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(Front cover) Maren Hassinger, *The Window* (2021). Installation at Dia Art Foundation, Bridgehampton, NY. Exterior, two bushes in steel; Interior, hanging fabric with images. A window provides a view onto the exterior sculptures.

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A surprising number of articles were submitted for consideration during the most restrictive months of the pandemic. Indicative of our international readership, the proposals were sent from various countries in Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. The editors are grateful to these authors. From Israel, we here include Shahr Marnin-Distelfeld's article on the multimedia artist Miri Abramsohn. A "second-generation Holocaust survivor," Abramsohn represents the plight of (now adult) children of parents who lived through the horrors of the Nazi invasion. Abramsohn's parents (who married after the War and the loss of their families) bore witness to the lifelong impact of cruelty and death. These children, writes Marnin-Distelfeld, were designated not only to serve as a lifeline for their parents who survived the war atrocities but to fill their lives with new meaning, providing compensation and a substitute for their lost families, communities, and previous lives. Based on an interview with Abramsohn and a discussion of theoretical writings about the second-generation Holocaust survivors and their art, Marnin-Distelfeld shows how the work of Abramsohn and other Israeli artists relates to and embodies these concepts.

The remaining articles focus on three distinctive groups of US artists from different eras. Stephanie Sparling Williams, a young African-American scholar and a curator at the Mount Holyoke Art Museum, here presents a comparative study of two contemporary sculptors, Maren Hassinger and Mary Ann Unger. Although their sculptures have shared space, appearing in the same large outdoor installations, and they became friends, this study brings their work into dialogue for the first time. Writes Sparling Williams, "... bringing these two artists together satisfies a personal and political goal ... and that is to rigorously integrate in research, writing, and exhibition the work of important Black women artists across time and media with the significant contributions of often also underrepresented peers." On our cover is a recent sculpture by Hassinger, an African-American artist, whose public art project will be on display for a year at the Dia Art Foundation. Tragically, Mary Ann Unger passed away in 1998, from cancer, at the height of her professional career, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and sculptural projects accepted for public sites. Sparling Williams honors both artists here with her elegant and insightful writing about their lives, their friendship, and their work.

More light-hearted is an article documenting the experiences of Abstract Expressionist women artists from New York and California who were celebrated, exhibited, and had their work embraced by a community of artists and collectors in Amarillo, Texas. The story of *The Women: Tops in Art*, a 1960 exhibition in Amarillo, is brought to life by Amy Von Lintel and Bonnie Roos. During the 1950s, art teacher and visionary Dord Fitz held classes and workshops across West Texas and Oklahoma, to introduce Abstract Expressionism to artists and collectors in the region. He also organized trips to New York, establishing relationships with galleries and with a number of women artists, who were then competing for attention with their male counterparts. Prior to the 1960 show, the Dord Fitz gallery had shown works by many of the AbEx painters, both male and female. Elaine de Kooning had come to Amarillo several times

for talks and workshops, and she and Jeanne Reynal recruited "top" artists for 1960 show. Among the seventeen participating artists were painters Hedda Sterne, Pat Passloff, Jane Wilson, Jane Freilicher, Mickey Wagstaff, Helen Frankenthaler, Yvonne Thomas, Ethel Schwabacher, Mariam Shapiro and Janice Biala. Several pieces were purchased by the Texas collectors, including Louise Nevelson's wall-size *Moon Garden*, which now has a permanent home in the Amarillo Museum of Art.

We are pleased to acknowledge the centennial of women's suffrage in our pages. Nicole J. Williams's "'Graphic Statues,' Female Monuments, Media Publicity, and the Struggle for Suffrage" offers some visual evidence of the obstacles that were overcome. While Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Sojourner Truth were among those struggling for women's rights, parallel efforts for "self-advertisement" sought to gain more lasting recognition for them through public artworks. Sculptor Adelaide Johnson's *Portrait Monument* of 1921, honoring Mott, Stanton, and Anthony, spent seven decades virtually out of sight before being restored to the US Capitol Rotunda in 1997. More recently, public sculptures related to women's suffrage continue to be dedicated, including the 2020 *Women's Rights Pioneers* monument featuring Anthony, Stanton, and Truth, in New York City's Central Park.

Among the reviews in this issue is Ann Sutherland Harris's detailed commentary on a recent publication and exhibition at the National Gallery, London, for Artemisia Gentileschi. Because the exhibition was scheduled to open during the pandemic and attendance would be greatly reduced, the curator and designer took special care in representing the works, so that "[b]rowsing through the catalogue can feel like standing so close to a painting that the guards will ask you to step back." One of our foremost scholars of Renaissance and Baroque art, Sutherland Harris's insights and remarks on the exhibition, the catalogue essayists, and the state of research on Artemisia are significant contributions to the ongoing study of this exceptional artist.

Other review topics are far ranging, from a book on contemporary feminist art and art history from the Middle East and North Africa, to a well-researched study on Autotheory, "the commingling of theory and philosophy with autobiography—as a mode of critical artistic practice indebted to feminist writing and activism." An unusual exhibition catalogue documents ephemera including press clippings, court sketches, and a variety of archival materials related to the Black activist Angela Davis and the international movement for her liberation in connection with a 1970s court case. Another new study refigures the much-written-about Ana Mendieta as "an artist and interlocutor of the Black Atlantic." These and more are included in *WAJ*'s selection of reviews in this issue.

As always, we are appreciative of the team that makes *WAJ* possible, our excellent book editor Aliza Edelson, Ian Mellanby and Guy Griffiths at Old City Publishing, and our friends at Rutgers University.

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

WHERE THE BODY ENDS

THE WORK OF MAREN HASSINGER AND MARY ANN UNGER

By Stephanie Sparling Williams

*"When I make a work, all of me is contained within it.
I make things that are extensions of myself..."*

—Maren Hassinger¹

Twenty tawny pods huddle together on a grassy lawn, their oblong points meeting in the center of a bundt-like ring. Stained and weather worn, together the smooth bulbous forms are at once familiar and alien, manufactured and natural, sinuous and fixed— sensual, warm, and, yet, lifeless. *The Well* (1979; Fig. 1 and Pl. 1) is an early work by sculptor Mary Ann Unger (1945–98) made out of bonded iron and exposed to the elements on Wards Island in New York City. Cast from a single mold, the individual components are connected only by their proximity, nestled against one another, a feature of the artist's work that can be observed throughout her artistic practice and well into the later years of her career.

The Well was first exhibited in the annual Organization of Independent Artist's (OIA) Sculpture Garden at Manhattan Psychiatric Center on Wards Island in 1979, before traveling to the Nassau County Museum of Fine Art in 1980, and then on to South Beach Psychiatric Center on Staten Island as part of the OIA's Sculpture Garden II, from July of 1983 to 1984. At the time, one *New York Times* critic likened the pear-shaped forms to "pigs at a trough, animals at a water hole, a convention of walruses or monks praying."² Lawrence Alloway, for *The Nation*, noted that Unger's 14-foot circle, though iron, had "the dusty radiance of terra cotta," an effect likely achieved through the artist's practice of finishing her work with acid.³ *The Well* was among perhaps dozens of sculptures brought together by the OIA and Artists Representing Environmental Art (AREA), to be installed across the Wards Island landscape, in close relation to the state's Manhattan Psychiatric Center. In addition to a catalogue and site map, the piece was featured in reviews for the *Soho Weekly News*, *The Nation*., and *The New York Times*.

It is unclear, though, who the audience was of *The Well*, or what the connection was between the sculpture garden and the prison-like psychiatric institute whose imposing structures shared physical proximity and provided a backdrop to many



Fig. 1. Mary Ann Unger, *The Well* (1979), bonded iron, 2' x 14' x 14'. Courtesy of Mary Ann Unger Estate, New York.

of the works in the sculpture garden. As Alloway speculated at the time, perhaps in addition to the location's abundance in spatial resource and the limited restrictions imposed on the artists who participated, the show might also represent a gesture towards care and recognition of those who inhabit the space as patients and staff—a morale-boosting visual reprieve from the tasks of healing and caregiving performed in isolation at the center, and on Wards Island. With this in mind, *The Well* also evokes lore around "wishing wells," and other spiritual connotations—a fount of blessings, the deep well of one's soul, and the encounter between Jesus Christ and an unnamed Samaritan woman at a well, to name a few.

To this author, *The Well* offers yet another connotation, and that is one of orifice, of fleshy bodily tissue that perhaps takes into itself and expels. This carnal metal opening might very well offer a portal, a site through which sustenance, pleasure,



Fig. 2. Maren Hassinger, *Wreath* (1978), branches and wire rope, 18" x 165". Courtesy of Susan Inglett Gallery, New York.

and life are accessed, exuded, and/or extracted. But where is the body? Where does it end?

Unger's journals reveal that the artist was indeed deeply concerned with the body, its spirituality, materiality, and its metaphysics. In the year leading up to the production of *The Well*, somewhere between June of 1977 and January of 1978, Unger, over several glasses of wine, scribbled deep and troubled reflections on the nature of creativity as it emanated from *atman*, the Hindu conception of "soul" or an individual's eternal core. Unger associated the act of creation with a relational struggle with and against nature. She understood sculpture on an elemental level as being about bespoke form, unlike the realm of other media such as painting or film, which Unger likened to the production of language and memory. She muses, "sculpture for me is truly spiritual in the god/man sense. The sense of 'things' overlaying order ... What [is] behind the thing is the order in a platonic sense."⁴ In the pages following, dated January 24, 1978, the time during which Unger would have likely been working on *The Well*, three words are listed and variously defined: flay, flail, and flesh—a curious insight into the artist's fascination with the body (its pain and possible destruction) at the site of its protective dermis.

In her incisive catalogue essay nearly fifteen years later for Unger's 1992 solo exhibition titled *Dark Icons*, Joan Marter illuminated the continuation of the artist's spiritual quest as one where she "attempt[ed] to demystify the body through the rituals associated with death."⁵ Arguably this was a process informed by her written meditations on creation and manifested in Unger's late 1970s sculptures like *The Well*. Additionally, while *Dark Icons* opened seven years after Unger was diagnosed with breast cancer, which inevitably shaped the tone and tenor of her work, as evidenced in her journals from the late 1970s, the artist had been working through the aesthetic principles of peeling back the body's layers through, as Marter observes, "rituals associated with death." An oft-overlooked mainstay in evaluations of the work is Unger's continued (not new) evocation of "the powers of regeneration through a struggle with mortality, [portraying] the body as a



Fig. 3. Maren Hassinger, *Monument 2 (Wreath)* (2018), branches on armature, 36" x 270". The Studio Museum in Harlem Partnership with NYC Parks, Marcus Garvey Park, NYC. Courtesy of Susan Inglett Gallery, New York.

site for self-discovery and healing."⁶ *The Well*—in all of its site-specific connotation—is a consummate example of this early impulse and dynamic.

On the other side of the country, and at the time Unger was devising and fabricating *The Well*, another portal opened in Los Angeles, California, in the studio of sculptor and performance-based artist Maren Hassinger (b. 1947). Charged with its own psychosocial and spiritual connotations, *Wreath* (1978; Fig. 2 and Pl. 2), like *The Well*, was also approximately 14 feet in diameter, and was an entangled ring of branches brought together by wire rope). And while the artist does not recall the original circumstances or exhibition context for this particular nest-like construction, Hassinger has become known for her thought-provoking explorations into the relational dynamics between humans and the natural world through both performance and sculpture, and more often, together at once. Citing Southern novelist Walker Percy as an intellectual interlocutor, Hassinger explored Percy's novels in her twenties, and felt him a "fellow traveler in [their] belief about the plight of nature."⁷

This concern for the environment has remained steadfast across Hassinger's impressive oeuvre, which spans the artist's half-a-century-long career. The entwined twigs intricately arranged in *Wreath* represent an early method and a metaphor for her practice in monumental sculpture making. Initially completed alone, Hassinger has since moved to include several assistants (often gallery or community members) in the ritual task of transforming her materials into art objects. For *Wreath* and its later iterations, tree limbs, twigs, and wire were wrangled together to make forms, with branches and body yielding to one another until the work is completed.

In the heat of the same summer sun that warmed the surface and cast shadows from Unger's *The Well*, just across the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge, and separated by two miles and forty years, another circle opening appeared in Marcus Garvey Park in New York's Harlem. Sitting atop a blanket of grass,



Fig. 4. Mary Ann Unger and Maren Hassinger, 1990. Photo: Geoffrey Biddle.

and tucked among mature trees and shrubs, from a distance, its ashen surface appeared uniform, even smooth. However, as one drew near, the walls of the rounded construction became textured, knotted, gnarled, and woven. A dense assembly of twigs and branches painstakingly entwined, and titled *Monument 2 (Wreath)* (2018; Fig. 3), the piece was a resurrection of Hassinger's earlier circular composition as well as the process that produced it. Among eight other site-specific sculptures that responded to the landscape of the Harlem park, this most recent version of *Wreath* was installed near the swimming pool, mirroring both the recreational structure and some of the aqueous symbolism in Unger's laden well sculpture decades earlier.

The form and function of the singular wreath varies across time and culture; in many contexts it signifies seasonal greetings and well-wishes; commemoration and memorial; and when placed upon one's brow, majesty, beauty, and nobility. Its continuity suggests timelessness, energy everlasting, a bond unbroken. In most instances, the wreath is present as a symbolic extension of the body's love or power, and quite literally celebrates, mourns, or adorns a body at the point of its ending.

There is an unmistakable and uncanny resonance between the lives and work of artists Mary Ann Unger and Maren Hassinger. Born two years apart, Unger was raised in New Jersey and Hassinger in Los Angeles, before they both attended historic women's colleges in the Northeast; Mount Holyoke and Bennington, respectively. Hassinger moved to New York City in 1969, following her time at Bennington, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Sculpture. She would eventually go on to receive her Masters of Fine Arts in 1973 from the University of California in Los Angeles, two years before Unger's 1975 matriculation from Columbia University in New York.

Before, during, and after their MFAs, the two sculptors developed vibrant creative lives on opposite coasts, Hassinger working intimately with Studio Z, a mutually supportive collective of Los Angeles based artists who staged performances, public actions, and exhibitions, and Unger completing a year of study at the University of California Berkeley, before traveling the globe, including a solo excursion



Fig. 5. Maren Hassinger, *Three Bushes* (1988), steel cable, 84" x 84" x 84" (three units). Courtesy of Susan Inglett Gallery, New York.

through North Africa before returning to New York to lead a successful career as an artist, which included a residency at Yaddo in 1980 and the arrival of Eve in 1982, the artist's only child. In 1984, Hassinger would return to New York City as an artist in residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, and two years later would welcome her daughter, Ava.

Both artists' work—gallery and outdoor, sculpture and works on paper, then and in the present moment—encourages open-ended interpretation, and often triggers personal associations and emotional experiences in their viewers. Where Hassinger contorts and configures industrial and natural materials into sculptures that resemble the natural world—landscapes, bushes, trees, Unger's gallery work, in particular, transforms her materials of Hydrocal, iron, fiberglass, and gauze into forms that take on bodily resemblances to bones, fleshy protuberances, and organs. Unger's outdoor public sculptures, however, also using industrial materials such as "bonded iron" and concrete, come together as boulders, trees, and other natural forms.⁸ Despite these associations, neither artist's work is explicit or didactic about the ideas or emotions it conjures.

And notwithstanding the significant alignments between their lives and their work, Hassinger and Unger (Fig. 4) have never been the topic of comparative study until now. Thus, the



Fig. 6. Maren Hassinger, *Monument* (2018/2020), branches on armature, 60" x 102" x 90". Courtesy of Susan Inglett Gallery, New York.

goal of this article is to bring their work into dialogue, one that is attentive to the embodied practice of both artists, with the dual aim of exploring the productive tensions in their /a/ the body's end, or its absence in their monumental sculptural work. Significantly, this conversation is propelled by a fascination with materials and their chromatic manifestations, particularly as process and selection might be understood as modalities of ontological production. Said another way, there is immense potential in an exploration that probes how materials such as black tar, nude hosiery, cream colored gauze, painted wood, white plaster, and welded steel communicate something intrinsic about the body and its labor. In turn, this dialectic understanding of both color and material in relationship to the body might lead to deeper theoretical insights into how viewers of Hassinger's or Unger's work might then experience their own being. Finally, bringing these two artists together satisfies a personal and political goal of this author, and that is to rigorously integrate in research, writing, and exhibition the work of important Black women artists across time and media with the significant contributions of often also underrepresented peers.

This essay is not the first time the sculptures of Hassinger and Unger have shared space, however. One of the first occasions was in the early 1990s, at the Socrates Sculpture Park in Astoria, Queens, New York, where Unger's humongous piece, *Misericordia* (1989; Pl. 3), was installed among a group of approximately thirty sculptures exhibited together in *No Man's Land*, which ran from September 23, 1990 to April 1, 1991. Curiously, while Hassinger's piece *Three Bushes* (1988; Fig. 5), which was installed nearby, was featured in *New York Times* critic Michael Brenson's review of the show, Hassinger was not listed among the exhibiting artists. This could be perhaps because *Three Bushes* was installed in the park two years prior, in 1988, and at the time Brenson was also the reviewing critic. Regardless, the two pieces took up space together for six months and both were standout sculptures, and in Brenson's estimation, deeply resonate.

In *Three Bushes*, copper colored steel tendrils stretched towards the sky, rooted—together with two other similar clusters—to a dry grassy section of the park. The wispy strands of each unit

were erratic and wavy, stiff and erect. The forms' flossy shadows, indistinct, coalesced with those of the natural environment, and as Brenson notes in his 1989 review of the work:

Hassinger's "Bushes" are so inconspicuous in the tall grass that they are almost invisible. Not only are these grasslike clumps of black cable integrated into the landscape, but in their own way they, too, change color and shape. It is possible, however, that the natural grass will outlast them. While the natural grass grows, the industrial grass will eventually come apart, dissolve and be absorbed into the earth.⁹

Given Hassinger's lifelong interest in this very tension between natural and manufactured environments and materials, the possibility of the artwork's decay would have likely delighted the artist.

Three decades later, two steel bushes stand upright and distant from one another; their barren bronze offshoots boldly contrast with the lushness of their surroundings. These bushes, strategically placed on the well-manicured lawn of Dia Bridgehampton in New York, are part of a rare indoor/outdoor installation featuring Hassinger's work (on view June 25, 2021 to May 2022). Titled *The Window* (2021; front cover), the outdoor sculptures are framed by an interior window for viewers inside the museum, who share space with the ghostly imagery of an earlier piece, *Circle of Bushes* (1991), printed on chiffon and suspended lightly from the ceiling.

Hassinger "employs the singular window as both a separating barrier and a transformative portal," write Kelly Kivland and Theodore Bocanegra Lang in the Dia exhibition brochure. Indeed, the reflexive appropriation of the artist's past bush sculptures creates a productive tension between the newly incorporated structures of the gallery with the landscaped environment beyond—transporting viewers between the two spaces as well as back in time. In a truly stunning move, that makes apparent Hassinger's development, the artist radically reorients the bodies of her viewers to the natural world as she had pointedly troubled the relationship between the natural world and her works of art in the past.

This deliberate toggle reversed the formal trajectory of the materials used in the original *Wreath*. In *Three Bushes* nearly a decade after, and *The Window* thirty years since then, Hassinger takes up steel cable to construct natural forms—bushes—whereas, in the 1978 piece, branches and twigs were culled to construct the distinctly manmade gallery-installed monument. As Brenson suspected and later confirmed in his 1990 review, Hassinger's "cable bushes now have grass growing in and through them so that it looks as if nature has engaged the artist's industrialized simulation of nature in a struggle, and finally begun to win."¹⁰ Today, and given the new context for Hassinger's bushes, it is unlikely that *The Window* will undergo a similar transformation. Time—another apt medium in the artist's practice—will tell.

In addition to praising Hassinger's conceptual ingenuity, at the time Brenson dubbed another piece "one of the strong new

works," and described Unger's *Misericordia's* "bent, round, nearly identical forms, each looking like a gigantic tooth, huddled like a football team or protective family from which there is no escape."¹¹ Like *The Well*, Unger's *Misericordia* is another outdoor sculpture of bonded iron and comprising vesicle-like units that nestle together without welding or joining. Now part of the permanent collection and on view at The Fields Sculpture Park at Art Omi, the piece was also titled "Congregation" at one time, which together with "misericordia"—"mercy" in Spanish—adds to the work's intrigue.

After its installation in *No Man's Land*, *Misericordia* traveled to the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park (1990–91), and then was transported to Top Gallant Farm, the 150-acre sculpture park in Pawling, New York, owned and run by German-born gallerist André Emmerich. Once a Quaker farm, the transformed country estate was the temporary home of Unger's *Misericordia* and other large-scale works by artists Alexander Calder, Keith Haring, Beverly Pepper (1922–2020), Tony Rosenthal, and George Rickey, to name a few. When operations discontinued at Emmerich's sculpture farm, *Misericordia* was moved in 1997 to its permanent home at Art Omi. An unrealized goal of the artist was to have this work cast in bronze.

Process | Material

The significance of Hassinger's and Unger's sculpture is in their choice of materials and the strategic and innovative ways they approached and pushed the boundaries of their selections. Irreverent towards the kind of purity or truth doctrines espoused around Modern sculpture, each artist has worked out something distinctly personal through the raw resources that were at their disposal. As writer and curator Robert Storr noted of French-born artist Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010), the process of making a work responds to the urgency of the artist's emotional life—"turning passive anxiety into active physical and intuitive effort," [she] seeks through her art to purge herself of sudden fears and irrepressible anger."¹² Indeed, and as Hassinger notes, the materials themselves and the process of making are extensions of the raced, gendered, oft oversexed, ailing, and failing bodies that manifest them in the world.

A parallel impulse seems to be at work in the life of sculptor Eva Hesse (1936–70), another influential figure in this moment, who's fidelity towards any material was upended by her keen ability to manipulate a vast variety of media towards her own deeply personal and cathartic ends. It makes sense, then, that both Hassinger and Unger were greatly influenced by Hesse. In 1973, Hassinger was introduced to Hesse's work for the first time at the Pasadena Art Museum. Hassinger recalled the encounter:

It was as if I was looking at somebody's spirit made manifest ... it was an absolute gut level, wrenching experience ... as if the sculpture were made flesh ... later when I began to read about [Eva Hesse], it was as if she had managed somehow to put all the emotional truth of her life into that piece, and it communicated that way ... It was a total true expression of life.¹³

In an interview with Kellie Jones and artist Senga Nengudi for the *Los Angeles Times*, and responding to a question from Jones regarding the most impactful exhibitions the artists had seen in the 1970s, Hassinger elaborates on the significance of this first encounter with Hesse:

For me it was a show at the Pasadena Art Museum by Eva Hesse, curated by Barbara Haskell. I mention her because I saw the work that was inspiring to me in other shows by other curators and it never had the same impact. You walk into a large room, ovoid or oval, and Hesse had made all these L-shaped pieces that vaguely looked like bandages. The material was translucent so the light in the room went right through them. They looked so much like something real I hadn't seen before, like a real personage or object that had a use I didn't know about. It was absolutely real to me with huge emotional impact: I felt it was talking to me about frailty but strength, beauty but gruesomeness, and I wanted as a professional artist to be able to make work with that power.¹⁴

Similarly, Marter recounts a congruent acknowledgement in Unger's autobiographical "Dark Icons," whose "surfaces come alive with blood crimson encrustations, or the deep blues and blacks of anguish and mourning." Many works are said to be related to Christian themes "in the art of Old Masters—Rubens's *Deposition*, Michelangelo's *Pieta*, or Giotto's *Entombment of Christ*." However, and as Marter's time with the artist reveals, Hesse's "wrapping and bandaging of sculptural elements can [also] be related to [Unger's] own illness and pain."¹⁵ Hesse's fleshy, bandaged, sculptures were lithe and phenomenologically impactful for both Hassinger and Unger, and her trailblazing influence was evident within their work in distinctive ways.

The superpower in Hassinger's and Unger's sculptures is that they, too, are sinuous—forms that are emotion-laden, twisted, oft-enormous and yet delicate. Enlivening materials that are at times spindly in Hassinger's case, and hulking in Unger's, the result is a monumentality no less impressive or stirring. Rather than egomaniacal and imposing, however, Hassinger's and Unger's works reflect a radical orientation towards space, deep emotional intelligence of the body, and a care and consideration of the fleshy vulnerability of that same body and its environments. Their work spans the possibilities and rebukes the limitations of material processes in sculpture, as well as their own raced and gendered bodies in the histories of art made in the 1970s through the early 2000s, and the myriad ways they have been left out of these narratives.

Albeit underexamined, Hassinger's performative and process-laden approach to her materials is both deeply personal and universalizing in practice, and offers something vital to those who study art, race, and the body, as her work is often marginalized in discourses of post-minimalist sculpture as well as feminist art in the late 1970s through 1990s. Additionally, Unger's own decade-long struggle with breast cancer and the ways she can be understood as working through the complex failings of her own body vis-a-vis



Fig. 7. Senga Nengudi, *R.S.V.P.* (1977), activated by Maren Hassinger, pantyhose and sand, 10 pieces, overall dimensions, variable. Courtesy of Thomas Erben Gallery.

objects that would long outlive her, is a stunning and underexamined exercise in feminist and ontological projection. Materiality in the work of Bourgeois, Hassinger, Hesse, and Unger is central to its meaning, and pointedly the materials are the manner through which a/their/the body extends. What materials, then, and by which processes might one extend a/their/the body?

Hassinger often used found materials like branches, twigs, and newspaper in her sculptures, and over years of making, her distinct formal language evolved through a usage of wire rope and steel cables. Unger's materials, on the other hand, were culled together or developed through experimentation and an innovative posture akin to alchemy. Hydrocal, plaster, iron, fiberglass, and gauzy mesh materials were among her most used, and Unger pushed the boundaries of these resources much as Hesse had in the generation prior.

In a forthcoming book on his life with Mary Ann, Geoffrey Biddle recalls Unger's bold approach to her work:

Mary Ann drew on her love of materials and experimentation and figured out how to make fiberglass pieces that looked rusted and metallic, like Corten steel. She was interested in modular art, pieces with multiple identical parts that could be arranged in various ways, so she made master shapes, then plaster molds reinforced with metal, then lined the molds with fiberglass and resin, over and over, until she had the required number of elements.... The final steps she always handled herself, coating the pieces with outside layers of resin impregnated with iron powder ... sanding them smooth, and wrapping them with acid-soaked cloth. When uncovered after a couple of days, there was

an object that looked a hundred times heavier than its true weight. She dubbed the material "bonded iron," and the pieces were impressive.¹⁶

Despite their disparate approaches to artistic practice, and their selections in creative resources, Unger's and Hassinger's unique processes represent a shared reverence, and deep and ongoing dialogue with their respective materials.¹⁷ Both were industrious and performative artists in this regard, wielding their own bodies in creative and strategic ways to achieve their artistic goals. The results were sculptures that captivate and confound as much as they are also haunted by the gendered labor and physical presence of the artists themselves—still to this day.

Form | Freedom

Minimalism and abstraction were two modes in which both Hassinger and Unger deftly operated. Hassinger pursued abstraction for "its potential to convey strong content and powerful emotions," and also to avoid didacticism in tracing and coalescing memory and nature as the subject of her work as well as a provocative discourse staged between her materials.¹⁸ That nature and movement are universal entities across time and culture is another fascination of both Hassinger and Unger, and keenly evident in installations such as *Dangerous Ground* (1981; Pl. 4) by Hassinger and *Across the Bering Strait* (1992–94; Pl. 5) by Unger. These two powerful masterworks are visually resonant in their occupation of space; caught in direct light, casting shadows, conveying both movement and stillness, and imbued with meaning. The dark and abstract forms comprised of bundles of balanced wire rope in *Dangerous Ground*, and Hydrocal, steel, and graphite in *Across the Bering Strait*, formally resembling elements in the natural world that, as Hassinger has noted of Hesse's work, exist on the edge of recognition and evade identification.

The sculptural ethos behind producing bodies of work that are profoundly evocative and yet elusive is one that both artists carry throughout their impressive careers. In the last few years, in particular, Hassinger has been expounding through commissions her large-scale outdoor sculpture series *Monuments*. In her most recent site-specific iteration, Hassinger created a solitary monument of her now famed branch construction for a pedestrian path in Washington D.C., on Connecticut Avenue, at the south end of Dupont Circle. The work, a swooping triangular form meant to emulate the shape of the underpass below, is approximately six feet tall at its precipice and gradually tapers off at its base. Branches and twigs were intricately woven through a metal armature by a team of nearly a dozen volunteers, the protruding stems snipped into shape using large hedge trimmers. Simply and aptly titled *Monument* (2018/2020; Fig. 6) the basketlike structure was commissioned through the Smithsonian's American Women's History Initiative as an outdoor extension of the ongoing project, "Because of Her Story, Monument & Marker."

As Kriston Capps from the *Washington Post* notes, despite not maintaining reliable visual connections to gender or race in her art, "there is a social dimension to much of Hassinger's work."¹⁹ While works in her *Monuments* series may first



Fig. 8. Mary Ann Unger, *Untitled* (1975), aluminum screen, 29" x 5" x 27'. Courtesy of Maxwell Davidson Gallery, New York.

appear to be deep musings on minimalism and the environment, in Hassinger's most recent iterative site-specific commission, "it's hard to miss the correspondence between the sculpture and pup tents," which are often set up by the unhoused in an area adjacent to where *Monument* was installed, and further "what [the sculpture] reveals about monuments—about the gaps between the values we choose to elevate and those we neglect."²⁰ Indeed, *Monument* is a formally rich meditation on where particular bodies end; where they get erased and made invisible despite their hypervisibility in our national systems of mattering. The disenfranchised and unhoused bodies of the nation's capital's residents activate the work in ways that unsettled traditional notions of audience and participation, and as Capps alludes, point to the fraught histories and practices of constructing monuments in Washington D.C. and beyond.

Over four decades prior, in a moment long before the strictures of the global pandemic created vastly different conditions under which art might be experienced, Hassinger was at the (literal) center of a sculpture created by multidisciplinary artist Senga Nengudi. Collaboration, and her longtime work with Nengudi, another member of Studio Z, might itself be understood as "form" in Hassinger's work. This is especially the case in her practice using modern dance as performative labor.

In one such longstanding partnership, Hassinger physically activates Nengudi's installed *R.S.V.P.* (1977; Fig. 7), a nylon sculptural environment into which Hassinger inserts her body in poetic freestyle movement. The sculpture itself was part of an ongoing series variously titled *R.S.V.P.* and *R.S.V.P.I.* that the artist began in the mid-1970s. Hassinger was one of the first to activate the sculptures with Nengudi herself, if not *the* first, and has participated in activations as recent as 2017. Without Hassinger, the sculpture comprises long pieces of dark beige and

brown nylon hosiery (previously worn), stretched between points where it has been attached to white gallery walls. In several iterations, the stockings are filled with sand and tied off to make bulbous forms that sag and droop from the strung taut nylon tubes. The material strain between the bulging sacks and the stretched stockings is both stunning and unsettling. When Hassinger weaves her limbs into the piece and begins to dance, the tension is one the viewers feel quite viscerally. Hers is a body proximate to and entangled within the sculptural material, and the result captured in documentation of the performance is imagery that is poetic in its formal grace and stillness.

In the early days of her practice, Unger constructed several wall pieces out of aluminum screen before replicating the forms in beautifully light and airy drawings. What is truly stunning about these early works, however, is that while Hassinger was knitting herself into the structural plane of Nengudi's sculptures, creating new work in its documentation, Unger was interlacing her own materials into pieces that would echo what Hassinger was achieving on the other side of the country, and through her own body. In Unger's hands the aluminum in *Untitled* (1975; Fig. 8) is elegant, soft and supple. Devoid of edges and denied its sharpness, the metal mesh tubes—resembling Nengudi's nylon—are intricately looped into one another in an interlinked construction that evokes support, tenderness, and care.

Body | Ending

Statement

*The flesh of the sculpture
Is being removed so that
The skeleton supports
The fleshy parts
And is structural and
Rational. Covered it
Becomes emotion, unwieldy
And alive.*

—Mary Ann Unger²¹

Both Hassinger and Unger are clear about how their bodies exist within their sculptural practice and their process and materials allow viewers of the work an experiential glimpse into the profound connections the artists are making between nature and humanity. "Humanness," thus, is central to their work's conception and execution, and though both Hassinger and Unger identify as women, neither artist's work is explicit in its relationship to feminisms or the feminist art discourses that were prevalent in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Furthermore, Hassinger's work evades easy capture within some of the more limiting interpretive strictures around Black Art during that same time.

Unger, a white woman, escaped the racializing categorization and conflation Hassinger experienced throughout her career; however, she and Hassinger both saw the gendered marginalization of their work in mainstream art museums, galleries, residencies, and prizes. While Unger seldom made reference to sex or gender in her work, she used her curatorial



Fig. 9. Mary Ann Unger, *Black Heart* (1998), Hydrocal over steel with cheesecloth and pigment, 30" x 23 1/2" x 8". Courtesy of Mary Ann Unger Estate, New York.

knack to bring the work of women into group shows at The Sculpture Center and other venues, and was an active member in the Organization of Independent Artists, no doubt bringing her creative and political fortitude to her work with the association. Finally, a lesser known connection to Unger's political life was her membership in the Guerrilla Girls, an anonymous group of women artist activists dedicated to combatting sexist and racist exclusion within the art world through feminist creative practices. Her name appeared along with Hassinger and over 500 other women on a poster titled *Guerrilla Girls' Identities Exposed!* from the 1990s that was exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2017–2018 in their show, *An Incomplete History of Protest: Selections from the Whitney's Collection, 1940–2017*.

Given such incisive junctions in their creative practice, it is likely no surprise that Hassinger and Unger were friends. The two met in New York in the early 1990s, and Hassinger recalls the deep sadness of Unger's illness and an admirable determination to continue making work. The artist also recalls spending time with each other's families at a retreat Unger shared with her husband "somewhere in the country."²² Hassinger recalls several visits when their daughters were young, and the serenity and beauty of the property. Despite this personal connection, Hassinger struggles to remember any professional ties along the lines of studio visits, shows, or collaborations, stating simply, "She was a friend. We must have met through somebody, and we must have been shown at some point together, but I

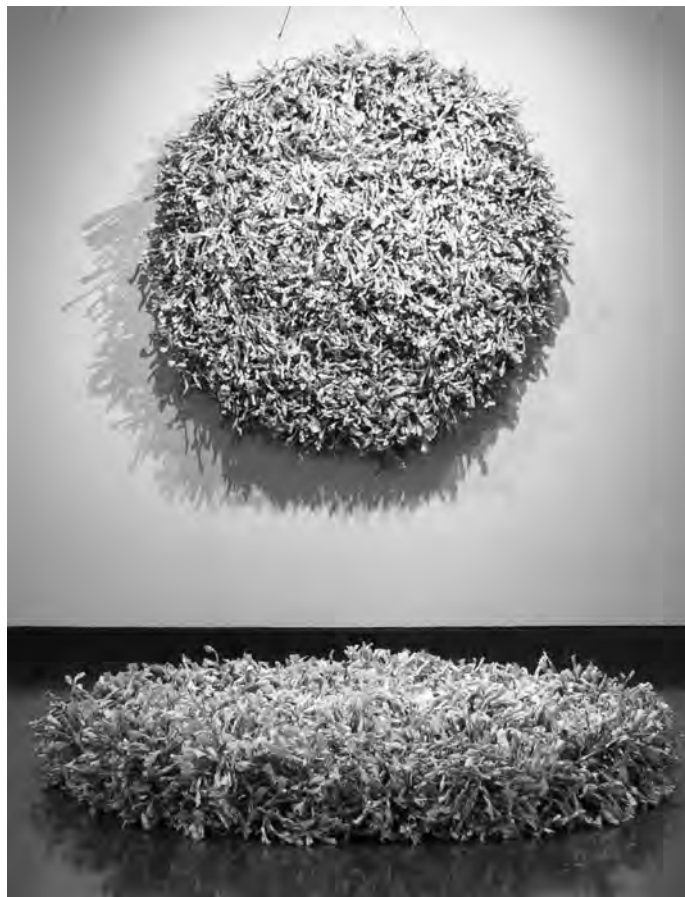


Fig. 10. Maren Hassinger, *Wrenching News* (2008), shredded, twisted, and wrapped *New York Times* newspapers. Courtesy of the artist, New York.

remember her as a friend, and her death was deeply troubling. I just remember it being so sad."²³

On September 23, 1996, Unger penned a somber entry into one of the black journals she kept in her studio for sketches and such musings.

The diagnosis is conclusive. I do have tumors all through my spinal fluid and the fluid that surrounds my brain. The largest one may have invaded my brain. So I begin treatment. The doctors say it is buying quality time. I have survived so long with serious infection that again I wonder what I am capable of. No one says how much time.²⁴

She is losing her decade-long battle with cancer, and despite her valiant fight, her body is ending. In the writing that follows, the artist ponders her condition as a spiritual problem to solve, one manifesting in her physical body. "My energy is blocked and unable to express itself. I have to find the spiritual problem and solve it," she asserts. "I see that it is my gift for sculpture which must be respected, allowed to develop and be fulfilled. Not doing this has made me sick. But can doing it make me well?"²⁵ The question the artist poses to herself reveals the extent to which she understood her sculptural practice as an extension of her very being, the work itself

(doing the work) as indissolubly linked to her wellness. And thus, as her body failed her, she continued to produce work that would prolong it. Plaster resembling bone. Mesh bandages wrapped around fleshy surfaces themselves darkening, becoming more intimate in scale and at times more direct in their connotation.

Black Heart (1998; Fig. 9) made of Hydrocal, fiberglass mesh, cheese cloth, shellac, pigments, diluted beeswax, and graphite powder, was in many ways an answer to Unger's question of whether her practice could heal her. Made shortly after her troubling prognosis and melancholic writing, its subject matter is straight forward and didactic. Part of a series loosely titled *Mitosis Series*, which Unger worked on up until the end of her life, it comprised several soul referents, other heart forms, and a wishing stone, for example. Beyond organs and tissue, these and works like *Mitosis Series no. 2* (1996) directly allude to the body on a cellular level through the process of division and regeneration. At its most basic and miraculous, the process of mitosis is typical of ordinary tissue growth—how the body sculpts and continues to facilitate its material existence. However, sometimes this can go wrong. Cancer is a disease of mitosis.

Notwithstanding the tidal wave of challenges to sweep the globe in 2020, and the lives spent as a result of a global health crisis, the kind of refuge Unger pursued through her practice might still be found in the extraordinary objects the artist bodied forth in the years leading up to her departure. *Black Heart* is one such miraculous work that even in the darkened galleries of the shuttered Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, where it belongs to the permanent collection; the dark form maintains its powerful presence. Lit only by the dim red glow of the museum's exit signs, the sentinel piece offers a steadfast meditation on the limitations and the transcendent possibilities of the human body. Its blackness is somehow deep enough to hold all of the moment's sorrow, tenderly, and with room yet for each glimmer of hope.

Exactly two decades after Unger produced her final heart-shaped wall-piece and put down her materials for the last time, Hassinger's *Wrenching News* (2008; Fig. 10) would formally and conceptually echo the painstaking labor—the twisting, the toiling, the multiplicity, the processing of bad news—that drove Unger to create these powerful bodily extensions. There is much to learn about the human condition from both artists, especially two so formally attuned.

Hassinger's and Unger's work, across media and form, often effects a sense of mourning, of loss. For Hassinger, it is the loss of closer connection with nature, a kind of mourning nature's ever-depleting resources as the result of an ever-corrosive humanity. Unger's aesthetic sensibility, especially in her later work, is bound up in the loss of her health and the functions of her own body as the result of her long battle with breast cancer. Each artist subtly and quite devastatingly suggests through her work that both nature and the body are impermanent, evocative, and fleeting under environmental and manmade conditions and constraints. In fact, the natural world in all its vastness, its quiet and staggering strength, and especially in its fragility, seems to be the junction where

Hassinger and Unger as artists and friends meet and depart, the exact nexus at which their /a/ the body ends. •

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Notes

1. Maureen Megerian also writes about Hassinger's work in her 1996 essay, "Entwined with Nature: The Sculpture of Maren Hassinger," *Woman's Art Journal* 17, no. 2: 22. www.jstor.org/stable/1358463 (accessed July 17, 2021).
2. "Sculpture Goes Outside for the Summer," in *The New York Times*, July 13, 1984.
3. Lawrence Alloway, "Art," in *The Nation*, July 7, 1979, 28.
4. Mary Ann Unger in "Black Sketchbook—June 22, 1977," 7. Courtesy of the Mary Ann Unger Estate.
5. Joan Marter, "Rituals of Demystification," in *Dark Icons: Mary Ann Unger* (exh. cat.) (New York: Klarfeld Perry Gallery, Jan. 1, 1992).
6. Ibid.
7. Email correspondence with the author, March 1, 2021.
8. A material process and effect coined by the artist where she would finish her fiberglass pieces by coating them with layers of resin imbued with iron powder, and sanding them down before wrapping them with acid-soaked cloth for several days. The result was an object that appeared much heavier than it really was.
9. Michael Brenson, "Bold Sculpture for Wide-Open Spaces," *The New York Times*, July 21, 1989.
10. Michael Brenson, "Art; The State of the City as Sculptors See It," *The New York Times*, July 27, 1990, Section C, p. 1..
11. Ibid.
12. Robert Storr, "The Matter at Hand," in Peter Weiermair, Lucy Lippard, Rosalind Krauss, et al., *Louise Bourgeois*, (exh. cat.) (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies Foundation, 1989/1995).
13. Megerian, "Entwined with Nature: The Sculpture of Maren Hassinger," 21–25.
14. LA Times: <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-xpm-2011-nov-27-la-ca-pst-kellie-jones-interview-20111127-story.html> (accessed Aug. 4, 2021)
15. Marter, "Rituals of Demystification."
16. Jeffrey Biddle, *Rock in a Landslide* (forthcoming).
17. This is an observation Megerian also makes of Hassinger's work in "Entwined with Nature: The Sculpture of Maren Hassinger," 21–25.
18. Ibid., 21–22.
19. Kriston Capps, "These artists point to social upheaval—and one simple solution," *Washington Post*, Oct. 28, 2020.
20. Ibid.
21. Mary Ann Unger, Journal Statement (MAU; Black Sketchbook Says Wed. 14th on first page); Courtesy of the Mary Ann Unger Estate.
22. Zoom conversation between Maren Hassinger and the author, Jan. 27, 2021.
23. Ibid.
24. Mary Ann Unger, Journal #14, entry Sept. 23, 1996; Courtesy of the Mary Ann Unger Estate
25. Ibid.

THE WOMEN: TOPS IN ART, 1960

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM IN AMARILLO, TEXAS

By Amy Von Lintel and Bonnie Roos

In 1960, in what might seem an unlikely place—the Texas Panhandle city of Amarillo—gallery owner and art teacher Dord Fitz worked to publicize and extend public recognition of women artists working in mid-century modernism. In his self-named gallery, Fitz exhibited the work of women artists—some of whom would gain international fame. He invited them to Amarillo as guest educators, showed them local hospitality, and encouraged Panhandle residents to purchase the artists' works for their personal collections. The high point of Fitz's efforts was an exhibition at his gallery that opened in March 1960, entitled *The Women: Tops in Art* (Fig. 1), which included eighteen women artists, mostly from New York City.¹

In the traditional narrative, male artists dominated Abstract Expressionism during its formative period in the United States. Over the last half century, feminist art historians have provided key correctives, detailing the contributions of women artists to the rise of Abstract Expressionism in the decades after World War II. And in 2016, the Denver Art Museum's exhibition and catalogue, *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, highlighted the significant role women artists played in forging mid-century artistic modernism.² Numerous books, including *"The heroine Paint" After Frankenthaler* (2015); *Heroines of Abstract Expressionism* (2019); *Sparkling Amazons: Abstract Expressionist Women of the 9th St. Show* (2019); and *Ninth Street Women* (2018) also help clarify women's central role in the movement's early days.³

Most histories of the movement are concentrated on people and events in New York, while only recently has attention shifted more to the West Coast, where burgeoning modernist movements that included women artists were unfolding simultaneously.⁴ And while the majority of mid-twentieth-century US art-lovers still remained captivated by Impressionism and mystified by modernist works that were not as easily understood, across America pockets of modernism also began to emerge. As the fame of the New York Abstract Expressionists spread, art students and forward-looking patrons embraced the new art. Among the early efforts to promote Abstract Expressionists during the late 1950s and early 1960s outside the major US art centers, one exhibition stands out: *The Women: Tops in Art*, presented by Fitz in



Fig. 1. Catalogue for *The Women: Tops in Art* (1960), Dord Fitz Gallery, Amarillo, Texas. Courtesy of the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma and the Family of Dord Fitz.

Amarillo. Although this group exhibition was one of the earliest attempts to call public attention to the women Abstract Expressionists, the story of the show has been all but lost to historical memory.⁵ In order to recuperate women's roles within the Abstract Expressionist movement, part of our critical obligation must be to avoid what Louise Siddons describes as art historical "New York-centricity."⁶ Less valued in New York than their male counterparts, especially economically, women artists often had to be more strategic in their salesmanship, which took them to places beyond that city—places like West Texas in Middle America.

Born in Oregon and having grown up in Oklahoma, George Edward (Dord) Fitz attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, including training under art historian Helen Gardner, before entering the Master of Arts program at the University of Iowa, where he studied with Grant Wood and Philip Guston. After a peripatetic teaching career, in 1953 he settled in Amarillo, where he opened a school of art and a commercial gallery.⁷ Because Amarillo, which is six hours by

car from Dallas and ten from Houston, has more contact with some closer non-Texas neighbors, Fitz hit upon teaching art through a series of widespread, weekly workshops, crossing a mostly rural region that included Northwest Texas, Western Oklahoma, and Southwestern Kansas as the foundation of his enterprise to make this area a new center of modern art. He shared with these art enthusiasts his views about the power of abstraction in art, hoping they would become “intelligent and trained consumers” of art.⁸ Fitz made annual trips to New York and encouraged his students to travel with him, connecting them with New York School artists with whom he became friends.

Fitz’s first foray into exhibiting these artists in his Amarillo gallery came together in 1957, with *7 Contemporary Painters*, including fifty-six works by Franz Kline, Milton Resnick, John Grillo, Miles Forst, and Joe Stefanelli, as well as Elaine de Kooning and Pat Passlof, who would later be included in *The Women* in 1960.⁹ The New York-West Texas conduit proved so successful that over the next decade Fitz held eleven shows promoting more than twenty New York artists, including five women for whom he held eight solo shows: Mickey Wagstaff in 1957 and 1959; de Kooning in 1962 and 1965; Jane Wilson in 1960; Louise Nevelson in 1964 and 1965; and Jeanne Reynal in 1966.¹⁰

To prepare for what he hoped would be his greatest achievement to date, in January 1960 he recruited two dynamic women artists to assist him in his preparations for *The Women*. Using their connections to a wide range of women modernists, de Kooning and Reynal helped Fitz organize and shape the exhibition.¹¹ De Kooning had traveled to Amarillo in 1957 for the opening of *7 Contemporary Painters* and stayed on to teach a workshop on contemporary art for local residents. The following year she returned for a second group show. While teaching at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque for the 1958-59 academic year, she joined Fitz for a “whirlwind” trip around Texas—to Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, and Austin—making further connections with artists, collectors, students, and the general public.¹² In November 1959, she participated in a group exhibition and panel discussion on modern art at the Dord Fitz Gallery.¹³ By the time *The Women: Tops in Art* opened, de Kooning had been there enough, and Fitz had so often represented women in his shows, that the Amarillo public might have been forgiven for assuming that Abstract Expressionist artists were primarily women. De Kooning championed the work Fitz had done promoting abstract art in the High Plains, while she regularly benefited from his connections.¹⁴ She had fully expected to serve as Fitz’s New York point person for *The Women* until her own burgeoning career made her too busy to continue with it on her own.

De Kooning invited her friend Jeanne Reynal to take over as the “chief promotor and organizer” of the exhibition. Reynal explained that de Kooning “was deeply involved with



Fig. 2. Louise Nevelson, *Moon Garden* (1958-60), painted wood, 8' 7 3/4" x 8' 18". Amarillo Museum of Art, Gift of Dord Fitz and the Area Arts Foundation. © 2021 Estate of Louise Nevelson / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

portrait commissions at the time and asked me to take over; one does not refuse Elaine anything. So, of course I took it on.”¹⁵ Reynal was an ideal recruit for the development of a major show of women’s art. She was not only an avant-garde mosaic artist whom de Kooning had toasted in an *Art News* review in 1953, but also the hostess of a regular New York art salon at her home around the corner from the famous Cedar Bar.¹⁶ “Jeanne Reynal gave the most superb parties,” said de Kooning. “She’d have perhaps [eighteen] people and have drinks before dinner—wonderful, luxurious drinks—and wine with dinner and drinks after dinner. And the walls were covered with Gorkys and then she had a superb painting by Mark Rothko. And later she bought some paintings of [Willem de Kooning’s].”¹⁷ Using all of the networking skills she had built up over the years as an artist, collector, and hostess, Reynal connected Fitz to the women artists and their gallerists in New York.¹⁸ Having lived on the West Coast in the 1940s, she had connections there as well, and it was likely her influence that brought the San Francisco-based Claire Falkenstein into the group.¹⁹

In the end, de Kooning and Reynal teamed up to recruit painters Hedda Sterne, Passlof, Wilson, Wagstaff, Jane Freilicher, Nell Blaine, Helen Frankenthaler, Perle Fine, Yvonne Thomas, Ethel Schwabacher, Linda Lindeberg, Janice Biala, Miriam Schapiro, and Patricia Allen, owner of the Burr Galleries, where Fitz showed his students’ works annually in

New York starting in 1956. Joan Mitchell and Grace Hartigan were invited to participate, but both declined, citing competing exhibitions as the reason.²⁰ Thanks to Reynal's influence, the show represented a range of media; alongside the paintings were Reynal's mosaics and innovative large-scale sculptural works by Falkenstein and Nevelson, including the latter's *Moon Garden* (1958–60; Fig. 2). While sculpture has long been sidelined in histories of mid-century American modernism,²¹ this was not true of *The Women*, which revealed a balance between two- and three-dimensional art and was more consistent with the way avant-garde artists of the moment understood Abstract Expressionism.

Sometimes the artists themselves, but more often their New York dealers, were responsible for setting the prices; however, Fitz ensured that there were some lower price-points mixed with higher ones to appeal to regional buyers.²² Each of the women submitted three works on average to the 1960 show, with prices ranging between \$450 and \$6850.²³ For the most part, despite the cost-of-living differential, the prices corresponded to those advertised in New York. For example, that year the Museum of Modern Art purchased Wilson's *The Open Scene* (1960) for \$2000, the same price paid by one of Fitz's students for the artist's similar sized landscape *River Port* (1958–59).²⁴

The exhibition's title, *The Women: Tops in Art*, spoke to a theme upon which the show's press releases expanded, noting that women were receiving some recognition in the art world and that those in the show were among the leading and most respected artists—the “tops” in their field.²⁵ Their work was being exhibited, and they were featured in arts journals as well as the popular press, including *Life*, *Esquire*, *Glamour*, and others.²⁶ A 1957 article in *Life* titled “Women Artists in Ascendance” showed the work of Frankenthaler, Mitchell, Blaine, Hartigan, and Wilson, while Nevelson appeared in *Life* the following year.²⁷ Publicity for the Amarillo show argued that the artists were worthy of attention, not because they were women but because they were among the best artists in the contemporary art scene.

As curator, Fitz had big ambitions for the show's reach, and while de Kooning and Reynal were offering on-the-ground support from New York, he began sending press releases to *Art News*, *Life*, *Time*, and *Esquire* to make sure it was on the national radar.²⁸ Fitz claimed that *The Women* would be “perhaps the largest all woman group show to be held outside New York, unprecedented of course in the Southwest.”²⁹ *Art News* included a mention under the heading “galleries cross country,” and without any fanfare listed the featured artists and highlighted that the show was of “nineteen [sic] New York artists—all women.”³⁰ Fitz engaged local and regional support, of course, offering guest lectures to the Federation of Women's Clubs in Amarillo, for example, to promote his show.³¹ Meanwhile, the Amarillo newspapers proclaimed that the city was “going to have a New York art exhibition, with a difference ... an aggregation of feminine brains, beauty, and talent.”³²

The regional press described *The Women* as displaying works that would be “as large as becomes Texas,” and indeed many of the included pieces were significantly grand in scale,

fitting both for mid-century modernism's enthusiasm for ever larger works and for responding to the adage, “Everything's Bigger in Texas.”³³ Though few extant images document the show, it would have been comparable to the impressive scale of the work featured in the legendary 1951 *Ninth Street Show* in New York, where most of the paintings were larger than five feet wide or high. In *Ninth Street Women*, Gabriel describes the women in this show, including Frankenthaler, de Kooning, Thomas, and Fine, carrying their huge canvases through the New York City streets to the Greenwich Village location.³⁴ Frankenthaler's canvas was the largest at the Ninth Street Show, measuring more than seven feet long. By comparison, *The Women* included at least seven works with measurements of more than seven feet on a side, and as the artists could not walk their pieces to Texas, Fitz found efficient ways of transporting the works cross-country. His letters describe conveying large canvases in his station wagon by un-stretching them, rolling them, and then re-stretching them in Amarillo for his various exhibitions.³⁵ The largest pieces in *The Women* were Nevelson's *Moon Garden*; Frankenthaler's *Red Sea* (1959; Pl. 6); Sterne's *Roads No. 4* (1956), *Roads No. 5* (1957; Fig. 3), and *No 1 – 1959* (1959);³⁶ Schwabacher's *Orestes* (c. 1959), *Antigone* (1958), and *Evening* (1958; Pl. 7);³⁷ Jane Wilson's *River Port*; Freilicher's *The Mallow Gatherers* (1958; Fig. 4);³⁸ Falkenstein's *Integrating Rectangle* (1957);³⁹ and Yvonne Thomas's *Highways* (1957; Pl. 8).

Such a grand and expansive show required planning in terms of placing the works. The Dord Fitz Gallery was located at 1710 South Taylor Street in downtown Amarillo, in a late-1800s ten-room frame house (Fig. 5). While it did not possess the whitewashed walls and high ceilings of a New York warehouse space, the multiple rooms of the Taylor Street gallery accommodated the large paintings easily. The exhibition's staging allowed the paintings to respond to and enhance one another. For example, Schwabacher's large black and blood-red *Evening*, inspired by her grief after the loss of her husband, hung next to Freilicher's *The Green Stripe* in what was referred to as the “red room” in the gallery.⁴⁰ Such color contrasts must have impressed visitors to the gallery, some of whom would never have seen paintings so large, colors so expressive, and gestures so bold. Not only were they large in scale and dramatic in color, but consistent with the ideals of Abstract Expressionist action art, they were also big in gestural expression and mark-making.⁴¹

All of the works in the show were recent, having been completed between 1955 and 1959, making *The Women* freshly contemporary, a reflection of what was being produced in the artists' New York studios at that moment. Some were also highly experimental in their media and materials. Sterne's pieces, for instance, were made with spray paint and a spray gun, while Fine's *Billet Doux* (1958; Fig. 6) was a mixed media collage on canvas.⁴² Nevelson's scrap-wood sculptures drew on found-object techniques that presaged Pop Art, and Falkenstein's “exploding volume” forms in *Envelope* (1958; Fig. 7) fused the linearity of drawing with the three-dimensionality of metal suspended in space.⁴³ Emily Genauer, writing for the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1959—in



Fig. 3. Hedda Sterne, *Roads No. 5* (1957), oil, spray paint on canvas, 86" x 50". Collection of The Hedda Sterne Foundation, New York. © The Hedda Sterne Foundation, Inc. Licensed by ARS, New York.

a review Fitz likely would have read while planning *The Women*—described Falkenstein's work as "forged metal spider webs, a bramble of leafless twigs, a filigree of bronze threads so delicate they suggest the areas of blight on dying trees. These are not sculpture in the conventional sense. Some may see them as metal 'drawings' traced in the air ... I find them enormously imaginative."⁴⁴ Frankenthaler, in turn, was arguably the first to pour her paint thinned onto the canvas, from coffee cans, letting it pool and stain the unprimed canvas, leaving other areas of the cotton surface plain and bare.⁴⁵ Reynal employed an avant-garde direct mosaic method that involved flinging and dusting her tesserae into the cement ground placed on the floor of her studio, not unlike Jackson Pollock's flinging his house paint out of cans with paint sticks onto canvases spread on the floor of his studio. Fine likewise worked directly on the ground with her canvases,



Fig. 4. Jane Freilicher, *The Mallow Gatherers* (1958), oil on linen, 76" x 77". Collection of the Estate of Jane Freilicher.



Fig. 5. Dord Fitz Gallery at 1710 Taylor Street, Amarillo, Texas (1959). Artist Charles Bunnell seated, looking at his portrait by Elaine de Kooning. (Photographer unknown). Courtesy of the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma and the Family of Dord Fitz.

moving a plank along the floor so that she could kneel on it while she painted works like *Black Waterfall* (1957).⁴⁶

The works in *The Women* also exhibited the wide range of approaches to abstraction, despite the focus on non-objective



Fig. 6. Perle Fine, *Billet Doux* (1958), mixed media on canvas, 48" x 68". © AE Artworks. Private collection. Courtesy Berry Campbell Gallery, New York.

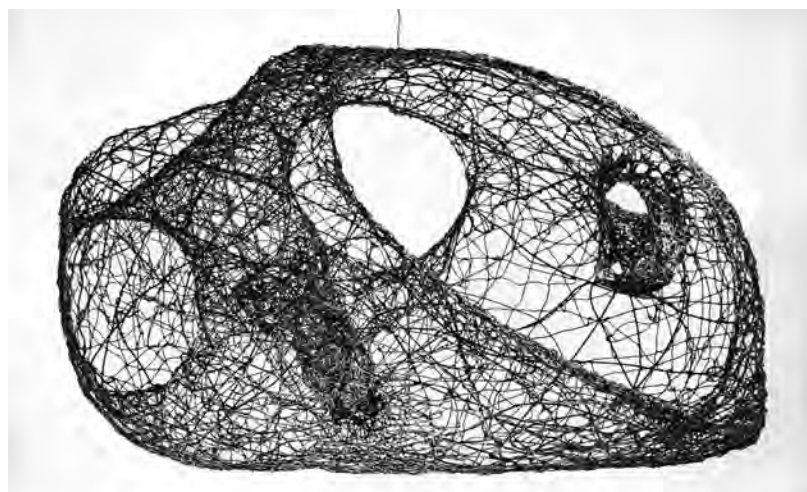


Fig. 7. Claire Falkenstein, *Envelope* (1958), steel wire assemblage, 48" x 60" x 36". Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David K. Anderson, Martha Jackson Memorial Collection, 1981.109.6. © The Falkenstein Foundation; Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York.

art advocated by the predominant Abstract Expressionist critic Clement Greenberg, whose preference for all-over abstraction and flatness tended to devalue any artist working with representation. De Kooning, on the other hand, recognized that "the abstract artist does not have to choose a subject. But whether or not he chooses, he always ends up with one," an observation that is more inclusive of the artists' approaches represented in *The Women*.⁴⁷ For instance, featured on the gallery walls were the abstract shapes and striking flatness of Frankenthaler's *The Red Sea*, alongside de Kooning's thick, gestural colors in *March Sky* (1959; Pl. 9), Fine's anxious biomorphism and linearity in *Black Waterfall* and *Billet Doux*, Biala's dancing areas of color in *Beach* (1958; Fig. 8), Passlof's agitated and scribbling rhythms in *Promenade for a Bachelor* (1958; Pl. 10), and Schapiro's ethereal shapes and washes in



Fig. 8. Janice Biala, *Beach* (1958), oil on canvas, 41 1/2" x 32". © 2021 The Estate of Janice Biala / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Pandora (1959).⁴⁸ Balanced with such all-over non-objectivity were Wilson's *River Port* and *Basket Lake* (1955; Fig. 9) and Freilicher's *The Mallow Gatherers*, all comprising landscapes with clear references to observed nature that nonetheless included notable areas of bold, gestural brushwork.⁴⁹ Freilicher's friend, the poet John Ashbery, best described her style as a "slightly rumped realism," and critics have credited her as a quiet maverick in her resistance to the major trends of mid-century non-objectivity.⁵⁰

Schwabacher in turn produced non-objective imagery even while referencing clear narrative meaning in her titles such as *Antigone* and *Orestes*. Over the decades, Schwabacher explored the stories of Greek mythology in her work, gaining a complex understanding of the gender and power conflicts in these stories. According to her biographers, she "uses the epic events of mythology, both in [her] journals and in her paintings, to ennoble the events of her life and place them on a heroic scale."⁵¹ The artists' awareness of the critical status quo as established by Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg, the movement's other most prominent art critic, did not mean they always conformed to it.⁵² Each of these artist's works reflected both avant-garde experimentalism and profound engagement with her particular medium. Indeed, we find nothing stylistically consistent about women's approaches to Abstract Expressionism, aside from, perhaps, a ready tolerance



Fig. 9. Jane Wilson, *Basket Lake* (1955), oil on canvas, 45" x 50". Collection Julia Gruen. © The Estate of Jane Wilson. Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York.



Fig. 11. Women artists from New York at the Durr Ranch near Dumas, Texas, Spring 1960. (Photographer unknown.) From the collection of Carolyn Fitz. Third from left, Elaine de Kooning; third from right, Louise Nevelson; seated to the left of Nevelson is Martha Jackson.

for difference, experimentation, and cooperation that was freely embraced away from New York in the context of West Texas.

As the March opening approached, Fitz arranged for in-person visits by as many artists as he could convince to come to Amarillo, which in the end included de Kooning, Nevelson, Reynal, Thomas, Lindeberg, and Wagstaff. Sterne was slated to come but ultimately was unable to travel.⁵³ Eyeing the West Texas exhibition as a potential market, the up-and-coming New York dealer Martha Jackson came for the opening. She had been representing Jackson Pollock when he died, and

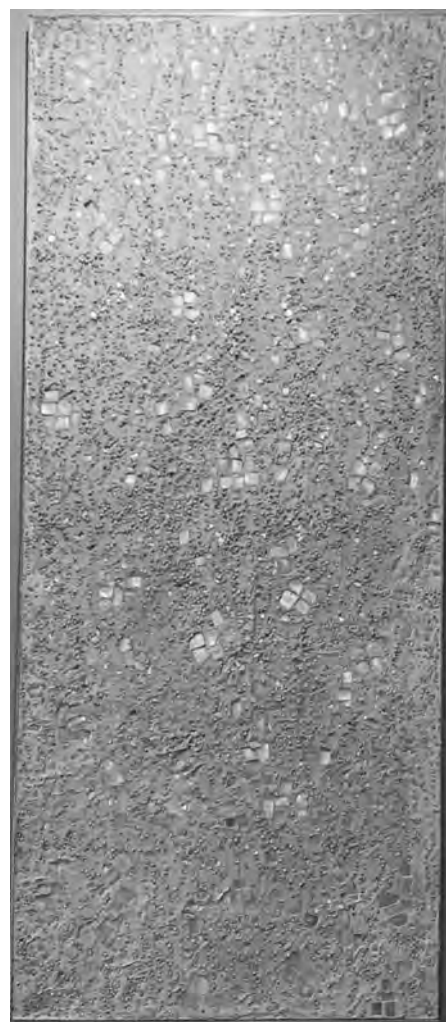


Fig. 10. Jeanne Reynal, *Legends of the Rain (Raindrops)* (ca. 1960), mosaic, 74" x 30". Collection of H.C. and Lena Mae Brillhart, Jr., West Texas. © 2021 Estate of Jeanne Reynal / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

having landed Nevelson as her client, was pitching Nevelson as the next Pollock, the shining new star of the Abstract Expressionist movement.⁵⁴ Jackson's attentions in Texas paid off.⁵⁵ She sold Nevelson's first large black wall sculpture to Fitz's students and clients for upwards of \$5800 (discounted from the listed price of \$6850, likely agreed on because Fitz spearheaded the sale).⁵⁶ Fitz's students raised the money and purchased the work collectively—through small donations and imaginative methods that involved a raffle—demonstrating a community desire to own a leading work of contemporary art.⁵⁷

Nevelson was not the only artist to profit from the show. Reynal's mosaic pieces all sold—including *Graying Rain*, *Little Big Yellow*, and *Legends of the Rain [Raindrops]* (c. 1960; Fig. 10).⁵⁸ Lindeberg sold an untitled square piece (1959; Pl. 11) to Betty Bivins Childers, founder of Amarillo Museum of Art, and Wilson sold the large-scale *River Port* to Lee and Betty Teel Bivins.⁵⁹ It seems that the best-selling works in the show were

by the artists who came in person, several of whom made enduring connections with regional patrons.

Eager to return the hospitality he and his students had received from artists in New York, Fitz welcomed the artists who visited Amarillo in true Texas style (Fig. 11). They were given opportunities to meet with the public and treated to an iconic ranching experience—"a genuine Texas chuck wagon barbecue and round-up." Fitz described one day's events:

We took the visiting artists to Stratford, Texas. Then we all got in an old school bus and went out twenty rough miles to the center of the Durr Ranch. There, in the middle of a level cow pasture, six cowboys, in their cowboy work clothes, were preparing a lunch for us over an open fire... That evening the Stratford art students prepared a great feast for us which we ate at the County Barn on the fairgrounds. After dinner, the community came to meet the artists and to enter into a discussion of art conducted by the visiting artists.⁶⁰

Having enjoyed their participation in this Middle-America Western experience, several of the artists returned again and again to the area, often staying with patrons and collectors they met during the exhibition.⁶¹

The artists also participated in a "symposium to discuss women's place in the creative development of the world today."⁶² They showed they were not above tackling such important issues at the local community college in Amarillo, where they embraced their activist public speaking roles. Though there is no lasting record of that event, its existence reveals a gender activism that coincided with the market value of the show and insists on the region's participation in important cultural discussions about controversial issues of the moment. It also points to the power of public lecturing and itinerant teaching for women artists, providing them opportunities to legitimize their role in the art world at a time when long-term academic teaching positions were few and far between.⁶³ In an out-of-the way college in West Texas, the visiting women were given a platform to share their professional views with a receptive audience, an opportunity they found worthwhile in what, in 1960, was still a highly discriminatory art world.

The importance of *The Women: Tops in Art* extended beyond the exhibition itself. It established some valuable, longstanding connections between the Texas-based Fitz, his students and patrons, and the participating women artists. Between 1960 and 1989, the year of her death, de Kooning visited Fitz in the Amarillo area at least fourteen times to show her work, give lectures, and teach; she came twice annually in 1960, 1966, and 1975.⁶⁴ The Dord Fitz Gallery hosted twenty-three shows that included de Kooning's work, six of them solo shows. Her repeat visits, coupled with de Kooning's indefatigable charm, enabled Fitz to become one of her principal gallerists and de Kooning to become a favorite guest lecturer at his regional art workshop circuit. Nevelson likewise returned to Amarillo often, even after she had reached financial solvency and international renown. She was in the

city at least seven times between 1960 and 1972, including in 1966 for the Fine Arts Festival with de Kooning and Harold Rosenberg. During these visits, Nevelson mounted solo shows, sold works, lectured to audiences of multiple hundreds, taught workshops to large classes of students, and was given the best hospitality locals could offer.⁶⁵

The Women: Tops in Art illuminates how the Southern High Plains of the US, seen as a rather conservative, Christian, and patriarchal region with its cowboy roots, was in fact highly progressive in supporting women as equals in the visual arts. It might seem surprising to outsiders, therefore, that works by Houston modernist painter Dorothy Hood hang alongside works of Nevelson, de Kooning, Reynal, Lindeberg, Freilicher, and Wilson in the homes of West Texas patrons—in 2018, Hood's work was paired with Nevelson's at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston for a knock-out show.⁶⁶ It is possible to imagine that another lasting outcome of the 1960 show was the opening of opportunities for professional women artists—from teaching at universities in Dallas, Houston, and Albuquerque, to securing patronage on the largely rural High Plains.

This focus on *The Women: Tops in Art* demonstrates how women abstractionists came to see Middle America as a serious market and even a source of inspiration for their art. Not only did these artists influence the region but their work was influenced by their visits to the area. There is evidence that both de Kooning's and Nevelson's aesthetic shifted, for example, in light of their repeated exposure to the region. De Kooning's paintings became more horizontal, reflecting the vast spaces and huge skies of the West, and her color palette changed from duller, flatter tones to bright, translucent yellows, purples, pinks, and blues found in the southwestern canyons and sunsets (1959; Pl. 12). Nevelson's sculptures turned from architectural walls more akin to the row houses of the New York City streets to windows that open onto broad landscape vistas like her large-scale outdoor sculpture in Scottsdale, Arizona, *Windows to the West* (1970–73), although her use of gold spray paint, likely inspired by glitzy gilded faucets she saw in the oil-boom towns of West Texas, was largely panned by art historians.⁶⁷ Also, after Nevelson's first visit to Texas, the ranch rifle stock appeared and was repeated in *Dawn* (1961), and she began exploring metal forms, perhaps partly in response to the treeless plains, where wood was scarce and the short, spikey forms she began producing could be seen in the desert plants.⁶⁸

Looking again at the candid photo of the artists from *The Women: Tops in Art* on that ranch in 1960, we see the almost anonymous women artists. Hosted by local patrons and art students who were proud of their place, all mutually driven by loyalty to modernist, abstract art, the women are seen mixed in with ranchers and cowboys, wearing thick coats and head scarfs to ward off the wind and dust and biting cold of a Panhandle spring day. From this photo, one can begin to conceptualize a gendered and geographical balance within the movements of American modernism and specifically Abstract Expressionism. More than artists working alone in their New York studios, and rather than being represented solely by the

well-known male artists, Abstract Expressionism comprised a much messier social structure. Growing up around the core artists was a supportive group that included men and women, artists and dealers, students and patrons, Easterners and Westerners, urbanites and rural dwellers, New Yorkers and Middle Americans. When we consider an event such as *The Woman: Tops in Art*, a truer vision of mid-century American modernism emerges, which includes both its missing women and its overlooked geographies. •

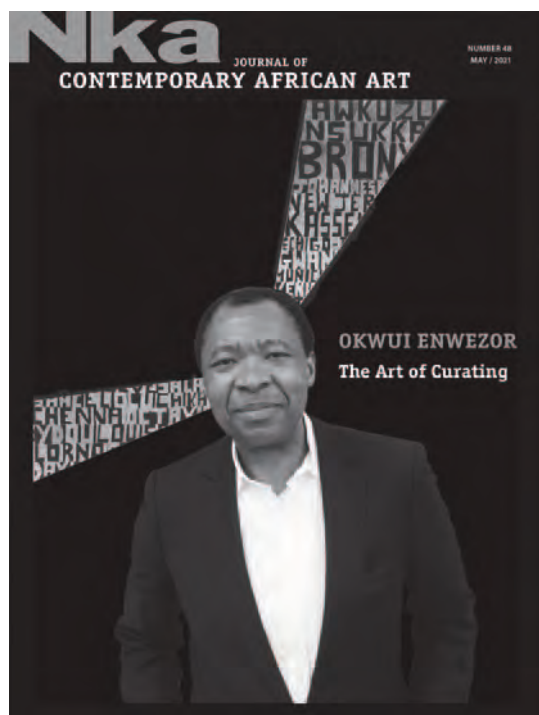
Amy Von Lintel and Bonnie Roos are authors of the forthcoming volume *Three Women Artists: Expanding Abstract Expressionism in the American West* (Texas A&M Univ. Press, 2022). Von Lintel is Professor of Art History and Director of the Gender Studies Program at West Texas A&M University. Her publications include *Georgia O'Keeffe's Wartime Texas Letters* (2020), and *Georgia O'Keeffe: Watercolors 1916-1918* (2016). Roos is Department Head of English, Philosophy, and Modern Languages at West Texas A&M University. Among her many publications is *Djuna Barnes's Nightwood: The World, and the Politics of Peace* (2014).

Notes

1. Though the exhibition catalogue said seventeen women, the final show included eighteen.
2. The Denver show and catalogue featured the work of forty-two women artists: the paintings of twelve hung in the exhibition, and the remainder were included in the extensive catalogue. See Joan Marter, ed., *Women of Abstract Expressionism* (Denver and New Haven: Denver Art Museum and Yale Univ. Press, 2016).
3. See, for example, Katy Siegel, ed., *"The heroine Paint" After Frankenthaler* (New York: Rizzoli, 2015); Megan Holloway Fort (with essays by Helen Harrison and Joan Marter), *Heroines of Abstract Expressionism* (Cooperstown, NY: Fenimore Art Museum, 2019); Michele Wijte, ed. *Sparkling Amazons: Abstract Expressionist Women of the 9th St. Show* (Katonah, NY: Katonah Museum of Art, 2019); Mary Gabriel, *Ninth Street Women: Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler, Five Painters and the Movement that Changed Modern Art* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 2018).
4. On West Coast developments, see especially Susan Landauer, "The Advantages of Obscurity: Women Abstract Expressionists in San Francisco," in Marter, ed., *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, 42–57.
5. Most of the women in Peggy Guggenheim's 1943 exhibition, *31 Women*, in her Art of This Century Gallery, were surrealists, although Louise Nevelson and Hedda Sterne, both in Fitz's 1960 show, were included. See for example, Mary V. Dearborn, *Mistress of Modernism: The Life of Peggy Guggenheim* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 204.
6. Louise Siddons, *Centering Modernism: J. Jay McVicker and Postwar American Art* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2018).
7. On Fitz's biography, see Carolyn Fitz, "Biographical Essay," in Graziella Marchicelli, ed., *The Broadcast is Always On: The Area Arts Foundation and Dord Fitz* (Amarillo: Amarillo Museum of Art, 2007), 10–19, and Amy Von Lintel and Bonnie Roos, *Three Women Artists: Expanding Abstract Expressionism in the American West* (College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, forthcoming 2022).
8. Fitz to Linda Lindeberg, Feb. 22, 1960, box 4, folder 2, Dord Fitz Collection, Western History Collection, Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman (hereafter DFC). As an arts connoisseur and supporter of women modernists, Fitz was surely aware of the rising importance of Dallas and Houston area artists like Toni LaSelle, Carlotta Corpron, Cynthia Brants, Constance Forsyth, Coreen Spellman, Dorothy Hood, Kathleen Blackshear, and Leila McConnell. On these artists, see especially Katie Robinson Edwards, *Midcentury Modern Art in Texas* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 2014); Michael R. Grauer and Paula L. Grauer, *Dictionary of Texas Artists, 1800-1945* (College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 1999); and Susie Kalil, *The Color of Being/El Color del Ser: Dorothy Hood 1918-2000* (College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 2016).
9. On this show, including its catalogue, see box 4, folder 1, DFC.
10. On de Kooning's show, see box 1, folder 10, DFC. On Wagstaff, see Sue Hankins, "Mother of Celebrities Finds Art an Exciting Venture," *Amarillo Sunday Globe-News* (1957), box 2, folder 13 and "Noted Woman Artist Showing Works Here," *Amarillo Sunday Globe-News*, June 21, 1959, 4C, box 1, folder 13, DFC. On Wilson, see box 2, folder 14, DFC; John Jonas Gruen and Jane Wilson papers, 1936-2009, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (hereafter AAA); John Gruen, *The Party's Over Now: Reminiscences of the Fifties—New York's Artists, Writers, Musicians, and their Friends* (New York: Viking, 1972); Sam Swasey, "Painted by the Sky," *Art Writing MFA* (Spring 2017), <https://artwriting.sva.edu/journal/post/painted-by-the-sky> (accessed July 25, 2021).
11. On de Kooning and Reynal's roles in helping Fitz organize the show, see typed memo to Fitz from Reynal, n.d., box 2, folder 4, DFC.
12. See first unpublished memoir of Fitz written in the context of the 8 *Modern Masters* exhibition in 1985, box 1, folder 1, DFC.
13. The 1959 group show included Jane Wilson and Jane Freilicher, along with ten male artists. See "Work of 13 Painters Is Held Over," *Amarillo Globe-Times*, Nov. 9, 1959, 29 and box 1, folder 10, and box 1, folder 15, DFC.
14. On this, see especially Amy Von Lintel and Bonnie Roos, "Expanding Abstract Expressionism: Elaine de Kooning, Action Painting, and the American West," *American Art* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2018): 52–79.
15. Typed memo to Fitz from Reynal, n.d., box 2, folder 4, DFC.
16. Elaine de Kooning, "Reynal Makes a Mosaic (1953)," in Elaine de Kooning, *The Spirit of Abstract Expressionism: Selected Writings* (New York: George Braziller, 1994), 137–42. See also box 2, folder 4, DFC; Jeanne Reynal Papers, 1942–1968, AAA; Von Lintel and Roos, *Three Women Artists*; and the recent exhibition *Mosaic is Light: Work by Jeanne Reynal, 1940–1970* at the Eric Firestone Gallery (Jan. to Apr. 2021).
17. Oral history interview with Elaine de Kooning, Aug. 27, 1981, AAA.
18. Fitz to Reynal and Thomas Sills, July 11, 1978, box 2, folder 4, DFC. See also Reynal to Fitz, Jan. 14, 1960; Fitz to Mrs. Andre [Constance] Emmerich (of the André Emmerich Gallery in New York), Jan. 29, 1960; Emmerich to Fitz, Feb. 6, 1960; Grace Hartigan to Fitz, Jan. 20, 1960, box 4, folder 2, DFC.
19. Both Reynal and Falkenstein had shows at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now SFMoMA) in the 1940s (Reynal in 1941 and Falkenstein in 1941 and 1948) and were friends with the director there, Grace McCann Morley. See Dore Ashton, et. al., *The Mosaics of Jeanne Reynal* (New York: George Wittenborn, 1964) and box 1, folder 13, DFC.
20. Grace Hartigan to Fitz, Jan. 26, 1960; Eleanor Ward to Fitz, Feb. 2, 1960, box 4, folder 2, DFC.
21. On the sidelining of sculpture in the history of Abstract Expressionism, see for example, Siddons, *Centering Modernism*, 105; Lisa Phillips, *The Third Dimension: Sculpture of the New York School* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1984); Meghan Bissonnette, "From the 'New Sculpture' to Garden Statuary: The Suppression of Abstract Expressionist Sculpture," *Journal of Art Historiography* 13 (Dec. 2015): 1–19; Sandra Kraskin, *Reclaiming*

- Artists of the New York School: Towards a More Inclusive View of the 1950s* (New York: Sidney Mishkin Gallery, Baruch College, 1994), 8.
22. See, for instance, [Constance] Emmerich to Dord Fitz, Feb. 6, 1960; memo from Betty Parsons Gallery to Dord Fitz, Feb. 8, 1960, box 4, folder 2, DFC.
 23. For the checklist, see box 4, folder 2, DFC.
 24. On this MoMA sale, see Elizabeth Sussman, *Jane Wilson: Horizons* (London: Merrell, 2009), 52–54. *Riverport* (c. 1958–59, 60" x 96") is currently in the Bivins Foundation in Amarillo.
 25. "Federation to Participate in All-Woman Art Showing," clipping, unidentified Amarillo newspaper, Feb. 10, 1960, 15, box 4, folder 2, DFC.
 26. Fine, Frankenthaler, and Schwabacher had been included in the 1958 Whitney Museum of American Art show *Nature in Abstraction*, which traveled to six other American museums, while Schwabacher and Frankenthaler were included in the large exhibition *Sixty American Painters 1960: Abstract Expressionist Painters of the 1950s* at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis the same year as Fitz's *The Women*. See Marter, ed., *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, 160. *Art News* featured exhibition review articles on Wilson (Oct. 1953; Nov. 1955; Jan. 1957; Apr. 1958; Apr. 1959); Biala (Apr. 1956); de Kooning (Sept. 1952); and Freilicher (1955); Schwabacher (Feb. 1947; Summer 1953), among others. Nevelson and Sterne were included in the Venice Biennale representing American art—Sterne in 1956 and Nevelson in 1962. On Sterne and the biennale, see Marter, ed., *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, 199. On Nevelson and the biennale, see especially Louise Nevelson and Diana MacKown, *Dawns + Dusks: Louise Nevelson, Taped Conversations with Diana MacKown* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), 147. Fine was featured in a cover-spread in *Arts & Architecture* (May 1947), while Wilson was featured in articles in the *New York Times* on Oct. 27, 1955 and April 15, 1959 (both times reviewed by Dore Ashton). See also Bert Glinn, "New York's Spreading Upper Bohemia," *Esquire* 48, no. 1 (July 1957); "Close Up of Jane Wilson," *Glamour* (May 1957), 143–46. On Biala, see especially *Her Work: Abstract Expressionism Second to None Series* (Chicago: McCormick Gallery, 2015), 12–15.
 27. Dorothy Seiberling, "Women Artists in Ascendance: Young Group Reflects Lively Virtues of U.S. Painting," *Life*, May 13, 1957, 74–77.
 28. Letters from Fitz to *Art News*, *Life and Time Division Office*, and *Esquire, Inc.* dated Jan. 28–29, 1960, box 4, folder 2, DFC. Other press releases on the show include "Show Devoted Entirely to Women Artists is Making Art History in the World of Art," *Amarillo Globe-Times*, Mar. 16, 1960, 29 and "First All Women Show Slated in Fitz Gallery," *Pampa Daily News*, Mar. 14, 1960.
 29. Dord Fitz to Jane Scholl, Jan. 28, 1960, box 4, folder 2, DFC.
 30. "Galleries Cross Country," *Art News*, clipping, dated Mar. 1960, box 4, folder 2, DFC.
 31. "Federation to Participate," as in note 25.
 32. "Exhibit Due at Amarillo," clipping, unidentified Amarillo newspaper, Mar. 6, 1960, 15, box 4, folder 2, DFC.
 33. Quoted from an unknown source, "Women Artists Slate Exhibit," *Moore County News* (Dumas, Tex.), March 13, 1960, box 4, folder 2, DFC.
 34. See Gabriel, *Ninth Street Women*, 7, 9.
 35. Fitz to Milton Resnick, June 3, 1957, box 4, folder 1, DFC.
 36. Sterne's *New York 1 [Road #4]* is reproduced in Sarah L. Eckhardt, *Uninterrupted Flux: Hedda Sterne, A Retrospective* (Champaign: Univ. of Illinois and Krannert Art Museum, 2006), 62.
 37. Schwabacher's *Antigone* (oil on canvas, 69 1/2" x 84 1/4") is in the collection at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, CT, a gift of the Betty Parsons Foundation.
 38. The title of *The Mallow Gatherers* was suggested to Freilicher by her friend, the poet Kenneth Koch, who stated "I thought that since there were no people, no gatherers in the painting, the title [. . .] might make the viewer look for people, get him involved in the painting in an odd and personal way." See Eric Brown, ed., *Jane Freilicher: Painter Among Poets* (New York: Tibor de Nagy Gallery, 2013), 38.
 39. On Falkenstein's *Integrating Rectangle*, see Susan M. Anderson, Michael Duncan, and Maren Henderson, *Claire Falkenstein* (Los Angeles: The Falkenstein Foundation, 2012), 98.
 40. After Schwabacher's husband died in 1951, she "violently rejected" her earlier joyful palette to embrace "black, white, and blood-red" colors until the early 1960s. See Judith E. Johnson, Jayne L. Walker, and Brenda S. Webster, "Ethel Schwabacher: The Lyric/Epic and the Personal," *Woman's Art Journal* 10, no. 1 (Spring-Summer, 1989), 6.
 41. On women artists and action art, see Von Lintel and Roos, *Three Women Artists*.
 42. Marter, ed., *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, 22, 199. *Billet Doux* was featured in the 1978 exhibition *Perle Fine Major Works: 1954–1978* at the Guild Hall of East Hampton. On Sterne's spray paint techniques, see also Eckhardt, *Uninterrupted Flux*, 7–9. On Fine, see especially *Perle Fine Papers, 1940–1967, AAA and Her Work*, 20–23, as in note 26.
 43. The literature on Nevelson is extensive. See especially Laurie Lisle, *Louise Nevelson: A Passionate Life* (New York: Summit, 1990); Arnold Glimcher, *Louise Nevelson* (New York: Dutton, 1976); and Laurie Wilson, *Louise Nevelson: Light and Shadow* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2016).
 44. E.G. [Emily Genauer], "Mixed Bag of Good Solos," *New York Herald Tribune*, Oct. 11, 1959, as clipping in box 4, folder 2, DFC.
 45. On how Frankenthaler's method and how her innovations defined the movement of stain painting, see Gabriel, *Ninth Street Women*, 459–61. See also Marter, ed., *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, 175.
 46. Marter, ed., *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, 72. Fine's *Black Waterfall* (1957, oil on canvas, 68" x 66") is currently in a private collection.
 47. Elaine de Kooning, "Subject: What, How, or Who? (1955)," in Elaine de Kooning, *The Spirit of Abstract Expressionism*, 147–48.
 48. Schapiro's *Pandora* (1959, oil on canvas, 39" x 32") is in the collection of the Eric Firestone Gallery, New York.
 49. On Wilson's *Basket Lake*, see Sussman, *Jane Wilson*, 13. Four other landscapes by Wilson are still in Amarillo. *August Landscape* (1959, 60" x 50", oil on canvas) was sent by Tibor de Nagy Gallery on consignment to Fitz in June 1960 with the price of \$1600. See memo from Tibor de Nagy Gallery to Dord Fitz, June 5, 1960, box 2, folder 14, DFC. It was purchased by Fitz's student Phoebe Shelton during the solo show of Wilson's work at Fitz's gallery in Summer 1960. Shelton gifted the work to the Amarillo Museum of Art in 2001, along with two other small landscapes. Another work, *Field and Houses* (1963, 52" x 44"), remains in the private collection of Claire and Paul Burney (Claire is the daughter of Fitz's student Betty Bivins Childers). The former three are reproduced in Sussman, *Jane Wilson*, 21. All of these works by Wilson were included in the Fall 2021 exhibition *Women of Abstract Expressionism in the American West* at the Amarillo Museum of Art.
 50. John Ashbery, "Jane Freilicher," in *Reported Sightings: Art Chronicles, 1957–1987*, ed. David Bergman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 243; David Lehman, *The Last Avant-Garde: The Making of the New York School of Poets* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 61.
 51. Brenda S. Webster and Judith Emlyn Johnson, *Hungry for Light: The Journal of Ethel Schwabacher* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1993), 8; and Ethel Schwabacher Papers, 1940–1975, AAA.

52. See for example, Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," *Art News* 51, no. 8 (Dec. 1952): 22–23, 48–50.
53. Early press releases included Sterne among the artists slated to visit, but in the end, she did not attend in person. See box 4, folder 2, DFC.
54. On Martha Jackson, see Gabriel, *Ninth Street Women*, 541–42, 602, 622, 672, and Gruen, *The Party's Over Now*, 122–25, 234.
55. Martha Jackson to Dord Fitz, Dec. 14, 1960, box 1, folder 26, DFC.
56. See the bill of sale from the Martha Jackson Gallery, Dec. 1, 1960, box 1, folder 26, DFC. The bill notes that the sales price was \$6850, less a 15 percent discount, making \$5822.50. See also "Works on Exhibition Here and Elsewhere," in the press release material for "The Nevelson Gala," Nov. 11, 1973, Scottsdale Civic Center, box 1, folder 26, DFC.
57. Fitz to Martha Jackson, July 24, 1960, box 1, folder 26, DFC. By December of 1960, Martha Jackson had received the agreed-upon purchase price from Fitz's Amarillo buyers in full.
58. On Reynal's sales in *The Women* exhibition, see Fitz to Reynal and Sills, July 11, 1978, box 2, folder 4, DFC.
59. Both the Lindeberg and Wilson paintings remain in the Bivins family collection in Amarillo.
60. See Fitz memoir as in note 12, 5–6. See also "Exhibit Due at Amarillo" and "Charles Durrs Host Chuck Wagon Dinner for Noted Painters, Sculptress, and Art Critic," newspaper clipping, March 18, 1960, both box 4, folder 2, DFC.
61. "Artist to Talk at Fair Exhibit," *Amarillo Daily News*, Sept. 26, 1958, box 1, folder 10, DFC.
62. "Federation to Participate"; "Seven Noted Women Artists Due at Show," *Amarillo Sunday News-Globe*, March 13, 1960, 4C; and Fitz memoir, 6.
63. On this, see Helen Langa and Paula Wisotzki, *American Women Artists, 1935–1970: Gender, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 8.
64. Fitz memoir; box 1, folder 10; and box 4, folders 1–4, DFC. For instance, de Kooning's visit in 1962 included teaching classes and a public lecture attended by approximately 350 people, according to the *Amarillo Citizen*, Nov. 6, 1962.
65. See, for instance, "Art," *Amarillo Citizen*, Apr. 21, 1964, 13; "Sculpture Class to Begin Today," *Amarillo Globe-Times*, Apr. 15, 1964, 38; "Sculptor To Hold Workshop Sessions," *Amarillo Sunday Globe-News*, May 5, 1968; Gloria Denko, "'Architect of Reflection' and Impulse," *Amarillo Globe-News*, May 10, 1968, 32; and Denko, "A 'Revival' of Awareness," *Amarillo Globe-Times*, May 16, 1972, 18, all included as clippings in box 1, folder 26, DFC.
66. *Kindred Spirits: Louise Nevelson and Dorothy Hood*, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Nov. 3, 2018 to Feb. 3, 2019.
67. On her gold works being inspired by faucets in Texas, see Wilson, *Louise Nevelson*, 204 and Lisle, *Louise Nevelson*, 227. On the critical dismissal of Nevelson's gold works, see Arthur Danto, "Black, White, Gold: Monochrome and Meaning in the Art of Louise Nevelson," in Brooke Kamin Rapaport, *The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson: Constructing a Legend* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2007), 46. The appeal of these gold works out West is shown by the fact that Fitz's students purchased a good number of them. On this, see Von Lintel and Roos, *Three Women Artists*.
68. On these changes to their aesthetics, see especially Von Lintel and Roos, *Three Women Artists*. Other artists who maintained close contact with Fitz long after the 1960 show included Reynal and Sterne. On this, see box 2, folder 11, and the second unpublished memoir of Fitz written in the context of *8 Modern Masters* exhibition in 1985, box 1, folder 1, DFC, 6.



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“GRAPHIC STATUES”

FEMALE MONUMENTS, MEDIA PUBLICITY, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SUFFRAGE

By Nicole J. Williams

On November 5, 1872, Susan B. Anthony and fourteen female colleagues entered a busy polling station in Rochester, New York, and cast their ballots in the presidential election. Shortly after, Anthony was arrested, placed on trial, and found guilty of illegally voting—as a woman. In the weeks before the trial, artist Theodore Wust prophesied the consequences of Anthony’s quest for female suffrage in a wood engraving on the cover of *The Daily Graphic*, the nation’s first illustrated daily newspaper (1873; Fig. 1). Wust pictured a topsy-turvy world of inverted gender roles. Anthony stands brashly in the center foreground, wearing an American flag top hat, ruffled boots with spurs, and a sensationally short skirt fringed with serried paper ballots. She grasps an umbrella resembling a sword. Behind her two men perform domestic work; one tends a sniveling baby, while the other totes a hamper of groceries. A policewoman teeters ineffectually on tiny feet. In the background, riotous women deliver speeches, march in a political parade, and debate “Union to a Man.” The editorialist quipped, “Whenever women rule the hour, they must acknowledge in the person of Miss Anthony the pioneer who first pursued the way they sought.”¹

Wust’s cover, titled “The Woman Who Dared,” exemplifies period popular imagery that satirized suffragists as masculine women who upended the patriarchal social order. Historians situate “The Woman Who Dared” as representative of a wave of American illustration, particularly cartooning, that caricatured suffragists as manly shrews.² However, Wust’s cover engaged a much broader range of visual arts and graphic techniques extending beyond the field of illustration. In many ways, his picture encapsulated the rapidly expanding and heterogeneous visual culture of the late nineteenth century.

“The Woman Who Dared,” for example, employed strong images and metaphors of hero statuary, a genre that is largely overlooked in scholarly discussions about the visual politics of the suffrage movement. Captioned “Graphic Statues, no. 17,” “The Woman Who Dared” belonged to a longer series of covers by Wust featuring caricatures of the era’s newsmakers in guises reminiscent of statuary.³ Anthony’s hieratic scale recalled the monumentality of public statuary, and her



Fig. 1. Theodore Wust, “Graphic Statues, No. 17— ‘The Woman Who Dared.’” *The Daily Graphic* 1, no. 81 (June 5, 1873): Cover. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-55836.

columnar skirt resembled a pedestal carved at the base with dentil ornament. Anthony’s jaunty hat, long boots, sword-like umbrella, and the torqued position of her arms and hands

specifically imitated Donatello's famous bronze statue of the biblical hero, *David* (1428–32; Fig. 2). Created for the Palazzo Medici courtyard, the sculpture was moved to the Palazzo della Signoria, as a public statue, upon the expulsion of the Medicis from Florence. Nineteenth-century viewers steeped in Renaissance art would have recognized Wust's allusion to *David* in his vision of Anthony's plucky victory over the Goliath of traditional patriarchy.⁴

Yet Anthony simultaneously embodies lower forms of commercial graphic media, which diminish her status as a hero statue. The qualifier "graphic" in the expression "graphic statues" asserts the role of the illustrated newspaper, *The Daily Graphic*, in the construction of Anthony's so-called monument. It thus characterizes Anthony as a mass media celebrity rather than a genuine hero deserving commemoration in bronze or marble. In addition to the pictorial newspapers, Wust's caricature invokes the publicity photograph. Wust clearly drew Anthony's glaring countenance, as well as her lace fichu pinned with a cameo, from well-known photographs of Anthony by Napoleon Sarony (c. 1870–95; Figs. 3, 4), which suffragists circulated as cartes de visite and cabinet cards. The disembodied effect of Anthony's bobble-like head accentuates her photographic origins. Wust's allusion to publicity photography destabilizes Anthony's status as a statue, causing her body to oscillate precariously between monument and media image. The graphic statue represents a liminal and cross-medial monument, more a magnet for mass media publicity than a pillar of everlasting renown.

This article identifies the intermedial concept of the graphic statue as an important trope in late nineteenth-century criticism of the US women's suffrage movement. Descriptions of female reformers as mass-mediated statues animated the conservative rhetoric around the franchise for women. Critics portrayed early feminists like Anthony as ersatz monuments associated with graphic publicity media, whether the pictorial press, lithographic advertising, or circulating publicity photographs. This hybrid vocabulary policed the masculine gendering of hero statuary and fame itself by reinforcing a disparaging association of feminists with the commercial arts of publicity. The graphic statue reproached women reformers as shameless seekers of publicity who could attain fleeting media celebrity but not the durable fame conferred by monuments in bronze or stone, which continued to exalt masculinity.⁵

The honorific statue became a contested sociopolitical symbol, however, as suffragists themselves deployed the imagery and language of female hero statues to stake their claim to belonging in the public sphere. Their competing appeals to honorific statuary made that typology a battleground in the struggle for women's rights between 1870 and 1920. Not coincidentally, these years witnessed the explosive growth of women's rights agitations as well as the heyday of American monument building. This article weaves together the suffrage movement and the statuary craze to enlarge our understanding of the role of sculpture in the early struggle for women's rights. In the process, it unearths the history of ongoing efforts to monumentalize American women in civic space.



Fig. 2. Donatello, *David* (1428–32), bronze, 62 1/4". Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, Italy. Scala / Art Resource, NY.

As a monuments craze swept the nation after the Civil War, largely organized and funded by women's associations, public statues honoring real American women were virtually nonexistent in civic space.⁶ In the nineteenth century, women proliferated in public sculpture as allegorical embodiments of abstract concepts, whereas honorific portrait statuary remained the restricted province of men.⁷ According to literary historian Michael Garval, the period's "monumental vision of greatness ... was fundamentally male." Visually, materially, and linguistically, monuments exuded a "phallic aura." Garval notes the "emphatic verticality" of their designs, the "suggestive hardness" of their materials, and the fact that their installation was discussed using the term "erection," which has architectural and anatomical meanings. For centuries monoliths revered the "virile glory" of rulers and warriors. In the Victorian era, a new monumental tradition honored cultural figures like authors and artists, although such projects continued to be "almost exclusively male, and were considered every bit as virile as their predecessors."⁸ By honoring greatness tout court, the monument reinforced an ideal of masculinity grounded on singularity and aggrandizement. The monument's very public nature entailed masculinity. Its imposing presence in civic space mirrored the public orientation enjoyed by men alone for much of the century. Despite the powerful queen for which the era is named, Victorian belief held that women were best suited to domestic



Fig. 3. Napoleon Sarony, *Susan B. Anthony* (c. 1870), cabinet card, 6 1/2" x 4 1/3". The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library.



Fig. 4. Napoleon Sarony, *Portrait of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* (c. 1870–95), carte de visite, 3 3/4" x 2 3/8". Susan B. Anthony Papers, Schlesinger Library, Harvard Radcliffe Institute.

roles and to lives of privacy and humility that deflected public attention from their bodies, desires, and achievements.⁹

Many early woman suffragists shirked this female imperative to conceal oneself in public and pursued their purpose in highly visible ways. As historian Margaret Finnegan notes, suffragists declared women not only equal citizens but also "equal claimants of public space." They "gave lectures and attended conventions; met in public halls, churches, and other well-trafficked sites; went door-to-door passing suffrage petitions and querying men's and women's opinions about female enfranchisement; visited state legislators; and encouraged influential people to support the movement." They brought their meetings and demonstrations to populous cities, crowded civic celebrations, and symbolic political spaces like the Rochester polling place where Anthony voted in 1872.¹⁰ In the early 1870s, suffragists also began to mount a sophisticated visual campaign. Seeking greater public visibility and more control over their public images, they deployed the technologies of engraving, photography, and later halftone printing to disseminate flattering portraits of their leaders and founders. In 1870, when Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton sat for their public photographs by Sarony, they comported their bodies in strategic ways to present "a fresh, positive image of political women," writes historian Allison K. Lange. In the photographs, Anthony and Stanton lean forward confidently and confront the camera unflinchingly, projecting authority. They follow the example of portraits of male political leaders, spurning such gendered conventions as the demure, averted

female gaze and the softening effect of domestic accessories. Anthony and Stanton possessed a keen sense of the political power of their portraits. They knew that their images could help Americans to envision women holding positions of leadership as well as challenge derogatory stereotypes about women who engaged in politics.¹¹

The suffragists' habit of displaying themselves in public invited recrimination. Critics claimed that their hyper-visibility coarsened their femininity and wrecked their family life. In an influential essay published in *The North American Review*, the English novelist Ouida (Maria Louise Ramé) wrote that the modern woman "shows herself . . . without scruple at every brutal and debasing spectacle which is considered fashionable." As a result, "the rude and bustling publicity of modern life robs woman of her grace," and her private life withers "almost entirely uncultivated."¹² Social critics accused progressive women of scheming to attain fame. They called suffragists "unabashed self-advertisers" who just wanted to be noticed and talked about. Antifeminist writer Eliza Lynn Linton claimed that they epitomized the "spirit of the day," which was both "vagrant and self-advertising."¹³ As the term "self-advertising" suggests, critics found a language and reference point for women's exhibitionism in the era's burgeoning publicity industries, in the growth of advertising, the newspaper press, and publicity photography in the late nineteenth century. Suffragists' apparent need to exhibit and promote themselves closely identified them with commercial technologies of publicity. The scathing stigma of prostitution subtended this relationship: the woman who promiscuously

“advertised” herself resembled the streetwalker who marketed her body on the streets. The studied publicity of women reformers objectified and commodified femininity.¹⁴

The motif of the graphic statue gave visual definition to these vexing consequences of suffragists’ participation in public life. Rendering feminists as faulty versions of male monuments expressed the unsexing effects for women of seeking public attention. The graphic aspect of the female statue—its allusions to the machinery of publicity—further marked a woman’s notability as manufactured through self-commodification, opposed to the earned and immortal fame of a male monument. The message of graphic statues was simple: by installing themselves before the public posed like statues, progressive women only published themselves like advertisements.

Consider other examples of graphic statues from Henry James’s classic 1886 novel about women’s reform, *The Bostonians*. The story follows the career of Verena Tarrant, a young lady with a charismatic flair for public speaking, who is being manipulated and groomed for the lecture circuit by a circle of feminist reformers. Verena’s love interest, Basil Ransom, struggles to protect her from the debasing publicity of the reformers’ work and to ensconce her in the private sphere of the home and family. Ransom laments, “If [women] would only be private and passive, and have no feeling but for that, and leave publicity to the sex of tougher hide!” Notably, Verena begins to feel the draw of domesticity following a tryst with Ransom in Central Park and a sunny afternoon stroll around the grounds of Harvard College. Masculine monuments shadow both settings, as if exerting a counterbalance on Verena’s designs to spend her life on the public platform. Male monuments do not merely reflect patriarchal authority in these scenes; they seem to intervene actively in Verena’s calculations to constitute or shore up that very authority. In the park, Verena and Ransom “admired all the statues and busts of great men with which the grounds are decorated.” Harvard’s Memorial Hall, dedicated to the university’s Union dead, “sprang majestic into the winter air.” Ransom jibes, “If, when women have the conduct of affairs, they fight as well as they reason, surely for them too we shall have to set up memorials.”¹⁵

Throughout the novel, though, James characterizes women reformers as monuments whose delicate “hides” are literally degraded by public exposure. James describes the old philanthropist Miss Birdseye as a badly weathered marble bust, a battered monument: “She had a sad, soft, pale face, which (and it was the effect of her whole head) looked as if it had been soaked, blurred, and made vague by exposure to some slow dissolvent. The long practice of philanthropy had not given accent to her features; it had rubbed out their transitions, their



Fig. 5. Alice Austen, *Rag Pickers and Loaded Carts* (1896), originally glass negative, 4" x 5". Collection of Historic Richmond Town.

meanings. The waves of sympathy, of enthusiasm, had wrought upon them in the same way in which the waves of time finally modify the surface of old marble busts, gradually washing away their sharpness, their details.” Miss Birdseye’s constant self-display has eroded her beauty and individuality. More specifically, by placing herself before the public like a bust, Miss Birdseye wastes into a publicity photograph. James’s terminology—“soaked,” “blurred,” and “exposure”—recalls the darkroom processes of developing a photograph and particularly Ransom’s abhorrence towards the public circulation of photographs of women. He fears the future when strangers will “see [Verena’s] photograph in the stores,” consummating her budding celebrity. When boys hawk Verena’s photograph at the Music Hall before her scuttled debut, Ransom feverishly wishes “he had money to buy up the stock.”¹⁶ According to literary historian Stuart Burrows, the public and commercial nature of late nineteenth-century photography alarmed James, who often thematized photography as a destructive force that turned the private self into public image, and individuals into freakishly uniform commodities. Burrows writes, “the endless circulation of photographic images in modern society... threaten(ed) to render everyone and everything the same,” the way the surface of Miss Birdseye’s bust loses its crispness and detail.¹⁷ Its loss of definition further hints at the suffragists’ breakdown of traditional distinctions between the sexes. The photographic dissolution of Miss Birdseye’s bust portends her death at the end of the novel.¹⁸

Another graphic statue in *The Bostonians* is Mrs. Farrinder, the great apostle of the emancipation of women. James describes her chilly gaze fixed downwards from the platform like the vacant marmoreal eye of a hero statue watching its



Fig. 6. Harriet Hosmer, *Zenobia in Chains* (1859), marble, 82" x 27" x 33". Courtesy of the Huntington Art Museum, San Marino, California. Photography © 2014 Fredrik Nilsen.

own dedication with public eulogium. "There was something public in her eye, which was large, cold, and quiet," James writes. "It had acquired a sort of exposed reticence from the habit of looking down from a lecture-desk, over a sea of heads, while its distinguished owner was eulogised by a leading citizen." At the same time, however, "there was a lithographic smoothness about her, and a mixture of the American matron and the public character."¹⁹ Here James refers to the smooth surfaces of lithographic stones as well as the noticeably slick texture of advertisement posters, created through the chromolithographic process. Posters advertising lectures by women orators litter the novel, bedizening "all the walls and fences of Boston" and accreting on the doorways and vestibules of lecture halls. Alice Austen's photograph of 23rd Street in New York City (1896; Fig. 5) reveals the visual cacophony of such a cityscape plastered with posters as well as the hypervisibility of women as objects of modern advertising; their colossal bodies overshadow the rag pickers who are the ostensible subject of the photograph. Although they push products like the newspaper and the theater, they also conjure a Jamesian vision in which women themselves are "immensely advertised."²⁰ Such flagrant display makes, and violently unmakes, public womanhood in *The Bostonians*. In the case of

Mrs. Farrinder, it flattens her statuesque body into the planarity of the lithographic plate or poster (a "leveling" that is metaphorical as well as material).²¹ Mrs. Farrinder embodies lithographic media of publicity such as the chromolithographic plate or poster. She places herself before the public as a statue, but public attention only mutates her body into lithographic simulacra of the monument.

At the same time that critics like Wust and James cast women reformers as inadequate monumental subjects, suffragists began to claim hero statuary for their sex through their writings, artworks, and even their bodily performances on the platform. This multiarmed movement for heroine statuary, though, has largely eluded study. Instead, scholarship has tended to focus on how feminists rejected traditions of ideal sculpture that enshrined an ideology of women as powerless, passive, and submissive. Sculptor Harriet Hosmer challenged representations of women in ideal sculpture as defeated captives when she created *Zenobia in Chains* (1859; Fig. 6); as scholar Joy S. Kasson has observed, Hosmer emphasized the Syrian queen's unconquered power, even as she marched through Rome enchained.²² Writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman similarly described the emancipated woman of the early twentieth century as an unruly Pygmalion figure who liberated herself from the static poses prescribed for women in ideal sculpture: "Here she comes, running, out of prison and off the pedestal: chains off, crown off, halo off—just a live woman." A 2006 exhibition at the Newark Museum about representations of New Women during the Gilded Age took its title, *Off the Pedestal: New Women in the Art of Homer, Chase, and Sargent*, from Gilman.²³ This equation of women's emancipation with liberation from conventions of female statuary, however, obscures the creative ways in which suffragists helped to forge the new sculptural idiom of the female monument.²⁴ In an 1887 speech to the National Woman Suffrage Association, suffragist Phoebe Couzens highlighted all that women had done for the country "without a place of honor in the republic for the living, or a statue to the memory of the dead."²⁵ Suffragists aimed to remedy this gap by presenting leaders of the movement as worthy of monumental commemoration.

Sculptor Adelaide Johnson is perhaps the best-known champion of suffrage monuments. She protested that men perpetuated their political and social power by "monumenting themselves and their achievements all over the planet." She wanted to create "a national portrait gallery of eminent women," appropriating the power of monuments for her sex.²⁶ Johnson carved busts of Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Caroline Winslow, and Lucretia Mott (1892; Fig. 7) for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, with funds raised through the National American Woman Suffrage Association. The busts were displayed in the interior space of the Gallery of Honor in the fair's Woman's Building, which was devoted to showcasing the achievements of women. Johnson, though, aspired to install the busts permanently in the US Capitol building, preferably in Statuary Hall. She worked towards this goal for decades, executing additional busts of prominent American women, including journalist



Fig. 7. Adelaide Johnson, Busts (Clockwise) of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Dr. Caroline Winslow, Lucretia Mott, and Susan B. Anthony (1892) in Hubert H. Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair*, Vol. 1 (New York: Bounty Books, 1894), p. 264. Library of the University of California, San Diego.



Fig. 8. Adelaide Johnson, *Portrait Monument to Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony* (1921), marble, 84" x 68" x 60". Architect of the Capitol. Photograph by Harris & Ewing (1921-3), originally glass negative, 5" x 7". Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-hec-30740.



Fig. 9. "'Woman the Reformer,' Susan B. Anthony,—From the Clay Modeling" (1889, bust by Jonathan Scott Hartley), in Alice H. Donlevy, "Modeling for Sculpture," *Demorest's Family Magazine* 27, no. 3 (January 1891): p. 133. Wilson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Lillian Whiting and spiritualist Cora Richmond. Commissioned by the National Woman's Party in May 1920, Johnson undertook the *Portrait Monument* (Woman Suffrage Statue) (1921; Fig. 8) for the Capitol Rotunda in anticipation of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. She described the work as "a truly magnificent monument of the three wonderful heads of our pioneers"—Anthony, Stanton, and Mott—"emerging from a solid block of pure marble as they arose and emerged from the mighty accumulation of the pressures of the past upon women."²⁷

Historian Sandra Weber has uncovered the contentious history of the making of the *Portrait Monument* and its afterlives in American culture and politics.²⁸ As Weber explains, Johnson began the commission with no guarantee that the suffrage amendment would be ratified or that the Joint Committee on the Library, which accepted artworks on behalf of Congress, would permit the sculpture's placement in the Capitol. After ratification in August 1920, some committee members remained opposed to the monument. They claimed that the Capitol lacked space for the large marble and that the floor might buckle under its weight. One committee member

ridiculed the monument as "three ladies sitting in a bathtub," rhetorically disrobing the women and consigning them to the private sphere of the bath.²⁸ Such reactions vented anti-suffrage sentiment. The committee accepted the sculpture just days before the National Woman's Party planned to unveil it



Fig. 10. Helen Farnsworth Mears, *Frances E. Willard* (1905), marble, 83 3/4 " x 40 1/2" x 35". National Statuary Hall, Architect of the Capitol.

in the Rotunda, swayed by the support of Florence Harding (First-Lady elect) and Christine Rice Hoar Gillett (wife of the House Speaker) and with the proviso that the sculpture be relocated to the building's lower level, known as the Crypt, following the dedication. On February 16, 1921, the day after the unveiling, Johnson's marble was moved downstairs. Despite its obscure location, the *Portrait Monument* continued to serve as a rallying point for generations of women's rights

activists and women's groups. Its location also became a perennial cause célèbre. After protracted Congressional debates, the *Portrait Monument* was returned to the Rotunda in 1997.

Susan B. Anthony was the most popular subject of period efforts to erect suffrage monuments. Commissioned by the Ladies' Art Association of New York and funded by donations from women across the country, sculptor Jonathan Scott Hartley completed the clay model for an honorific portrait bust of Anthony (1889; Fig. 9), also intended for the Chicago World's Fair.²⁹ Sculptor Lorado Taft completed a third marble portrait bust of Anthony (1892; unlocated), commissioned by Frances E. Willard. When Anthony hesitated to commit to sitting for Taft, favoring a woman artist, Willard reassured her, "We can not have too many busts of you, so let Miss Johnson go on and make hers, and let me have mine, and let those other women make theirs, and we will yet have one of them in the House of Representatives at Washington, the other in the Senate, the third in the White House!"³⁰ In 1905, Willard became the first woman honored with a monument at the Capitol, when Congress accepted her statue by Helen Farnsworth Mears, presented by the state of Illinois, for Statuary Hall (Fig. 10).³¹

Beyond the undertaking of suffrage monuments, the concept of honorific female statuary played a forgotten role in the construction of suffragist political spectacle. Historians have explored how suffragist demonstrators borrowed theatrical strategies from the popular stage to entertain and incite the public. Women demonstrators imitated the spectacular, crowd-pleasing effects of the theater and often collaborated with progressive actresses and personalities in the stage world.³² Looking more holistically at how such political performances were staged in and framed by multimedia environments suggests that they further emulated hero statues available in the civic spaces of their demonstrations.

A provocative episode occurred during Independence Day festivities at the Centennial International Exposition, held in Philadelphia in 1876. Anthony and four female accomplices, including Couzins, interrupted the day's formal ceremonies in front of Independence Hall by storming the stage and presenting to a presiding officer the Declaration of Rights for Women by the National Woman Suffrage Association. They then departed the stage, scattering copies of the Declaration as they went, and made their way to another platform erected at the building's rear façade, where Anthony read the Declaration "under the shadow of (George) Washington's statue," according to the *History of Woman Suffrage*.³³ A stereograph (c. 1876; Fig. 11) from the time of the Centennial shows the marble statue of George Washington (1869) by Joseph Bailly draped in bunting for the Centennial celebration and lodged behind the guardrail of the temporary stage.

When Anthony read from the Declaration, she invited the audience to imagine her own petrification into a monument. As she declared that "Woman's wealth, thought and labor have cemented the stones of every monument man has raised to liberty," the elevation of her body on the bandstand would have echoed the raised position of the Washington statue.³⁴ This

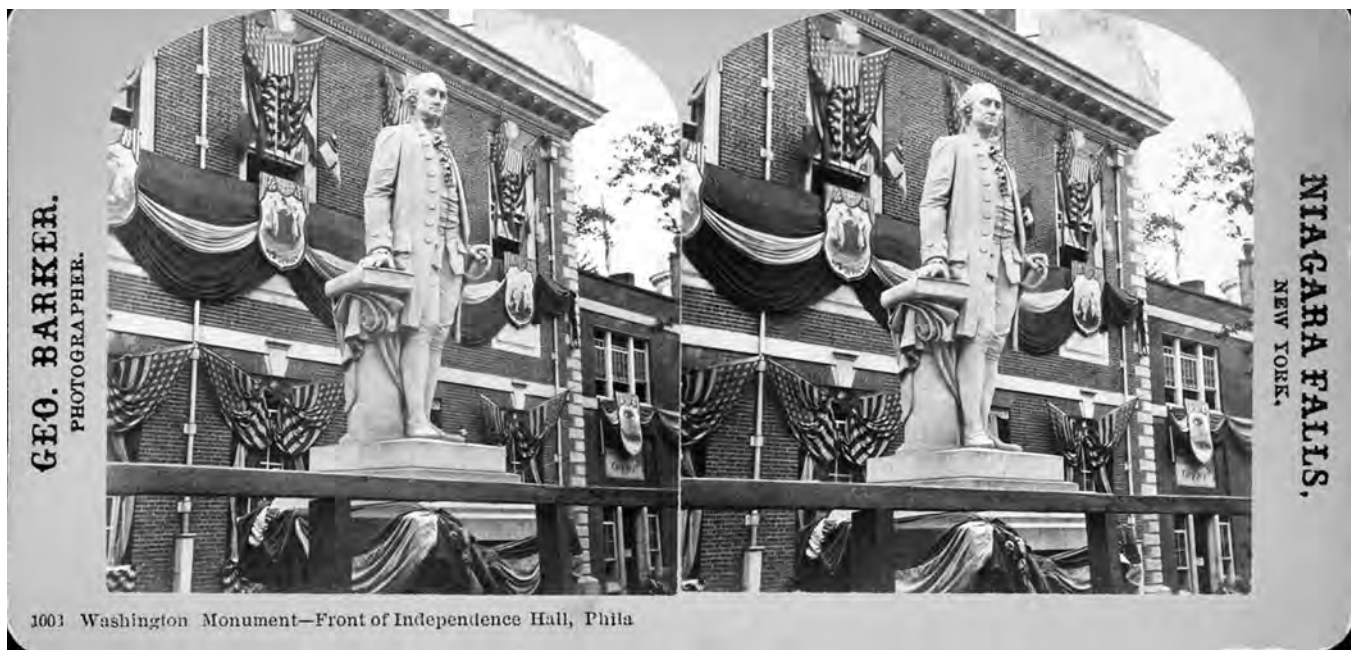


Fig. 11. George Barker, "Washington Monument—Front of Independence Hall, Phila." (c. 1876), stereograph, 3 1/2" x 7". The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library.

calculated juxtaposition posited Anthony as a modern-day Washington, a modern champion of liberty, and thus as monumental material. Moreover, Anthony would have orchestrated her body into implicitly statuesque poses. According to art historian John Stephens Crawford, nineteenth-century speakers like Anthony imitated the poses and gestures of classical orators taken from antique and neoclassical statues of those men. Victorian orators imagined themselves, and were imagined by their peers, in relation to classical and neoclassical statues.³⁵ We can think of Anthony as a kind of Victorian performance artist, using her own body and existing civic statuary, to insinuate parallels with male monuments and impel others to imagine her as a monument. Cousins anointed her "the immortal Susan B. Anthony" in an account of the day, as if Anthony's body had there begun a transformation into durable stone.³⁶ Later in life, Anthony designated herself a monument. Noting how few suffrage and antislavery pioneers survived in 1900, when Anthony turned eighty, she told lecture agent James Burton Pond, "I feel almost like a *Spared Monument* of both crusades." She capitalized and italicized "*Spared Monument*" to underscore her vision of monumental selfhood.³⁷

At the time of Anthony's eightieth birthday, painter Sarah James Eddy honored her with a monumental portrait. *Susan B. Anthony on the Occasion of Her 80th Birthday* (1901; Pl. 13) depicts Anthony receiving roses from school children during her birthday celebration at the Lafayette Square Opera House, which also formalized her retirement as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.³⁸ Anthony's figure brings to mind a kindly mother or grandmother ministering to her brood at her knee. As art historian Holly Pyne Connor observes, "No reference to her years of writing, lecturing, and lobbying for women's emancipation and

equality are included." Instead, Anthony assumes a "traditional maternal role" although she never married or bore children. For this reason, Connor calls the painting "a fascinating example of how entrenched and codified the formula for female portraits had become."³⁹ Such images of suffragists as devoted mothers formed a vital element of suffragist visual campaigns in the 1890s and 1900s, when the movement strained to emphasize the compatibility of womanly care with political power; suffragist organizations increasingly argued that the vote would empower women to safeguard their children and improve domestic life. For suffragist organizations in the 1890s and 1900s, "motherhood proved central to their arguments about American political womanhood."⁴⁰

However, Eddy simultaneously subverted the conventions for depicting women by rendering Anthony as a monument—specifically, as an honorific portrait bust. Eddy painted Anthony's head in frosty tones and reflective dashes, with a shock of light streaking from brow to bun. While capturing the anemia of senescence, the pallor and luster of Anthony's head also resemble white marble. Her lace shawl drapes to a point beneath her chest like the tapered base of a sculpted bust. Against her garnet dress and chair, Anthony's white head, shoulders, and chest read collectively as a marble bust. Flesh and lace turn to stone. Anthony hardens into a proleptic monument. The children, multiplied in an infinite stream of shadowy heads, evoke future generations performing the rite of laying flowers beneath a commemorative monument. Indeed, the painting bears an uncanny resemblance to a later photograph (1930; Fig. 12) of Anthony's relatives, Peggy and Hope Anthony, laying wreaths at the base of the *Portrait Monument*. By painting Anthony's bust receiving the tributes



Fig. 12. Underwood and Underwood, Peggy and Hope Anthony, relatives of Susan B. Anthony, placing a wreath and flowers upon the *Portrait Monument* on the 137th anniversary of the birth of Lucretia Mott, January 3, 1930 (1930), photographic print, 9 1/3" x 7 1/3". Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-14416.

of posterity, Eddy affirmed her faith that suffragists would one day take monumental form.

The long struggle for the image and meaning of suffrage monuments continues today, at a time when women still represent less than eight percent of public statues in America. In recent years, a national dialogue has grown considering how public statues perpetuate social inequalities based on gender as well as race. Calls to remove racist and sexist monuments have swept the nation, as have calls to build new and more inclusive monuments. In 2006, a Congressional resolution authorized the creation of a bust of Sojourner Truth for the Capitol, following a decade-long campaign among black leaders and groups to add Truth's likeness to the *Portrait Monument*. Sculpted by Artis Lane, the larger-than-life bronze bust was dedicated in 2009 in Emancipation Hall in the Capitol Visitor Center. In 2016, the *Tennessee Woman Suffrage Monument* was unveiled in Centennial Park in Nashville. The monument features five women active in the local ratification debate, including four white women—Carrie Chapman Catt, Anne Dallas Dudley, Abby Crawford Milton, and Sue Shelton White—and one African American woman, J. Frankie Pierce. In New York City, the campaign Monumental Women

commissioned sculptor Meredith Bergmann to complete a bronze suffrage monument for the Literary Walk in Central Park. The *Women's Rights Pioneers Monument* (2020; Pl. 14) also brings the interracial history of the movement into focus, honoring Sojourner Truth in addition to Anthony and Stanton.⁴¹ And in September 2021, the monument *Ripples of Change*, designed by Jane DeDecker, was unveiled in Seneca Falls, New York, composed of statues of Truth, Harriet Tubman, Martha Coffin Wright, and Oneida activist Laura Cornelius Kellogg. Early feminists had excluded women of color from their monumental initiatives, betraying the limits of their democratic commitments. Working against an anti-suffrage rhetoric of woman reformers as ersatz, "graphic" statues, they challenged the masculine gendering of the monument, but not its racial requisites. Although honorific statuary was a key site of the early struggle for women's rights, the breadth and diversity of the suffrage movement are only now becoming visible in public space.⁴² •

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Notes

1. *The Daily Graphic* (June 5, 1873), 2.
2. See Kate Clarke Lemay, *Votes for Women! A Portrait of Persistence* (Washington, DC: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2019), 125; and Allison K. Lange, *Picturing Political Power: Images in the Women's Suffrage Movement* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2020), 84–85.
3. For the "Graphic Statues" series, see William Murrell, *A History of American Graphic Humor (1865–1938)* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1938), 36.
4. There are additional reasons Wust may have selected Donatello's *David* as a model for Anthony. First, the statue's changing contexts of display, from private residence to public space, mirrored Anthony's own entry into the public arena. Historians further have described *David* as androgynous, like Wust's depiction of Anthony, owing to his slender physique and supple flesh. However, nineteenth-century viewers tended to interpret these same features as signs of *David's* adolescent masculinity. For the statue's supposed androgyny, see, among others, Christelle L. Baskins, "Donatello's Bronze 'David': Grillanda, Goliath, Groom?," *Studies in Iconography* 15 (1993): 113–34.
5. For the gendered distinction between celebrity (female) and fame (male) in this period, see Brenda R. Weber, *Women and Literary Celebrity in the Nineteenth Century: The Transatlantic Production of Fame and Gender* (Farnham, Surrey, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).
6. For women as keepers of memory and commissioners of monuments in this period, see, among others, Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 2003); and Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997), 188.
7. Until the twentieth century, Alexander Doyle's *Margaret Haughery* (1884) statue in New Orleans was the only prominent monument erected in honor of a woman in the US. Two other public statues of Hannah Duston, a Puritan mother taken captive by the Abenaki, were erected in Boscawen, NH (1874) and Haverhill, MA (1879). Notably, the British imperial tradition of erecting statues to Queen

- Victoria stands in stark contrast to the dearth of female monuments in the US. For public statues of the queen across the empire, see "Sculpture and Ceremonial: Monuments to Queen Victoria," Yale Center for British Art, <https://interactive.britishart.yale.edu/victoria-monuments/map> (accessed Aug. 10, 2021).
8. Michael D. Garval, "A Dream of Stone": *Fame, Vision, and Monumentality in Nineteenth-Century French Literary Culture* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 2004), 33, 62–64, 71.
 9. Of course domestic ideology rarely captured the lived experience of Victorian women. Christine Stansell explores how the domestic lives of urban laboring women "spread out to the hallways of their tenements, to adjoining apartments and to the streets below," while middle-class women traversed public space daily on errands, shopping trips, church visits, social calls, and reform missions. Historian Anne Boylan also describes how "the fuzziness" of the boundaries between public and private did not keep critics from wielding "ideas about spheres and inappropriate public activity selectively" to challenge women working for controversial and unpopular causes such as women's suffrage. Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789–1860* (Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1987), 41. Quoted in Margaret Finnegan, *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture and Votes for Women* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999), 48; and Anne M. Boylan, "Claiming Visibility: Women in Public / Public Women in the United States, 1865–1910," in *Becoming Visible: Women's Presence in Late Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Janet Floyd, Alison Easton, R. J. Ellis and Lindsey Traub (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010), 20.
 10. Finnegan, *Selling Suffrage*, 49.
 11. Lange, *Picturing Political Power*, 75. See also Allison K. Lange, "How Susan B. Anthony Became the Most Recognizable Suffragist," *The Suff Buffs* blog, National Park Service and the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, April 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/how-susan-b-anthony-became-the-most-recognizable-suffragist.htm> (accessed Aug. 10, 2021). As Lange points out, Anthony and Stanton adapted such visual techniques from the work of their colleagues in the antislavery movement, especially Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth. Both Douglass and Truth had distributed their own photographic portraits to raise funds for the antislavery cause and promote a new image of black authority that refuted racist caricatures of African Americans in popular culture. Later suffragists of color such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Mary Church Terrell also circulated their portraits, although their reach was more limited than those of white women activists.
 12. Ouida, "The New Woman," *The North American Review* 158, no. 450 (May 1894): 619, 617, 614.
 13. Eliza Lynn Linton, "The Wild Women as Social Insurgents," *The Nineteenth Century* 30 (Oct. 1891): 604, 600.
 14. Progressive women were further identified with mass media publicity since the masses were gendered feminine and thought to enact a passive, uncritical, and emotional, or feminine, form of consumption. For the identification of women with mass culture more broadly, see Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Post-Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986), 44–62.
 15. Henry James, *The Bostonians: A Novel* (London and New York: MacMillan and Co., 1886), 11, 325–26, 241–42. Another male monument attends the novel's final scene at the Boston Music Hall, where Verena "was to reveal herself to the country." At the back of the stage "some genius of music or oratory erected himself in monumental bronze." Here James refers to *Beethoven* by Thomas Crawford (1853). *Ibid.*, 419, 429.
 16. *Ibid.*, 26–27, 203, 430. By contrast, journalist Matthias Pardon "wanted to see [Verena's] name in the biggest kind of bills and her portrait in the windows of the stores." *Ibid.*, 126.
 17. Stuart Burrows, "Resembling Oneself: James's Photographic Types," in *A Familiar Strangeness: American Fiction and the Language of Photography, 1839–1945* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 2008), 74. For James's bleak attitude towards mass circulation photography and his longing for an earlier time when photography served as an intimate mode of connection, see also Owen Clayton, "Flirting with Photography: Henry James and Photographic Exchange," *History of Photography* 41, no. 4 (2017): 329–42; and Julie Grossman, "'It's the Real Thing': Henry James, Photography, and *The Golden Bowl*," *The Henry James Review* 15, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 309–28. For photography's transformation into "a public and commercial" medium through the popularity of cartes-de-visite in the mid-nineteenth century, see John Plunkett, "Celebrity and Community: The Poetics of the Carte-de-visite," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 8, no. 1 (2003): 55–79.
 18. Roland Barthes has argued that photography itself augurs death by reminding the beholder of human impermanence: "With the Photograph, we enter into *flat Death*." Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981), 92.
 19. James, *The Bostonians*, 20, 30.
 20. *Ibid.*, 98, 320, 418, 419, 427, 428. Elsewhere James describes Verena similarly, as a "walking advertisement." *Ibid.*, 259.
 21. Interestingly, illustrated posters appeared increasingly flat in this period. According to art historian Ruth E. Iskin, poster artists developed a new modernist language in the 1880s and 1890s that utilized "flat two-dimensional space," "flat color areas devoid of shadows," and "an overall emphasis on the surface." One artist who helped to develop this new commercial aesthetic was the Boston illustrator Ethel Reed (1874–1912). Ruth E. Iskin, *The Poster: Art, Advertising, Design, and Collecting, 1860s–1900s* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2014), 55.
 22. Joy S. Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives: Women in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1990), 141–65. Another notable response to the female captive in sculpture is Lucy Stone (Blackwell)'s account of viewing *The Greek Slave* by Hiram Powers in Boston in 1851. Stone characterized her encounter with the statue as an epiphany that opened her eyes to the subjugation of women and galvanized her career as a lecturer on women's rights as well as abolition: "There it stood in the silence, with fettered hands and half-averted face—so emblematic of women. I remember how the hot tears came to my eyes at the thought of the millions of women who must be freed...." Many other antislavery and women's rights reformers, including Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, compared the position of women under American law and the plight of enslaved people. Andrea Moore Kerr, *Lucy Stone: Speaking Out for Equality* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1992), 51–52; and Jane S. Sutton, *The House of My Sojourn: Rhetoric, Women, and the Question of Authority* (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 2010), 81.
 23. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Is Feminism Really So Dreadful? Listen to Charlotte Perkins Gilman," *Delineator* 85 (Aug. 1914): 6. Quoted in Holly Pyne Connor, "Preface," in *Off the Pedestal: New Women in the Art of Homer, Chase, and Sargent*, ed. Holly Pyne Connor (Newark: The Newark Museum; New Brunswick and London: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2006), xiii. For women's rejection of ideal sculpture and the allegorical mode of representing women as embodiments of abstract concepts rather than specific historical figures, see also Judy Sund, "Columbus and Columbia in Chicago, 1893: Man of Genius Meets Generic Woman," *The Art Bulletin* 75, no. 3 (Sept. 1993): 451; and Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 2006), 53–54. Michelle H. Bogart excavates a particularly fascinating case in which supporters of women's suffrage repudiated the violent misogyny of the sculpture group *Civic Virtue* (commissioned 1909; erected 1922) by Frederick

- William MacMonnies. The work depicted a semiclad male youth trampling underfoot two female figures of Vice, a departure from the more virtuous representations of women in public sculpture. See Michelle H. Bogart, "The Rise and Demise of *Civic Virtue*," in *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890–1930* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989), 258–70.
24. For early efforts to build women monuments, see Lindsay Erin Shannon, "Monuments to the 'New Woman': Public Art and Female Image-Building in America, 1876–1940" (PhD diss., Univ. of Iowa, 2013); Jeanne Madeline Weimann, *The Fair Women: The Story of the Woman's Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893* (Chicago: Academy, 1981), 39–40, 59–70; Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives*, 164–65; and Sandra Weber, *The Woman Suffrage Statue: A History of Adelaide Johnson's Portrait Monument to Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony at the United States Capitol* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2016).
 25. Phoebe Couzins, Speech titled "A Woman without a Country," to the convention of the National Woman Suffrage Association, Jan. 16, 1887. Quoted in Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Matilda Joselyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 3 (Rochester, NY: Susan B. Anthony, 1886), 66.
 26. Letter from Adelaide Johnson to May Wright Sewall, Nov. 12, 1893, and Note, Adelaide Johnson, Sept. 30, 1935, Adelaide Johnson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Both quoted in Weber, *The Woman Suffrage Statue*, 40–41.
 27. Letter from Adelaide Johnson to Alice Paul, Jun. 23, 1920, Adelaide Johnson Papers. Quoted in Weber, *The Woman Suffrage Statue*, 66.
 28. Note, Adelaide Johnson, Adelaide Johnson Papers. Quoted in Weber, *The Woman Suffrage Statue*, 88.
 29. Hartley never completed the marble version of the bust due to compounding controversies. See Nicole Williams, "The Shade of Private Life: Visions of Imperiled Privacy in Late Nineteenth-Century American Art" (PhD diss., Yale Univ., 2019), 140–99.
 30. Quoted in Ida Husted Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, vol. 2 (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1898), 722; and Weimann, *The Fair Women*, 290. See also Allen Stuart Weller, *Lorado Taft: The Chicago Years* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2014), 138–39.
 31. For Willard's statue by Helen Farnsworth Mears, see Shannon, "Monuments to the 'New Woman,'" 120–23.
 32. See Susan A. Glenn, *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000). For the British context, see Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907–14* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988).
 33. Anthony, Stanton and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 3, 31.
 34. *Ibid.*, 34.
 35. See John Stephens Crawford, "The Classical Orator in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture," *The American Art Journal* 6, no. 2 (Nov. 1974): 56–72.
 36. Phoebe Couzins, Speech to the convention of the National Woman Suffrage Association, July 4, 1876. Quoted in Anthony, Stanton, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 3, 36.
 37. Letter from Susan B. Anthony to James Burton Pond, Jul. 22, 1900. Quoted in James Burton Pond, *Eccentricities of Genius: Memories of Famous Men and Women of the Platform and Stage* (New York: G. W. Dillingham Co., 1900), 146. Anthony's self-identification as a living monument and her choice to sit for portrait busts give lie to her humble disavowal of monuments to herself on other occasions, as relayed in Ida Husted Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, vol. 3, (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1908), 1420 ("I hope there will be no effort to put up a shaft or any monument of that sort in memory of me or of the other women who have given themselves to our work. The best kind of a memorial would be a school where girls could be taught everything useful that would help them to earn an honorable livelihood; where they could learn to do anything they were capable of, just as boys can."); and 1470 ("The present writer used to talk with Miss Anthony about what would be done to perpetuate her memory, and once, when a statue was mentioned, said there ought to be one in the pretty, little park almost opposite her home, through which she had passed hundreds of times when out for an evening walk. 'I never can bear to see the statue of a woman exposed to the cold and rain and snow,' she answered, 'And I don't like to think of one of myself out of doors.'"). Additionally, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* highlighted monuments and other portrait sculptures of Anthony, including the busts by Johnson, Taft, and Hartley; a statuette of Anthony and Emily Gross by Bessie Potter; a bust medallion of Anthony designed by Leopold Bonet for the façade of the Beckwith Memorial Building in Dowagiac, Michigan; and the proposal of George W. Aldridge, New York State Superintendent of Public Works, to carve Anthony's face in the State Capitol building. The Anthony medallion on the façade of the Beckwith building (presumed destroyed) is visible in a photograph in the collection of the Dowagiac Area History Museum. For Potter's statuette *Mrs. S. E. Gross and Susan B. Anthony* (1896), the clay model for which was destroyed in the casting process, see Julie Aronson, *Bessie Potter Vonnoh: Sculptor of Women* (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 2008), 65–67.
 38. Vivid accounts of the event and painting appear in "A Portrait of Miss Anthony Commemorates Eightieth Birthday Jubilee. By Miss Sarah Jane Eddy," *Democrat and Chronicle*, April 18, 1902, 16. For the Smithsonian's rejection of the portrait as a gift from the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1918, and eventual acceptance of the work one year later with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, see Richard Kurin, *The Smithsonian's History of America in 101 Objects* (New York: Penguin Press, 2016), 357–58; and Lisa Kathleen Graddy, "How women's history and civil rights first came to the Smithsonian," *O Say Can You See? Stories from the Museum* blog, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Aug. 25, 2015, <https://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/womens-history-smithsonian> (accessed Aug. 10, 2021).
 39. Connor, "Not at Home: The Nineteenth-Century New Woman," in Connor, *Off the Pedestal*, 32–33.
 40. Lange, *Picturing Political Power*, 157.
 41. The original design called for a statue of Anthony and Stanton flanking a long scroll with the names and quotations of twenty-two other suffragists, including seven women of color. It provoked controversy for reinscribing the marginalization that black suffragists suffered during the movement. For critiques of the original design, see, among others, Ginia Bellafante, "A Suffrage Monument Fails Black Women," *New York Times*, Jan. 20, 2019, Section MB, 3; and Michelle Duster, "The Women's Suffrage Movement Included More Than Two Women and So Should the Monuments," *Essence*, Jan. 29, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190129194158/https://www.essence.com/news/the-womens-suffrage-movement-included-more-than-two-women-and-so-should-the-monuments> (accessed Aug. 10, 2021).
 42. For a summary of 20th- and 21st-century efforts to monumentalize American women, see Monica L. Mercado, "Putting Women on a Pedestal: Monument Debates in the Era of the Suffrage Centennial," in *Suffrage at 100: Women in American Politics since 1920*, eds. Stacie Taranto and Leandra Zarnow (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2020), 395–414.

EMBROIDERED MEMORIES

THE ARTWORK OF MIRI ABRAMSOHN, A SECOND-GENERATION HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

By Shahar Marnin-Distelfeld

Miri Abramsohn is a Second-Generation Israeli artist whose work is related to the Holocaust. By analyzing four series of her assemblages, and conducting interviews with Abramsohn the artist, along with theoretical literature regarding Holocaust art, Abramsohn's unique artistic expression is revealed. Born in Tirat Carmel in 1950 to Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Israel the previous year, her assemblages reflect her identity and experiences, both in content and style. As the artist herself testifies, "These experiences invade everything I do."¹ Abramsohn represents a phenomenon in the Israeli culture of Second-Generation artists, most of them highly creative but rarely known to the public. Abramsohn has been a visual artist for many years, exhibiting her works only locally and infrequently.² Discussion of her art production significantly contributes to the Israeli cultural discourse on the Holocaust. As Ernst Van-Alphen explains, this art created by the children of survivors could bridge a huge gap in their family history.³

Through a visual analysis combined with interviews with Abramsohn, her art seems related to existing research regarding the creative work of the Second-Generation of Holocaust survivors. This article offers the first introduction to Abramsohn's work. The first part will address some theoretical terms relating to Holocaust studies, which were found suitable for decoding her artwork. The second section will discuss the concept of "Second-Generation" in Israeli art.⁴ The third part will present and analyze Abramsohn's art divided into four series: works based on past photos, such as *Mother and Father – Diary* (2010; Fig. 1), a series of girl images—both the living and the dead ones, a group of tiny papier-mâché statuettes, and a series based on American calendar art featuring women turned into German and Jewish ones.

Dina Wardi, who engaged in longitudinal research of Holocaust survivors and Second-Generation members, explains in her 1990 book *Memorial Candles*: "The knowledge is

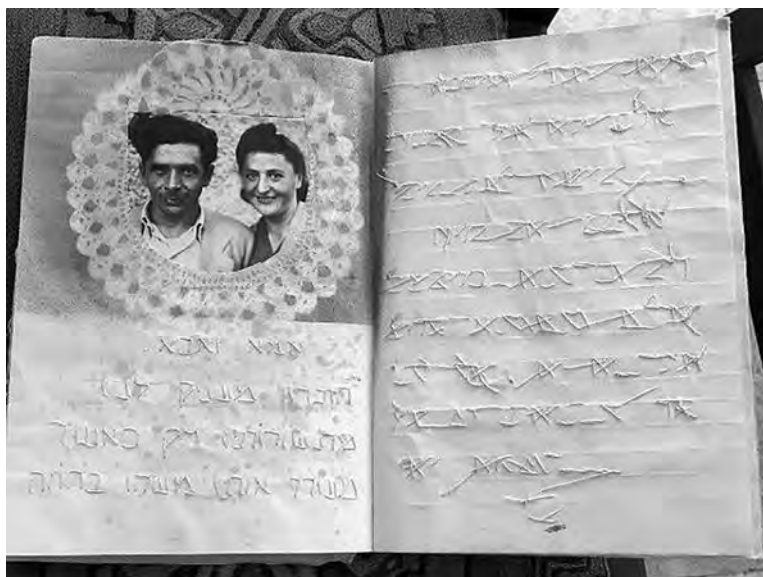


Fig. 1. Miri Abramsohn, *Mother and Father – Diary* (2010), print, photo and embroidery on paper, 6 3/4" x 9 1/2".

always there, in the background, with a constant impulse to engage in 'the Holocaust mystery' so as to decode it. Thus, it emerges from underneath the covering layers, consciously or un-consciously."⁵ In line with Wardi, Abramsohn's work embodies an attempt to adopt the role of a "memorial candle" commemorating her perished family. The Second-Generation as "memorial candles" were designated to serve not only as a lifeline for their parents surviving the war atrocities but also to fill their lives with a new meaning, providing "compensation and substitute for their lost families, communities and previous lives." Wardi further argues that "Many of Second-Generation members ... did not spare their efforts ... trying to bridge the generation gap between dead and living, past and present." Abramsohn's art reveals different facets of these efforts.⁶



Fig. 2. Haim Maor, *Doors of the Box* (1986–87), high-gloss paint on tin doors, velvet, triptych, right: 56 3/4" x 21 5/8", center: 57 1/8" x 29 1/2", left: 56 3/4" x 20 7/8". Collection of the Tel-Aviv Art Museum. Photo: Avraham Hai.

The term "memorial candle" implies a retention of memory by the person who functions as a "candle." Scholars have been dealing with the essence of Holocaust memory both in relation to the survivors and in relation to their children. Marianne Hirsch introduced the term "postmemory," which "describes the relationship of the Second-Generation to powerful, often traumatic experiences that preceded their births but were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right."⁷ In line with this observation, Abramsohn's artwork derives from her inevitable process of constructing a "postmemory" of the Holocaust. Moreover, Abramsohn's interest in old photos and the use of them in her art echoes Hirsch's claim that photographs, more than any other evidence, are the fragmentary remnants shaping the cultural work of postmemory.

Challenging Hirsch's term of "postmemory," Van-Alphen argues that children of Holocaust survivors have no indexical connectedness to the event of the Holocaust, being distanced from it historically.⁸ By definition, they have no "memory" of it, which closely resonates Nadine Fresco's term of "absent memory."⁹ Therefore, he suggests to define this situation as "a

displacement of the connection with the parents."¹⁰ Both the concept of displacement and its artistic forms will be addressed in Abramsohn's art.

In addition to these terms, Van-Alphen's phrase "Playing with the Holocaust" could be another theoretical framework employed to examine Abramsohn's artwork, characterized by a sense of childishness and choice of playful objects.¹¹ By analyzing the pieces, the phrase "playing with the Holocaust" will be addressed to discover how a certain image or object relates to children's realm and to the Holocaust. As Van-Alphen explains, the Holocaust has become a unique, respectable subject to be studied under certain commandments, which caused artists to feel "a bit restless," sometimes violating them in search of new methods of representation to reach authenticity.¹²

Following Van-Alphen, Abramsohn's passion for materials, objects, and handicraft resonates a distant memory of home, childhood, and a mother who herself used to embroider, sew and knit. This passion poses an antithesis to deep sensations of displacement and alienation, contributing to bridging the gap between her parents' history and her own world, allowing her to feel closer to home through a therapeutic process.

The term “Second-Generation” emerged in the 1980s in relation to children of Holocaust survivors born after WWII and raised in Holocaust survivor families.¹³ This term, albeit controversial, is related to the collective consciousness of the generation’s sons and daughters, possessing shared components in their identity.¹⁴ In her book *Memorial Candles*, Wardi presents a therapeutic-psychological aspect addressing the shared characteristics of Holocaust survivors and their families.¹⁵ Wardi also portrays the national-cultural connection of the Israeli society’s attitude towards the Holocaust over the years as a significant factor in the development of the Second-Generation’s identity. This identity has been examined in different aspects of creativity, especially through Hebrew literature, yet also through plastic arts.¹⁶ Art has been playing a central role in the process of enabling diverse approaches to interpretations of the Holocaust as a subjective experience.¹⁷ The term “Second-Generation” seems well-suited as a framework for researching the art of Abramsohn, relying mostly on the typological analysis of art historian Batia Brutin in her book *The Inheritance*.

The late 1970s saw the first Second-Generation artists’ exhibitions by Haim Maor, Rivka Miriam Sharshevski, and Yocheved Weinfeld. During the 1980s Maor was the most prominent artist dealing with the Holocaust in several exhibitions, the most important of which was *The Faces of Race and Memory*, held in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem in 1988 (Fig. 2).¹⁸ However, it was Moshe Gershuni’s groundbreaking art that has become a milestone in the acceptance of art addressing the Holocaust.¹⁹ As Roe Rosen states, Gershuni (himself not a Second-Generation survivor), managed to address the Holocaust without transforming it into a superficial or ideological manipulation.²⁰

At the beginning of the 1990s, the subject of the Holocaust became more noticeable in Israeli art, being aware of Holocaust art outside of the country which largely enriched artistic methodology, such as *Maus* by Art Spiegelman (1991)²¹ or Zbigniew Libera’s *Lego Concentration Camp* (1996). These works contributed to a process Elie Wiesel conceptualized as “general desanctification of the Holocaust.”²²

In 1997, The Museum of Israeli Art, Ramat Gan, hosted three solo exhibitions that directly dealt with the Holocaust,²³ and then showed *Live and Die as Eva Braun* by Roe Rosen, who designed a virtual reality regarding Hitler’s mistress. The exhibition dared to build an installation around the aggressor, rather than the victim,²⁴ and thus raised questions about the manner in which the Holocaust should be imprinted into our collective memory.²⁵ While in the past the inability to deal with the monster led to a ‘repressed’ memory model—expressed through the use of abstract rather than figurative art—newer models could now be seen.²⁶ In 1990 the Holocaust and related concepts were reflected in the art of two Second-Generation artists—Simcha Shirman and Philip Ranzer—exhibited at the Israeli Venezuela Biennale pavilion.

Over the past twenty years, the topic of the Holocaust has continued to present itself in Israeli art, challenging “the very notion of one over-riding truth or ‘story.’”²⁷ It seems that art contributes to making Holocaust commemoration a dynamic

arena ‘committed to exploring new modes of referentiality.’²⁸ In 2002, an exhibition, *Lying Within the Skin: Images of Silence and Absence in the Art of Second-Generation Holocaust Survivors*, presented Second-Generation artists and art as a distinct phenomenon.²⁹ What especially stood out there were the indirect visual strategies addressing the Holocaust through metaphors and de-familiarization.³⁰

At the beginning of the century, a number of solo exhibitions by Second-Generation artists were dedicated to the Holocaust,³¹ while in 2008, two group exhibitions were held parallel in Israel and Hungary: *Layers of Memory* at the House of Artists in Tel Aviv, and *In the Holocaust’s Shadow—Israeli Second-Generation Artists* in Budapest.³² In 2011, Haim Maor presented a comprehensive exhibition, *They Are Me*, where a collection of his artwork exploring his identity in relation to the Holocaust was displayed. In 2014 the group exhibition *Motherhood in the Shadow of the Holocaust* included Second-Generation artists who dealt with their mothers, a topic rarely targeted in the context of Israeli Holocaust art.³³ In 2020 Rachel Nemesh’s solo exhibition *One Flesh* also addressed the relationship between her and her mother, a Holocaust survivor.³⁴ Second-Generation artists who are now in their seventies or eighties continue to create art addressing the Holocaust, being influenced by the contemporary and changing discourse.³⁵ Among them is Miri Abramsohn.

Miri Abramsohn was born to Holocaust survivors who came to Israel in 1949. Her father, Moshe Feldman, was born in Belarus, was married and had two daughters. At the onset of World War II, he was drafted into the Polish army. After Poland’s occupation, he was captured by the German army. While in captivity, he drifted between various camps, finally arriving in Auschwitz, where he worked as a car mechanic. Towards the end of the war he managed to escape from the Death March. At 35, liberated, he reached the displaced persons camp in Landsberg, Germany.

Abramsohn’s mother, Sabina Kozlovski, was born in Przysucha, Poland, to a wealthy family who were landowners and owned a bakery. During the German occupation, the bakery became essential for the Germans. The Kozlovskis were sent to the ghetto. Sabina and her brother managed to escape, hiding safely with a Polish family for two and a half years. At the end of the war Sabina Kozlovski arrived in Landsberg’s camp, where she met Abramsohn’s father. They were married in 1948 after a few years in the camp. The father had no knowledge of what had become of his first wife and daughters, and this uncertainty haunted him for the rest of his life. He and Abramsohn’s mother had two daughters. Abramsohn has always felt that they had been born to replace the daughters that her father had lost. The father, a heavy smoker who suffered from insomnia, used to talk a lot about his past. His meaningful presence in the artist’s life is manifested through his image, which was often featured in her art. The mother, who was seldom portrayed in Abramsohn’s art, is pictured as a strong woman in her daughter’s testimony. The artist’s intense engagement in handicrafts is a heritage passed on to her by her mother. The works are characterized by diverse languages,



Fig. 3. *Father* (2010), oil on canvas, 19 5/8" x 27 1/2".

combining various styles, materials, and techniques with a tendency towards materiality, coloration, needlework, and use of ready-made objects. The works are partly realistic, partly naïve and partly conceptual. Four series of works discussed here characterize Abramsohn's entire creation.

Many of Abramsohn's works are based on old photos. Van-Alphen states that old photos are considered as historically respectable, as an appropriate remembrance of the Holocaust, in line with diaries and documentaries.³⁶ Roland Barthes claims that a photo cannot retrieve the past but confirms that what it shows really existed.³⁷ Hirsch argues that photographs are highly powerful in constructing "postmemory" by those belonging to the Second-Generation.³⁸ Abramsohn has shared her feelings about old photos: "I buy old pictures of unknown people in markets, and hang them on the wall as if they were my relatives." This collection of photos of unfamiliar people constitutes an artificial means for creating family trees which Second-Generation people miss so much. "Our parents' generation who barely escaped the atrocities usually did not have any family photos or objects to relate to. Most of them were left empty handed."³⁹ The old photos serve her as raw material comprising an integral part of the work or a basis for her paintings. They echo the function of "memorial candle"



Fig. 4. Miri Abramsohn, *Father - Diary* (2010), photo, cloth and embroidery on paper, 6 3/4" x 9 1/2".

coined by Wardi, bridging past and present.⁴⁰ Abramsohn's diary is reminiscent of the genre of visual memoirs or graphic novels formulating a postmemory of the Holocaust.⁴¹

The work *Mother and Father – Diary* (Fig. 1) combines old photos with doodles, personal text, and quotations from various sources which are partly embroidered into the diary pages. In the upper part of the page there is a photo showing her parents as young and vital. Around it, an embroidered print resembling a Christian halo provides the composition with a festive and holy atmosphere. Underneath the picture and on the opposite page there is a spontaneous and unrefined embroidery of text in Hebrew.

The father's image seen in the diary served as a basis for a painting portraying him as strong and vigorous, framed by a zigzag pattern characterizing photographs in older times (2010; Fig. 3). In the upper part, winged angels vaguely visible, hovering above his head, represent his two perished daughters.

The other pages of the diary also convey the artist's painful memories, for example, the page dedicated to the father figure alone (2010; Fig. 4). The upper part of the page features an old official passport photo embroidered onto a scrap of thick woolen cloth. Next to the picture, the word "Abba" (Father in Hebrew) is also embroidered in white. Choosing a white

thread resonates with feminist Hélène Cixous's call on women to shape a feminine language writing "in white ink."⁴² The white ink simulates the maternal milk, which according to her, sums up the feminine experience of authentically bonding physical senses with mental ones.

Indeed, in creating this diary, Abramsohn does shape a personal language not complying with conventional cultural dictates. Her white embroidery almost hidden within the pages suggests a cautious inner voice both heard and unheard. This artistic practice embodying restraint and disguise at the same time is typical of Second-Generation art.⁴³ Below this picture an embroidered text can be seen, indicating the artist's perception of her father's cultural position: "Daddy was not accepted to the handsome Israeli guys' club ... but belonged to another club—that of those led as 'lambs to the slaughter.' He was a strong sad and very lonely lamb." These lines focus on major terms in the Israeli cultural discourse of the 1950s in the newly established state of Israel. Brutin emphasizes the fact that Second-Generation artists do not create in a vacuum but rather respond to the Israeli society's attitude towards the Holocaust.⁴⁴ Abramsohn's text draws on the attitude towards the Holocaust built into the Israeli national awareness and the tension created between those led as "lambs to the slaughter" and the "handsome Israeli guys."⁴⁵ Those representing the survivors belonged to partisan and warrior groups who highlighted the active resistance to the Nazis, which they shared. The Holocaust victims and survivors were perceived as those who were led as "lambs to the slaughter" contrary to active fighting considered as quintessential. They were not compatible with the Israeli ethos glorifying the young soldiers who fell while protecting their homeland in the War of Independence in 1948. Abramsohn critically presents this symbolic cultural paradox: although her father had the outer appearance of a young handsome Israeli guy, suitable to this "club," he nevertheless did not belong there, as he was deeply rooted in his traumatic European history.

In a series of *Girl* images, the artist uses her self-portraits as a young girl. The fact that her father had had two daughters who perished and then two daughters in his new marriage was strongly present in the family's life. Her father used to tell them about his lost family, and the artist felt as if she and her sister supplanted their sisters.

Girl in a Blue Dress (2008; Fig. 5, Pl. 15) is based on a black and white photo of the artist as a child, blown up by her and surrounded by bodiless pieces of girls' clothing. On the right hand side, scrabble tiles create the words "PAPER DOLL NO 1" to imply that the images were inspired by a common hobby for girls in these days—playing with paper dolls dressed up in various paper outfits folded onto them. The playing tiles anchor this work in a childhood world. Very often the artist returns to her childhood games as if she herself were "playing with the Holocaust." Van-Alphen, who coined this term, states that after many years in which representing the Holocaust playfully has been a taboo, Second- and Third-Generation artists started relating to it in a playful mode.⁴⁶ This phenomenon has been noticeable since the 1980s, occurring simultaneously in Israel (e.g., Roe Rosen and Ram Katzir),



Fig. 5. Miri Abramsohn, *Girl in a Blue Dress* (2008), oil on canvas and scrabble letter tiles, 27 1/2" x 39 3/8".

Europe (e.g., Alain Sechas and Zbigniew Libera), and in the US (e.g., Tom Sachs).⁴⁷ These artists have been searching for new means of commemorating the Holocaust which do not comply with the "appropriate" ways. Using playful practices in artistic projects, violating cultural prohibitions, enables these artists to formulate broader perspectives in constructing Holocaust remembrance. Van-Alphen explains that playful art has become an effective tool in getting closer to the Holocaust by being active as viewers.⁴⁸

At first glance, *Girl in a Blue Dress* looks colorful and optimistic, but on closer inspection it seems enigmatic: the girl is indeed nicely dressed and smiling; however, she is depicted in an empty space with childish garments of absent girls hovering around. The girl has been uprooted from a familiar space into an imaginary one. The little dresses are displayed in supposedly human positions but they are not meant to cover anyone. The representative pieces of clothing purely reflect sensations of displacement and alienation. These are merely paper dolls, shown as floating in space out of context, belonging to an inner conscious world of the artist. In many Second-Generation artists' work such conditions of detachment and displacement can be seen, bearing no hold on anything concrete, but floating



Fig. 6. Rachel Nemesh, *Pieta* (2017), graphite on paper, 29 1/2" x 39 3/8".

in a vacuum.⁴⁹ Abramsohn presents here a sharp contrast between her own world as a child and that of her perished sisters. She might be attempting to put herself in their place, simulating a girl about to disappear, leaving her dress. This is exactly the playful moment Van-Alphen describes, where imaginary play encounters some aspects of the Holocaust, suggesting the horror of a perished person by means of play.⁵⁰ This identification of Second-Generation members with Holocaust survivors is a well-known phenomenon being manifested in their artistic work.⁵¹

Using childhood memories and images representing a child's world reflects a sense of displacement, which Van-Alphen defines as the attempt of children of survivors to connect to their parents.⁵² It seems that reconstructing a world of childhood enables her to deal more directly with parental trauma, which continues to linger. "This is a blocked and erased childhood which does not allow natural play and laughter," explains Wardi.⁵³ Perhaps that very contrast between what should have been in that world and what it actually was resembles a wound that would not heal, revisited by the artist trying to relive her missed childhood.

In *Father in the Striped Pajamas* (2010; Pl. 16) the artist's portrait as a child appears again in a photo-based image. In the

upper part, the father is portrayed, dressed in striped camp pajamas—a quintessential image often recurring in Second-Generation art.⁵⁴ The pajamas bear the letters AU, first letters of Auschwitz, where the father spent the war years, and also his ordinal number, written in black. Auschwitz-Birkenau survivors all had tattooed numbers on their forearms, which feature largely in Second-Generation artists literary and visual art.⁵⁵ The artist recalls her father sitting at home in the evening trying to peel off his tattooed number using a needle.

In this work we view some floating objects detached from any clear context or space: pictures and a small wall lamp, an old model of an empty baby stroller, slippers, two pairs of girls' pajamas and two men's pajamas—one striped and the other light blue. This composition can be perceived as a domestic space where random objects appear, driving an illusion of a home yet making no sense of a normal life. Second-Generation artists have repeatedly engaged with domestic objects removed from a secure place to sterile spaces, implying up-rootedness and destruction.⁵⁶

Past and present are mixed when the girl's image seems to be intruding on her father's camp reality. The overalls she is wearing are painted gray like her father's pajamas, with her self-portrait as a child conveying hesitance or possibly embarrassment. The artist confesses to an anxiety troubling her from childhood concerning the reappearance of her father's previous family suddenly disrupting his second family's normal course of life. Another way of reading this painting is by considering it, similarly to the previous painting, as an indication of the artist's identification with the victims "over there," which characterizes Second-Generation art.⁵⁷

A third series is based on small papier-mâché statuettes molded by the artist, another activity resembling child's play. Each piece is shaped like a mummy, an object embodying the encounter between life and death. Here again, Van-Alphen's phrase of "playing with the Holocaust" is relevant: the making of numerous statuettes, numerous "dead" anonymous objects, inevitably denotes the Holocaust.⁵⁸

In *Pieta* (2012; Pl. 17), a triptych made on canvas, the central image—a magazine drawing—is that of a mother holding her infant, looking gloomy. It is a black and white drawing framed within a kind of a decorated arch. On both sides, in a symmetrical composition, are two white paper statuettes, with ready-made glassy candy glued to them. The real looking candy's 'wrap' implies angels' wings and along with the halo-looking circles around the statuettes' heads, strongly connote Christian iconography: that of the crucifix scene with the two thieves on both sides and the Madonna and Child and the *Pieta* (as the work's title indicates). An iconography of the dead Christ in his mother's bosom is only implied in *Pieta*. The living infant held by his mother actually predicts his own fate, of being crucified later.

Israeli art addresses the *Pieta* either as expressing a feminine link to war situations or as conveying anti-war criticism.⁵⁹ In Holocaust art, the *Pieta* scene keeps repeating itself, since women artists of the Second-Generation identify with both the mother as a victim and also with the child being sacrificed. Salient examples of such scenes can be found in *Pietas* by Ayana Friedman,⁶⁰ and



Fig. 7. Miri Abramsohn, *Death and Life* (2012), papier mache and oil on canvas, 11" x 7 7/8".

by Rachel Nemesh (2017; Fig. 6).⁶¹ A striking resemblance to Abramsohn's *Pieta* can be found in the work of Second-Generation artist Yocheved Weinfeld's *It's just a Fairy Tale* (1988).⁶²

Abramsohn states that the sweet and kitschy design aesthetics which disguise the heavy emotional load attached to the little mummy statuettes once again refer us to a childish world. The statuettes resonating the ancient practice of embalming become a toy for the artist. By covering the statuettes with candy-like objects, she juxtaposes innocence and play with death and horror. Using the candy-like objects as play, the artist creates beautiful compositions that seem to shield her against a threatening outburst of some inner painful chaos.⁶³

In *Death and Life* (2012; Fig. 7), the statuette resembling an embalmed human body is cut in two, with a large pink stain bonding its two parts. A black gazelle's skeleton, symbolizing death, is drawn over that stain, while on the left a plant symbolizes life. The sharp contrast between the two images emphasizes the banal fact of life and death being able to exist so close to one another. The statuettes' anonymity and generic shape imbue this series with a kind of conceptuality so different from the figurative one presented previously.

In a fourth series, Abramsohn makes collages of torn off pages from an old American calendar promoting Coca-Cola products. (One might think of Boris Lurie or Allen Schechner, who used the Coca-Cola trademark logo to reflect on the

relationship between Holocaust commemoration and commodification; however, Abramsohn said she had no familiarity with these works.) Each page has been manipulated by the artist, who added another layer of paper and painted on it. "I created a series showing how the Holocaust penetrates our cheerful lives." These works, all from 2013, express displacement and estrangement as artistic strategies and also reflect some playful act of making new characters by cutting and pasting prints. All the original scenes are anonymous, featuring American women leisurely drinking Coke while horseback riding, sitting in a café, or attending an outdoor event. Abramsohn's manipulation is manifested through her intervention with those light and beautiful leisure scenes with some of the figures turned into German (Fig. 8) or Jewish women. The young women turned into Jewish ones are portrayed bearing some clear identifying marks from the Holocaust: a yellow badge indicating being Jewish is attached to the woman's yellow blouse (Pl. 18), and the woman with the horse has a tattooed number on her arm (Fig. 9). Abramsohn's representation of the tattooed number on the right arm instead of the left, as was historically done, is intentional—this mixture of fact and fiction, reality and imagination, serves the artist in wishing to engage the Holocaust in an original manner.

This reading is in line with Van-Alphen, who explains how the children of survivors reconstruct their perspectives of the



Fig. 8. Miri Abramsohn, *A Coca Cola Calendar, Woman with a racing program and swastika* (2013), collage and ink on paper, 11 3/4" x 11 3/4".



Fig. 9. Miri Abramsohn, *A Coca Cola Calendar, Woman with a Tattooed Arm* (2013), collage and ink on paper, 11 3/4" x 11 3/4".

Holocaust, based on second-hand memories combined with historical knowledge, while undermining conventional ways of connecting to the Holocaust.⁶⁴ A dissonance between Holocaust emblems and familiar normal life scenes is manifested in every piece of this series. The artist admits to trying to create a parallel existence, an imaginary reality which suggests impossible situations. This mental and visual exercise constitutes estrangement and displacement.

Four concepts—Dina Wardi's "memorial candle," Marianne Hirsch's "postmemory," and Ernst Van-Alphen's "displacement" and "playing with the Holocaust" are found compatible with Abramsohn's art. As a first child born to two Holocaust survivors, it seems that Abramsohn undertook the role of a "memorial candle," dealing with her past artistically for many years. She relies on old family photos, turning them into raw materials for personal expression, thus turning "respectable" evidence of the past into an imaginary memoir. In her visual diary, she addresses these photos of her parents with her own thoughts, embroidered with a strong nostalgic touch. The images blend past and present, an attempt to bridge between the two distant worlds of her parents' and her own. This practice strongly meets Marianne Hirsch's definition of "postmemory."

The girl image—herself, based on her old photos—is dominant in her work, representing a displaced childhood, where figures of young girls seem uprooted, situated in an unclear, detached and alienated space of consciousness. The paper clothes which remain empty and floating in a dystopic space of the painting imply a popular girls' hobby of the 1950s, echoing Van-Alphen's phrase of "playing with the Holocaust." The girl representing the artist also functions as a "memorial candle" for her father's family that perished in the Holocaust. Her dead sisters are represented by the bodiless girls' outfits.

Toy references can be seen in the series of the papier-mâché statuettes of tiny mummy-like pieces. Even Abramsohn's choices of diverse materials and techniques—printed matter, ready-made objects, painting, pasting, embalming, collage, and embroidery—all reflect an intense affection for engaging in handicrafts connected to children's and youthful activities. This artistic approach is also significantly typical of Second-Generation artists. The compositions of this series juxtapose themes of death and life. The statuettes are generic and anonymous, unrealistically reflecting a sense of alienation and estrangement.

The series of calendar figures strongly supports the notion of playfully manipulating images in order to create a parallel existence of disrupted reality. Using collage, the artist modifies the figures' identity, shaping a fake world, challenging Holocaust attributes like the yellow badge, swastika, and tattooed number. She creates fantastic scenes in which a young Jewish woman wearing a yellow badge could be sitting in a café or riding a horse, normal leisure time activities that would have been forbidden to one wearing that badge. This manipulation suggests displaced representations which challenge the racist ideology, thus providing a surprising view of history.

These interpretations of Miri Abramsohn's artworks show that even seventy-five years after the War, the arena of Second-Generation art contributes a crucial understanding of Holocaust heritage and its implications in the Israeli culture. •

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Notes

1. Interview with the artist [Hebrew]. I would like to thank Miri Abramssohn for sharing her life story and her work corpus with me, as well as her knowledge and deep feelings and thoughts. All subsequent quotes or statements from the artist not otherwise identified are from this interview. The interview was conducted in Hebrew, and translations are mine.
2. Abramssohn participated in group exhibitions in Israel: Passing by (*Over Vashav*) – Art from Recycled materials, Niraleh Gallery, Beit Lechem Haglilit (curator: Nurit Volpe, 2012); Tree's Fruit (*Pri Ha'etz*) Niraleh Gallery, Beit Lechem Haglilit (curator: Nurit Volpe, 2013); A Journey (*Masah*), Artists' Gallery Kiryat Tivon (curator: Nurit Volpe, 2015); Second Edition (*Mahadura Shniya*), Artists' Gallery Kiryat Tivon (curators: Miri Chacham Ben Zvi and Rina Buberoglu, 2020); Thread Pullers (*Hamoshot Bachutim*), Teo, Herzeliya Pituach (curator: Hadar Makover Marom, 2021).
3. Ernst Van-Alphen, "Second-Generation Testimony, Transmission of Trauma and Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 27: 2 (Summer 2006), 486.
4. Batya Brutin. *The Inheritance: The Holocaust in the Artworks of Second-Generation Israeli Artists*. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2015). [Hebrew]
5. Dina Wardi, "Identity of a Certain Kind: A Conversation with Psychotherapist Dina Wardi on Identity characteristics of Second-Generation members and how they are reflected in their art," in Anat Gatenio, ed., *Lying Within the Skin, Images of Silence and Absence in the Art of Second-Generation Holocaust Survivors*, Israeli Art Gallery, Memorial Center Kiryat Tivon, 2002. (Hebrew, my translation).
6. Wardi, "Identity of a Certain Kind."
7. Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29 (1), (2008): 103.
8. Van-Alphen, "Second-Generation Testimony," 487.
9. Nadine Fresco, "Remembering the Unknown," *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 11 (1984): 417–28.
10. Van-Alphen, "Second-Generation Testimony," 487.
11. Ernst Van-Alphen, "Playing the Holocaust and Playing with the Holocaust," *'Holocaust'-Fiktion*, https://doi.org/10.30965/9783846755051_011 (accessed June 27, 2021)
12. Ibid., 153.
13. Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 14.
14. Two early scholarly texts paid attention to the generation of the survivor's children: Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversation with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* (New York: Putnam, 1979); Nadine Fresco, "Remembering the Unknown."
15. Dina Wardi, *Memorial Candles* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1990).
16. Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 18.
17. Christine Berberich, "Introduction: The Holocaust in contemporary culture," *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 25 (1-2), (2019): 3-4. DOI: 10.1080/17504902.2018.1472871 (accessed June 25, 2021)
18. Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 19. Yael Guilat, *The 'Lost' Generation: Young Artists in 1980s Israeli Art* (Sde Boker Campus, The Ben-Gurion University of the Negev: The Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, 2019), 202 [Hebrew].
19. During 1979–80, Gershuni displayed two exhibitions dealing in Jewish identity and the Holocaust at the Tel Aviv Museum and at Biennale, Venezuela. See: Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 19.
20. Roe Rosen, "Seen and Unseen Trauma, On Traces of the Holocaust in Moshe Gershuni's Art and Its Place in Israeli Art," *Studio 76* (Oct. 1996): 44–59. [Hebrew]
21. Katalin Orban, "Trauma and Visuality: Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and In the Shadow of No Towers, *Representations* 97 (Winter 2007): 57-89.
22. Elie Wiesel, "Trivializing Memory," *From the Kingdom of Memory: Reminiscences* (New York: Summit Books, 1990), 169.
23. These were: Itamar Newman, 1939-45: A Tribute to Primo Levi; Jacob Gildor, *The Private Hell*; Natan Nuchi, *Digital Sketches*.
24. Gendron, "It's the Real Thing: The Limits of Realism in Holocaust Visual Art, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 13 (4) (2009): 415; Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 23.
25. When the exhibition was held again in 2016 it was received with indifference. See: Dana Gillerman, "Holocaust Representation in Art has transformed radically over the last decades: *Live and Die as Eva Braun* as a Case Study." Two exhibitions expanding the views over the aggressor: David Wakstein *Explosion* and Boaz Arad's *VoozVooz*. See: Aviva Lori, "It was an explosion," *Haaretz*, Sept. 12, 2003. [Hebrew]
26. For example, Dina Shenhav's 2002 exhibition at the Helena Rubinstein gallery that included images of Nazi officers made of beads, Yoav Ben-David's 2004 exhibition that included Alice in Wonderland with SS soldiers, and Dov Or-Ner who sketched sexual scenes of Hitler. See: Sperber, "How has dealing in the Holocaust become provocative?" <http://maarav.org.il/archive/?p=1314>, 2009. [Hebrew] (accessed July 10, 2021)
27. Berberich, "Introduction," 5.
28. Ibid.
29. Gatenio, *Lying Within the Skin*, 20.
30. Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 25.
31. These solo exhibitions included: Haim Maor's *Marked 1975-2002* that dealt in marking people as victims of assault. See Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 26; Anat Massad's *Please Attend Dressed in White Shirts* in 2003, that dealt in the Zionist ethos and the Holocaust, and Ayana Friedman's *Chic Paris* in 2004 that dealt in identifying with the Holocaust survivors from a social-cultural aspect.
32. Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 26.
33. Mor Presiado, *Motherhood in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (exh. cat.), Bar-Ilan Univ., 2014 [Hebrew].
34. Shahar Marnin-Distelfeld, "'In the liveliest place, my mother's bosom, there was death' – mother-daughter relationships in the work of Rachel Nemesh, Second-Generation Holocaust survivor," *Holocaust Studies* (2021): 12. DOI: 10.1080/17504902.2021.1882770 (accessed June 25, 2021).
35. To read about the typology of Holocaust art in Israel: Katz-Freiman, "Don't Touch My Holocaust" – Analyzing the Barometer of Responses: Israeli Artists Challenge the Holocaust Taboo," in *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art after the Holocaust*, ed. Shelley Hornstein, Laura Levitt and Laurence J. Silberstein (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2003), 129–54. See also: Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 30–31.
36. Van-Alphen, "Playing the Holocaust," 151.
37. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).
38. Hirsch, "The Generation," 115.
39. Wardi, "A Certain Kind of Identity."
40. Ibid.
41. Hirsch, "The Generation," 104–05.
42. Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976): 875–93. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173239> (accessed June 25, 2021). See also Mor Presiado, "'These Threads Capture Shadows' Sewing and Embroidery in Holocaust Art of Contemporary Jewish Women Artists," *Ars Judaica* (2012): 100.

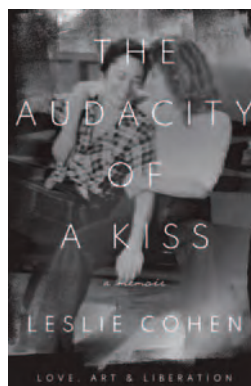
43. Gatenio, *Lying Within the Skin*.
44. Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 10.
45. Ibid. 11; Steir-Livni, *Let the Memorial Hill Remember* (Tel-Aviv: Resling, 2014), 18.
46. Van-Alphen, "Playing the Holocaust," 152.
47. For an elaborated reading on the use of children's clothes in Holocaust art, see: Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 144–46.
48. Van-Alphen, "Playing the Holocaust," 154.
49. Gatenio, *Lying Within the Skin*.
50. Van-Alphen "Playing the Holocaust," 155.
51. Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 177–78; Marnin-Distelfeld, "'In the liveliest place,'" 12.
52. Van-Alphen, "Second-Generation Testimony," 487.
53. Wardi, "A Certain Kind of Identity."
54. Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 122–34.
55. Ibid., 85–86; Marnin-Distelfeld, "'In the liveliest place,'" 13.
56. Examples can be found in the art of Shosh Kormosh and Deborah Morag. See: Gatenio, *Lying Within the Skin*.
57. Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 209. In this context I must mention Mira Hermoni-Levine and Zehava Meser, see Ibid., Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 180–85, 210–11.
58. This series resembles Michel Nedjar's schmattes-dolls (a Second-Generation artist). See: Allen S. Weiss, "Desublimation and Morbidity," *The Drama Review* 43 (1) (1999): 14551.
59. Tal Dekel, "In Kathe Kollwitz Shoes? Gender Aspects in Ruth Schloss' Art," *Bezael: Journal of Visual and Material Culture* (2009). <http://journal.bezael.ac.il/he/protocol/article/3050> [Hebrew]
60. Presiado, *Motherhood in the Shadow*, 18-19.
61. On the Pieta in Holocaust art, see: Marnin-Distelfeld, "'In the Liveliest Place,'" 13-15.
62. Brutin, *The Inheritance*, 200.
63. The practice of embalming is known from Ish Gabai's art. See Gatenio, *Lying Within the Skin*.
64. Van-Alphen, "Playing the Holocaust," 153.



APPARITION OF SPLENDOR
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Elizabeth Gregory
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KING OF HEARTS
Drag Kings in the American South
Baker A. Rogers



"I remember Sahara as a spring in the desert of the time!"

—Gloria Steinem

Cohen and her partner were models for George Segal's iconic sculpture "Gay Liberation." In this evocative memoir, she tells the story of a love that has lasted for over fifty years and recounts her quest to build gay and feminist oases in New York, including the groundbreaking women's nightclub Sahara.

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THE AUDACITY OF A KISS
Love, Art, and Liberation
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Visual Arts of Douglass College
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Striptease as Transformation
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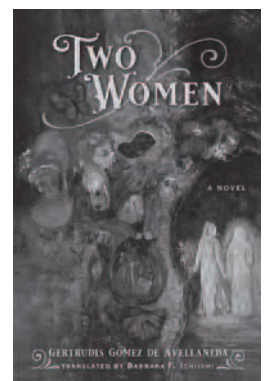
"Once banned as immoral, *Two Women* reads like a forerunner of the psychological novel, full of eros, thanatos, and other deep impulses both dark and light. It's a love story, a tragedy, and a philosophical thriller that bears the reader along on its verbal and conceptual flights as participant in its many raptures and heartaches, its ethical struggles between desire and obligations. The translator, Barbara Ichiishi, makes it all come alive."

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—Adriana Méndez Rodenas, author of *Transatlantic Travels in Nineteenth Century Latin America*

TWO WOMEN
A Novel
Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda
Translated by Barbara F. Ichiishi
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Artemisia

By Letizia Treves, with contributions by Sheila Barker, Patrizia Cavazzini, Elizabeth Cropper, Larry Keith, Francesco Solinas, and Francesca Whitlum-Cooper. The National Gallery, London, and Yale University Press, 2020

Reviewed by Ann Sutherland Harris

The opening page of the catalogue of the exhibition at the National Gallery of London devoted to Artemisia Gentileschi is almost blank except for her first name in large capital letters printed in gold across the middle. It faces a full-page close-up of Artemisia looking at us. Letizia Treves, the curator of the exhibition, wants us to know Artemisia not only as an outstanding painter of biblical and allegorical subjects but also as a strong woman who faced many obstacles during her long career.¹ Most of her twenty-nine works in the exhibition are well known and usually accepted as autograph. Treves also included two works by her father, Orazio Gentileschi, an excellent painter and her teacher, as well as the portrait of Artemisia that the French painter Simon Vouet made in Rome around 1625 but was only identified recently. Previously scholars depended on a small print by Jérôme David, based on a lost self-portrait of hers, when trying to decide if the women she depicted were based on her own features or not, and thus in some sense self-portraits.²

The National Gallery acquired an early painting by Artemisia of *Saint Catherine of Alexandria* in 2018. It was an expensive purchase for an artist little known in Britain. After some conservation that could be followed online, it was sent on a tour around England but not to museums; it was displayed in a classroom at a Catholic school, a doctor's office and even a woman's prison, decisions that many thought unwise even if for admirable motives. Meanwhile Treves began planning the first exhibition devoted to Artemisia in the United Kingdom; she has already been honored in Florence, Milan, Paris, Rome, New York, and St.

Louis. It was to open on April 4, 2020 and close on July 26, 2020.

The arrival of Covid-19 in late 2019 did not halt these plans. The organizers realized that the exhibition might not be seen by anyone, or at best by far fewer people than would normally attend such a well-publicized show about such an appealing subject at the National Gallery. The catalogue seems planned to serve that missing audience by providing full-page color images of the exhibited works and full-page details as well. Browsing through the catalogue can feel like standing so close to a painting that the guards will ask you to step back.³ Treves and the catalogue's designer, Robert Dalrymple, planned the layout with meticulous care. For example, among the artist's most frequently discussed pictures are two close-up views of *Judith beheading Holofernes*. They are on facing pages, making comparison easy: her probable source—Caravaggio's equally graphic but less plausible depiction of a woman beheading a large man without any assistance is on the previous page. It is also a smaller image cut in half by the binding as if to dismiss its significance.

All earlier exhibitions of Artemisia Gentileschi's paintings, starting with *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, included the work of other artists.⁴ That Artemisia's six paintings in that show stood out among many others by gifted women painters working in Europe in the seventeenth century, especially those by Elisabetta Sirani (1638-1665), Giovanna Garzoni (1600-1670), and Rachel Ruysch (1664-1750), testifies to the power of her dramatic images next to the restrained elegance of Sirani, the superb descriptions of fruit and vegetables by Garzoni, and sumptuous flower arrangements by Ruysch. While promoted extensively by the National Gallery as the most celebrated European woman artist of the seventeenth century, Artemisia was in many ways less celebrated and less successful in her lifetime than these three women artists, who had customers waiting for every finished work. Judging from the surviving letters she sent to potential patrons throughout her life, Artemisia had to campaign for every

commission. She traveled from Rome, where she was born, to Florence (c. 1613–20), then back to Rome (1620–26/27), then briefly to Venice (c. 1627–29), before settling, if not happily, in Naples by 1630, where she remained until her death. She left Naples in 1638 for a trip to London, where her father and three brothers had been working for the Duke of Buckingham and King Charles for a decade.⁵ All these difficult journeys made after she left Rome in 1626/27 were motivated by her search for better opportunities beyond single works for private patrons, however distinguished, and ideally a position as a court painter with a steady income. She had no public commissions until she went to Naples in 1630.⁶ By comparison, Sirani never left Bologna, Ruysch spent most of her life in Amsterdam, and Garzoni, who trained in Venice and Rome, settled in Florence, and worked mainly for the Medici, apart from three years in Turin working for the Dukes of Savoy.⁷

Lavinia Fontana (1552–1614), a Bolognese artist who, like Artemisia, was trained by her father, was best known for her portraits, but she also painted several fine altarpieces and paintings of biblical and mythological subjects. Her reputation and connections brought her an invitation to Rome in 1600. She sent an altarpiece to Rome of the *Vision of Saint Hyacinth* in 1599 that is still in the church of Santa Sabina and painted a large altarpiece of the *Stoning of Saint Stephen* for the basilica of San Paolo fuori le Mura in 1604.⁸ A pioneer among Italian women artists for her ability to work on a large scale as well as that of easel paintings, Lavinia's presence in Rome during the ten years when Artemisia was training and painting her first independent works was certainly known to both Orazio and Artemisia. Elizabeth Cropper and Francesco Solinas mention Lavinia in their catalogue essays, the latter stressing her superior education and ease with important patrons as something Artemisia would emulate, but not her repertoire beyond portraits (12, 48–49). Lavinia made two paintings of Judith after she has beheaded Holofernes, one



Fig. 1. Artemisia Gentileschi, *Susannah and the Elders* (1610), oil on canvas, 67" x 47 5/8". Kunstsammlungen Graf von Schönborn, Pommersfelden.

of which is dated 1605, as well as small private works that featured female nudes.⁹ If Artemisia met her and saw some of her paintings, especially those nudes, she may well have thought she could do better. By 1610, when she signed and dated her brilliant first treatment of the story of *Susannah and the Elders* (cat. 2; Fig. 1), she proved it.

Fontana's importance as a role model was essential to Artemisia: here was a woman painter who succeeded in the male-dominated world of altarpieces in both Bologna and Rome. She may also

have recalled in later years the value of Lavinia's husband, who took care of all their financial matters, when her own marriage produced nothing during her years in Florence beyond five pregnancies, the dissipation of her dowry, and no useful help in the studio then or later. When Elisabetta Sirani died unexpectedly at the age of twenty-seven, Bologna reacted by creating a splendid catafalque in San Domenico, publishing a book of poems that celebrated her achievements and perfect character, and buried her in San

Domenico next to the tomb of Guido Reni, then the city's most celebrated artist. Artemisia almost certainly died in the outbreak of the plague in Naples in 1656–58 that decimated half the city's population. There is no memorial to her in any Neapolitan church today, although a floor slab inscribed HEIC ARTIMISIA in San Giovanni dei Fiorentini is recorded in a nineteenth-century publication. During the plague nothing else would have been possible.¹⁰

This catalogue is dedicated to R. Ward Bissell, who died in 2019, just as plans to celebrate the National Gallery's acquisition of its Artemisia painting with an exhibition began to take shape. His monographs on Orazio (1981) and Artemisia (1999) Gentileschi with catalogues of their paintings launched serious research on both artists.¹¹ That for Artemisia's paintings has fifty-three entries for accepted works with another forty-two "incorrect and questionable attributions."¹² He also lists 108 documented works by her that cannot be traced today. Thus, roughly a third of her documented production has survived, a much lower percentage than is the case for Sirani, Garzoni, and Ruysch.¹³ Evidently, her reputation after her death was not sufficient to preserve much of her work, even paintings owned by important collectors in major cities.¹⁴

Keith Christiansen, who with Judith Mann curated the exhibition devoted to Orazio and Artemisia in 2001, first characterized Artemisia as a "chameleon" who adopted different styles for each city she visited, making it hard to determine whether she or someone else painted a debated work.¹⁵ Many ambitious seventeenth-century artists left home in northern Europe to study in Venice, Bologna, Florence, and Rome, and made works that reveal what impressed them in each place, but not to the degree that their own artistic personality disappears. If this is true of Artemisia after she left Rome in 1612/13, it suggests either a lack of confidence in her abilities to compete with other artists in each city that she visited or that the work is not by her. Certainly, an artist who needed a separate section

for works attributed to her that is almost as large as that for accepted works, as Bissell decided Artemisia did, is a rarity.

Letizia Treves is aware of the many seventeenth-century Italian paintings now being presented by dealers or in exhibitions as by Artemisia that are probably not by her. By limiting the loans to twenty-nine paintings that span her career from 1620 to 1652, Treves presented a group of paintings whose attributions to Artemisia are accepted by most authorities. Her essays summarize what earlier scholars have said but also add new information, often from x-rays, that reveal *pentimenti*—that useful Italian word for changes in the composition hidden by the final paint layer. Nevertheless some of the exhibited works need more critical attention.

One work that has been in several exhibitions and has been debated at length, especially by Mary D. Garrard, is the Burghley House Collection's *Susannah and the Elders* (cat. 22). No other generally accepted work shows evidence of such a tortured process in its creation.¹⁶ This alone arouses suspicion, as does the elaborate signature and the date 1622 in Roman numerals. R. Ward Bissell devoted a long entry to his catalogue of disputed works to explain why he did not accept it. The longer I spent looking at the other works in the catalogue that are by her, the less the Burghley House *Susannah and the Elders* looked at home in their company. The influence of Guercino goes beyond the setting, but it cannot be attributed to him either. The only part of the Burghley House painting that looked like Artemisia was Susannah's body. Even her face looks overworked by whoever did it, along with the elders' shiny outfits, an effect not seen in any other accepted work and not typical of Guercino either. Then I spotted the color images of the upper bodies of Artemisia's *Susannah* of 1610 and the *Susannah* in the Burghley House painting of 1622 [sic] juxtaposed in Larry Keith's essay, *Looking at Artemisia*.¹⁷ The difference in the painting technique between them is so clear that I can no longer accept the latter as by Artemisia. Even more significant, the position of the exposed

breast in the Burghley picture is wrong: she is leaning over to the right but the nipple is displaced to her left. Apparently, her reputation was such that it was worth creating an Artemisia for the English art market in the eighteenth or nineteenth century.¹⁸

Another problematic work is *Jael and Sisera* (cat. 20). What we see now is restoration repaint over a work that was almost irretrievably damaged when acquired by the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts in 1975. The entry by Francesca Whitlum-Cooper allows that most comments on this work lack enthusiasm. While its association with the imperial collection in Vienna since 1781 was seen as hopeful by some scholars because of a mark used by its curators on the eighteenth-century frame that contained it when acquired, Bissell is cautious as no such work by her is recorded in their inventories, although there was one of this rare subject and approximate size not attributed to anyone.¹⁹ After describing in detail its poor condition, except for the inscription, Bissell writes, "that, were the picture to be judged merely on the basis of its presented quality, this conclusion (that it is by Artemisia) could not be reached." And near the end of his lengthy entry, he states: "Physical deterioration cannot account, however, for the passionless, stilted, and derivative nature of this painting."²⁰ Sisera is depicted with a right arm and shoulder that leaves no room for the rest of his torso above his waist. Jael's yellow dress has far fewer folds than are usual in Artemisia's work, and especially for a skirt that covers the floor around her; and the restorer must have invented the strange fold patterns for his pants. Surely it is time to remove this mediocre painting from Artemisia's catalogue. Some clever detective work might explain how an unidentified painting was remade with this bold inscription shortly after the end of World War II (and the 1947 publication of Anna Banti's book about Artemisia.²¹) It is noteworthy that the inscription and its setting hardly needed conservation. Above all, what is such a big inscription with Artemisia's name doing dominating the painting from the center background, and in faulty Latin?²²

Artemisia's first signed and dated painting—the *Susannah and the Elders* of 1610—conceals a much shorter inscription in the shadows on the lower left. Her abbreviated autograph in gold on the frame of the chair of her *Penitent Magdalene* (Palazzo Pitti) is her second signed work, and is also discreet compared with the arrangement behind *Jael and Sisera*. She put the inscription on the *Judith beheading Holofernes* (cat. 6) on the lower right edge of the painting: EGO ARTEMITIA/LOMI FEC. Finally, the artist's name and the date of the portrait of an unknown *gonfaloniere* (standard-bearer) (cat. 14) were written on the back and are now covered after relining.²³ It seems improbable that she created this billboard publicity for the *Jael and Sisera* of a kind not found, I believe, in any seventeenth-century European painting?²⁴

Artemisia was in Venice between 1626 and 1630, but no surviving works can be linked to her time there except her splendid interpretation of Esther fainting in the presence of Ahasuerus (cat. 25). Its horizontal composition cleverly adapts a painting by Paolo Veronese that she must have seen when she was there.²⁵ She eliminated most of the spectators and simplified the setting to focus on the two main characters. The dramatic encounter between Esther—sumptuously dressed in golden yellow silk—and Ahasuerus, also expensively dressed in puffed up sleeves and pantaloons of black and white silk, are the only actors on this stage except for two women barely visible behind Esther who support her. A page and a dog in the center found during conservation were painted out to enhance the dramatic effect of the empty space in the center of the painting. While most scholars have admired this decision, Judith Mann commented, after a long and careful description of the two protagonists' clothes, that "the painting lacks real compositional vigor; the beauty of its parts overwhelms the whole."²⁶ I agree.

Artemisia might have agreed because the composition of her next horizontal painting in the show—*The Birth of Saint John the Baptist* (cat. 29)—cannot be faulted. The group of women caring for the baby fills two thirds of the center and



Fig. 2. Artemisia Gentileschi, *Self Portrait as the Allegory of Painting (La Pittura)* (ca.1638–39), oil on canvas, 38 7/8" x 29 5/8". The Royal Collection / HM Queen Elizabeth II.

right foreground. All of them are sensitively lit but only the head and hands of Zacharias on the far left, busy writing down his son's name, are visible. The exhausted mother and a companion behind Zacharias are barely visible in the dark left corner.²⁷ The women are grouped so informally around the baby that it seems an ordinary birth in a humble Neapolitan home rather than a sacred event—all nicely described by Francesca Whitlum-Cooper (204–06). It served with the even larger vertical painting of *Saint Januarius in the Amphitheater at Pozzuoli* (cat. 30, with a fine full-page plate) to show us what Artemisia achieved in Naples. She held

her own among the many outstanding Neapolitan painters and collaborated with some who did the architectural backgrounds and landscape settings for her figures (see cat. 30 and 33).

The last painting in the exhibition is another *Susannah and the Elders* made in 1652 (cat. 36). Treves allows here for some collaboration with Onofrio Palumbo, who is documented working with her in Naples (222). The presentation is very proper—only a glimpse of part of her right breast is visible. A thin white drapery that leaves her right arm and long right leg visible covers the rest of her body. She raises her left arm with her palm facing the men who tell her to

keep quiet, while the shadow along the inner side of her right arm almost reaches the top of her shoulder. Palumbo and Artemisia are both better artists than this! The figures fail to generate any believable psychological tension, something that is present in all her best paintings. Without the barely legible signature, I wonder if this picture would have been attributed to her?

Most of the essays that precede the catalogue entries are by scholars familiar to all who follow Artemisia, but such is the pace of research into her life that all contain fresh material while giving new audiences the information they need. I strongly recommend reading all of them.

Sheila Barker's contribution, "The muse of history: Artemisia Gentileschi's first four centuries of immortal fame," charts the written records of her life from her court records of her rape, to the evidence of her limited education, the earliest biographies (usually brief) and all other records of her travels, her patrons, and her reputation first as a follower of Guido Reni, then of Caravaggio, and finally neglect until her name and achievements were reintroduced to the Italian public in 1916 by Roberto Longhi. Barker also discusses the critical issue of attribution, with emphasis on Mary Garrard's views about Artemisia's work affected by the "deep-seated masculinist biases regarding a woman's artistic capacity" (87).

Her helpful survey concludes with some excellent suggestions for future research in the many archives, "especially those of Venice and southern Italy." She writes, "The final chapter on Artemisia's fame is happily nowhere in sight" (87).

Elizabeth Cropper provides an excellent account of Artemisia's life that uses the discovery by Francesco Solinas of some thirty-six letters written by her or her husband towards the end of her Florentine years (1612–1620). They prove she had learnt to write, if not always with correct spelling, and provide vivid details of her affair with a wealthy admirer who was tolerated by her husband, a man whom she was forced to marry before she left Rome for Florence in 1612/13. Cropper also includes a portrait drawing by Ottavio

Leoni of Artemisia's mother, Prudentia di Montone. She was a beautiful woman who for this portrait chose a fancy hairdo, a pearl necklace, and a soft scarf-like collar.²⁸ She had five children in quick succession before dying in childbirth. Artemisia, then only twelve, was her oldest child and only daughter. She was left with the task of raising her three younger brothers, a situation that as Cropper stresses would seem unlikely to allow her to develop any talent for painting (12). Cropper then underscores the tragic death of Artemisia's own children: "These personal sufferings are important to our story because they have a bearing on [her] exceptionality as an artist, and are not merely about her statistical normality" (14).

Patrizia Cavazzini begins her essay about Orazio and Artemisia with this vivid description of Artemisia's father: "a loner, temperamental, sarcastic, lascivious, brutal"—all from contemporary sources about his character—that seems improbable to anyone familiar with his superbly disciplined paintings (32). It is no surprise that he and Artemisia were rarely in touch after she left Rome for Florence in 1612. Cavazzini offers a detailed account not only of Artemisia's first years of training but also of the artists' scene generally in Rome. Joining a male master's studio and drawing nude male models was training not available to Artemisia, who could not leave the house without a chaperone (32).

In his essay, "'Bella pulita, e senza macchia': Artemisia and her letters," Francesco Solinas, who discovered the cache of letters written by Artemisia and her husband during her impromptu departure from Florence to Rome in 1620, after her possessions had been confiscated until she could pay her debts, provides a detailed account of these and her other letters, some of which were published as early as 1882. Nineteen of the sixty-four letters now known from original documents or printed records were written by Artemisia herself; the others were dictated to professional scribes but signed by her, as she herself explained to one patron. The letters she wrote in Rome are autograph and document her



Fig. 3. Artemisia Gentileschi, *Lucretia* (ca. 1620–25), oil on canvas, 39 3/8" x 30 3/8". Etro Collection.

progress from barely literate—as she declared during that infamous trial after her rape—to writing letters whose spelling quickly went from phonetic to correct. She did not find the process easy, however, and all of her later known letters are dictated to professional scribes.²⁹ The vivid language of these autograph letters has attracted much comment, especially those to Francesco Maria Maringhi, a wealthy young man she met through mutual friends in Florence who became her lover, an affair tolerated by her husband. Maringhi took care of her debts and even visited her in Rome but eventually disappears from her life, as did her husband in 1622.

The informal character of her own letters creates the brief illusion that we can hear her own voice: their informality and bold assurance of her desires lack the formal self-deprecating language of official letters dictated by

her later or by better educated women artists such as Lavinia Fontana. Solinas also notes that earlier editors of her letters "heavily corrected" some of them, and maybe those by other artists too (61).³⁰ He also mentions his approval of some recent works attributed to her on the art market as proof of the extraordinary degree of interest in her career and work.

Letizia Treves provides many eloquent discussions of the paintings in the exhibition, and in an essay titled "Artemisia portraying her self" considers the degree to which she used her own features for two pictures of Saint Catherine, another of a female martyr, one of a woman playing a lute, and her *Self Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (*La Pittura*) (Fig. 2), all in the exhibition.³¹ Treves concedes that "there is a temptation to see her features in almost every female figure she painted." Yet, she submits that "any discussion



Fig. 4. Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith and her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes* (1623–25), oil on canvas, 72 1/2" x 55 3/4". Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of Mr. Leslie H. Green.

about Artemisia's portrayal of herself in her paintings needs to distinguish between self-portraiture, in the sense of a literal recording of features, and self-representation, where a resemblance is clear but the artist takes on different guises. It is important to remember that the term 'self-portrait' was not yet in use in Artemisia's day: her known self-portraits are invariably described in contemporary sources as portraits of Artemisia "by her own hand" (64). The long list of her possessions left in Florence after she made a hurried trip to Prato and then to Rome in 1620, leaving behind unfinished works and debts, does not include a mirror. Without one it would have been impossible for her to

study her own features in a variety of positions. However, since she appears in a virtually identical position in all these works except the *Allegory of Painting* (*La Pittura*), believed by most scholars to have been painted much later, and since her features resemble her appearance in Vouet's portrait of her made in 1625, she must have had either a small painting or a portrait drawing of herself made by another artist—her father perhaps—or a drawing she made of herself when she had access to a mirror.³² When she made her *Self Portrait* (cat. fig. 32), she certainly had one. She looks older and has that steady gaze that sees the viewer as she would if painting the viewer's portrait.³³

Even in this thoroughly researched publication, Artemisia's hypothetical use of her own features and her own body for works that depict nude or partially disrobed women, such as her *Cleopatra* (cat. 3) are still proposed. Mirrors were luxury objects in sixteenth-century Italy and elsewhere, and usually no larger than 12" x 12", but some writers seem to believe that she had one or even two to use herself as a model for her *Allegory of Painting* (*La Pittura*).³⁴ Moreover, there were no full-length mirrors available until the twentieth century.³⁵ She must have used models, and the carefully observed accuracy of her female subjects testifies to this practice. Her depictions show breasts responding to gravity if the subject is leaning, and soft enough to be squeezed by the edge of a garment or a hand. Hers also have nipples with an aureole around them. This is not seen in her father's pictures of reclining women, whether *Cleopatra* or the *Magdalene*. In his painting of the Virgin feeding the infant Jesus of 1609 (Bucharest *Madonna and Child*), her breast almost touches her shoulder blade—an impossible location.³⁶ In his catalogue essay "Looking at Artemisia," Larry Keith speculates that Artemisia used her own face when painting *Allegory of Inclination* (1615–16), and also declares that the body of *Inclination* "has its basis in her skillful recording of a live, posed model; in this case, herself" (94).³⁷ This is quite simply impossible. She had a young woman pose for her.

Artemisia's *Lucretia* (cat. 21; Fig. 3) has mystified many because she is holding the dagger in her left hand while squeezing her breast with her right hand. Keith Christiansen, who is quoted by Treves, suggested that Artemisia "may have posed for the figure of *Lucretia* [because] "... the dagger is held (unusually) in the left hand ... [which] might indicate 'a mirror-image reversal'" (170). No sixteenth-century mirrors would have made this possible. The answer is simple—she is feeling for the heartbeat under her breast and ribs to make sure that she stabs herself in the right spot.

If Artemisia Gentileschi is going to be regarded as a major painter in a century when male artists dominated this

profession, the attributions to her should not include anything for which apologies are necessary. They should display her formidable ability to record gestures, expressions, and poses that resonate today as they did to her audiences five centuries ago. They should catch a significant moment in the lives of the characters depicted and use every inch of the painting to achieve this result. Not all of her works in the show manage this challenge. Everyone agrees that *Judith and her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes* (Detroit Institute of Art) (cat. 23; Fig. 4) demonstrates this ability in full, and her slightly earlier adaptation of her father's painting of the same subject in Palazzo Pitti (cat. 28) does this too, even though the figures are not full length.³⁸

While her best works in this exhibition demonstrate her formidable gifts from 1610 to about 1640, a few disappoint. The notion of her as a chameleon able to change her style to keep her clients happy needs to be dropped. A new catalogue of her work might have fewer items attributed to her than Ward Bissell's of 1999 because much has happened since then: we now know far more about her and her contemporaries. Perhaps a group of scholars could collaborate—as they did for Rembrandt—and produce a reliable catalogue of her work.³⁹ It would need entries for excluded works, as Bissell's did. With all the most problematic attributions eliminated, we can better judge how great she was. •

Ann Sutherland Harris, Professor Emerita, University of Pittsburgh, has specialized in European paintings and drawings of the seventeenth century with emphasis on artists working in Rome and Bologna. She collects twentieth century works on paper by women artists.

Notes

1. Born in Rome in 1593, she died in Naples after 1654 (see note 10).
2. Catalogue entries 16–19 (158–65) discuss Vouet's portrait, a rare medal representing her, the beautiful drawing of her hand by Pierre Dumonstier II with its inscription documenting their meeting, and Jérôme David's engraving after the lost self-portrait.
3. The organizers' goals were supported by

the generosity of several foundations that made many large color images possible.

4. The six works by Artemisia Gentileschi in *Women Artists: 1550–1950*, which traveled between Dec. 21, 1976 and Nov. 27, 1977, to Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the University of Texas at Austin; the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; and The Brooklyn Museum, NY, are all in this exhibition. For the catalogue, see Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550–1950* (New York: Knopf, 1977). I chose and wrote about most of the works made in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries; Linda Nochlin was responsible for the works made in the 19th and early-20th centuries.
5. Her father died there in 1639. Her role in the decoration of the Queen's House in Greenwich is hard to determine due to poor preservation of the ceiling's canvases in the past and extensive restoration.
6. She probably never expected to get major fresco commissions that required a team of assistants. These were far more prestigious than a single altarpiece, or even the decoration of a chapel.
7. Garzoni was the subject of a splendid recent exhibition in Florence: "*La Grandezza dell'Universo*" nell'arte di Giovanna Garzoni ("*Immensity of the Universe*" in the art of Giovanna Garzoni), curated by Sheila Barker, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Palazzo Pitti, March 10–May 24, 2020.
8. The *Stoning of Saint Stephen* was destroyed in a fire in July 1823 that gutted the basilica, along with many other altarpieces.
9. For this aspect of Lavinia Fontana's work, see the exhibition catalogue *A Tale of Two Women Painters: Sofonisba Anguissola and Lavinia Fontana* (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2019), cats. 56, 57, 59, 60 and 61. Several of these works are recent discoveries. The curator was Leticia Ruiz Gómez; entries for these works are by several scholars. Despite her limited opportunities to paint, Sofonisba Anguissola came out looking like the better artist when her works were set beside those of Lavinia Fontana.
10. For sources and details, see R. Ward Bissell, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Authority of Art: Critical Reading and Catalogue Raisonné* (University Park: Penn State Univ. Press, 1999), 101. The church was destroyed after WW II. Surviving parish records of deaths do not mention Artemisia.
11. Ibid., and R. Ward Bissell, *Orazio Gentileschi and the Poetic Tradition of Caravaggesque Painting* (University Park: Penn State Univ. Press, 1981). Mary D. Garrard's important study of a selection of her work: *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (Princeton, NJ:

Princeton Univ. Press, 1989), did not pretend to be a complete catalogue of her work.

12. Documents proving that Artemisia's two paintings in the Spada Gallery were made by 1637 were overlooked by Bissell, who attributed them to other artists, as many other scholars did in the past. See Keith Christiansen and Judith W. Mann, *Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press and Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 299–300. Thus the total for accepted works is 54 and that of less certain works should be lowered to 41.
13. This is also a much lower percentage of known and accepted works than we have for Annibale and Ludovico Carracci, Caravaggio, Guercino, Guido Reni, Pietro da Cortona, Pier Francesco Mola and Carlo Maratta, to list only eight of best known Italian male seicento painters.
14. The term "documented" does not guarantee that the work mentioned in 17th century or later sources was by her, but their existence nevertheless provides some record of her output and reputation.
15. See Judith W. Mann's essay, "The Myth of Artemisia as Chameleon: A New Look at the London *Allegory of Painting*," in *Artemisia Gentileschi: Taking Stock*, ed. Judith W. Mann (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2005), 51–77.
16. See Mary D. Garrard's *Artemisia Gentileschi around 1622: The Shaping and Reshaping of an Artistic Identity* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2001), 77–113.
17. See p. 102. The extended right arm of the Burghley Susannah is also too long.
18. R. Ward Bissell's long discussion of the painting's origins, its records—or not—in The Burghley House family archives and the absence of any clear link to a painting of this subject by her in any Roman family archives in the 1620s support his conclusion that this painting is not by Artemisia Gentileschi. As Bissell notes, the inscription is unique in its length and detail. Such inscriptions usually arouse suspicion among experts, whether of a painting or a drawing. See Bissell, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Authority of Art: Critical Reading and Catalogue Raisonné*, 348–53.
19. Ibid., 211–13. No references can be attached to this work until its sale in Budapest by Enterprise des Magazins de Commission, Budapest (sale 38, 1974, lot 85). The Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest bought it in 1975.
20. Ibid., 221.
21. Banti was the pseudonym of Anna Lopresti Longhi, the wife of Roberto Longhi, whose essay, "Gentileschi Padre e Figlia," in *L'Arte* 19 (1916), first brought their names to the attention of an educated public in Florence.

22. It reads: ARTEMITIA.LOMI/FACIBAT/M.D.CXX.
23. It reads: ARTEMISIA.GE[N]TILESCA.FA-/CIEBAT ROMAE 1622
24. Several scholars, including Judith Mann and Jesse Locker, have accepted a second work with a similar background but no date. It depicts Medea about to stab her son but it is a far more competent painting and the inscription is moved over to the right and occupies less space. It cannot be by the same hand as the Budapest *Jael and Sisera*, and does not look like anything by Artemisia either, in my opinion. See Francesca Baldassari, *Artemisia Gentileschi e il suo tempo* (Rome: Palazzo Braschi, 2016), 156–57.
25. See Bissell, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Authority of Art*, 243 and fig. 127. Veronese's painting is now in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. 138. It is usually catalogued as a studio work.
26. Mann, *Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi*, 376.
27. Most authorities believe that she finished the painting in Naples, but Bissell said that the canvas has a typical Neapolitan weave: this would mean that she painted all of it in Naples in 1630 or soon after.
28. Leoni's women sitters in fancy clothes—are identified—are from aristocratic families. If Prudentia was not, maybe this portrait was made when she married Orazio, her second husband. Her first was also an artist; Cropper speculates that she inherited some of his tools of the trade that could have been useful to Orazio. The drawing belongs to the Morgan Library and Museum, New York.
29. Solinas's book, *Lettere di Artemisia*, De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2011, which includes all of the letters he discovered, is out of print but he mentions a new edition "now available in an updated edition: *Lettere di Artemisia*, Rome, 2020." (I cannot locate it online.)
30. See Solinas's endnote 17 on page 61, where he discusses the transcribed letters as "heavily corrected," as published in 1754 by Giovanni Gaetano Bottari. On Bottari's method, see G. Perini, "Le lettere degli artisti da strumento di comunicazione, a document a cimelio," in E. Cropper, G. Perini and F. Solinas, eds., *Documentary Culture, Villa Spelman Colloquia*, vol. 3 (Bologna: Villa Spelman Colloquia, 1992), 165–83.
31. See cats. 9, 10, 11, 12, and 34. They are dated 1615–1618.
32. Orazio had one and uses it to great effect in *The Conversion of the Magdalene* (Alte Pinakothek, Munich, inv. 12726). There is a beautiful color image of this painting in the catalogue of the exhibition *Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi* (2001), 431. The hands of the Magdalene give us an idea of the mirror's size, ca. 12" x 12." Bissell dates the painting c. 1613–15 when Artemisia was already in Florence but she might have had access to the mirror before she left.
33. This poorly preserved work has not always been accepted but after recent conservation seems likely to be autograph. The identity of the man she is painting is unknown.
34. The angle of *La Pittura's* head would not have been visible to Artemisia even with several mirrors. Her position is very close, however, to the profile and shoulder of the maidservant in the Detroit painting, *Judith and her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes* (cat. 23); if Artemisia had a tracing of this figure, she could have used a model to help her make some slight changes. *La Pittura* does not look like Artemisia—no small bump on her nose and no visible eyelids.
35. Bathsheba is shown looking at her hairdo in a larger mirror held for her by an attendant in Artemisia's painting of her in the Neues Palais, Potsdam [cat. fig.12 n p. 29]. This work is dated 1645–50. Treves's essay and catalogue entry summarize the many comments on this self-referential work whose simplicity is perhaps its greatest feature—a painting is about to be made but only *Pittura* knows what it will become.
36. See 15 in *Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi* for a good color image of this painting after restoration from bullet damage (93). Christiansen does not comment on the location of the breast, only noting "Orazio emphasizes the bulk of her swollen breast just as he revels in the plainness of her braided coiffure" (91). While believing that Orazio used a local woman as his model when painting this picture, Christiansen himself seems never to have observed a woman breast feeding, and maybe Orazio had not either. In the same catalogue, see Mann's entry for Artemisia's *Madonna and Child* (cat. 52), where she notes various awkward elements, especially the different sizes of Mary's hands (299–301). She believes, as I do, that this is a very early work by Artemisia made before she went to Florence.
37. The painting was not in the exhibition because it cannot be moved from its site in Casa Buonarroti. There is a good image on p. 16, Fig. 3. Keith's essay contains important technical information about Artemisia's painting acquired by the National Gallery and the other bust images that are variations on the theme of her own features in different roles, and other works in the show.
38. I would not have included *Portrait of a Lady holding a Fan* (cat. 15), *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy* (cat. 24), or the *Annunciation* (cat. 26). I may discuss these in a later article for the *Woman's Art Journal*.
39. Mary Garrard's essay, "Identifying Artemisia: The Archive and the Eye," in S. Barker, ed., *Artemisia in a Changing Light* (Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2017), is an eloquent appeal for the discipline of traditional connoisseurship to be applied to the many paintings attributed to her now, and mainly in private collections. For the Rembrandt Research Project, see <http://www.rembrandtresearchproject.org> (accessed Sept. 3, 2021).





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Under the Skin: Feminist Art and Art Histories from The Middle East and North Africa Today

Edited by Ceren Özpınar and Mary Kelly
Published for British Academy by
Oxford University Press, 2020

Reviewed by Claudia Yaghoobi

An invaluable contribution to the fields of art history and gender studies, *Under the Skin: Feminist Art and Art Histories from The Middle East and North Africa Today* challenges both Orientalist and colonial perspectives and dominant MENA (Middle East and North Africa) narratives about women artists' works. It sets out to decolonize the history of art, which has been dominated by the Western canon, by including various modes of art production, history writing, and theoretical perspectives in analyzing visual arts from MENA from the 1950s to 2020. As the title of the volume indicates, it promises to reveal what is under the surface and not a partial perspective. The cover image, by Iranian artist Katayoun Karami (b. 1967), is from Somayeh Noori Shirazi's chapter titled "The Articulating-self Inside Out: Katayoun Karami and Becoming a Woman." Karami's photograph, *The Other Side* (2007; Fig. 1), conveys the practice of veiling through its bodily effect, not the image of the veil itself. Breaking away from stereotypical depictions of veiling, Karami's work invites the audience to see beyond their presumptions. In that sense, Karami's work quite appropriately appears as the cover image of the volume, as *The Other Side* is more about hair than veiling itself in the articulation of female subjectivity by deconstructing the conventional understanding of self-portraiture. Noori Shirazi argues that Karami not only destabilizes the Orientalist gaze but also resists representations of cultural identity by demonstrating how her sense of subjectivity is impacted by the practice of veiling. Noori Shirazi uses the well-known works by diasporic Iranian artist Shirin Neshat (b. 1957) as a counter to Karami's in order to provide



Fig. 1. Katayoun Karami, *The Other Side* (2007), analog print, 15" x 10".

the readers with evidence for her argument. In this sense, the choice of this image for the cover aligns with the title and the main argument of the book.

The volume is an ambitious work, consisting of a foreword by Griselda Pollock, Nadia Radwan, and Mandy Merzaban; an introduction by the editors; and twelve chapters, which are organized in three sections.

Section one, "Agency and Resistance to National and Global Discourses," includes four chapters. Chapters one and two problematize questions of gender roles, women's agency, and national discourses silencing women's voices. Focusing on two paintings, Inji Efflatoun's (b. 1924) *The Fourth Wife* (1951) and Gazbia Sirry's (b. 1925) *The Two Wives* (1953), Nadine Atallah discusses the issues of authenticity and nationalism in Egypt, demonstrating the reality of women's everyday lives, more specifically the question of polygamy. Atallah poignantly situates the history of art within the larger feminist discourses of Egypt, which are related to nationalism and the idea that women's emancipation was viewed as instrumental in the nation's independence. Atallah distinguishes Egyptian art from its west-

ern counterpart by its *authenticity* rather than *greatness* that manifests women's participation in shaping the vision for an independent Egypt and also implies the difference between male and female artists' works (14). Charlotte Bank examines works by younger video makers between 2005 and 2011, such as Nisrin Boukhari's (b. 1980) *peu-r-ouge* (2008) and *Kun/Be* (2009), to discuss gendered social spaces and gender-normative behavior relying on artists' own statements about their artistic interests and the way they view their role in Syrian society. Bank argues that these young artists who work from within the Syrian state, critiquing the government, find themselves facing censorship and hurdling bans; however, they articulate their critique by using metaphors, symbols, and allegories. Both chapters conduct an impressive research in bringing forth the societal barriers that women artists are set against.

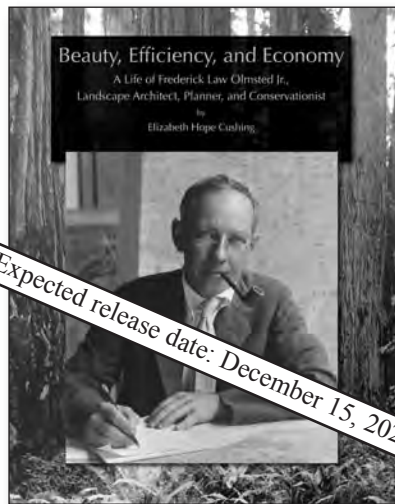
Chapters three and four attend to topics of identity, hybridity, and the ways women artists negotiate subjectivities that bring together heritage and their current positionality. Turning to questions of hyphenated identity, Tal Dekel examines Jennifer Abessira's (b.

1984) work as a French Jewish woman of Algerian origin as an immigrant in Israel. Addressing questions of hybridity and the ways that French immigrant women negotiate this multilayered self, Dekel expounds on the intersection of identity with gender, ethnicity, religion, and nationality. Using Abessira's works, including *The Occident vs. Africa*, *Don't Look Back*, and *New Order* (all 2014), which challenge binary thinking, Dekel unravels the complex mechanisms of racism, sexism, and nationalism that immigrant women negotiate in occupying an in-between space within national and ethno-gender identities. Chapter four, "The Moment of Change," by Lina M. Kattan, examines works by Saudi artists Samiah Khashoggi (b. 1958), Hend al-Mansour (b. 1956), Noura Bouzo (b. 1983), Emtethal al-Awami (b. 1985), Eiman al-Gibreen (b. 1981), and Huda Beydoun (b. 1988). Kattan explores their negotiation of reclaiming their heritage and Islamic identity while simultaneously re-evaluating their

values. To do so, Kattan groups the works under five overlapping and intersecting categories: Islamic Heritage and Traditions; Westernized, Modernized and Hybridity; Veiling and the Body; Femininity and Identity; and Cross-Cultural critique. These two chapters are perhaps among the most persuasive works in the volume regarding their representation of intersectionality of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality.

Section two, "Translating Ethnicity and Subjectivity into Art," highlights the ways that women artists resist local and global hegemonic narratives about their subjectivity through their artwork. Chapter five, by Isabelle De Le Court, focuses on the legacy of two Lebanese abstract artists, Saloua Raouda Choucair (1916–2017) and Etel Adnan (b. 1925), exploring the local audiences' resistance to non-figurative art, the artists' intervention in their art while acknowledging their positionality, and their aesthetic encounters and social

situations. Telling women's stories from inside the family perspective is the focus of chapter seven by Holiday Powers. Exploring the multimedia works of Franco-Algerian artist Zineb Sedira (b. 1963) against the history of colonialism, Powers discusses issues of cross-generational memory and transmission in distinct but overlapping ways, including Sedira's family's memories, her personal story, and the collective memory of postcolonial Algeria. Sedira's video installations since 2000, Powers argues, serve as a medium of resistance against contemporary power structures and colonial historiography. In a video installation titled *Mother Tongue* (2002), Sedira includes three generations of women speaking about childhood stories on three different screens; the grandmother speaks in Arabic, Sedira responds in French, and her daughter speaks in English. On the third screen, the grandmother and granddaughter face an impasse. According to Powers, "In some ways



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BEAUTY, EFFICIENCY, AND ECONOMY

*A LIFE OF FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED JR.,
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT, PLANNER, AND CONSERVATIONIST*

BY ELIZABETH HOPE CUSHING

Fortunately Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. (1870-1957), preordained to landscape architecture by his famous father (1822-1903), proved a talented professional in his own right; outstanding enough to make a significant mark through innovative and creative work in city and community planning, in park work, and through his life-long advocacy for land preservation and conservation. For too long the fact that he shared his name with one of the most prominent figures in the practice of landscape design in America has obscured his major contributions to the field. It is hoped that this overview of his life and aspects of his professional career will contribute to the remediation of that fact, and continue the establishment of his place in American landscape history.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Hope Cushing is a practicing landscape historian, the author of *The Lynn Album*, *a Pictorial History*, and *Arthur A. Shurcliff, Design Preservation, and the Creation of the Colonial Williamsburg Landscape*. She is co-author of *Community by Design*, *The Olmsted Firm and the Development of Brookline, Massachusetts*; and editor of *No Race of Imitators: Lynn and Her People, An Anthology*. She has contributed articles to various journals, magazines, and books. Her cultural landscape history reports include work for the National Park Service; for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management's restoration of Olmsted parks in Massachusetts; for Endicott House, the MIT Conference Center in Dedham, Massachusetts; for restoration work on the Charles River Esplanade, Boston, Massachusetts, and for the Taft Art Museum in Cincinnati, Ohio.

there is always a form of translation when sharing memories across generations, because the different subject position of each generation means that each person will understand the same story in a different way" (104). The work speaks about the difficulty of transmitting memories. The final chapter of section two addresses the works of two female artists from Algeria, singer Taos Amrouche (1913–76) and painter Baya Mahieddine (1931–98). Akila Kizzi examines the social position and commitment of these artists during the colonial period, from 1830 until the country's independence from France in 1962. Focusing on gender, race, and class, and analyzing plural identities, Kizzi sheds light on mechanisms of oppression and women's strategies to resist these oppressions. Kizzi argues that by using ideas of family heritage and memory, Amrouche transformed the art of singing into the free voice of colonized women, and by using traditional Algerian culture by way of dressing in her paintings, Baya refused to be identified as someone who she was not, namely a French woman.

Section three, "Methods and Strategies for Seeing Politics and Practices Differently," zooms in on feminist methodologies, beginning with Jessica Gerschultz's chapter on tapestry, associated with feminine creativity and labor that allows for ambiguity and subverting of

sociopolitical hegemonies. The following chapter, by Rachel Nelson, examines the struggle between interpretation and presence in Palestinian-American artist Emily Jacir's (b. 1972) *Where We Come From* (2001–03), a pairing of photographs, text, and video. The work is a documentation of the "militarized interior borders of Palestine" conducted during Nelson's residency at the Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art in Jerusalem. In Nelson's words, the documentation was done "in response to a question posed to Palestinians living within enclaves and refugee camps under Israeli jurisdiction," surrounded by checkpoints and walls (144). The installation includes photographs alongside Arabic texts of mapping of borders, checkpoints, passports, ID cards, and permits. Ceren Özpınar's chapter on a 2011 exhibition titled "Dream and Reality: Modern and Contemporary Women Artists from Turkey" examines curatorial discourse by looking into the statements in the catalogues. Finally, Mary Kelly's chapter presents an interview with Syrian born artist Diana Al-Hadid (b. 1981) where thought-provoking questions are asked, including the thorny issue of whether or not artists prefer to be called "woman artists," which according to Kelly can be empowering if used in its historical narrative (177). Al-Hadid however responds that the gendered label irritates her because she prefers the work of women

to speak strategically for themselves rather than via big announcements about "women artists" exhibitions (177).

Under the Skin is such a brilliant work with seamless scholarship that it is difficult for the reader to critique a work of this magnitude. What I found disruptive, however, was the placement of the artwork in the three sections rather than within each individual chapter. Turning the pages back and forth constantly to find the images that were being discussed broke the flow. It would also be more appealing to have a balance in the representation of the artists, as there are several works on Algerian artists. While a single work cannot cover all countries of the region, a balanced approach would give voice to some lesser-acknowledged artists. Overall, however, the volume provides a new framework to contemplate production of art and art history in MENA, and poignantly foregrounds women artists' voices. •

Claudia Yaghoobi is a Roshan Institute Associate Professor in Persian Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Recent publications include *Temporary Marriage in Iran: Gender and Body Politics in Modern Iranian Literature and Film* (2020). She is co-editor (with Janet Afary) of the book series "Sex, Marriage, and Family in the Middle East" for Bloomsbury Press.

Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism

By Lauren Fournier
The MIT Press, 2021

Reviewed by Anne Swartz

Canadian Lauren Fournier's recently arrived book has much to recommend. Even though scholarship on autotheory as an historical framework has circulated in women's studies, gender studies, and autobiography studies since the mid-2010s (or even longer in specific domains), it can be a new concept for visual arts professionals across media.

Once introduced, intellectual life seems divided into the before and after of reading this influential book. The reader will best understand Fournier's project in terms of her own practice: she's an artist, curator, and scholar. She's interested in self-representation and its benefits by illustrating the pleasures of the text from both the practical realm of an artist and the interpretative position of the writer/curator.

The book is a complicated publication. Symptomatic of the whole, the introduction reveals and evidences some of the reach and limits of the volume. This beginning section helps showcase the basic premise of autotheory and its parts in the long, oft-tangled histories of art,

writing, researching, and philosophizing. There the author defines autotheory:

The term "autotheory" emerged in the early part of the twenty-first century to describe works of literature, writing, and criticism that integrate autobiography with theory and philosophy with autobiography, the body, and other so-called personal and explicitly subjective modes. It is a term that describes a self-conscious way of engaging with theory—as a discourse, frame, or mode of thinking and practice—alongside lived experience and subjective embodiment, something very much in

the *Zeitgeist* of cultural production today—especially in feminist, queer, and BIPOC—Black, Indigenous, and people of color—spaces that live on the edges of art and academia (7).

This commingling of self-representation with theory allows for interdisciplinary practices—merging writing and speaking with visual and conceptual forms. These approaches are fundamental to contemporary art, particularly post-1960s video, film, installation, and performance (2). This book is provocative because, while autobiography and memoir are hardly the domain solely of women's activities, the ascription of the philosophical and theoretical into self-visualization and self-identification are feminist practices, especially in visual and conceptual art like the self-imaging seen in such American Feminist artists' works as Hannah Wilke's performance art or Joan Jonas's video works, or even in Roni Horn's sculptural practices.

However, the introduction also illustrates, on a microcosmic level, why this latest volume is uneven. Undeniably, this book combines sophistication and applicability. Its density in both the starting portion and the detail of subsequent chapters, or "case studies," belies its origins as Fournier's dissertation conversion. But, whatever polish it may lack, this artist, writer, and curator will remain a tour-de-force as the writing and the voice evolves. In 2018, she completed her doctorate and published one of her initial contributions to the field of autobiography studies with an article on autotheory, the germ of the current book, that has been widely discussed and even recently anthologized.¹ What direction Fournier's future work will take could follow divergent paths if she leans into her "self" or if she continues to pursue further analytical interpretation.

This book is captivating—reading it is an experience akin to the first moment venturing into Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). There, Butler advanced the notion of gender as a performance and foregrounded the term performativity catalyzing its active usage in

feminist, queer studies, and dissident studies scholarship. The resemblance between Butler and Fournier's books stems from the similar experience where terms in currency suddenly have a logic. Fournier situates this project in the juncture between autobiography studies, art history, and gender studies. For those unfamiliar with autobiography studies, this concept of autotheory as presented by Fournier has a fresh angle. Anyone knowledgeable about feminist art or feminist art history will be familiar with the broad strokes of the autotheoretical impulse as the author describes it, which merges the self-fashioning, analysis, or critiquing artistic activities with theory as a scaffolding to explain, contextualize, and structure them.

In the text, Fournier applies autotheoretical research to both writing and visual/conceptual art examples in detailed readings. She devotes whole chapters to projects such as Adrian Piper's intimate, private performance, *Food for the Spirit* of 1971, wherein the artist marks up philosopher Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) as a way to insert herself into intellectual discourse, high modernist art history, and the "white male conceptual world." Fournier's view of the photographic documentation of Piper's actions serve to integrate philosophy, theory, and self-imaging—in this solo performance for the audience of one, the artist, she moves through reading, making notes in the book's margin, and photographing herself in the mirror. Fournier describes the scheme the artist uses: "Piper invokes autotheory through the conceptual work's framing devices, including the title and the artist's statement: by conflating 'spirit,' which in the Kantian scheme means a kind of interiority, with 'food'—literally, physical matter that feeds the immanent body, and figuratively, nourishment for one's spiritual and philosophical life... The embodied metaphor of philosophical sustenance is in sustained tension with the notion of 'spirit' as abstracted from the body" (78–79). The act of photographing concretizes the intellectual experience of reading and contemplating the text and the meditation of the artist on her visage and physique. Fournier highlights how

this self-documentation merges the conceptual and sensual in the materiality of the photograph. This combination manifests a *feminine imaginary*, a key concept in the oeuvre of Belgian-born, French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray, with whom Fournier studied.²

Next, Fournier turns attention to Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* of 2015, looking at how aesthetics, psychology, and politics impact citational practices "by drawing attention to those references," often scribbled in the margins—for Nelson's book—or body of the text as modes of "intertextual intimacy" (47, 135). Later, Fournier uses Chris Kraus's *I Love Dick* of 1997, a complicated "novel" cum memoir of an imaginary love affair to kindle her marriage, that becomes the backdrop for an explanation of the feminist-academia #MeToo movement and the politics of feminist public display and exposure in relation to autotheory and performance. There are many short analyses of recent artworks by women, including selfies and social media examples, which are welcomed introductions, alongside more canonical feminist visual artworks.

Speaking broadly, the art-historical interpretative toolkit intertwines the critical methodologies of autobiography/biography and intentionality. Since the Renaissance in the West highlighted the artwork as the result of one artist's committed endeavors, the biographical methodological approach has held significant sway and been celebrated with much esteem. The 1550 publication in Italy of artist Giorgio Vasari's *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* seared greatness into the lineage of art historical conversation. It would take 421 years until feminist artists and art historians would bring the female experience to the fore with the same enthusiasm.

The role of autotheory in art and art history is established by Fournier's text, not only in terms of feminist production but also for nonbinary and gender-nonconforming bodies (269). Autobiography is a different category since it deals with archiving and remembering one's life to write that history. In terms of art and art history, the personal and lived experience get widespread attention for

feminist artists—by extension, critics and art historians, less so for much of recent history for men artists. The person and the persona got short shrift in much of twentieth-century art historical literature. Towards the end of the century, the pendulum swung, and the age of psychoanalysis finally gave way to listening to the artist.

During the post-WWII era, women artists, especially in Anglophone countries, but elsewhere as well, have written about their studio practice with diligence. Fournier explains: Autotheory is tied to a politics of radical self-reflection, embodied knowledge, and sustained, literary nonfictional writing through the self that has been, and continues to be, suppressed and repressed by certain patriarchal and colonial contexts. “Autotheory exists in the place between criticism and autobiography, which might be why it is so enmeshed, in different ways and to different effects, depending on the practice at hand, with the essay” (38). Fournier outlines here nothing less than a defense for why many speak smartly about their lives and works. She also grasps that theory, a “master discourse,” historically has not been characterized as the sphere of women, yet in this new “critically legitimate” genre, autotheory becomes their domain proper apropos the short forms in which they typically write (14–15).

The entwining of self and art for women artists has a complicated history. In the contemporary era, women have offered substitutes and symbols for the self. And feminism remained tied to lived experience, personalized content, and circumstantial determinations. As such, it became understood as a “low theory,” one based on the capriciousness of the individual situation, shaped by the conscious construction of one’s experience and conditions.³

The value of the self-portrait for women artists initially was its availability. The autotheoretical impulse for visual artists seems to necessitate the spoken and written word to reveal the art, its import, or its value. In this age of social media, unfortunately, many young artists convince themselves they must have an online presence or a brand to “exist” or develop a reputation and concomitant status with the related



Fig. 1. Sona Safaei-Sooreh, *Swift Memorial* (2016), sculpture. Installation view at Zalucky Contemporary, Toronto, 2017. Photo: Toni Hafkensheid. Courtesy of the artist.

audience and market. Such revelation, when it veers into the boundaries of theory quickly can become terse.

Yet, one of the powerful aspects of autotheory in Fournier’s parlance is its appropriative quality. Bringing in all the greats puts them into association with the artist or maker. The Simulationists, such as Ashley Bickerton, and feminists critiquing commodity culture in the 1970s and 1980s, like Barbara Kruger, did similar things. There’s the double-edged sword here of too-much theory. She invokes the burdens of its excesses when discussing the logos peppering “brand-scape” of Iranian-Canadian conceptual artist Sona Safaei-Sooreh (b. 1981), such as her Louis Vuitton-look in *Swift Memorial* of 2016 (Fig. 1). Safaei-Sooreh correlates intellectual knowledge, artistic value, and cultural capital: “Possessing a Louis Vuitton bag and flaunting it on your arm as you walk around is not unlike the cultural capital to be derived from possessing knowledge of theorists and notable contemporary artists and flaunting that knowledge by waxing lyrical about Deleuzoguattarian rhizomes.... By selecting the names of those whose work was central to her grad school experience as an immigrant artist studying in Toronto ... [she points to] the fetishization of theory in art spaces and prompt[s] reflection on the cultural capital ... of learning and citing” (112). The upside is the inclusion—for the in-crowd, that is.

One of the exciting commentaries here is Fournier’s brief survey of the phrases

coined by one of her colleagues—“intertextual identification” and then “intertextual intimacy” (147–50). She articulates these terms as “describ[ing] a way of reading, a way of writing and doing work, and a way of referencing or placing *alongside*” (149). It is an enchantment with another’s creative activities through citation. There’s the truism Fournier observes, “Citing names of friends and fellow artists and thinkers is also a way of inscribing a community and, relatedly, recording and canonizing a movement (from within it)” (193). For feminist artists, building movements is an important tool since they often need access and opportunity. She’s enunciating that they are doing it for themselves.

Speaking of access and opportunity brings to mind equality. As she concludes her study of autotheory, Fournier inscribes a decolonial discourse towards the end. It is a worthwhile effort, but limited. She also mentions the class and labor constraints underpinning her ideological approaches to the scholarship she tried to combat and oust. Her analyses in this book hinge on a white feminist lineage. Fournier already says she will turn her expansive sensibilities towards the study of non-western feminist artists, especially from the global south, and Indigenous artists.

This well-illustrated book takes an engaging look at autotheory. Fournier surveys several recent controversies in the feminist art world and academy with verve and care. The author

showcases how integrating theory and philosophy into one's artistic enterprise magnifies the self at the center. •

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Notes

1. See Lauren Fournier, "Sick Women, Sad Girls, and Selfie Theory: Autotheory as Contemporary Feminist Practice," in *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 33 (3) (Sept. 2018): 641-660, doi: 10.1080/08989575.2018.1499495; anthologized in *Life Writing Outside the Lines: Gender and Genre in the Americas*, eds., Eva C.

Karpinski and Ricia A. Chansky (New York: Routledge, 2020), 149-68.

2. The "feminine imaginary" recurs as a central motif throughout Irigaray's work, functioning as a gendered response in opposition to French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Jacques Lacan's suppositions about the Imaginary as constituted by his so-called Mirror Stage, wherein the child forms an image of *himself*, in Lacan's formulation, by looking in the mirror. For Irigaray, see Luce Irigaray, *The Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985) and Luce Irigaray, *The Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Cathryn Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985). For Lacan, see Jacques Lacan, *Écrits, a selection* (London, Tavistock, 1977). (Italics

mine for emphasis.)

3. This notion of low theory is a highlight but underdeveloped. Fournier draws upon English literature and philosophy scholar Jeffrey R. Di Leo's differentiation of the low theories of feminism and post-colonialism, alongside cultural studies, from the high theories of Structuralism and Deconstruction (53). But, the more relevant conversation about low theory, which she declares as bearing expansively on her scholarly project as a whole, is Jack Halberstam's investigations. In her brief analysis of Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue's art (291), Fournier touches upon Halberstam's application of low theory to queer culture, and declares Halberstam's scholarship as foundational to hers (249, 251).

Marking Modern Movement: Dance and Gender in the Visual Imagery of the Weimar Republic

By Susan Funkenstein
University of Michigan Press, 2020

Reviewed by Jordan Troeller

Susan Funkenstein's account of dance in the Weimar Republic could be seen as providing a prehistory to Yvonne Rainer's famous observation that "dance is hard to see."¹

For Funkenstein is not interested in dance per se but in its representational form—how the time-based, ephemeral character of the performance takes on a more protracted existence in the guise of visual imagery (what Funkenstein means by the term "marking" in her title, an invocation of marking as both a choreographic act and one of visual inscription). The visual imagery addressed in her book is diverse. It includes collage, drawings and paintings, photography, prints, mass-circulation periodicals like *Uhu* and *Elegante Welt*, and ephemera (e.g., posters and invitations), all of which, she argues, fixed the dancing body in interwar Germany.

If the representation of dance is one of the book's overriding concerns, a second focus, just as important, is that of gender, and more specifically, how

sexual difference—its myriad discourses and sometimes its attempted erasure—mediates the performing body's inscription. Interestingly, here we are talking not only about the female body, which preoccupies Funkenstein's first three chapters, as she considers the bodies of dancers Mary Wigman (1886-1973; Fig. 1), Sent M'Ahesa (1893-1970) and Nidda Impekoven (1904-2002) (in Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*), Isadora Duncan (1887-1927), and synchronized dancing tropes like the Tiller Girls. Also at issue in the book is how that female body intersected with racialized conceptions of dance (Paul Klee's drawings of Josephine Baker and actress Anna May Wong constitutes a chapter), with the self-performance of (male) bourgeois identity in the paintings of Otto Dix staging himself in dance halls, and with what Funkenstein argues to be "the techno-logical body" of Oskar Schlemmer's highly costumed dancers (209). As such, Funkenstein goes far beyond conventional definitions of the New Woman or New Man as anchoring her conception of gender; rather, she opens this category up to an array of other intersectional possibilities.

Funkenstein's approach is based on meticulously researched case studies, grounded in specific artworks. She demonstrates a solid command of the archival materials, exhaustively delving into contemporary reviews, manifestos



Fig. 1. Hugo Erfurth, Mary Wigman in *Idolatrie* (Götzendienst), from *Ecstatic Dances* (Ekstatische Tänze), 1917/19. photograph, 4 1/2" x 6 1/8". Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Mary-Wigman-Archiv, No. 264.

and artist statements, exhibition materials, and correspondence. Readers will also find that Funkenstein builds on existing research into dance in the Weimar Republic (and further afield during the early twentieth century), especially the scholarship of dance historians Susan Manning and Kate Elswit. Given this thoroughness, I was surprised to find that some of her conceptual categories (such as race)

were not as exhaustively researched or theoretically bolstered as they could have been had she taken into account more recent scholarship. The term “oriental” plays a pivotal role in some of her materials, and yet there is no mention of studies like Anne Anlin Cheng’s *Ornamentalism* from 2018 (though she elsewhere references Cheng’s *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface*) or similar such efforts to specify differences in racialized discourse between the Black body as opposed to the Asian body, which would have further supported Funkenstein’s analysis.

Additionally, it was sometimes difficult to understand why certain case studies were admitted and others excluded. I expected, for instance, if not a chapter on Rudolf Laban, at least an extended discussion of his dance notation, given that the concept of “marking” plays a role in the book. There is recent scholarship on this topic that could have expanded and deepened Funkenstein’s account, scholarship that also shares her interest in the terms of “modern movement.”² Had such examples been admitted, Funkenstein may have been able to develop a more rigorous conception of “marking” as it functions in her argument, distinguishing it perhaps from these other forms of notation that we find in dance at that time.

Nonetheless, the study is on the whole illuminating and presents a vast wealth of archival details and artworks that will surely enrich survey courses and future scholarship on this topic. I also believe that her central argument holds true: that representations of dance responded to the “complex and fluctuating constructions of gender” during the Weimar Republic (3). Where I am less convinced, however, is with the issue of agency: Funkenstein sets out not only to write a history of these representations, but to argue that they “resulted in something radical: copious images of dance that challenged long-held models of objectifying the female body” whereby ultimately “strict binaries of self and other fell apart” (3). Here I think Funkenstein’s introduction actually sets us up for a different argument than what she ultimate-

ly delivers in the chapters, which is that dance cut both ways. Sometimes it served to reinforce performances of an ossified bourgeois masculinity (e.g., Dix), at other times, it opened up onto gender fluidity in the guise of the “impersonal” (e.g., Wigman), and elsewhere, it suggested a nascent lesbian erotics for the female beholder of revue dances—all of this is there in the book, making Funkenstein’s

stated argument of “radicality” somewhat misleading; what she accomplishes is actually far more dynamic.

One of the most exciting avenues opened up by Funkenstein’s scholarship—though not explicitly addressed in the study—is the question of dance’s mediation through technological reproduction. It would seem that much of the representational forms that captured

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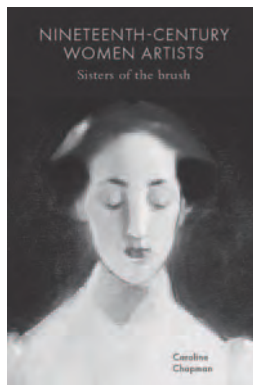


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dance after the moment of the performance's ending, regardless of whether those forms were themselves photographic or not, were at some point mediated through photographic form. This larger issue, of dance in the age of its technological reproduction, say, is only implicitly suggested by Funkenstein's emphasis on mass media as a realm of representation as important for her research as painting and drawing. How many of these artists were actually viewing performances as opposed to seeing them already mediated through photographic form? I was led to this question upon seeing the striking comparison in the book of Paul Klee's drawing *Chinese Beauty (Precision)* (1927), and an illustrated page of the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung (BIZ)* portraying Anna May Wong. The two "bear a direct similarity," according to Funkenstein, leading her to question "whether *BIZ* was the initial impetus for the Precision series, whether Klee's titles followed *BIZ*'s example, and whether Klee began the series with *Chinese Beauty*"—a series that included an unnamed portrait of Josephine Baker (160).

Though left unanswered, these questions are fascinating, but just as significant is the more fundamental issue to which they lead, which is whether dance could effectively *not be seen* outside of its mediation through technological reproduction, from film and photography to print media and the illustrated magazines. If that were the case, what implications would such a thesis hold for Funkenstein's concern with dance's representational character during these years? Furthermore, what would it say about technology's impact on the body—a topic broached explicitly in her last chapter on Schlemmer's *Gesamttanzwerk* and its iconography of metal (complete with connotations of armored bodies following Prussia's military defeat)? Would it help us to understand the contradictions at play in her conclusion, in which she points to how "images of dance declined in painting but increased in film" with the rise of National Socialist aesthetics, particularly the public dance spectacles in films like Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*? Here, instead of Schlemmer's quasi-mechanical figures, we have the archaic

return of the idealized Aryan physique but mediated through one of the most modern of representational forms, film. At the end of the book, the reader is left wondering, where exactly then should one locate the modernity of movement? In the body or its representation? •

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Notes

1. Yvonne Rainer, "A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A," (1966) in *Minimal Art: A Critical Survey*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995 [1968]), 271.
2. Whitney Elaine Laemmli, "The Choreography of Everyday Life: Rudolf Laban and the Making of Modern Movement," PhD diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania, 2016.

Women, Aging and Art: A Crosscultural Anthology

Edited by Frima Fox Hofrichter and
Midori Yoshimoto
Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021

Reviewed by Catherine McCormack

This anthology opens excitedly with a lighthearted anecdote from one of the co-editors about confronting her own aging features in 2008, and the determination to correct what she saw as the invisibility of old women within art historical scholarship. While the former observation is an unusually whimsical point of departure for Frima Fox Hofrichter and Midori Yoshimoto's volume, the latter assumption may be an overly confident claim. Hofrichter and Yoshimoto's collection of essays joins an established corpus of critical work on female senescence in visual culture, which

includes Erin J. Campbell's *Growing Old in Early Modern Europe* (2006), an edited volume, and the monograph *Old Women and Art in the Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior* (2016), along with Cathy McGlynn, Margaret O'Neill, and Michaela Schrage-Früh's *Ageing Women in Literature and Visual Culture* (2017).

Rather than make claims for innovation within the field, then, perhaps what the editors might have chosen to emphasize is the anthology's impressive global reach (what the editors refer to as "cross-cultural"), with essays attending to visual culture from Europe to the Polynesian Marquesas Islands, and the art of the Americas (including the pre-settler communities on the Northwest coast) to West Africa and Japan. These are approached with a variety of historical methods, taking in postcolonialism, feminist theory, social history and traditional connoisseurship, unfurled over twelve chapters that are

held together by a uniting thematic of representations of elderly women in a variety of media—from carved masks to painted portraits, photographs, prints, and paintings. (An obvious omission within this cadre is a contribution concerned with the art of Southern Asia, which would have been a welcome enrichment of the comparative analysis across different visual cultures offered by the volume.)

The opening six chapters of the anthology are dedicated to the field of medieval and early modern visual culture, with the first few chapters building on well-developed feminist art historical discourses concerned with images that belie a European misogynistic world view and deep social anxieties about women, aging, and agency. Unsurprisingly, the generalized visual archetype of the witch or the hag is central to these discussions. M.E. Warlick's opening essay considers the disappearance of

female herbalists and pharmacists in illustrated manuals and textbooks for herbal preparations, and the contiguous proliferation of what became archetypal images of malevolent witches around a boiling cauldron as the professionalization of the medicinal and apothecary roles evicted women practitioners from places of learning.

The theme of disappearing women continues with Zirka Z. Filipczak's analysis of the evolution of representations of religious women in the seventeenth century from serial prints and books of emblems. Filipczak focuses on three case studies: the New Testament prophetess Anna, the Sibyls, and the personification of Heresy as an old woman with withered drooping breasts. Of the three, Heresy, made deliberately repulsive as an aging woman, is the most compelling discussion for understanding how the external physical characteristics of female maturity took on moral implications, and how this was bolstered by the regular representation of its opposite, Virtue, as a pert breasted, smooth-skinned young woman. The theme continues with Jane Kromm's essay on the association of elderly women with the deadly sins of anger, envy, and avarice in images in which anger and envy all become indexical to the physical characteristics of old age. Kromm links these to discourses about gender, property, and community in illuminating ways and the threat posed by these feminized vices. With both essays an emphasis on or discussion of the elite male spectatorship that consumed these images would have offered another rich angle.

But while some women were becoming less visible in visual culture, Diane Wolfthal's essay argues that others were becoming more visible—chiefly mature female servants whose presence and identity were recorded as sitters, even when the developments in architectural design of grand homes did much to limit the visible presence of working staff.

The rolling momentum of feminist historical method in the opening chapters of the book is dramatically interrupted by Paul Crenshaw's contri-

bution, which draws largely on traditional connoisseurship and formal analysis to determine the identity of a mature woman in a painting by Frans Hals in the Metropolitan Museum of Art presumed to be an elderly Judith Leyster (1609–60). Crenshaw's is the only essay in the volume that focuses on archival provenance and speculative formal visual analysis over a critical method. The reader is invited to compare and contrast different images of Leyster on the grounds of "girth," "weight," and "fulness" with scant material on offer to reflect on Leyster's social and political position as both an artist and mature woman sitter of the late seventeenth century beyond such superficialities. A more probing discussion of portraits of female maturity can be found in Vanessa Rocco's essay on Lucia Moholy's (1894–1989) photographs of stateswoman Clara Zetkin (1857–1933) and the aesthetic of New Vision photography in which the elderly orator is read as a symbol of idealized heroicism, although at times the analysis risks sentimentalization and an overdependence on biographical discursions.

The denigration and vilification of elderly women in European visual culture discussed in the volume's early essays is in direct contrast to three essays that explore an indexical relationship among age, social status, and authority in matrilineal societies in non-global north countries. Megan A. Smetzer problematizes the assumptions that Haida masks of mature, high-ranked Haida women from the northern Northwest Coast of America were produced to satisfy the demand for souvenirs for Euro-American fur traders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and instead argues for the overlooked centrality of mature women to indigenous Haida ritual. Carol Ivory's essay narrates a potted history of the colonial transformation of the social roles and sexual identity of Polynesian people of the Marquesas Islands via a discussion of the portraits of two Marquesan



Fig. 1. Louise Nevelson and *Moon Garden*, New York, 1958. Photo by Walter Sanders / The LIFE Picture Collection / Getty Images.

women, Paetini and Vaekehu, and the evolution of their visual depictions over the nineteenth century during the period of contact with and infiltration by colonial settlers. Ivory mobilizes a critique of the so-called "dusky maiden" archetype of the exoticized, sexually available non-western woman and sets up a tantalizing trope for the "dusky matriarch," but without ever fulfilling this potentially compelling angle of enquiry.

Susan Kart's essay looks to a different relationship between sexuality and empowerment in a discussion of the Sowu masks (carved wooden headpieces) worn by Mende women, who, unusually for mask-wearing ritual performing societies in West Africa, were not only the performers but the primary commissioners of their sculpted ceremonial masks that denoted their status as elders with social authority. This authority and "autonomy" that Kart describes included playing a key role in girls' initiation into Sande society—which traditionally entailed performing what the author describes as "genital modification" but which is routinely described by the international community as female genital mutilation (FGM). Kart's essay examines the controversy over the place of such helmet masks in museum collections in light of the perceived barbarism of the initiation rituals. Kart

seems to privilege (problematically for this reader) the right for Sande women to “dictate their own femininity and to thwart the norms of Euro-American society by shaping their daughter’s genitals” (150) without examining how FGM serves the wider interests of patriarchal authority over women’s bodies and their sexual pleasure—in an attempt to avoid slipping into the colonist’s language of finding fault with more “primitive,” less “civilized” societies. Women’s aging seems here to be a phantom heuristic as the author shifts focus away from FGM to argue that the solution to the dilemma faced by museums in how they acknowledge or tacitly condone or erase discussion of genital mutilation would be to include narratives from older women who did not speak negatively of the practice; however, Kart does not offer any such narrative or example of visual culture to support or elucidate how the experiences of elderly women would change these implications.

The central trope of the aging woman as witch returns later in the volume, with Johana Ruth Epstein’s richly argued discussion of American sculptor Louise Nevelson (1899–1988). Epstein explores the artist’s inversion of the malignant stereotype into a figure of

aging female power as an astute means to capture the interest of a mainstream audience in the 1950s. Given Epstein’s recurring motif of domestic objects, the author presents interesting strands of enquiry around the entanglement of the figure of the hostess and witch in Nevelson’s self-curated persona (Fig. 1), which offer interesting points of reflection, ones that could also potentially have been enlivened by a reflection on the Marxist-feminist movements of the 1970s that overlapped the figure of the witch with the oppression of women in the home.

Rachel Middleman’s essay on Joan Semmel’s (b. 1932) unflinching nude self-portraiture as a mature female artist strikes a key note in the anthology with its discussion of agency, aging, sexuality, identity, and, most importantly, visibility of aging female bodies as creative bodies that matter. This is bolstered by Midori Yoshimoto’s essay on Japanese artist Miwa Yanagi (b. 1967) that concludes the anthology. Yoshimoto positions Yanagi’s photography and performance as an interruption to the standard Japanese cultural trope of the elderly woman as cannibalistic devouring crone, with works that play with the relationship between female old age and youth, and center the “transcendental grandmoth-

ers” for whom the societal pressures of the performance of femininity are obsolete in exchange for freedom and creativity in old age. Both Yoshimoto’s analysis and Yanagi’s content resist any collapse into sentimentality and explore elements of the uncanny and discomfiting elements of folklore and Japanese fairy tales that infuse the artist’s corpus.

Reading the back cover, much of the rich and at times provocative content of *Women, Aging, and Art* is obscured behind an overdetermined idea of beauty as a value signifier, with a tendency in some appraisals to insist that geriatric women can be beautiful as opposed to demolishing beauty as a value judgment on women’s bodies altogether. This anthology is much more than a consciousness-raising project to comfort the aging female readers or women “anxious” about their wrinkles that the book’s dedication addresses. It reveals as much insight into the at times conflicting and contrasting approaches to art historical method as it provides material for comparative analysis from a global and largely decolonized perspective. •

Catherine McCormack is a consultant lecturer at Sotheby’s Institute of Art in London and an independent curator.

Angela Davis: Seize the Time

Edited by Gerry Beegan and Donna Gustafson with contributions by Angela Y. Davis, Nicole R. Fleetwood, René de Guzman, and Lisbet Tellefsen
Hirmer and Zimmerli Art Museum,
Rutgers University, 2020

Reviewed by Rebecca VanDiver

In 1972 the African American artist Elizabeth Catlett (1915–2012), then living in Mexico, created a serial portrait of the political activist and Black feminist Angela Y. Davis (b. 1944) entitled *Angela Libre* (Fig. 1). The horizontal silkscreen features Davis’s recognizable face with her well-known natural hairstyle repeated six times in varying rainbow colors on a shiny sheet of metal

foil. Catlett based her print on a photograph of Davis, one of the many that circulated widely in the media between 1969 and 1972. At the time of Catlett’s printmaking, the then twenty-eight-year old Davis sat in jail awaiting trial for her connection to an August 1970 armed attack at a California courthouse. Davis’s October 1970 arrest ignited an international movement for her liberation. Catlett’s silkscreen, titled in Spanish, was one of the myriad visual objects produced in service of the ensuing Free Angela Davis campaign and is part of a larger body of visual culture that takes Davis’s image as a referent.¹ A number of these impressive images, including Catlett’s *Angela Libre*, are included in *Angela Davis – Seize the Time*, an exhibition that opened in September 2021 at the Zimmerli Art Museum at

Rutgers University. With Catlett’s appropriation of a mass media image, subsequent repetition and reproduction of Davis’s iconic visage, and use of the print medium, *Angela Libre* opens onto several themes tackled in *Seize the Time*, among them an “exploration of the politically charged image of Angela Davis” (7), contemporary artistic engagements with Davis’s image, and the significance of print and ephemera to Davis’s place in the history of Black liberation struggles. Co-curated by Donna Gustafson, curator of American art at the Zimmerli, and Gerry Beegan, chair of the Department of Art and Design in the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers, *Seize the Time* takes Davis and her image as subject. The exhibition presents “magazines, press photography, court sketches, videos, music, writings, and

correspondence” alongside other archival materials and a selection of contemporary artworks related to the visual legacy of Angela Davis.²

This wonderfully illustrated scholarly catalogue edited by Gustafson and Beegan was created to accompany the exhibition. The 192-page catalogue comprises a foreword by Thomas Sokolowski, the Zimmerli’s late director, an introduction written by Gustafson, a detailed chronology, two essays, and edited transcriptions of two conversations—one between Gustafson and Lisbet Tellefsen, an Oakland-based activist and archivist who wrote the included chronology and whose impressive archival collection of Davis-related ephemera forms the corpus of the exhibition, and the second between Angela Y. Davis and René de Guzman, senior curator of art at the Oakland Museum of California. These insightful conversations are joined by two scholarly essays, penned by Beegan and Nicole R. Fleetwood, on the printed reproduction of Davis’s image, her iconic status, and radical Black feminisms. Following the heavily illustrated texts are eighty-eight pages of full-color plates, a selected bibliography, exhibition checklist, and index.

While the exhibition works to “position Angela Davis as a continuing touchstone for contemporary artists who reference her history as a political icon and her texts on revolution, feminisms, and incarceration,”³ the catalogue is a treasure trove of archival images. In total some 175 images are reproduced—a mix of photographs, newspapers, and posters all related to Davis. With the catalogue’s privileging of ephemera and discussions around collecting and archiving, *Seize the Time* is an exciting development for those interested in the historic Angela Davis case as well as the role of archives and printed ephemera.

Lisbet Tellefsen’s robust chronology follows the catalogue’s foreword. Typically found at the end of monographs, the chronology does important work in sketching out Davis’s roots and routes, beginning with her 1944 birth in Birmingham, Alabama, through her 2019 induction into the National Women’s Hall of Fame. In addition to fleshing out key events related to Davis’s arrest, trial,

and the associated liberation movement between 1969 to 1972, Tellefsen draws attention to the evolution of Davis’s progressive education and the various networks (international, institutional, social, and political) in which she became ensconced.

The Oakland-based Tellefsen, whose significant archive sits at the heart of the Zimmerli’s curatorial endeavor, only began collecting Davis-related material around 2003. In her conversation with Gustafson, “An Archive of Resistance,” she details her fascinating collecting story. Outlining her archival process, the conversation would be a useful addition to undergraduate and graduate level classes on collecting and offers methodologies for budding art historians and collectors alike. Having known Davis socially since the 1980s, Tellefsen articulates the challenge of producing an archive “on a private person who hasn’t been given much privacy” (46). The statement opens up another sub-theme of the catalogue, Davis’s own view of herself and how she grapples with her public image.

Design historian Gerry Beegan’s contribution, “Bearing Witness,” takes the image of Davis from the September 11, 1970, cover of *Life* magazine as a jumping-off point to examine “the political deployment of Davis’s image” between 1969 and 1972 (51). Davis’s followers quickly appropriated the media images of her and incorporated them into their visual materials.

Considering the context of production is a way Beegan suggests to “resist the nostalgic iconification of Angela Davis” (52). Beegan’s essay offers important insights into how access to printing technologies (e.g., offset lithography) led to a liberation of design and the growth of the alternative press (51). He also further highlights the “crucial role that effective printed materials, posters, leaflets, and even buttons played in political activism at this time” (52). He argues that the Davis-related materials, which almost always focused on her hair and face, conveyed what Davis saw as her most important quality—that she was a Black woman (60). More than that, “In their portability and multiplicity, in their saturation, they



Fig. 1. Elizabeth Catlett, *Angela Libre* (1972), screen print on foil, 23 5/8" x 27 1/16". National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. © Catlett-Mora Family Trust / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. NPG.94.132.

resist the state’s attempt to define Davis as a criminal and to confine her body” (60). Like other contributors he acknowledges Davis’s own “mixed feelings” about her public representation, which did not accrue to her own self-image (59). Beegan notes how “[t]he Tellefsen archive and this exhibition offer the opportunity to acknowledge and investigate the materiality of these social objects” (51). Presenting the ephemera in *Seize the Time* as visual objects demanding art historical study is one of the exhibition and the catalogue’s many strengths.

Like Beegan, Nicole R. Fleetwood’s essay, “Black Radical Feminism and the Iconic Status of Angela Davis,” works to destabilize the static iconicity of Davis, with Fleetwood writing that “she is much more than a fixed image of an activist from the 1960s” (71). Always a steadfast champion of social justice, Davis continues to evolve and as noted throughout the catalogue is active in a number of movements including the abolition of the prison industrial complex. Fleetwood offers needed contextualization of Davis’s persona within 1970s Black feminism and argues that it is crucial to “frame [Davis’s] revolutionary ideology, practices, and style, within this era of [B]lack feminism” (73). She then unpacks the “Afro icon” related to Davis’s natural hairstyle, explaining how the ubiquity of Davis’s image,

which so frequently highlighted her hair, resulted in the detention and harassment of other Black women who sported the same style. Fleetwood's essay provides brief but welcome and important discussions of artworks by Betye Saar, Elizabeth Catlett, and Wadsworth Jarrell that bridge the gap between the mass media and fine art images included in the exhibition and catalogue. Fleetwood aptly sums up *Seize the Time* when she writes that the show is "an exhibition, and archive, and a roadmap for how a figure deeply rooted in collective struggle emerges against her will, as the face of freedom struggles and how she uses that platform to continue the work...." (71).

Fittingly the textual component of the catalogue concludes with Angela Davis in conversation with René de Guzman. In her own words, Davis describes

herself "as an educator, an activist, a feminist, an abolitionist feminist, as someone who has been involved in movements for social justice most of my life" (81). Together the pair contemplate Davis's complicated relationship to her past and to her public image, as well as the decisions that went into placing her archive at Harvard University's Schlesinger library, and the importance of the visual, especially art, to social change. Davis acknowledges that the images of her that abound "don't necessarily represent me as an individual but the movement around me" (88). To be sure, *Seize the Time* successfully complicates and challenges our understanding of Angela Y. Davis and the visual culture (past and present) inspired by her ongoing fight for social justice. •

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in the Department of History of Art and Architecture at Vanderbilt University. She is the author of *Designing a New Tradition: Loïs Mailou Jones and the Aesthetics of Blackness* (2020). She is at work on a second book that considers the use of ephemera in twentieth and twenty-first century African American artistic production.

Notes

1. Catlett's involvement with the campaign began in late 1969. Melanie Anne Herzog, *Elizabeth Catlett: An American Artist in Mexico* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2000), 136.
2. The show and the catalogue are dedicated to Thomas Sokolowski, the director of the Zimmerli who died in 2020. Zimmerli Art Museum exhibition overview, available at: <http://www.zimmerlimuseum.rutgers.edu/voorhees-galleries/angela-davis-%E2%80%94seize-time#.YASDC-lKgdu>.
3. Ibid.

Zofia Kulik: Methodology, My Love

Edited by Agata Jakubowska
Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and
Kulik-KwieKulik Foundation, 2019

Reviewed by Joanna Turowicz

The artistic biography of Zofia Kulik (b. 1947) has been marked by radical shifts. In 1987, two years before the fall of the Iron Curtain, the Polish artist left the intensely active performance duo named KwieKulik, which she formed in 1971 with Przemysław Kwiek (b. 1945), her partner in life and art. She then dramatically abandoned processual art (Open Form)—a neo-avant-garde approach advanced by KwieKulik as "the Art of Activities," integrating critical performances commenting on Poland's communist social systems and relations—in order to return instead to the creation of object-based, material artworks (Closed Form). Hijacking the modernist and pejorative notion of Closed Form conceived by Oskar Hansen,¹ her former professor, she boldly remade it into her own emancipatory artistic agenda. In one of her first statements upon departing KwieKulik, she offered, "I am fascinated by Closed

Forms. Centricity, symmetry, multiplication, order, figural ornament, imposing upon myself certain preexisting patterns of structures (monuments, medals, mandalas, carpets, and gates) that I try to fill with my own madness—these constitute my formal and constructive rules of composition" (64).

Over the next twenty years, Kulik successfully pursued a solo career, developing an internationally recognized artistic idiom of large-format black-and-white photographic collages and a unique technique of "multiple-exposure photographs" (65–67, 175) filled with, among other things, visual elements drawn from the iconosphere of Communist Poland and other totalitarian regimes, as in the epic frieze *All the Missiles Are One Missile* (1993; Fig. 1). In this monumental photo-collage, displayed during the Venice Biennale in 1997, the artist scrutinizes the narrative of terror and power in visual culture and considers the reciprocal relations between imaginaries of femininity and masculinity: the left part of the work is devoted to women's cultural images, while the right side presents more actively militarized men. This work and other complex compositional structures often utilize repetitive ornamental borders fea-

turing draped or nude males gesturing or posing with religious or military accessories (for example, artist Zbigniew Libera modeled for the *Archive of Gestures* series of 1987–91); they are full of state-making and wartime iconography as well as numerous references to historical art, and are aesthetically reminiscent of Gothic pointed arches, patterned mosaics, or Persian carpets. These works had as their basis Kulik's constantly growing "archive of images," photographs taken in the studio and outdoors, in addition to photographed television images, which the artist used to produce her most monumental piece, *From Siberia to Cyberia* (1998–2004). This large-format photo-mural (68 feet long and 8 feet high) is made up of around 18,000 small photographs—television screenshots of programs and films that the artist watched over the years 1975–2004—and critically reveals the massive attack by visual culture on human subjectivity. Says Kulik, "All my works consist of endless gathering and archivization of the images of this world" (247). Kulik's political photo-collages quickly won recognition among Polish and international critics, who saw in them insightful analyses of the mechanisms of violence exerted by phallogocentric systems on the masochistically

subjugated individual, or deconstructions of entrenched national and political myths. In the context of feminist art history, one should also mention the artist's numerous self-portraits, a motif recurring throughout her solo practice as a visual manifestation of the subjectivity and agency of a woman artist.

The next major turn in Kulik's artistic biography occurred in 2007 at the peak of her international career. Her monumental photo-collages—such as her self-portrait *The Splendour of Myself II* (1997), an ironic, witty and feminist dialogue with Renaissance images of Queen Elizabeth I—were juxtaposed with Rembrandt's paintings at Castle Wilhelmshöhe during *Documenta 12* in Kassel. Despite this success, later that year Kulik virtually stopped making her own art, focusing instead on organizing and researching the vast KwieKulik Archive together with a team of art historians and her ex-partner.² In their countless performances, for-camera activities, interventions, and films, KwieKulik had blurred the boundary between the private and public spheres, exposing the absurdities of life in the communist system. A monumental monograph of the duo's work issued in 2012,³ as well as a series of their exhibitions in Poland and abroad (such as *KwieKulik. SHE and HE* at the Badischer Kunstverein in Karlsruhe, 2018), established the pair's position in the lexicon of neo-avant-garde art of the 1970s and 1980s.

Zofia Kulik: Methodology, My Love, published by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw in the English-language series *Museum Under Construction*, responds to an urgent need for documenting and disseminating Kulik's solo oeuvre, paying particular attention to her complex double biography and the sociopolitical contexts of a woman artist. The successive volumes of the series reflect the Museum's program, that is exhibitions and conferences, as well as the development of its collection—activities aimed at reinterpreting and disseminating modern and contemporary art, particularly that from Central and Eastern Europe; monographs of women artists, including Alina Szapocznikow (1926–1973), Zofia Rydet (1911–1997), Maria Bartuszoová

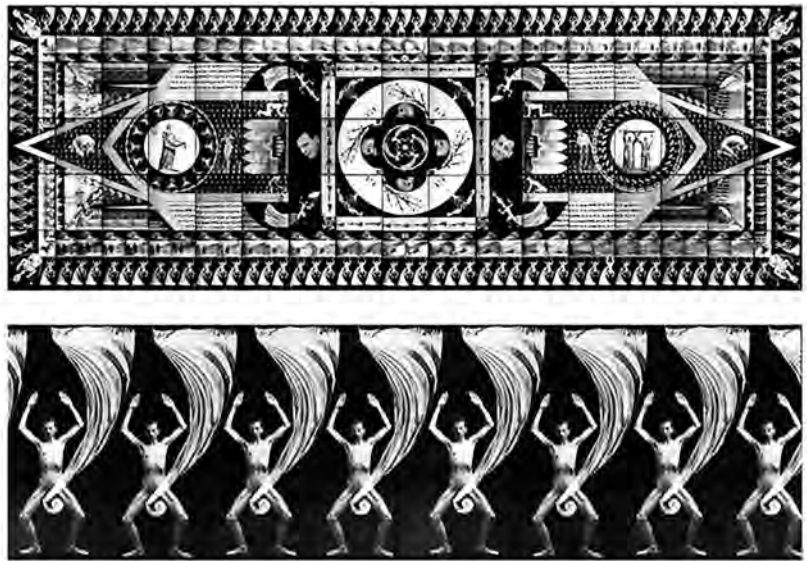


Fig. 1. Zofia Kulik, *All the Missiles Are One Missile* (1993), 2 of 85 gelatin silver prints, 10' x 28', total and fragment, Centre Pompidou Collection, Paris.

(1936–1996), and Miriam Cahn (b. 1949), feature prominently among them. Volume 17 of the series, devoted to Kulik, should be considered as the museum's pledge to continue researching her individual practice and popularizing her art through exhibitions.

Edited by Agata Jakubowska, Associate Professor and Deputy Director at the Department of Art History of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, *Zofia Kulik* is the first monograph on the artist⁴ and includes a section of color reproductions accompanied by thirteen essays that contextualize or problematize her art and outline new interpretations and perspectives.

The opening essay by Tomasz Załuski, as well as those by Katarzyna Ruchel-Stockmans and Dorota Łuczak, seek to grasp the overall phenomenon of Kulik's art, paying particular attention to her complex artistic and archival methodology, showing the consistency and continuity of certain issues (recurring visual forms, themes, or schemas) that she has embraced over the last several decades. Załuski interprets Kulik's individual career primarily as the result of a need to "fully unleash her 'archival drive,' which was already present (but largely suppressed) during the KwieKulik period" (65). He points to an intriguing fundamental

continuity occurring between the artist's two biographies that manifests in her approach to visual structures in connection with history and collective and private memory. Analyzing Kulik's film essays from the series *Cultivating the Archive. A Performative Work* (2016–17), Załuski notes her surprising, though perhaps temporary, return to processual practices whereby the leading Polish protagonist of the 'archival turn' in the visual arts began to expand her own concept of the archive and archival practice by taking into consideration her own body—its material, performative, and affective memory (75).

Similarly, Katarzyna Ruchel-Stockmans scrutinizes the "insatiable" archival practice that "underlies" each and every work by Kulik by juxtaposing two seemingly distant works: *Archives of Gestures* (an extensive archive critically showing one male model "assuming the most demanding poses") and the photo-mural *From Siberia to Cyberia* (250). "While different in method and formal result," she argues, "these extensive cycles reveal the entanglement of the artist's practice with her private life and the collective history she is part of" (248). Dorota Łuczak, in turn, stresses Kulik's background as a sculptor and alumna of the Faculty of Sculpture of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. Referencing Hans

Belting's notion of the "image embodied in the medium," Łuczak perceives Kulik's unique multiple-exposure photographic collages as the result of a sculptural strategy of stitching or "sewing together" images embodied in the material medium of photography (272, 277). Another comprehensive perspective is set out by Angela Dimitrakaki, who, based on a feminist and neo-Marxist approach, analyzes the emancipatory and "labor-intensive" role of Kulik's post-1987 artistic and archival practice, outlining its actual economic aspects as related to Poland's wider socio-political transformation.

A distinct group of essays comprises case-studies detailing selected projects by Kulik. Luiza Nader discusses *Ambassadors of the Past* and *From the KwieKulik Archive* (both 2006) that serve as a commentary on the practice of the duo KwieKulik and, more broadly, on the functioning of the Polish neo-avant-garde community of the 1970s and 1980s. It is worth noting that the color photo-collages marked a switch to digital technology, which was more effective than the time-consuming method of multiple-exposure photography. Edit András and Wiktoria Szczupacka, in turn, remember Kulik's few little-known solo projects from her time in the symbiotic duo, making the reader aware of the artist's subjectivity, clearly distinct if somewhat repressed at the time. Anna Kałuża and Agata Jakubowska interpret selected series produced after 2000, when Kulik—working from the position of a mature and fulfilled artist—began slowly to focus attention on her immediate surroundings: her garden, her family, and the "domesticated" KwieKulik Archive, explored through a Derridean sensibility.

At the current time of the coronavirus pandemic and mounting economic problems, coupled with an intense conservative-patriarchal turn in Polish and global politics, what resounds most powerfully are the essays discussing Kulik's early works, which emphasized both gender and politics. Two now classic essays from the late 1990s, by Ewa Lajer-Burcharth and Sarah G. Wilson, reprinted for this book, remind us of how Kulik was shaped during that decade, when experiences related to the post-Communist

socio-political situation were still fresh. In her groundbreaking interpretation, Lajer-Burcharth notices in Kulik's works a psychoanalytic diagnosis of communist and post-communist culture where masochism was a central psycho-cultural mechanism for the formation of Central European subjectivity. As Lajer-Burcharth interprets Kulik's use of male images: "Kulik's male protagonists ... represent the idea of the communist subject as the function of a *system*—neither an anonymous state apparatus nor a mere ideological abstraction, but rather a system of cultural signification defined as a repertoire of specific signs and poses. It is the masculinist rhetoric of this system, as much as the maleness of the subject it assumes, that Kulik's work makes apparent" (147–48). Likewise, Wilson adds reflections on the Catholic Church's repressive-disciplining influence on the development of subjectivity during the Polish transformation, while pointing out the power of resistance embedded in Kulik's anti-patriarchal art. "Forever caught between the sickle and the cross, her ironic self-referentiality nonetheless links up with mandalas of healing and of our archetypal memory," comments Wilson (183).

These two essays resonate aptly with commissioned texts by Suzana Milevska and Michał Murawski examining the political aspects of Kulik's works from today's perspective in relation to the current political tensions in Poland. Referencing Gilles Deleuze's notion that the eternal return is not a return of the same but of difference, Milevska argues how "Kulik's works can be interpreted as a certain warning, or even an anticipation, of the evident recent recurrence or strengthening of patriarchy, the organized amnesia around fascist atrocities from the past, and the growing racism in contemporary Poland ..." (215–16). This contemporary context is also stressed by Murawski, who, however, speaking from the position of an anthropologist of Warsaw's architecture and urban spaces, notices a potential of revolt and resistance in the marching and disciplined human masses shown in Kulik's works. At the time of Poland's ongoing Women's Strike (Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet or OSK) and recurring

mass street protests fomented by the introduction of radically strict anti-abortion laws in October last year at the height of the pandemic crisis, these interpretations and Kulik's works themselves gain a pressing topical urgency.

Editor Jakubowska deserves credit for a successful presentation of Zofia Kulik's oeuvre in its entirety—from her little-known student projects to the film essays of 2016–17—whereas the respective authors should be applauded for their competent and inspiring analyses of her works. Due to the book's limited format, some important topics have been left uncovered, such as the significance of the different series of Kulik's self-portraits, where the artist examines her subjectivity in connection with gender and her own biography. But what I probably miss the most in this first monograph of the Polish artist is a detailed reflection on the significance and nature of Kulik's multi-year hiatus during her solo practice. A chronological list of the featured reproductions (321–23)—the only timeline in the book—makes the reader acutely aware of the lack of new solo projects between 2007 and 2016. Further, what are the profits and losses (artistic, psychological, and economic) resulting from Kulik's decision to initiate research into the KwieKulik archive and her active participation in the process of the duo's historicization? What does the artist think today about that decision? These concluding remarks point moreover to an urgent need to continue research into the artist's oeuvre and biography, leading to her catalogue raisonné. By significantly expanding the discursive context for Kulik's work, *Zofia Kulik: Methodology, My Love* makes us realize how much we need her critical anti-patriarchal art at the time of an intense conservative shift in world politics.

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Notes

This review was translated from the Polish by Marcin Wawrzyńczak.

1. The theoretical system of Open Form developed by Oskar Hansen, professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, influenced the processual practices of several generations of the school's alumni, including "the Art of Activities" of the KwieKulik duo; see for example Aleksandra Kędziorek and Łukasz Ronduda, eds., *Oskar Hansen: Opening Modernism. On Open Form Architecture, Art and Didactics* (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2014).

2. Since 1982, Kulik and Kwiek have lived in Łomianki near Warsaw on the same property, but since their split in different buildings; the KwieKulik Archive is also housed there. In 2011, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw acquired the Archive, fragments of which will be presented in a permanent exhibition at the institution's new space, to be launched in 2023.

3. See Łukasz Ronduda and Georg Scholhammer, eds., *KwieKulik: Zofia Kulik & Przemysław Kwiek* (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and KwieKulik Archive; Wrocław: BWA Wrocław Galleries

of Contemporary Art, Awangarda Gallery; Vienna: Kontakt: The Art Collection of Erste Group and ERSTE Foundation, 2012).

4. For catalogues presenting fragments of the artist's oeuvre, see for example, Piotr Piotrowski, ed., *Zofia Kulik. From Siberia to Cyberia* (Poznań: National Museum, 1999); Bożena Czubak, ed., *Zofia Kulik. Self-Portraits and the Garden* (Warsaw: Le Guern Gallery, 2004), and Hans Günter Golinski, ed., *Zofia Kulik: From Siberia to Cyberia and Other Works* (Bochum: Museum Bochum; Rostock: Kunsthalle Rostock, 2005).

Radical Virtuosity: Ana Mendieta and the Black Atlantic

By Genevieve Hyacinthe
The MIT Press, 2019

Reviewed by Melanie Anne Herzog

Cuban-born artist Ana Mendieta (1948–1985) has been the subject of numerous exhibitions and publications that frame her life, her art, and her artistic legacy in relation to histories of performance art, site-specific installations, and earthworks. Critical analysis of her complex and multivalent art practice has been shaped predominantly by feminist readings of Mendieta's embodied performativity, and by considerations of ways in which her experience of dislocation and exile shaped her work.¹ More recently, in exhibitions such as *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985*, scholars and curators have positioned Mendieta among the pantheon of Latin American, specifically Cuban, women artists.² Genevieve Hyacinthe extends such critical analyses in *Radical Virtuosity: Ana Mendieta and the Black Atlantic*, an incisive, well-considered, and thoroughly researched art historical intervention.

With precision and clarity, Hyacinthe draws upon previous scholarship while refiguring Mendieta as an artist and interlocutor of the Black Atlantic.³ In *Radical Virtuosity* Hyacinthe frames her analysis of Mendieta's art praxis within this formulation of ongoing intellectual and cultural mixing; as she tells us in the book's introduction, "I am aligning Mendieta's process with the spiritually

innervated, politically charged actions and evolving formats of black Atlantic ritual practices.... My reference to Mendieta's 'radical virtuosity' implies her appropriation and redeployment of black Atlantic elements according to her own measure" (10–11). She posits Mendieta's "dedicated insertion of self" into the discourses of contemporary art with which she found "artistic, cultural, and sociopolitical affinity" as "an act of activism" (11). As Hyacinthe explores these affinities, she compares Mendieta's work to that of a vast range of artists to highlight both affinities with and departures, or ruptures, from their processes and their works' significations.

Throughout *Radical Virtuosity*, Hyacinthe considers concepts and ritual practices that imbue Black Atlantic earthworks and, more specifically, Mendieta's work, with expressive and spiritual power. Key to her broad formulation of earthworks—as earth-based ritual, the planting of trees, and the making of objects from natural materials imbued with spiritual power—is *el monté*, "a liminal concept and aesthetic" (155) that connotes wild places: mountains, jungles, and woods. Hyacinthe describes as *el monté* Mendieta's process, the spaces in which her work was made and seen, the materials used by the artist, and the Afro-Cuban ritual aesthetics that pervade Mendieta's invocation of Santería ceremonies in her feminist performatives on uncultivated land. She also sees in Mendieta's praxis the attendant principle of *monté adentro*, which loosely translates as "going back to the land."⁴

In the book's Introduction, "Disappearance as Sociopolitically Intense Black Atlantic Performativity," Hyacinthe outlines the key precepts that shape this book, beginning with a close reading of "ritual gesture" in a photograph of Mendieta's performative *Body Tracks* (1974). Building upon the Black Atlantic concepts of witnessing (*árbtrá*) and following (*serio*) as processes integral to the indoctrination of practitioners into the Black Atlantic ritual format of Santería, Hyacinthe calls attention to the gestures and postures of ritual prostration, supplication, and praise that pervade the practice of Santería and that figure repeatedly in Mendieta's performative and earth works. She highlights the principles of embodiment and endurance—both the time-based embodied labor of Mendieta's performance-based actions and their ongoing existence as photographs, films, and film stills. Rather than serving as documentary indices of ephemeral performances, Hyacinthe argues, these intermedia iterations of Black Atlantic performativity, continually reinvigorated through audience interaction—both witnessing and following—were critical to Mendieta's practice, a Black Atlantic dynamic of active witness, a call that invites response. She also posits in Mendieta's work a deliberate, activist strategy of disappearance, or self-removal, as a liberatory praxis that creates space for audience response—a "talking back." It is this "sophisticated strategy of self-removal and apparent disempowerment" that, for Hyacinthe, characterizes



Fig. 1. Ana Mendieta, *Árbitra* (1982), color photograph. © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC. Galerie Lelong & Co., New York.

Mendieta's "socio-politically intense black Atlantic performativity" (24). Mendieta constructed the act of disappearance, Hyacinthe claims, "to make an intense, lasting critique of both the art-world-based and everyday global hegemonies faced by the Black Atlantic collective...." She continues, "I contend that Mendieta, in fact, does not disappear at all. Instead, she makes enduring gestures of self as a Black Atlantic 'body collective' to 'fight the power' by deliberate design" (57).

While Hyacinthe assumes readers' familiarity with Mendieta's biography, in her discussion of the artist's likely limited knowledge of Santería and minimal engagement with the intellectual and cultural precepts of the Black Atlantic during her early years, she hints at Mendieta's privileged upbringing and social location as "white" before her forced exile from Cuba to the United States in 1961, at age twelve, following the Cuban revolution.⁵ She also addresses the experiences of racism shared by Mendieta and her older sister in Iowa, where they were treated as "Other" and as Black, which led Mendieta to identify as a "woman of color" and assert her identification with marginalized Black and Brown peoples for the rest of her life, and to forge an ethos and praxis of

Black Atlantic collectivity. As previous scholars have noted, Mendieta's childhood memories of the Afro-Cuban religious practices of her family's servants were amplified by what she learned about Santería in the US and through study of African and African diaspora art at the University of Iowa. Still, Hyacinthe acknowledges that, for Mendieta, "grounding her work in the intricacies of black Atlantic aesthetics may not have been a prime motivation" (21), but argues that an audience reception-based reading of Mendieta's work offers the potential for an interpretation of its Black Atlantic signification—not, she emphasizes, to overstate the importance of Black Atlantic ritual strategies and processes in Mendieta's work, "but to probe the work in this light with new sophistication" (23).

Chapter One, "From *Árbitra* to *Serio*: Experiencing Mendieta with Slow Temporality and Embodiment," delves more deeply into the idea of witness and following, and Mendieta's penchant for works of art that require extended contemplation. As she explores Mendieta's Black Atlantic performative strategies, Hyacinthe considers her embodied presence (and constructed disappearance) in her *Siluetas*, such as her 1976 *Anima: Silhueta de Cohetes* (Firework Piece) and the film that records the glowing presence of this figure lighting the night sky of Oaxaca, Mexico. She notes that in this piece Mendieta "disappears" from the process of making, as the piece was fabricated by a pyrotechnical artisan, a socio-politically deliberate "collaboration" (64). She returns to *árbitra* and *serio*, ways in which audiences are invited to enter Mendieta's "collaborative performative structures" (75), with attention to *Árbitra* (1982; Fig. 1), a tree stump in Hartford, Connecticut, into which Mendieta burned a *Silhueta* using gunpowder to achieve a mark "like a burn tattooing the tree trunk's outer layer" (78). She also considers a contact sheet that records the intimacy of this process, including Mendieta's imparting of information to her students at the Hartford Art School, "not unlike the way a priestess of Santería or some other African or black Atlantic ritual

system parses out sacred information to aspirants" (82).

In this chapter, Hyacinthe also describes her own embodied *serio* engagement with Mendieta's *Imágen de Yágul* (1973). The author traveled to Oaxaca and, after speaking with groundkeepers at Yágul, where Mendieta was photographed reclining in a rock tomb, her naked body covered with wildflowers, subsequently removed her own clothes and laid in a similar crypt with her body analogously covered with flowers purchased from a local vendor and was photographed by her student-assistant, Carmelita Diaz. In what she describes as an act of collaboration, Hyacinthe's re-enactment of Mendieta's first *Silhueta* revealed to her the "focus, discipline, endurance under pressure, and composure" brought by the artist to her action, as well as the nuances of her reclining posture (93). Collaboration is most often construed as a mutually consensual act, so perhaps Hyacinthe's own action should more accurately be considered an act of homage and an effective means of acquiring embodied understanding; as she writes, "By participating with my body, like a devotee who must use her body as part of the strategies of indoctrination into black Atlantic ritual arts, I gained a new avenue of access into the ritual of Mendieta's art formats" (94).

In Chapter Two, "Self-Indoctrinating *El Monté* on American Soil: Neo-Baroque Devils and Goddesses," Hyacinthe applies a "reception-based reading signifying black Atlantic syncretism, rebirth, and fluidity regarding gender performativity" (103) as she foregrounds the Latin American neo-baroque as a hybrid aesthetic that infuses Mendieta's work. Mendieta's ancestry and self-identification, the ritual practices of Santería, and avant-garde art practices intersect in Hyacinthe's analysis of "the comingling of black Atlantic neo-baroque and *el monté* as Mendieta's means of 'self-care' or strategy of endurance while in exile" (105).

The chapter title calls out, in an Afro-Cuban context, Mendieta's inscription, "There is a devil inside me," in her

performative action *Blood Sign* (1974), a Super 8 film, and other works, a reference to the Catholic upbringing of her childhood, her feeling that her forced emigration was the result of an unknown sin, and the manifestation in multiple aspects of Mendieta's oeuvre of the Santería trickster and Afro-Cuban deity or Orichá named Elegguá, the guardian of the crossroads where life transitions occur. The "goddesses" referred to here include Ixchel, the Mayan healer-goddess of the night, and the Orichá Yemayá, the mother of the ocean who, like Elegguá, is associated with liminal gender expression; accordingly, Hyacinthe reads references to these deities into Mendieta's play with gender in her self-representation. These Orichá also mediate in some way between the realms of earth (the corporeal) and sky (the astral), the liminal space in which Mendieta repeatedly figured herself. They are associated, too, with the waters of the Black Atlantic, which Hyacinthe contends Mendieta employed rituals of "self-baptism" that constituted "her metaphorical black Atlantic rebirth" and her self-indoctrination into Santería, thus creating "*el monté* on American soil" (135).

In Chapter Three, "Built to Outlast the Earthwork Standard," Hyacinthe directs our attention to Mendieta's challenge to "the hegemony of the U.S. Earthworks movement" (181), through what she terms "a palpable registration of labor in her process (how she makes a work) and performatives (the works themselves)" (185). In a photograph of 1981, we see Mendieta creating a *Silhueta* with her bare hands, in intimate physical contact with the earth as she claws from the ground a mound of dirt scaled to the dimensions of her own body. Mendieta's labor, unlike the use of machinery by hegemonic earthwork artists to move vast amounts of earth, demanded intense and sustained exertion and focus—a "rebutal of the Earthwork standard" (191) by which the earth was reconfigured—according to the artist, "brutalized" without regard to the ecological implications of this assertion of human dominance. Hyacinthe also notes Mendieta's

"collectivizing outreach of her hand to marginalized everyday people" in her land-based projects (196).

The Orichá Yemayá figures prominently in the book's expansive conclusion, "*El Monté* Feminism: The Evolving Self as Silhueta Expansion." Hyacinthe considers Mendieta's performative actions and presence in relation to an expanding sense of Black Atlantic feminism: the artist in a shimmering dress at a going-away party before her departure for Rome in the early 1980s, an evocation of Yemayá as "a liminal and hybrid figure of black Atlantic ritual" (229); Mendieta's conjuring of Yemayá in her *La Venus Negra* performative, which included the 1980 photograph *Black Venus* (Fig. 2) that appeared in the feminist art journal *Heresies* in 1981; and contemporary performative invocations of Yemayá and Oshún, the river Orichá of pure water, fertility, and love.

Following the principles Hyacinthe highlights in Mendieta's work, *Radical Virtuosity* offers readers a thoughtful and self-reflexive invitation to consider Mendieta's work through a Black Atlantic lens. Throughout this book, Hyacinthe highlights Mendieta's "practice of radical virtuosity"—the artist's refusal to be bound by art world limitations and boundaries of genres, processes, mediums, and her claim for the creation and display of her work in sites that suited her purposes. In her courageous surpassing of previous discursive boundaries in writing about this complicated artist, Hyacinthe has crafted a book of "radical virtuosity" in its own right. •

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Fig. 2. Ana Mendieta, *Black Venus* (1980), black-and-white photograph. © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC. Galerie Lelong & Co., New York.

Note

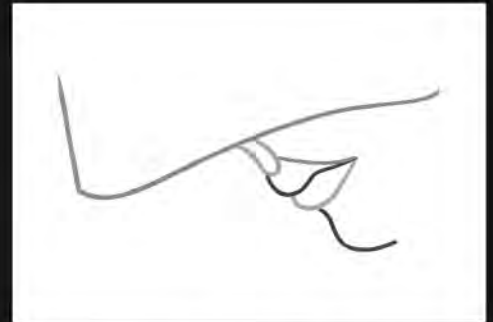
1. See, for example, Jane Blocker, *Where Is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1999); and *Ana Mendieta: Earth/Body, Sculpture and Performance 1972–1985*, ed. Olga M. Viso (Washington, DC: Hirshhorn Museum, 2004).
2. See *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985*, eds. Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta (Los Angeles: Hammer Museum, and New York: Prestel, 2017).
3. Paul Gilroy, the British literary scholar and theorist of race and racism, introduced the term Black Atlantic as constitutive of the centrality of the trafficking and enslavement of African and Africa-descended people in shaping the Atlantic world, and the critical importance of ongoing, transnational African-diasporic intellectual and cultural exchange as integral to the cultural and social fabric of the modern world. See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, and London and New York: Verso, 1993).
4. Hyacinthe highlights Lydia Cabrera's *El Monté*, a key text on Afro-Cuban Earthwork published in 1954, in Mendieta's possession after she completed her graduate studies, though she notes that "it is unclear to what extent [Mendieta] read and digested its contents" (39).
5. On Santería and Mendieta's childhood memory, see Joan Marter, "1 February 1985: Joan Marter and Ana Mendieta," in *Ana Mendieta: Traces*, edited by Stephanie Rosenthal (London: Hayward, 2013), 229–30.

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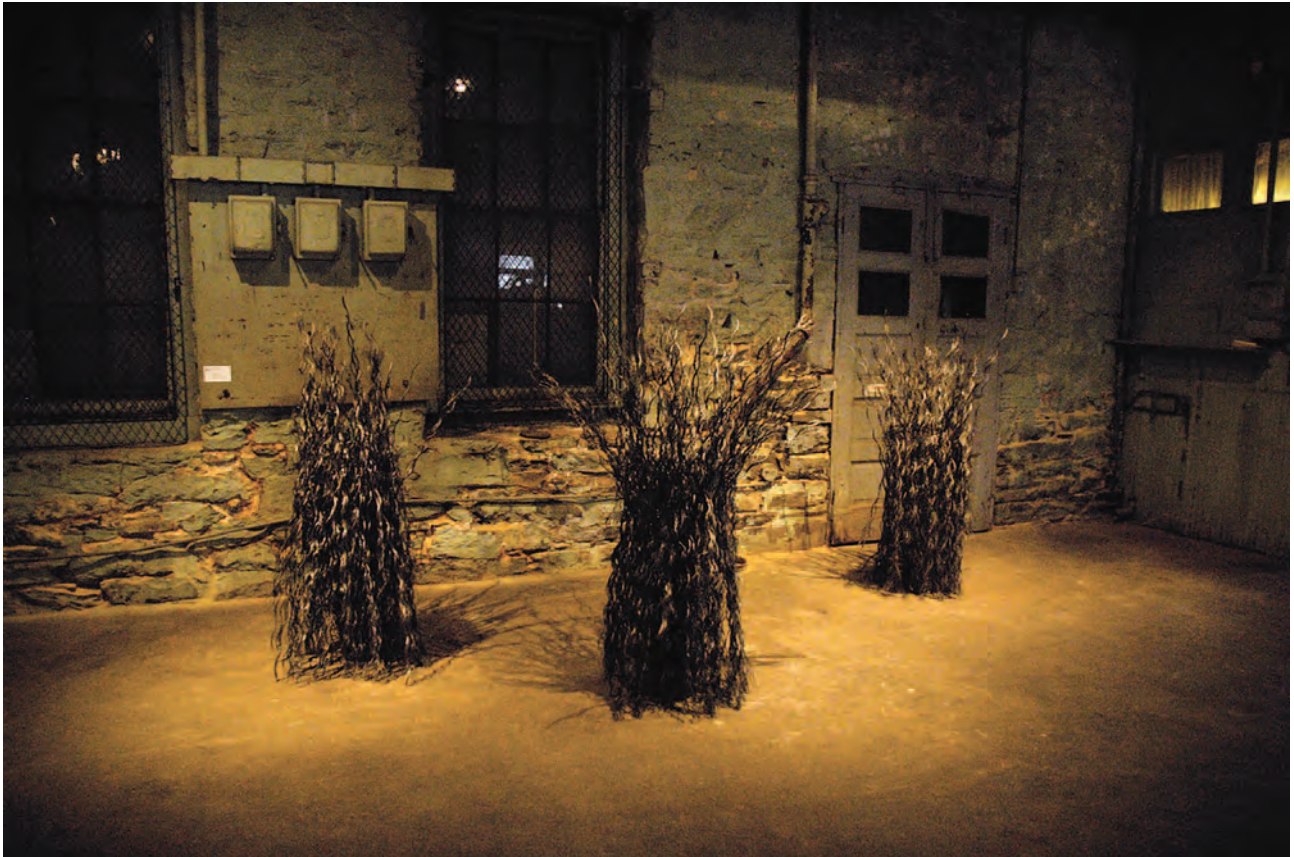
Pl. 1 .Mary Ann Unger, *The Well* (1979), bonded iron, 2' x 14' x 14'.
Courtesy of Mary Ann Unger Estate, New York.



Pl. 2. Maren Hassinger, *Wreath* (1978), branches and wire rope, 18" x 165".
Courtesy of Susan Inglett Gallery, New York.



Pl. 3. Mary Ann Unger, *Misericordia* (1989), bonded iron, 8' x 11' x 11'. Courtesy of Mary Ann Unger Estate, New York.



Pl. 4. Maren Hassinger, *Dangerous Ground* (1981), wire rope, 48" x 36" x 36" each (20 units, must be remade).
Courtesy of Susan Inglett Gallery, New York.



Pl. 5. Mary Ann Unger, *Across the Bering Strait*, (1992-94), Hydrocal over steel with pigment and graphite, 55' x 33' x 6'.
Trans Hudson Gallery, Jersey City, NJ, Photo: 1994.



Pl. 6. Helen Frankenthaler, *The Red Sea* (1959), oil and charcoal on sized, primed canvas with painted wood frame, 69 5/8" x 68 1/2". Private collection. © 2021 Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Pl. 7. Ethel Schwabacher, *Evening* (1958), oil on canvas, 51 1/2" x 85 3/4". Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Christopher C. Schwabacher and Brenda S. Webster (M.2003.201). © Ethel Schwabacher Trust. Photo courtesy Museum Associates/LACMA.



Pl. 8. Yvonne Thomas, *Highways* (1957), oil on canvas, 50" x 62". © Estate of Yvonne Thomas. Private collection. Courtesy Berry Campbell Gallery, New York.



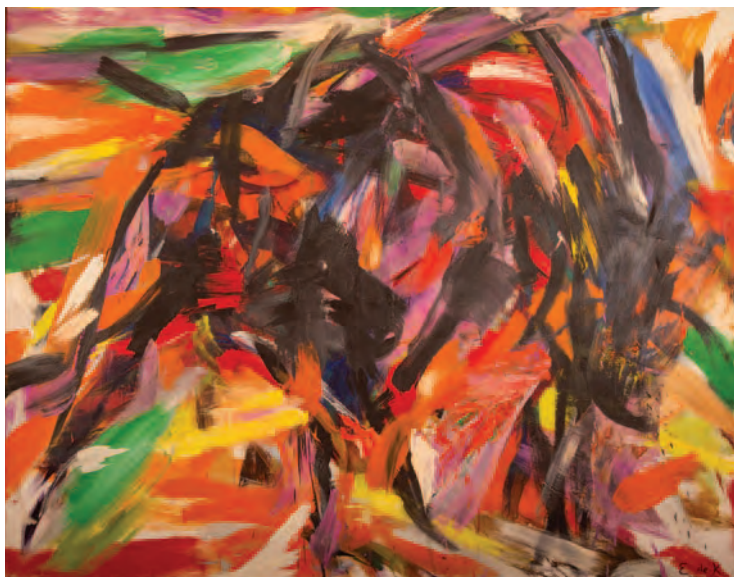
Pl. 9. Elaine de Kooning, *March Sky* (1959), oil on board, 18 1/2" x 24 1/2". Current location unknown. © Elaine de Kooning Trust. Courtesy of Levis Fine Art, New York.



Pl. 10. Pat Passlof, *Promenade for a Bachelor* (1958), 68" x 68". © Milton Resnick Pat Passlof Foundation, Courtesy of Eric Firestone Gallery, New York. Collection of Christian Levett.



Pl. 11. Linda Lindeberg, *Untitled* (1959), oil on canvas, 30 1/4" x 28 1/4". Collection of Claire and Paul Burney, Amarillo, Texas. © Linda Lindeberg Estate. Photo: Amy Von Lintel.



Pl. 12. Elaine de Kooning, *Untitled [Bull]* (1959), oil on canvas, 48" x 60". Private collection, West Texas. © Elaine de Kooning Trust. Photo by Rik Andersen.



Pl. 13. Sarah James Eddy, *Susan B. Anthony on the Occasion of Her 80th Birthday* (1901), oil on canvas, 74 x 60". Division of Political and Military History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.



Pl. 14. Meredith Bergmann, *Women's Rights Pioneers Monument* (2020), bronze and granite, 168". Central Park, New York City, New York. Photograph courtesy Lynn Hamlin, 2021.



Pl. 15. Miri Abramsohn, *Girl in a Blue Dress* (2008), oil on canvas and scrabble letter tiles, 27 1/2" x 39 3/8".



Pl. 16. Miri Abramsohn, *Father in the Striped Pajamas* (2010), oil on canvas and scrabble tiles, 31 1/2" x 31 1/2".



Pl. 17. Miri Abramsohn, *Pieta* (2012), papier mache and glassy candy on canvas, 11" x 7 7/8".



Pl. 18. Miri Abramsohn, *A Coca Cola Calendar, Woman with a Yellow Badge* (2013), collage and ink on paper (2013), 11 3/4" x 11 3/4".

Kyra Belán

Love Mother Earth

Global Climate Strike 2019 acrylic on canvas 40"x30" 2021



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