in a relatively straight line—with output building from idea to sketch to finished work, and artistic identity evolving from exploratory to crisp and identifiable—is one that Micchelli calls out as particularly conservative from a twenty-first-century perspective (233–34). In opposition to this, Micchelli defends Mason's adventurous approach to abstraction, examining how it has helped inform later artistic approach-

es. Her own process of planning her paintings, for example—layering form and color, such as in *Emergent Form* (1945; Fig. 1), and her 1947 painting *Integration of Bearings*—may have skipped a generation in Abstract Expressionism but has returned in recent years in “the notion of an artwork as a multistep enterprise from concept to execution” (235). Likewise, her “stylistic smorgasbord and flexibility of form and composition, it can be argued, anticipated the processes of Conceptual painting while maintaining an allegiance

to the meaning-embedded object” (236). Ultimately, Micchelli offers her body of work as a powerful example of artistic evolution, “a visual sequence of ideas undergoing a continual state of revision: purified, compounded, abandoned, and revisited” (237).

Understanding all of this, especially the importance that Mason placed on exploration, diverse ideas, and action as well as her focus on materiality and the ways in which she used her materials so fluidly, it is interesting to note that the

titles of her last two series, completed in 1969, two years before her death, included reference to either “paradox” or “trinity”: *Trinity #9, the Indeterminate Square; Paradox #4, Paradox of Perspective; Trinity #4, Towards the Sensuous; No. 1 towards a Paradox* (Fig. 2). Faith and doubt, bringing to a close the artist’s search for a true realism. •

Taylor L. Poulin is Assistant Curator at the Terra Foundation of American Art.

With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972–1985

Edited by Anna Katz, with essays by Elissa Auther, Anna Katz, Alex Kitnick, Rebecca Skafsgaard Lowery, Kayleigh Perkov, Sarah-Neel Smith, and Hamza Walker
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and Yale University Press, 2018

Reviewed by Ellen G. Landau

Sometimes given relatively short shrift in surveys of American twentieth-century art, the so-called Pattern and Decoration (P&D) movement, with a heyday lasting less than five years, has often somewhat simplistically been presented as merely a more ornamentally based, vaguely Matisse-inspired “feminist” alternative to the forcefully intellectualized masculine style of Minimalism, then all the rage. A further, more complex analysis of this movement—which included a number of key male proponents as well and still exerts influence some four decades hence—has now been presented in *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972–1985*. In it, a combination of new essays is bolstered by historical reprints of articles by original practitioners and supporters (including most prominently Amy Goldin (1926–78), Joyce Kozloff (b. 1942), and John Perrault), along with an extensive exhibition history. An updated bibliography and photos as well as short biographies of the forty-five associated practi-

tioners here identified (twenty-seven of whom are women) likewise constitutes extremely useful source material gathered in one place.¹

Such valuable primary and secondary source data, along with 175 artwork images, has been combined to create an impressively produced and comprehensively conceptualized catalogue. This 328-page book was published in conjunction with The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles’s organization of a revisionist exhibition re-assessing the movement, intended to be on view at LAMoCA from October 2019 through early May 2020. The show would then travel to the Hessel Museum of Art at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, in New York, where it would be seen through mid-December. These institutional plans were unfortunately cut short or, in the case of Bard, cancelled by COVID-19.

Luckily, the profusely illustrated catalogue presents not only full-page color illustrations of the artworks in the exhibition, but also installation shots of other P&D examples in situ, thus constituting a more comprehensive record for posterity. In his informative and well-written foreword, Klaus Biesenbach, LAMoCA’s then recently arrived director, set out clear parameters for both the exhibit and its catalogue. “Often described as the first contemporary art movement comprised of majority female artists,” Biesenbach writes, “P&D defied the dominance and orthodoxy of modernist art by embracing the much maligned category of the decorative. Further, by refusing to

accede to the art/craft hierarchy, P&D challenged long-established systems of art valuation. The artists were bolstered by their social context,” he further explained, pointing out that “Pattern and Decoration emerged during a time of heightened political activism and cultural awareness marked by women’s, gay liberation, and indigenous people’s movements; new chapters in the struggle for civil rights and black power; and widespread opposition to the Vietnam war.” These currents of social change, Biesenbach explains, had “important implications for the very definition of art” that have extended far beyond the movement’s short-lived period of attention (7).

Throughout the seven major essays that comprise the subsequent discussion, such points as Biesenbach raised at the start are fleshed out, in some cases more broadly, and in others by zeroing in on issues more specifically pertinent with regard to one or more of P&D’s recognizable “stars.” LAMoCA organizing curator Anna Katz’s introductory essay, “Lessons in Promiscuity: Patterning and the New Decorativeness in Art of the 1970s and 1980s,” provides background on the formation of this group in New York and how it was received. “Almost without exception, then as now,” she points out, “every account of P&D defines the movement by what it was not. Its emergence is routinely positioned against what was felt as the near tyrannical hegemony of the modernist protocols of purity, reduction, and self-reflexivity” (18). Indeed, reaction to its first museum presentation, in 1977, at New York’s P.S. 1

Contemporary Art Center, centered on the works' anti-Minimalist qualities, despite, as Katz details, a number of shared systemic approaches: repetition, non-hierarchical deployment of the grid, and resistance to the gestural markings of Abstract Expressionism, among them. Yet, P&D, Katz avers, is as much an art of opposition as it is affirmation. It is abstract but not self-referential: "P&D artists saw themselves as opening their art up and out, letting the world in by way of the decorative." P&D "understood modernism as a puritanical art of exclusion ... and sought to create an art based on both aesthetic and political principles of inclusion" instead (21).

Katz proceeds to fill out her thesis by analyzing many examples of how this was achieved, most notably by reference to architectural ornamentation, jewelry, fabric design, stained glass, miniatures and manuscripts, embroidery, and other "minor" arts associated with women's work, including textiles and mosaics. She explains the importance of Miriam Schapiro (1923–2015) and Judy Chicago's (b. 1939) 1972 Womanhouse project at Cal Arts from the point of view of what would become P&D goals (eventually adhered to by both its male and female artists), as well as the interests of many movement adherents in reconstructing as backdrop the global history of women's art making. This trained a new focus by P&D practitioners on craft and cultural production by US Native Americans and the traditional arts of women in Mexico, the Middle East, New Zealand (Maori), West Africa, and other worldwide sites. Howardena Pindell (b. 1943), Kozloff, Valerie Jaudon (b. 1945), Schapiro and Robert Kushner are among the featured artists in this discussion. Katz also claims that Western art can be brought into a new focus through the study of sources for P&D. This angle, she asserts, can help to "expose the fiction, the caricature, that modernism was ever and always anti-decorative," citing for instance the three dedicatees of Miriam Schapiro's 1992 portfolio [*Sonia*] *Delaunay*, [*Natalia*] *Goncharova*, [*Liubov*] *Popova and Me*. Now that Anni Albers (1899–1994) and the Bauhaus weaving workshop appear



Fig. 1. Miriam Schapiro, *Blue Burst Fan* (1979), acrylic and collage on canvas, 48" x 96". The Jewish Museum, New York. Gift of Marsha Fogel. 1944-712.

regularly on undergraduate syllabi, and Hilma af Klint (1862–1944), "an artist who never distinguished abstraction from ornamental form" (41), has become universally recognized as the pioneer she was, the ways in which P&D paved a road to the future through the past seemingly become more clarified. Katz explains her use of "promiscuity" in the essay's title as relating to the fact that the kind of pluralistic excess it implies had both political and artistic valence in the 1970s. Pattern and Decoration references the liberating aspect of that term at that time as well as the implications of juxtaposition it implies.

The other essays following Katz provide interesting side issues for the reader's edification and are recommended for further insight into the more widespread impact of P&D, both because of and beyond its celebrated feminist implications. In advancing the latter, Elissa Auther's "Miriam Schapiro and the Politics of the Decorative" details again Schapiro's conversion from hard-edge abstraction by way of gender politics to the making of what she termed "*femmage*," collages such as *Blue Burst Fan* (1979; Fig. 1), inflected by women's home-based craft traditions and the "global lexicon of ornament," leading to her association with other proponents of what became known as P&D (73). Auther details how Schapiro's rejection of decoration as a "dirty word" and the obvious

hybridity of these new works between a variety of typically underestimated folk and non-Western sources with modernist abstract patternizing schematics (including what the author terms a surface/depth binary) were both celebrated and critiqued in her day. The *femmagés* of Miriam Schapiro, now arguably P&D's most recognizable representative, represent a rejection of influential art critic Clement Greenberg's dogmatic binary between major and minor (i.e., high and low) art. As Auther explains, in her *femmagés*, "Schapiro questions the way we conceive of both high art (painting) and everyday experience (in the form of women's creative labor in the home," refusing to draw a hard line between professional and amateur (81).

"Infinite Progress: Criss-Cross and the Gender of Pattern Painting" by Rebecca Skafsgaard Lowery focuses on a much less well-known, contemporaneous, non-New-York-based version, mostly focused on "Op"-type geometrically patterned acrylic paintings and mathematically based tile work design. In her essay, Lowery analyzes what she judges as "the progressive possibility of pattern painting [seen] through the lens of the Boulder, Colorado-based Criss-Cross collective, a corollary to the Pattern and Decoration movement" (106). Sarah Neel-Smith's "A Meeting of Two Minds: Oleg Grabar and Amy Goldin on the Met's Islamic Art Galleries, 1975" investigates two lengthy polemics on the



Fig. 2. Joyce Kozloff, Tile Mural for Harvard Square Subway Station (1985–86), New England Decorative Arts project, view down pedestrian ramp, glazed tile, 96" x 996". Photo: Cymie Payne.

Metropolitan Museum of Art's Islamic galleries appearing in *Artforum* in the spring of 1976. These were presented in the form of a dialogue between prominent Harvard Islamicist Oleg Grabar, and New York artist and critic Amy Goldin, who had attended Grabar's class a few years earlier. "On the one hand," Neel-Smith points out, Goldin and Grabar's essays "build upon century-old debates about the Western exhibition of Islamic art and the appropriation of its forms by European and American artists," as did Matisse, for example, and then many of the later P&D movement practitioners, most prominently Kozloff, Kushner, Kim MacConnel (b. 1946), and Judy Pfaff (b. 1946). "At the same time," the author notes, "Goldin and Grabar wrote their essays with an eye to the future, motivated by a shared desire to overturn mainstream artistic and art historical paradigms." These are goals with which, this catalogue maintains, such American P&D artists certainly agreed (147).

Hamza Walker's "Rebecca Morris and the Revenge of P&D" specifically argues that P&D is not a feminist movement, yet it is "inconceivable without feminism," pointing out that early meetings and events associated with its tenets prominently included

Kushner, MacConnel, Ned Smyth, Robert Zakanitch, and other men, and interestingly arguing that Daniel Buren might perhaps be designated "the ultimate Pattern and Decoration painter" (177). Somewhat unusually in defense of this assertion, the second half of Walker's essay is devoted to explicating the 1990s works of another non-New York practitioner, LA-based Rebecca Morris (b. 1969), whose more recent paintings are seen as an ironic take on the originary P&D practices and goals.

The two final essays in this catalogue examine the impact of P&D on actual decoration: Kayleigh Perkov's "Pattern Consciousness: Counterculture-Influenced Interior Design," and "Cosmopolitanism and Antagonism: On Public Art, Postmodern Architecture, and P&D," by Alex Kitnick. The former argues that the 1960s-70s rejection of "Modernist principles of clean lines and streamlined spaces in favor of an eclectic mix of textiles, upholsteries, and wall coverings consisting of riotous colors and intricate patterns" is concomitant with P&D's "mingling of sources from across the globe and without regard for artistic hierarchies." Moreover, "pattern consciousness," a phenomenon that, in Perkov's view, can

be seen simultaneously in both art and design at that time, "owes intellectual debts to a pop-cultural notion of expanded consciousness, urging sensual experiences and individuality" (216). Kitnick relates P&D principles to Percent for Art public projects, like New England Decorative Art's Tile Mural for Harvard Square Subway Station (1985–86; Fig. 2), made of glazed wall tile, painted and installed by Kozloff, as well as postmodern buildings erected in the 1980s by Michael Graves and the architectural firm Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates.

Klaus Biesenbach, in his catalogue introduction, asserts that, ever since its founding, LAMoCA has "been dedicated to presenting work made from a multiplicity of perspectives, and in recent years, it has also increased its commitment to collecting and presenting artwork by under-represented artists." It is also fitting, he comments, that a P&D show was planned for the institutions' fortieth anniversary, as it now "joins the museum's rich history of groundbreaking scholarly surveys," including the related *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, previously on view in 2007 (7–8). Although the live presentation of *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972–1985* became one of the casualties of an unexpected and unprecedented worldwide calamity, the intelligent and attractive book LAMoCA produced to accompany it should cast a much longer shadow in the advancement of feminist scholarship. •

Ellen G. Landau, Andrew W. Mellon Professor Emerita in the Humanities, Case Western Reserve University, is the author of *Lee Krasner: A Catalogue Raisonné*, and has written recent articles and catalogue essays on Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, and Michael (Corinne) West, as well as male Abstract Expressionists Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell, and Hans Hofmann.

Notes

1. Some of the artists included in this category are perhaps a bit of a stretch, including Lynda Benglis, Billy Al Bengston, and Lucas Samaras.

Women Made Visible: Feminist Art and Media in Post-1968 Mexico City

By Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda
University of Nebraska Press, 2019

Reviewed by Teresa Eckmann

The past is extremely important for most Mexican people. We return to our history and our past as a means to constantly redefine who we are.

—Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, 2001¹

What motivated and sustained Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda's decade-long research project, tracing the history of feminist art and activism in Mexico City? The tangible impetus was the author's personal connection with the material—an artist and scholar, she inserts herself at times into the narrative, describing her intensive process of retrieving a lost, ignored, and erased history of women's artivism and activism in post-Tlatelolco Mexico.² She weaves that history from her close examination of multiple, varied Mexican archives, and her command of interdisciplinary methodology and theory draws on scholarship published in Spanish and English, including feminist, cultural, globalization, and film and media studies, and *Onda* literature, semiotics, and more, forming a robust bibliography of some 450 sources.

Evident throughout *Women Made Visible* is the author's insider perspective—as a young artist in Mexico, Aceves Sepúlveda confronted a “male-dominated art system” (xiii), and an absence of women in art history books. In 1999, having completed an undergraduate degree in graphic design from the Universidad Autónoma in Guadalajara, where she was born, Aceves Sepúlveda drove some 2,750 miles to Vancouver, Canada, to pursue a Master of Fine Arts at York University. Treating the body as the medium of her art practice while addressing identity and what she defined as a “temporary (pseudo) exile” state, she created installations with photography, drawing, and video.³ She went on to complete a



Fig. 1. Pola Weiss, *Cyclops portrait* (1987), photograph. © Fondo Pola Weiss-Edna Torres, Centro de Documentación 15, Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, UNAM.

Master's in art history at the University of British Columbia (UBC), with a research focus on Mexico's NAFTA-era shift from state arts patronage to private, transnational corporate philanthropy.⁴

While continuing doctoral studies at UBC, in 2008 she attended *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Of the 120 women artists in this survey of international feminist art (1960–85), only a single artist from Mexico, Mónica Mayer (b. 1954), was included. She interviewed Mayer the following year while researching the 1970s artist collectives, *Los grupos*, in Mexico City, and their conversation confirmed the need for a deep examination of “the legacies of Mexican feminism in the visual arts.”⁵ Aceves Sepúlveda began with artist archives, such as those of Mayer and her colleague Ana Victoria Jiménez (b. 1941), from which she could begin to reconstruct that history, or rather, “alternative histories” recording the role of “visual letradas” (6) in contesting “normative representations of the female body—both aesthetically and in formal politics” (5).⁶ She also analyzes contributions by filmmaker

Rosa Martha Fernández (b. 1942), and Pola Weiss (1947–90), a self-defined *teleasta* (producer of televisual images) and video artist. Enriching her study were discoveries in the then-newly available Mexican secret services archives, photographic records of feminist demonstrations, interviews with feminist studies scholars and new media artists, and videos.

With rigorous scholarship based on a wealth of primary and secondary sources, *Women Made Visible* reconstructs an erased history. (Every page of my review copy is annotated—underlined, starred, check-marked, boxed, and circled, invaluable in supporting my personal research, stewardship of archives, and teaching.)

Timely and necessary, *Women Made Visible* advances the field of Latin American, Chicanx, and Latinx art history similarly channeled by the exhibition and publication *Radical Women in Latin American Art, 1960–1985* (2017–18).⁷ This revisionist effort (initiated in 2010), which ran parallel to Aceves Sepúlveda's research, was broader in focus, covering fifteen Latin American countries and the US, and

included sixteen Mexican women artists and collectives.

In this time of heightened awareness of social justice movements, it is highly relevant that Aceves Sepúlveda's historical account is "about a group of women who ... produced visual and material records of female bodies by taking on the task of creating and keeping visual representations and statistical information about how gendered, classed, racialized, and sexed bodies were produced in relation to the urban landscape" (4). The author identifies the archive, the city, and the media as her main organizing categories, which she redefines in relation to women's fight for not only visibility but political and social change.

Women Made Visible comprises nine chapters grouped into three parts. Part 1, "Feminizing the City," spotlights post-1968 Mexico City and the "feminization of the urban space" (93) as Aceves Sepúlveda details President Luís Echeverría's legislation of women's bodies and rights, and his concurrent promotion of economic and cultural nationalism while engaging in a dirty war against the leftist opposition. Mexico City was host to the International Women's Year Conference in the summer of 1975—as new or second wave feminism (or *neofeminismo*) in Mexico City was emerging, and women were forming collectives⁸ and voicing their demands and concerns (e.g., legalization of abortion, reproductive rights, criminalization of sexual and domestic violence, self-representation, and an end to beauty pageants) (93). In this section Aceves Sepúlveda identifies Mother's Day celebrations and the *Monument to the Mother* (1949) as sites for feminist protest and street performances, and she addresses women's changing roles in the media, including broadcasting and the film industry.

In Part 2, "The Archival Practices of a Visual Letrada," the author defines what constitutes an archive and analyzes the significance of Jiménez's archive, her "archival persona," and feminist trajectory (126). Against the artist's archive, Aceves Sepúlveda weighs government surveillance reports, documents, and photographs

held in the Archivo General de la Nación, in an attempt to rebuild a narrative of feminist activism, performance, and activism in Mexico from multiple points of view. She presents a history of exhibiting archives in Mexico, feminist art exhibitions, contributions of *Fem* magazine, and the formation of feminist art collectives in the 1970s, including Tlacuilas y Retrateras (Women Scribes and Portraitists), Polvo de Gallina Negra (Black Chicken Powder), and Colectivo Bio-Arte (Bio-Art Group). She details feminist happenings such as the misunderstood *La fiesta de quince años*, a collective performance staged at the establishment art institution, Academia de San Carlos, that questioned this coming-of-age celebration. Based on archival research, the author argues that Mexican new wave feminism was not an exclusive middle-class, university-educated movement but was intergenerational and diverse (185).

In Part 3, "Protesting the Archive," Aceves Sepúlveda offers an important critique of gendered and indigenous representation in Mexican photography by photographers who at times treated their subjects with an ethnographic and othering approach. Mapping images by Lola Álvarez Bravo (1903-93), Graciela Iturbide (b. 1942), Tina Modotti (1896-1942), and Mariana Yampolsky (1925-2002), for example, the author proposes that by considering select iconic photographs⁹ in tandem with the practice of photojournalism as well as Jiménez's photo documentation of a diverse feminist body, the combined varied points of view "help chart the politics of representation within a visual economy," (211) defined as "the distribution of images in a system of production, circulation, and consumption" (192). She discusses Mayer and Jiménez's collaboration with Rosa María Fernández's women's film collective (1975-85), which addressed then-taboo topics of abortion and rape, and examines Pola Weiss's experimental, performative video art that "[uses] the female body as an allegory of the city" (270). Weiss' *Retrato Cíclope* (Cyclops Portrait) (1987; Fig. 1), on the book's front cover, offers an apropos metaphor—the artist, whose shoulder-

length hair falls over her face, parting to reveal a camera lens, calls attention to women's invisibility while acknowledging her power to create visibility with her "eye." So, too, does Aceves Sepúlveda bring to light a record of an overlooked history of feminist art and activism in Mexico. •

Teresa Eckmann is Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Texas at San Antonio. She is author of *Neo-Mexicanism: Mexican Figurative Painting and Patronage in the 1980s*.

Notes

1. Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, "Change of State" (MFA thesis, York University, 2001), 3.
2. "Post-Tlatelolco" refers to an era of crisis following the Mexican government's assault on its citizens as they demanded a democratic opening during a peaceful protest held at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in the Tlatelolco area of Mexico City on October 2, 1968.
3. Aceves Sepúlveda, "Change of State," 2.
4. Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, "Art and Possibility: From Nationalism to Neoliberalism. The Cultural Interventions of Banamex and Televisa," (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 2007).
5. Aceves Sepúlveda, "Change of State," 3.
6. Responding to Ángel Rama's theory on the hegemony of lettered urban men (or *letrados*), Aceves Sepúlveda on page 6 defines "visual letradas" as "self-identified women who, by the second half of the twentieth century, became more openly concerned with performing and recording audiovisual information about how their bodies were visually construed and politicized." I personally would prefer the term "letradas visuales."
7. Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta, *Radical Women in Latin American Art, 1960-1985* (Los Angeles: Hammer Museum and DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2017).
8. These include, for example, Mujeres en Acción Solidaria (MAS), Movimiento de Liberación de la Mujer (MLM), Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres (MNM), Coalición de Mujeres Feministas (CMF), and La Revuelta.
9. For example, Graciela Iturbide's *Nuestra señora de las iguanas* (*Our Lady of the Iguanas*) (1979) and Tina Modotti's *Mujer con jícaras* (*Woman of Tehuantepec*) (ca. 1929).



Fig. 1. Judy Chicago, *The Creation* (1984), modified Aubusson tapestry, 42" x 163". © Judy Chicago.

Judy Chicago: New Views

By Judy Chicago, et al.

Scala in association with National Museum of Women in the Arts, 2019

Reviewed by Sally Brown

This recent monograph and collection of essays provides insightful conversations around the work and career of Judy Chicago (b. 1939), in a style that seems much like the art itself—strategic, complex, controversial, sometimes paradoxical—and in all these ways, fully feminist and intentional beyond the art as aesthetic object. Eight essays and one interview approach her work from divergent perspectives, from her early minimalist and performance work, through her feminist collaborations, to her recent broadly philosophical explorations on death and dying.

The cover art, *Purple Atmospheres* (1969), a smoky explosion of purple, represents the artist's evolution as an artist and feminist, and the opening few pages include a selection of works, including a photograph of one of Chicago's cats lying on a model for the Heritage Floor, part of *The Dinner Party* of 1976, and *The Creation*, a detail from 1984 of a modified Aubusson tapestry weaving by Audrey Cowan (Fig. 1). The furry cat spread out on the glistening tiles with women's scripted names from Western history and the brightly hued depiction of an organic mother earth birthing nature, grabbing hold of the sun, at once emits Chicago's feminist

breadth and provocative engagement with play.

A Foreword by National Museum of Women in the Arts Director Susan Sterling opens the book, which coincided with Chicago's 2019 exhibition at the museum, *The End: A Meditation on Death and Extinction*. Pointing to the impact of Chicago's work, Sterling notes that "generations of younger artists have grown up viewing *The Dinner Party* as an iconic piece of art history" (11).

The first essay, by Sarah Thornton, "Who's Afraid of Judy Chicago," points to the ever-present contentiousness embedded in her work, describing its complexity and relationship to feminism, beginning with her early performance work. Chicago has always had an awareness of the impact of her self-positioning and has played a major role in the curation of her own and others work.¹ Thornton discusses the "soft core porn" aspect of *The Dinner Party* (14), in contrast to the artist's description of the vulva-form plates as metaphors, and their increasing three-dimensionality from prehistory to the present to represent the growing struggle for equality and change.² In addition, Thornton's analysis of the plates rings curiously akin to that of the US House of Representatives, which in 1991 deemed them "pornography."³

Thornton extrapolates Chicago's feminism as more constructive than deconstructive, differentiating her work from that of Cindy Sherman (b. 1954) and Barbara Kruger (b. 1945). She laments the mislabel "essentialist," in

defining Chicago's feminism, writing: "Much of Chicago's work can be seen as avant-garde insofar as it was aesthetically experimental, critical of the status quo, and at odds with the high art establishment" (15). However, as Chicago notes: "The avant-garde is a male lineage" (15).

An interview with Chicago by Hans Ulrich Obrist traces the artist's interests and themes throughout her career—aesthetics, accessibility, research, process and intent—with feminism woven throughout. Asked about the epiphany to reinterpret *The Last Supper* with plates on a table after visiting a china painter's home studio, Chicago explained that the epiphany could not have happened in a museum. "At what museum could I have seen the history of work by women artists?" (23).

"Through Minimal to Feminist," an essay by Chad Alligood, discusses Chicago's early transition, looking back on her minimalist work with a feminist intention. Exemplifying Chicago's tenacity, Alligood writes: "In this cultural climate, an increasingly dogmatic and masculinist critical discourse emerged, surrounding the minimal sculptural object ... the production and proliferation of minimal form in art often coincided with a barely repressed misogyny...." (29).

After receiving her MA from UCLA in 1964, with a focus on Minimalism, Chicago (then Judy Gerowitz) entered auto body school. The only woman out of 250, she learned traditionally male-dominated techniques in order to

inscribe female imagery onto car hoods, plainly interrogating the “oppressive masculinity Gerowitz experienced as a young female artist in Los Angeles” (30). Color remained paramount in her early minimal fiberglass works (learned at a boat building school), with sprayed acrylics and Prismacolor applied to the richly hued works. Alligood calls these early works “minimalist drag,” and from the rainbow imagery and feminine inspired car hoods to a sprayed acrylic entitled *Green-Blue Star Cunts* (1969), it seems Chicago’s feminism was evolving.

In “‘To Tell of Touch, to Touch by Telling’: The Erotics of *The Dinner Party*,” William Simmons brings a refreshing approach to Chicago’s best known work. Simmons begins by pointing to suffragist Mary Richardson’s protesting of a fellow activist via slashing Diego Velazquez’s *The Toilet of Venus* (1647–51), not because it is a nude “but rather as a formalist gesture connecting the beauty of painting and the body to the beauty of activism” (67). This foretells the feminist methodology of Chicago’s “transhistorical” monumental work. In the lineage of women, Simmons asserts, “...it is the musculature of history that spreads throughout the bodies, uniting disparate lives but never collapsing into an essentialist history” (69).

In “*Gestures of Liberation: Smoke and Firework Performances, 1968–1974*,” Philipp Kaiser attempts to paint Chicago as a genius. Kaiser places the early *Atmospheres* as outside of the realms of Land Art, Light and Space, Minimalism and Feminist art (too early), as reasons for the lack of earlier recognition for the series. It is an interesting hindsight perspective of Chicago’s outside performances, creating—“feminized” atmospheres with smoke and fireworks, and painting and photographing women monochromatically in various environments..

“Of Woman Born,” by Massimiliano Gioni, takes readers through the history of imagery of mothers and motherhood to contextualize the significance of Chicago’s *Birth Project* collaborative series. Gioni observes that the Western tradition in art history morphed the mother’s life-

giving power into male province, slowly reducing female role to passive (136). Chicago’s series, Gioni asserts, are based on multiple experiences with a plurality of sources, documents, and contributors—the emphasis is active and narrative in these large, bright, heavily detailed embroideries designed by Chicago and created by many. Gioni concludes: “... many of the works in the Birth Project come to resemble vast maps, for this cycle Chicago is traveling a new cartography of desire and kinship” (137).

Jonathan D. Katz’s essay, “Metamorphosis as Stasis in Power Play and the Holocaust Project,” discusses Chicago’s two intense series examining gender constructs and masculinity and the darkness of the Holocaust. Katz recognizes Chicago’s “linking gender to exploitation, and linking one exploitation to another...” and her revelation through the series that “oppression may change, but the impulse and its tragic denouement, sadly remain constant” (157). “For Chicago,” he writes, “form and morality are one” (159).

In “Two Tales of Herstoric Proportion,” Manuela Ammer looks at Chicago’s *Kitty City* (1999–2005) and *Autobiography of a Year* (1993–94). *Kitty City* investigates the history of interactions between human beings and felines, and *Autobiography of a Year* chronicles a year of personal and professional hardship in 140 drawings.

The last essay, “The End: A Meditation on Death and Extinction,” by Martha C. Nussbaum, takes readers through Chicago’s two recent series. “The End,” Nussbaum observes, is “both searingly personal ... and at the same time painfully global, with a

powerful compassion for all the creatures that humans afflict through our greed” (203). “‘Extinction’ images shock ... inviting us to embrace the threatened creatures. Above all, the series summon protest and action” (205).

Images complement the text throughout, mostly chronological and providing ample testament to Chicago’s evolution and breadth as an artist. A duet of images in the middle of the book is particularly intriguing: at left, *Feather Room* (1965) and on the right, *Feather Room* (2018)—these juxtapose a young Chicago in black and white amongst the feathers, looking up, hand on her mouth as if with awe or excitement with the recent color photo of Chicago amongst the feathers, hand on chin, eyes closed, as if grateful, reflecting, at peace. •

Sally Brown is a writer, artist and the Exhibits Coordinator for West Virginia University Libraries. She edits the blog *Les Femmes Folles: Women in Art*.

Notes

1. See for example, my “Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party: The Curatorial Context*,” in *WAJ* 41, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2020): 20–29.
2. “Roots of ‘The Dinner Party’: History in the Making,” Brooklyn Museum, <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollections/exhibitions/3353>, accessed December 1, 2020.
3. Richard Mahler, “The Battle of Chicago: Art: Feminist Artist Judy Chicago Fires Back at Critics Who Call Her ‘Dinner Party’ obscene and withdraws her gift to a University,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 October 1990: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-10-12-ca-2100-story.html>, accessed December 1, 2020.

Subscribe Today...



Subscribe online:

www.oldcitypublishing.com/journals/waj-home/

Woman's Art Journal • ISSN 0270 7993 (print)
Volume 42, Issues 1-2 (64 pages/issue, 8.5" x 11")

20% individual
subscription discount for
CAA and WCA members.
Contact publisher for details.

Paula Rego: The Art of Story

By Deryn Rees-Jones
Thames & Hudson, 2019

Reviewed by Margarida Brito Alves
and Giulia Lamoni

In 1961, the year marking the start of the colonial war between Portugal and its African colonies, artist Paula Rego (b. 1935) presented her work for the first time in Portugal in the exhibition *II Exposição de Artes Plásticas* (II Exhibition of Fine Arts), held at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon. Since that moment, Rego's painting practice has traced a singular and internationally celebrated itinerary in the field of contemporary art in and beyond Portugal—an itinerary strongly interwoven with the political and cultural histories of her country of origin but also with wider questions such as the enactment of power relations in the private and public spheres.

After attending the St. Julian's School in Carcavelos, Portugal, Rego studied at the Slade School of Fine Art in London during 1952–56. She subsequently lived with her family in Portugal and the United Kingdom, finally establishing permanent residence in London in 1976. As part of her personal trajectory, this experience of migration, and the complex relations to belonging that it implied, constitute a relevant thread running through different phases of her production. Significantly, Rego named the museum dedicated to her work, which opened its doors in 2009 in the coastal city of Cascais, “Casa das Histórias,” a house or home of stories, symbolically indicating that her practice strongly inhabits, and is inhabited by, Portuguese cultural imagination.

Over the years, several monographs have been dedicated to the exploration and discussion of Rego's painting from different perspectives and through the lens of a set of theoretical approaches. These include, among others in English, *Paula Rego's Map of Memory. National and Sexual Politics*, by Maria Manuel Lisboa (2003); and *Love and authority in the work of Paula Rego, Narrating the family*



Fig. 1. Paula Rego, *Salazar Vomiting the Homeland* (1960), oil on canvas, 37 1/8" x 47 1/4". © 2019 Paula Rego, courtesy Marlborough Fine Art London.

romance (2011) by Ruth Rosengarten, and several in Portuguese, including *Paula Rego e o Poder da Visão. 'A minha pintura é como uma história interior'* by Ana Gabriela Macedo (2010). In the context of this critical production, Deryn Rees-Jones's *Paula Rego: The Art of Story* stands out because of specific characteristics that make it both a particularly solid study of the artist's work and a very refined art book.

Addressing Rego's career trajectory over more than sixty years, *Paula Rego* is generously illustrated, with 330 illustrations, including numerous color plates. Opening with a short foreword by Marina Warner, the book is then divided into six sections that represent a chronological sequence: “Configurations (1951–1980),” “Monkeys, Rabbits, Girls and Dogs (1981–1987),” “The Story and the Secret (1987–1994),” “Animations (1995–1998),” “Theatres of Memory (1999–2005),” and “Metamorphoses (2006–2018).” Even with this chronological structure, the book succeeds in intertwining various themes and subjects that punctuate Rego's extensive production, while following the

diachronic development of her practice—thus leading to a rich analysis of the artist's work throughout its successive phases.

As stated in the preface, Rego's “breaking of taboos, particularly around women's experiences” continued to resonate deeply with Rees-Jones after she visited the artist's retrospective exhibition at Tate Liverpool in 1997 (10). To a certain extent, it is from this standpoint that Rees-Jones reflected upon Rego's paintings and developed a multifold and complex interpretation interlaced throughout the book. The connection between Rego's creative processes and her personal experiences has been a recurrent and often central subject of much critical writing on the artist's work. Rees-Jones does not exclude this perspective but, with an engaging writing style, clearly balances different possibilities to discuss Rego's production, focusing on the many stories and figures that inhabit the artist's paintings.

In this sense, relevant lines of inquiry emerge, potentially connecting different moments of Rego's work: power

relations, abuses and violence against women, authority and authoritarian rule, female agency, politics and representation of gender, but also the relations between literature and painting, the artist's dialogue with the work of other artists, the experimental practice with materials and formats, and the question of narration and figuration. Often departing from the analysis of specific artworks, Rees-Jones discusses these various complex issues above with much insight. Nevertheless, despite her efforts to weave connections between different phases of Rego's production, further articulation between distinct moments of the artist's career could bring a more composite texture to this monograph.

The author's strong focus on the artworks—whose analysis is acute but sometimes a little too extensive—shapes this book and matches the richness of the images included. However, as the inevitable consequence of such attention, other aspects of Rego's practice are sometimes overshadowed. As an example, the links between Rego's work and the cultural, social, and political contexts of its production are at times overlooked, with the notable exception of the initial chapter on the early work. This aspect is particularly significant, considering the artist's ability to unearth the often troubled relations between personal stories and political and cultural histories—as shown by artworks such as *Salazar Vomiting the Homeland* (1960; Fig. 1), a politically charged painting, in which Rego addresses the long Portuguese dictatorship. Likewise, while Rees-Jones carefully references some artists whose works were important sources of dialogue and inspiration for Rego—Jean Dubuffet, in an initial phase, is perhaps the most discussed example—possible connections with fellow Portuguese artists, such as Menez (Maria Inês Ribeiro da Fonseca, 1926–1995) and Salette Tavares (1922–1994) are not envisaged.

Finally, the author's choice to avoid a conclusion in such a dense and prolific book is perhaps motivated by the patent risk of redundancy. Nevertheless, the absence of a final reflection tends to strengthen the impression of slight

fragmentation provoked by the book's structure and Rees-Jones's emphasis on individual artworks. Partial conclusions are drawn from time to time, for instance, when the author writes: "For Rego, violence is generated not simply from within, but in relation to a society that perpetrates violence on women's bodies" (187). Even so, a final section would have probably allowed the author to emphasize the interconnection between the different phases that articulate Rego's work. Consequently, a summary may have provided the reader with a more cohesive comprehension of the artist's practice.

These critical points do not compromise the scholarly value of this remarkable contribution to the study of Rego's painting. By associating a chronological approach with discussions of specific themes and questions explored in the artist's work, the author manages to produce a rich narrative that combines an overview of Rego's artistic trajectory with an in-depth analysis of numerous paintings. This capacity is perhaps the great strength of this solidly researched monograph—both an academic work and a beautifully illustrated catalogue of Rego's painting. In this sense, Rees-Jones's level of engagement with the artist's production and her scientific rigor are noteworthy. By constructing a thorough and multifaceted narrative on Rego's artistic career, the author may have sacrificed the possibility to look at

the artist's painting through a more inventive perspective, thus shedding some unprecedented light on a body of work that has been the object of much discussion and critical writing both in Portugal and in the United Kingdom. Rees-Jones has contributed an important monograph that will become a significant reference on the work of Paula Rego at the same time it leaves the door open for other studies. •

Margarida Brito Alves is an Associate Professor at the Department of Art History at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Nova University of Lisbon. She has published widely on contemporary art in Portugal and is a board member of the Art History Institute of UNL, the coordinator of the Contemporary Art Studies research group, and the "Spatial Practices in Contemporary Art" research line.

Giulia Lamonì is FCT Researcher in Contemporary Art at the Art History Institute of the Nova University of Lisbon, where she coordinates the research project "Artists and Radical Education in Latin America: 1960s–1970s" (2018–2021). Her publications include journal articles and exhibition catalogues. She recently co-curated the exhibition *Earthkeeping / Earthshaking: art, feminisms and ecology* at the Galeria Quadrum in Lisbon (2020).



Woman's Art Journal
archives are available online from





Pl. 1. Mary Cassatt, *Mrs. Cassatt Reading to Her Grandchildren (La Lecture)* (1880), oil on canvas, 22 3/4" x 39 1/4". Private collection.



Pl. 2. Mary Cassatt, *Auguste Reading to her Daughter* (1910), oil on canvas, 45 1/2" x 35". Photo: wikiart.



Pl. 3. Mary Cassatt, *Portrait of Mrs. Cyrus J. Lawrence with Her Grandson R. Lawrence Oakley* (c. 1898), pastel on tan paper, 28" x 23". Photo: Courtesy Clark Art Institute.



Pl. 4. Mary Cassatt, *On the Balcony* (1873), oil on canvas, 39 3/4" x 32 1/2". Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of John G. Johnson for the W. P. Wiltach Collection, 1906, W1906-1-7.



Pl. 5. Mary Cassatt, *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge* (1879), oil on canvas, 32" x 23 1/2". Philadelphia Museum of Art: Bequest of Charlotte Dorrance Wright, 1978, 1978-1-5.



Pl. 6. Mary Cassatt, *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* (1878), oil on canvas, 35 1/4" x 51 1/8". National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, 1983.1.18.



Pl. 7. Marguerite Gérard, *Portrait of a Man and Woman in an Interior* (1818), oil on canvas, 27 1/8" x 22 1/8". Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OK, Museum purchase, Taber Art Fund, 2019.9



Pl. 8. Marguerite Gérard, *The Drawing Lesson* (1814-16), oil on canvas, 19" x 15 3/4". Lynda and Stewart Resnick collection, Los Angeles.



Pl. 9. Marguerite Gérard, *The Letter and the Drawing* (*La lettre et le dessin*) (1820), oil on canvas, 24 3/8" x 20". Private collection.



Pl. 10. Gesina ter Borch, *Arrival at a country house* (1661), Artbook fol. 17r, gouache and watercolor over black chalk, 8 1/4" x 13". Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Pl. 11. Margareta de Heer, *Landscape with Animals* (1640s), signed *Margareta D. Heer Fecit*, gouache and watercolor on vellum, 11 5/16" x 9 9/16". Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge (long term loan, Maida and George Abrams Collection).



Pl. 12. Alida Withoos, *Study of a Hanekam (Celosia argentea)* (n.d.), watercolor and graphite, 14 1/2" x 9 1/2". Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 2006.



Pl. 13. Maria Sibylla Merian, *Pineapple and Cockroaches* (1701–05), gouache on vellum, 17 1/8" x 11 7/8". British Museum, London, for *The Insects of Suriname*, 1719 ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Pl. 14. Anne Ryan, *Collage No. 452* (ca. 1948–54), collage of hand- and machine-made papers, natural and synthetic fabrics, and watercolor and oil paint, on hand-made wove paper, 6 5/8" × 5 1/8". Photo: Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery.



Pl. 15. Anne Ryan, *Collage No.* , (ca. 1948–54), collage of hand- and machine-made papers, some with charcoal or watercolor additions, natural and synthetic fabrics, linen tape, and yarn, on cardstock, 6 7/8" × 4 1/2". Photo: Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery.



Pl. 16. Anne Ryan, *Collage No. 291* (ca. 1948–54) collage of hand- and machine-made papers, natural and synthetic fabrics, printed candy wrappers, gold and silver foil, and oil paint and watercolor, on wove paper, 8 × 6 3/4 in. Photo: Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery.



Pl. 17. Anne Ryan, *Still-Life (Cubist Table Top Still-Life with Glass and Pitcher)* (1942), oil on canvasboard, 18" x 24".
Photo: Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY.



Pl. 18 Anne Ryan, *Collage #707* (1953), collage, 16" x 39". Collection Christian Levett, Florence.

LINDA STEIN ADDRESSING SEXUALITY:

PROFILES SERIES OF 1960s AND 1970s BASED ON THE ARTIST'S DIARIES

... these faces I'm drawing look back at me in disgust. I have to make sure they can't see me. I'll turn the face from frontal view to profile. I'll begin just below the eyes...



**LECTURES,
VISITS AND
WEBINARS
SCHEDULED FOR
PSU LEHIGH VALLEY,
BARUCH COLLEGE
AND OTHERS**

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF

HAVE ART: WILL TRAVEL! INC.
FOR COURAGEOUS KINDNESS

**A NON-PROFIT 501(c)3
WITH EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
ON DIVERSITY AND EMPATHY
BY A CURRICULAR TEAM
OF NATIONAL SCHOLARS
IN COLLABORATION WITH
PENN STATE UNIVERSITY**

HaveArtWillTravel.org

212.964.6007

Profile Landscape 438.081
1976, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48" x 24"
LindaStein.com