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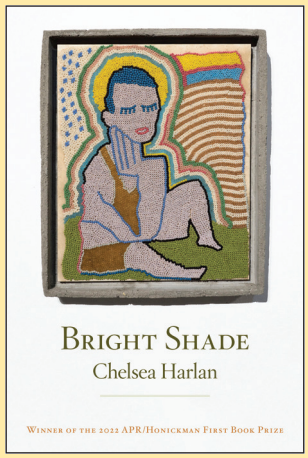


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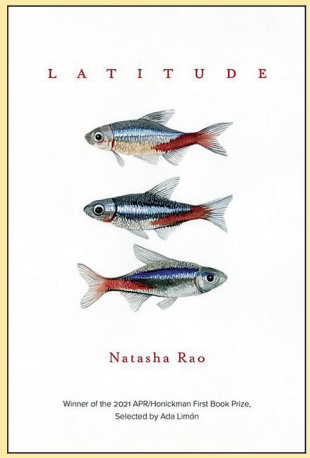
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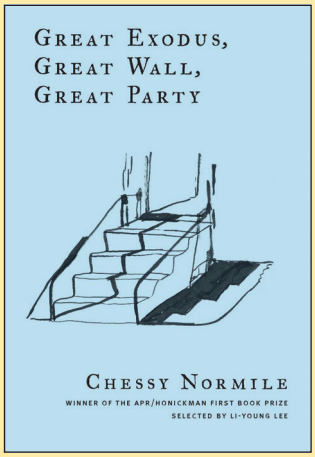
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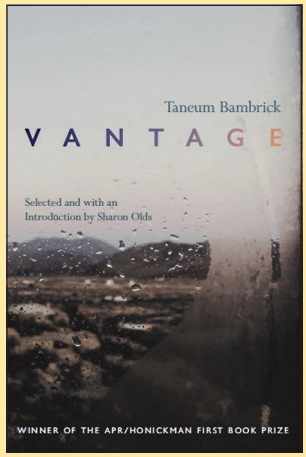
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(Front cover)
Shirin Neshat,
Unveiling (1993), RC Print & ink, 60" x 40".
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The editors of *Woman's Art Journal* are profoundly grateful for our growing international readership, reflected through the daily stream of proposals for articles and book reviews, and requests for partnerships, received via our successful new website. *WAJ* Fall/Winter 2023 recognizes these global relationships, focusing on artists from varied origins, including women born in Iran, Cuba, Japan, and the US, all of whom, for our articles, developed transdisciplinary artistic modes in the late 1970s and '80s incorporating elements of photography and performance.

Our stunning cover and lead article by Erin Devine considers transnational artist Shirin Neshat, who came to the US from Iran in 1973, at the age of sixteen. Soon she was studying painting at the University of California, Berkeley. When she arrived in New York City her work was recognized for haunting self-portraits, and later, for her memorable videos. Devine contextualizes Neshat's formative US period in her first major installation, *Unveiling*, at Franklin Furnace in April 1993, the genesis of her renowned photography series on Iranian women, and early sculptural objects and Super-8 projections. *Unveiling*'s transgressive presentation as "performative excavations" and "portrait-subjects" strategically destabilized identities and deployed the artist's gaze. Devine argues how Neshat's codified body, dressed in chador with bodily close-ups ornamented in Persian calligraphy, may be entwined within a broader complex of cultural traditions and political forces that "contradictorily celebrate and violently repress women."

Ana Mendieta was exiled from her native Cuba at age eleven, when her father was sent to jail. She was transported to an orphanage in Iowa, and later became a performance artist as well as a sculptor. Philip Kelleher's "close looking" examines the bodily presences of the *Silueta* series, initiated in 1973 and pursued over one hundred photographic and performative iterations. Kelleher's astute material analysis and psychoanalytic lens draw on the notion of "curdling," broadly defined here as the impurity of the silhouette, to investigate the artist's mixed European and Indigenous American heritage, and the undermining of the photographic medium's claims to rational language and logic. As a Cuban artist denied her family and country, Mendieta created the *Silueta* as a sign of anchoring the body, a process that also established her identity paradoxically within and beyond the borders of feminism and singular cultural categories of woman, artist, and nature.

Artists Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman are collaborators who planned to "upend artistic and gendered taboos in photography." Beginning their partnership after meeting at the Institute of Design in Chicago, they agreed that feminist politics would be at the core of their practice. Joanna Gardner-Huggett explains that Ciurej and Lochman organized their photographic series as an attempt to disrupt gendered expectations in the domestic realm. At ID, they became aware of earlier women photographers who explored the nude female body, including Barbara Morgan, Imogen Cunningham, Judy Dater, and others. Collaborative works by these two young women led to many provocative narratives utilizing their own nude bodies—breasts and nude torsos find their way to dinner tables, outdoor settings, and scrabble games played by men. *Still Wet from the Cocoon* and *Glory on a Budget* are featured series and acknowledge various feminist forebears. Ciurej and Lochman use their own bodies through humor, parody, and feminism to consider how the domestic realm intersects with the public sphere.

The Japanese artist Maemoto Shōko was praised in the 1980s as one of the "Chō-shōjo" (Super Girls) while participating in many significant exhibitions in Japan and abroad. Scholar Kokatsu Reiko examines the unique and complicated categorization of Maemoto's career in 1980s Japan prior to the resurgence of her exhibitions in 2020, analyzing the artist's critical development, the feminist trends and histories in Japan, and the representation of Japanese women artists on the global biennial circuit. Maemoto developed complexly layered "felt craft" techniques and embroideries with denim and dongolos cloth, accessories, cute objects, and Naruko. Early works from the mid-1980s suggest her fears of childbirth. Later installations address the struggle to find her place as a woman artist in Japan and the prevalence of social themes with difficult subject matter.

The superlative reviews compiled by *WAJ* editor Alison Poe offer close engagements with new publications on drag, race, sexuality, mothering, photography, costume, among other interdisciplinary feminist art-historical studies. Examining the historical binaries and "slippage" of the categorical terms "abstraction" and "representation," Sarah Cowan's extensive double review, on queerness in contemporary abstraction and Black contemporary artist Jennifer Packer, strives for a three-dimensional humanist reading embedded in the artistic agency of non-normative spaces, embodiment, and oblique meanings. Megan Driscoll's review frames the fraught perspectives of Black matrilineage, revolution, and slavery, narrative extensions of "the double-consciousness of Black life" leveraged through photography. Nika Elder elucidates Barbara Chase-Riboud's reputation and creativity as a visual artist beyond her lauded achievements in poetry and literature. The polyvocal voices of motherhood, radical self-care, and art production are addressed by Li Yang's review of the art collective MATERNAL FANTASIES, and the polyphonic fiber art and indigenous "borderlines" of Consuelo Jimenez Underwood are unraveled by Matthew Simms.

The catalogue of Chinese-American artist Hung Liu at the National Portrait Gallery is reviewed thoughtfully by scholars Meng Yi and Jane Chin Davidson. Sarah Humphreville expands the narratives and geographical hegemony of women and global abstraction, and Lauren Cesiro exposes how the New Woman shaped photography as vehicles for self-expression and self-determination. The exhaustively researched biography on Florine Stettheimer is presented by Heather Hole. Neoclassical fashions (specifically white muslin dresses) of the 1790s catalyze Theresa Kutasz Christensen's review. Adelina Modesti analyzes Mary Garrard's latest book on Artemisia Gentileschi in the context of women's political agency and feminism. Catherine Puglisi turns her attention to a significant new exhibition catalogue on early modernist painter Lavinia Fontana.

Joan Marter and Aliza Rachel Edelman
Editors, *Woman's Art Journal*

Beyond Representation

The Evolution of Embodied Experience in Shirin Neshat's Early Art

By Erin Devine

Walking along Roosevelt Island's Four Freedoms State Park on the East River of Manhattan in late fall 2022, pedestrians would have encountered the image of a single, heavily kohled eye, Persian text spiraling around its iris, affixed onto the steps of the tree-lined promenade. Facing the United Nation's Headquarters on the opposite bank, these steps-turned-public art became the stage for speeches made that November by activists, including Hilary Clinton, calling for the removal of the government of Iran from the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women.[1] The image, *Offered Eyes* (Pl. 1), was appropriate to a series of works entitled *Eyes on Iran* displayed on the island by Iranian diaspora artists, although this singular piece was recycled from a far-earlier 1993 exhibition by its artist, Shirin Neshat (b. 1957).



Fig. 1. Shirin Neshat, installation view of *Unveiling* (1993), Franklin Furnace, New York. Photo by Marty Heitner, courtesy Franklin Furnace Archive. © Shirin Neshat.

That exhibition, titled *Unveiling* (1993; Fig. 1 and Pl. 2), was held at Franklin Furnace, an experimental non-profit gallery then located in Lower Manhattan, and notable as her first solo exhibition displaying installation-based sculptural works along with photographs. Although the former works remain largely ignored in her scholarship, they are constructive to understanding the spatial evolution Neshat would formulate from photography to moving-image installations. In *Translation and Transgression in the Art of Shirin Neshat*, the first twenty years of the artist's career is reinvestigated, from *Unveiling* through *Book of Kings*, an era of work from 1993 to 2012 devoted to Iranian subject matter.[2] However, her practice was dually contingent upon her transnational identity and a nascent period of appropriation and performativity that correspond with her interrogations of the social and psychological spaces women must navigate and defy. In this article, these strategies are positioned in Neshat's early works, between 1992 and 1997, toward her development of an embodied practice with which she had long been preoccupied, even before *Unveiling*.

Neshat's biography, as recorded in many interviews and articles, was often cursorily abridged, beginning with her first visit to Iran as the genesis of her debut exhibition. This naturally underserves the effects on her career from her early education in California and the decade after her move to New York in 1983. Correctly, Neshat arrived in the US in December 1973 at the age of sixteen to study, as many upper-class Iranians did during the second Pahlavi era (1941–79). She completed high school in Los Angeles before moving to San Francisco, eventually landing at the University of California, Berkeley, to pursue an art degree. Her final visit to Iran prior to



Fig. 2. Shirin Neshat with one of her paintings, circa 1980s. Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery. © Shirin Neshat.

the revolution (1978–79) was in 1977, and soon, as Neshat recalled, she would be "caught off guard. The borders closed and I had to support myself."[3] In addition to this isolation, she felt circumspect when anti-Iran protests escalated on the Berkeley campus and around the country during the hostage of the American Embassy in Tehran (1979–81).

While at Berkeley, Neshat studied painting and made what she has called "mediocre art." With her "ideas confused" she "wasn't really inspired by the art history," and much of this work she destroyed or abandoned (Fig. 2).[4] Whatever the content of that early 1980s curriculum, it did not aid Neshat's development of a body of work that addressed her diasporic experience, impacted by her troubling witness to a pivotal historical moment in her homeland through the lens of its principal adversary. Her submission to the MFA exhibition at the Berkeley Museum of Art included four untitled works of moderate size (34 x 46 inches) whose media included a hybrid of house paint, watercolor, pastel, and collage, an accumulation of materials perhaps bearing tendencies of Neo-Expressionist painting of the time. The 1982 exhibition, *Twenty-Nine Degrees*, named for twenty-nine participating graduates, was reviewed by fellow student Andrea Sadeghi for the college newspaper, *The Daily California*:

> Shirin Neshat's four untitled collages are delicate, ghostly depictions of vacant rooms, with doors leading to other rooms. Figures of women, rather like suffering Madonnas in their sorrowful attitudes, fade into pastel shades, through doorways and coffin-like boxes ... that conspire to suggest fully dimensional rooms and other rooms beyond.[5]

Even without surviving images, the "suffering Madonnas" were, plausibly, veiled women. Images of Iran's unrest in American media and the awareness of an impending Veiling Act (1983), bringing into law the compulsory obligation to wear hijab in public for all women and girls over the age of nine, certainly were on her mind. Neshat's struggle with the circumstances of diaspora, the double-consciousness of being at once the observer and the observed, manifest in an imagery of women who also seem suspended within ambiguous spaces and compellingly prefigure her later videos.

As a young artist in New York, Neshat felt intimidated and as underconfident as in her Berkeley days. Her output was reduced to a smattering of group exhibitions, and she tenuously pursued artistic ambitions.[6] Neshat was more consistently attenuated to arts administration during this period, arriving at The Storefront for Art & Architecture, an experimental incubator for visual art and architecture, in 1985. For the next ten years she performed a range of duties at The Storefront, assisted their curatorial program, and eventually married founder Kyong Park. Projects during Neshat's tenure included an inaugural program on performance and *After Tilted Arc*, an exhibition in 1985 on the controversial removal of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* from New York's Federal Plaza, with contributions and discussions by Carolee Schneemann (1939–2019), Mierle Laderman Ukeles (b. 1939), Hannah Wilke (1940–93), and Nancy Spero (1926–2009). Additional artists with whom Neshat interacted at The Storefront included Vito Acconci, Kiki Smith (b. 1954), and Jenny Holzer (b. 1950).

Neshat's work was informed as much by her collaborations with her New York art community as her return to Iran. It was not until after the end of the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88) and the death of Iran's post-revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, in 1989, that she even considered that return. By her first visit in May 1991, she was not only married but had an infant son, and her life in New York was further solidified by her US citizenship in 1986. Taking advantage of relaxed laws permitting diasporic citizens to reenter the country, she finally witnessed firsthand hijab enforcement under *Gasht-e Ershad* (Guidance Patrol or, colloquially, 'morality police'), and a radically different homeland "in which everyone functioned under a common ideology."[7] Upon her return, she was granted a residency at Henry Street Settlement and took two days per week from The Storefront to contemplate and experiment, handwriting Persian poems on her drawings of hands and shrouded figures, and eventually onto Xerox copies of photographs. In late 1992, she paired two images—with stones at their base—for a group show at Exit Art, by which time she had responded to a call for emerging performance artists from Franklin Furnace that resulted in *Unveiling* in April 1993. The



Fig. 3. Shirin Neshat, *Unveiling* (1993), sheet metal and Super-8 projection, 5′ x 8′. Franklin Furnace, New York. Photo by Marty Heitner, courtesy Franklin Furnace Archive. © Shirin Neshat.



Fig. 4. Shirin Neshat, installation of *Stoned Carpet* from *Unveiling* (1993), Franklin Furnace, New York. Photo by Marty Heitner, courtesy Franklin Furnace Archive. © Shirin Neshat.

photographs of Neshat dressed in chador and close-ups of her eyes, feet, and hands—the only parts of the female body publicly visible under Iran's restrictive dress code—were presented as unmatted 8 x 10 inch prints under glass (see Pl. 2). At that time Neshat had no gallery representation or intended audience or patronage and sought to create a group of works that could "convey my emotions, my responses, and my understanding of the profound political changes."[8]

Whether in the US or in Iran under Pahlavi, Neshat had arguably lived principally in Westernized societies; therefore, these self-portraits masqueraded hijab as an experience of her interstitial engagement with Iran through travel and return, underscoring the photographs as performative excavations toward her aspiration to understand the country's upheaval that she had watched from afar. This first iteration of *Unveiling* reveals an equal concern for those spatial-temporal encounters that conspire with questions of identity, chiefly the representation of sculptural objects, such as talismanic plates in the shape of hands. Neshat collected such hand-shaped artifacts in Tehrani bazaars, some of which contain human and animal forms covered with inscriptions.[9] One rendering of such plates at the Franklin Furnace exhibition is a Super-8 projected eye onto a large hand, cut from sheet metal, representing the Eye of Fatimah, the daughter of Mohammad, and one of the few female saints recognized in Islam (1993; Fig. 3). Other flat, metal hands were surrounded by rocks, encased under glass to appear like displayed archaeological artifacts (1993; Pl. 3). Broadly known as *hamsa*, an amulet of a palm-shaped symbol or hand with a central eye trace back to ancient Mesopotamia, a talisman of luck and protection from evil. In Iran, they also reference the severed hands of Shi'i martyrs who attempted to bring water from the Euphrates River to Imam Hossein and his followers, detained at the Battle of Karbala in the late seventh century.

Brought together relationally within Franklin Furnace's space, Neshat imbues both objects and portrait-subjects with equal significance and history. Her early representations of Iranian women, realized alongside the Super-8 film projection

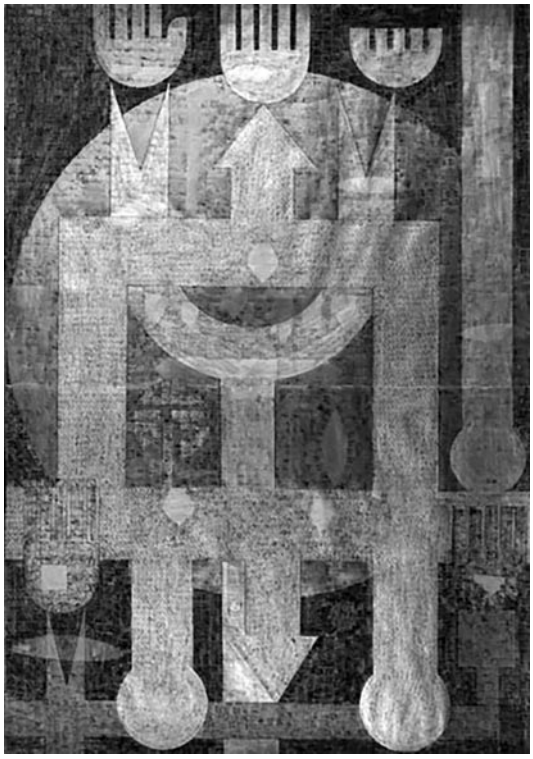


Fig. 5. Faramarz Pilaram, *Mosques of Isfahan (A)* (1963), watercolor, ink, paint, and printed seals on paper, 54" x 38 1/4". Courtesy Grey Art Gallery, New York University Art Collection. Gift of Abby Weed Grey, G1975.111.

and installations, suggest a codified body entwined within a broader complex of nationalist identifications, cultural traditions, and political forces that contradictorily celebrate and violently repress women. The most overtly political gesture from *Unveiling* was called *Stoned Carpet* (1993; Fig. 4), a Super-8 projection of the outline of a recumbent woman onto an installed pile of rocks. In Islam, the praying stone or *mohr*, when touched or bowed upon, is a mediator between Muslims in the act of prayer and their connection with the eternal or divine. Yet in her original proposal to Franklin Furnace, Neshat's reference to a "stoned body" co-signified religion's violence.[10] Conceptually replacing the material knots of the Persian carpet with variously sized and textured stones, Neshat signaled the replacement of Persian art traditions then currently viewed as minor or even irrelevant under the Islamic regime, therefore asserting that the censorship of art and objects, and the restrictions and violence upon the female body, are causally related, imposed as they are by the same repressive, theocratic regime.

With *Unveiling*, Neshat cohered a consistent body of work that fused text and image, and the appropriation of Persian and Islamic material culture, as hallmarks of her practice. The Saqqakhaneh artists had first incorporated a recognizably Persian visual rhetoric into an Iranian modern art movement. Based in Tehran in the 1960s, they bared interest in Iranian folk art and were so-called for the repeated visual references in their paintings and sculpture to the Saqqakhaneh, a public drinking fountain with the image of a hand installed in wall niches dedicated to the early Shi'ite martyrs at Karbala (Fig. 5). The Saqqakhaneh artists or "spiritual pop artists" paid reverence to iconic objects of Iranian-Islamic tradition and incorporated calligraphy for both its abstract embellishment and historical and sacred associations.[11]

Neshat similarly appropriated traditional Islamic and Persian art, bridging them with contemporary modes of practice to which she was exposed in New York, such as installation and the conceptual, subversive use of text to image. Her multiple modes of address—through bodily projections upon inanimate steel and stone surfaces, the integration of the low-brow folk traditions of the religious Saqqakhaneh and the magical hamsas, and the high-brow art of carpet-weaving—juxtaposed the past and present of Iran. Whereas her Saqqakhaneh predecessors blamed Iran's cultural suppression and "Westoxication" on its intimidating Pahlavi monarchy, Neshat pins the same loss of culture to the censorship of the later Islamist government. The resistance to a Westcentric modernization during the Pahlavi period was articulated in the Saqqakhaneh's calligraphic appropriations that bear the futility of meaning, emphasizing instead of verse the abstract shapes of letters and "the importance of the written word as a form that is open to multiple interpretations."[12] The transdisciplinary forms of calligraphy, Persian poetry, and folk art signified a culture under threat; however, Neshat's approach differed in that the female body was centrally positioned as the barometer of historic and political shifts.

In *Unveiling*'s photographs, Neshat strategically enacted alterities in ways that destabilize rather than authenticate identity, offering a complex response to both her time experienced in Iran and the contradictory images of Muslim women's passivity and violence against them as witnessed in the US. Neshat staged a dual self-surveillance by collaborating with the presumed knowledge of Western viewers while denying them the pleasure of wholly possessing that knowledge, an intelligence held at bay by the application of calligraphy's obscuring screen. For art historian Iftikhar Dadi, calligraphy is more important as a sign of Otherness than for its interpretation as a text. Dadi's reading of Neshat's photographic subjects as "transcultural allegories" is based on their perceived lack of setting or affect, framed as depthless signifiers absent of narrative.[13] Calligraphy appears exotic in part due to its abstraction, an incomprehensible lexicon to those who cannot read Persian. *Unveiling* presented Orientalized tropes of seduction inscribed with the sensual poetry of Forough Farrokhzad (1935–67), one of Iran's great modern poets and arguably its best-known woman poet, which entice viewers toward their translations, even if only in desire for mastery over the image's ambivalent signs. Neshat's application of calligraphic writing foregrounds a transgressive enunciation from the subject photographed that, when combined with the artist's deployment of the gaze, facilitated an intersubjective, embodied awareness of space.

The act of looking is exploited in the projected eye, both onto the metal hand and in the centrality of the eye, in Neshat's *Offered Eyes*, *I Am Its Secret* (1993; Fig. 6) and the titular *Unveiling* (Fig. 7 and front cover). The deployment of direct or fixed stares

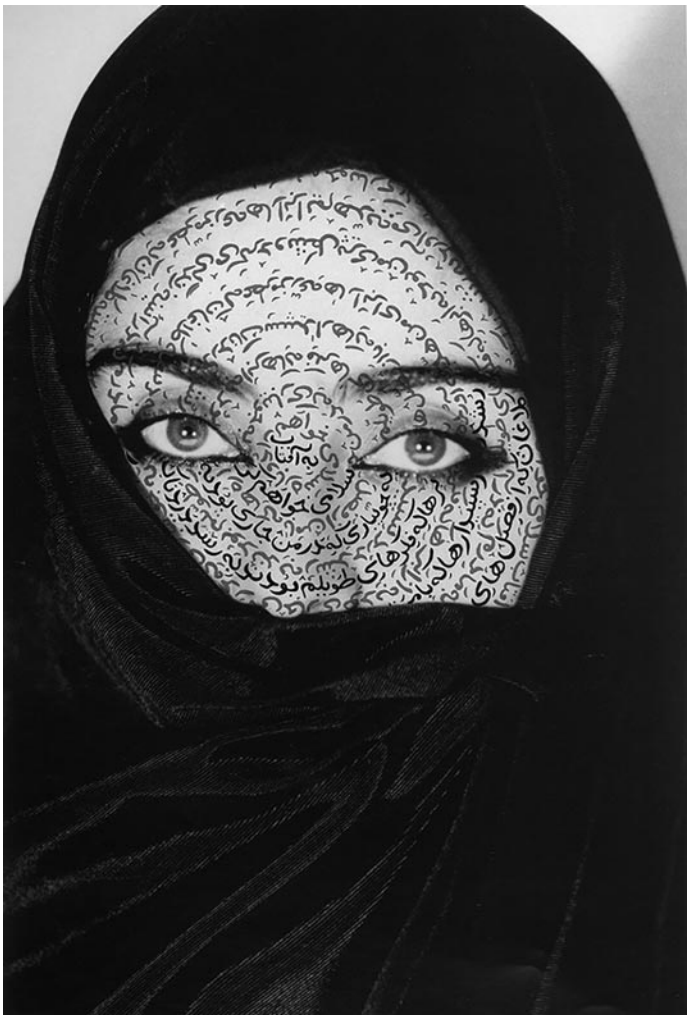


Fig. 6. Shirin Neshat, *I Am Its Secret* (1993), RC Print & ink, 49 1/2 " x 33 3/4". © Shirin Neshat, Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery.



Fig. 7. Shirin Neshat, *Unveiling* (1993), RC Print & ink, 60" x 40". © Shirin Neshat, Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery.

is subversive to Iran's mandatory dress code that additionally appeals to the Muslim woman's downcast eyes. But Neshat's discomforting gaze guides the viewer to a deeper engagement with the ocular act of looking, foregrounded by colonial legacies and sexual politics. Engaging tropes of seduction and prescriptive femininity, the photographs emphasize the scopophilia inherent to the multiple positions of surveilling, witnessing, and viewing. Scaffolded upon ahistorical use of exoticized subjects in visual culture, Neshat repositioned the body as the center of discourse, appropriator of language, and bearer of meaning.

Images of veiled women are suspended in time, chronicled within a teleological continuity that nationalizes and marginalizes the subject, sutured to the needs of both nation-state and imperialist authority. The static image, whether found in the press, painting, or photography, affords the viewer casual contemplation. Directing the gaze and performing the portrait are likewise complex extensions of the body through the ability to inflect and produce subjectivities stemming from and resistant to established meaning. As Amelia Jones observed, "Body artists *perform* rather than *suppress*," making the viewer aware "of the impossibility of determining meaning or identity in any final way and of the contingency of the subject (the artist as well as the interpreter)."[14] Neshat performs the seductive Oriental only to destabilize the seduced viewer. The text further obscures the meaning of her gaze in a new dialectical space—that belonging both to the viewer and to the picture plane—a process of disruption and estrangement that can only strip spectatorship of its authority when the subject has control of its own depiction.

Neshat's photographs resist patriarchal language not only in the adoption of women's words, but in the ways their inscription onto bodies recodes the cultural and psychological readings women have been forced to bear. As her handwriting functions as recitation, Neshat replaces Qur'anic verse and even mosque decoration, inferring these bodies as sacred and cultural sites alongside venerated objects. A woman's transcription of the words and text of women challenges the dominant discourses inscribed onto female bodies, recalling the processes of "écriture feminine" by Hélène Cixous, and writing as strategies of resistance to patriarchal forms of language attested by Luce Irigaray, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and



Fig. 8. Shirin Neshat, *Rebellious Silence* (1994), RC Print & ink, 46 5/8" x 43 3/4". Photo by Cynthia Preston. Courtesy Gladstone Gallery. © Shirin Neshat.

Gloria Anzaldúa.[15] These hermeneutic approaches reinterpret text as symbolically fused to the body and, according to this model, the word and the veil are inseparable from the female body under the Islamist regime.

Writing is a symbolic projection of action, and the body bears the burden of textual meaning inextricable from corporeal experience. Amna Malik emphasized Neshat's process, stating that the inscribed images, re-photographed to fuse the ink on the paper seamlessly and permanently with the emulsion, symbolically sealed together the Muslim subjects and the texts.[16] In the mode of either classic self-portrait or the more contemporary practice of performative self-display, Neshat is both the surface upon which the text lies and the absent body that writes it. Therefore, Neshat's act of writing is as performative an aspect of her work as putting on a chador and posing for the camera. Directing the viewer's gaze from a superficial representation into the experiential domain of embodiment, Neshat's interplay, between recognizing a role and performing it, and the viewer's co-recognition of the performative act, recall what Jones referred to as "the pose," whereby performers consciously enact an identity without clarifying their position on that identity.

After the Franklin Furnace exhibition and throughout 1994, Neshat staged powerful, large photographs of armed women. The *Women of Allah* series (1993–97) presented a shift from the emphasis on the private space of women's bodies, overlaid with poems by Farrokhzad, to women's participation in political revolution with poems by Tahereh Saffarzadeh (1936–2008), whose works espoused religious fervor and reverence for martyrdom. In the *Women of Allah*'s later photographic iterations, such as the 1995–96 self-portraits with her son and group portraits of women in Tehran, or the cropped double-portraits of a man and woman from 1997, texts were expanded to include writings by novelist Moniro Ravanipour (b. 1952) and poet Simin Behbahani (1927–2014). Of the three dozen photos that span both *Unveiling* and *Women of Allah*, texts are primarily comprised of the words of Farrokhzad and Saffarzadeh, whose sharply contradictory poems attest to Neshat's awareness of the dichotomies underlying women's lived experiences in Iran. As relayed in the works' titles, for instance in *Rebellious Silence* (1994; Fig. 8), the lips, closed and obscured by a gun, emphasize women's silence, and replicates them as mute yet defiant subjects of the West's spectatorial consumption. From the scopophilic object of colonialist desire to the abject object of neo-colonialist alterity, both series emerge from and against language and the historical and mainstream representations that, as with the Islamist regime, effectively seek to silence women. Neshat's own enunciation emerged from her personal, spatial-temporal reckonings with the past and present that coalesced in her repositioning of Iranian women as subjects, reinscribed with words of women.

At Franklin Furnace, the use of Super-8 film serviced projection of moving and static images onto symbolic objects. She later described her early photographs as "minimalist, sculptural, rigid carved monuments," indicating a conceptually steeped understanding of architectural space but dissatisfaction with her work's ability to activate it.[17] She produced her first video installation for "Art in the Anchorage," one of Creative Time's many projects that fill underutilized spaces in New York with visual art. Within the cavernous cells beneath the Brooklyn Bridge (the Anchorage), Neshat created an untitled self-portrait in motion: an image of her face in close-up, swaddled in black headscarf, projected onto a vertical screen. Now known as *Anchorage* (1996; Pl. 4), the four-minute video performance enacted gestures of her still photography, marking a pivotal transition. In total darkness, a single-shot projection of Neshat's hands and face is montaged in three sequences: her hands begin outstretched, proper to the gesture of submissive prayer, then suddenly hold a revolver firing at the viewer; finally, she swirls and chants in an incantation of the whirling dervish dance of the Mevlevi Sufis. As a performance-for-camera, her actions engage significations vacillating between Islamist terror and Islamic spirituality.

Like the Persian poems written across the surface of the body, the veiled body's enactment of song and dance are the cultural elements that embed the work with notions of "Islam," an exoticism intended to seduce the viewer who, confronted by the gun and the gaze, is lured into a field of interpretive, albeit disturbing exchange. *Anchorage* also retains qualities of early experiments in performance-for-camera, such as Lynda Benglis's *Now* (1973; Fig. 9), a subject sans narrative in which the artist taped before a television monitor a series of uncomfortable facial expressions directed toward the viewer, including subsequent images of herself in these same contorted expressions. Benglis's interactions arguably fulfill an identity reliant upon the screen itself; viewers further witness the inauthenticity of mediated representation and the destabilization of their command of space. Neshat similarly complicated herself in *Anchorage*, framed in portrait-view on a black background, an interaction with viewers extended by her direct gaze but disrupted by her profound gestures. The frontality of her projected image is rooted in her photographs, but the mediated quality of a subject enacted in a darkened space below the Brooklyn Bridge intensified the experience.

Jones's explanation of a relationship between the artist/self and the viewer/other is an intense positioning of the "intersubjective": the self-realization of the viewer that occurs through the spectatorship of an artist's self-actualization on screen.[18] By seeing the projected body on screen, the viewer in turn acknowledges their own corporeality, resulting in an intimacy with that image (on screen or monitor) created under certain viewing conditions such as projections in a dramatic, darkened space. As a video-portrait, the intersubjectivity between bodies-viewing and bodies-viewed undergirds Neshat's *Anchorage*, a work imbued with the same psychological suspension of the subject as her photo-portraits and the same contradictory impulses of seduction and repulsion. If Neshat's photos created a sense of anxiety and loss of command over the subject, her early videos extend that anxiety into a filmic complexity and ambiguity by which the subject on view, unhinged from the confines of strict narration, offer another kind of intersubjectivity, a positionality that Maria Walsh calls "entrancement," at which narrative guidance is replaced by an "intense proximity to an image quality."[19] Prefixed by Raymond Bellour's insistence in his film analyses upon the hypnotic experience of "cinema-situation," these affectations were indelible to an influx of moving—image installations in the 1990s employing sound, dramatic space, and high-quality cinematography, lending toward a phenomenology of spectacle in collusion with entrancement.[20]

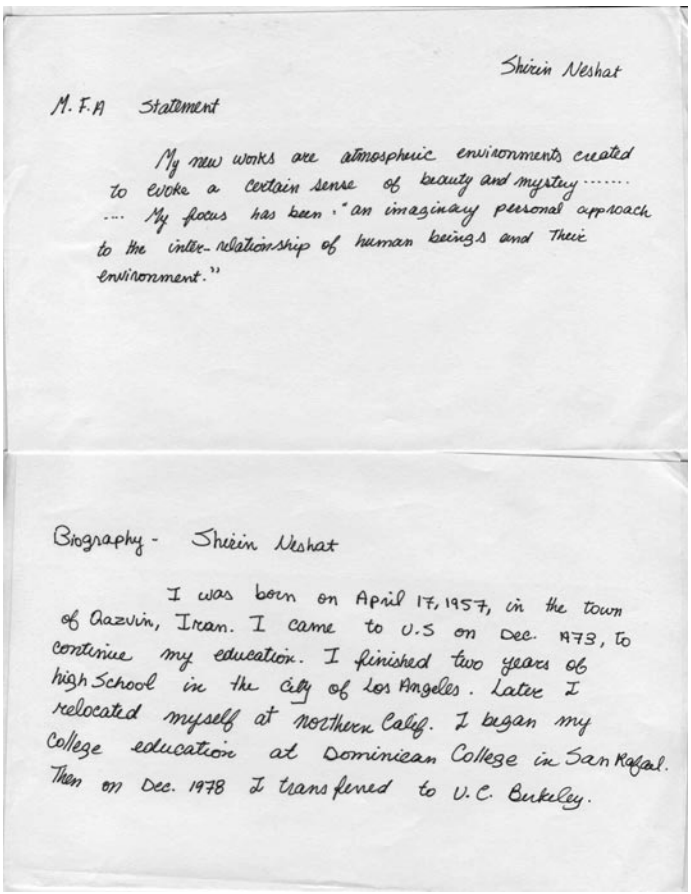
In *The Shadow Under the Web* (1997; Pl. 5), Neshat's developing considerations of site and architecture, investigated within the film and the viewing space, align a heightened and sensorial imbrication of viewers to the subject-object on screen. The 'shadow' of the ten-minute, four-channel color video is Neshat herself—running between a mosque, a crowded *souq* (market), along an ancient city wall, and on modern streets, a maze of spaces she has described as private, public, sacred, and natural.[21] Filmed on location in Istanbul, Turkey, for the Fifth International Istanbul Biennial of 1997, the



Fig. 9. Lynda Benglis, still from *Now* (1973), video (11 minutes). Courtesy Video Data Bank at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. © Lynda Benglis.

city is a centuries-old symbolic border between "East and West." Dressed in chador, Neshat races along an imposing series of walls constructed during the city's early founding as Constantinople in the fourth century. Along with cities in Iran, Istanbul is at once ancient and modern, and Neshat, in what seems to be desperation and confusion, runs between these temporal and cultural spaces as the work's central subject. Following Neshat's trajectory across four monitors installed above eye-level on four walls, images montage at varying intervals, and viewer awareness is as divided and overwhelmed as the subject navigating her territory. The viewing experience thereby transmits a bodily anxiety that mimics the physical and psychic conditions produced by her suspended movements in time and space.

The Shadow Under the Web also marks Neshat's increased visibility as an internationally exhibiting artist, a migratory status based on travel in the making and the exhibition of work, through which space and culture are fluid metaphorically and tangibly. One of the first exilic artists to relate space and identity metaphorically, Cuban-born artist Ana Mendieta's (1948–85) *Siluetas* (1973–80) emphasized possibilities for reclamation or transcendence through an interaction with the physical and landscaped environment. *Siluetas* translates as "shadows," and Neshat's *Shadow Under the Web* also visualizes a fleeting presence, a specter wrestling against the borders of past and present. Neshat's use of urban space also recalls the work of Valie Export (b. 1940), who in the 1970s incorporated her body into photographic tableaux interrogating the position of women's presence in environments dominated by man-made architecture. In a major shift, Neshat utilized cinematic space toward a metaphoric position of the Muslim woman within the contemporary world more broadly and who, although reduced to a marginalized shadow, transgresses her historical, religious, and cultural limitations, if only temporarily.



Shirin Neshat

M.F.A Statement

My new works are atmospheric environments created to evoke a certain sense of beauty and mystery .... My focus has been "an imaginary personal approach to the inter-relationship of human beings and their environment."

Biography - Shirin Neshat

I was born on April 17, 1957, in the town of Qazvin, Iran. I came to U.S on Dec. 1973, to continue my education. I finished two years of high School in the city of Los Angeles. Later I relocated myself at Northern Calif. I began my College education at Dominican College in San Rafael. Then on Dec. 1978 I transfered to U.C. Berkeley.

Fig. 10. Shirin Neshat's artist statement and biography for her MFA Thesis. Exhibition at the University of California, Berkeley, in the summer of 1982. Courtesy Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive.

Neshat's separate but conceptually hinged performative photos and sculptural installations in *Unveiling* were an experimentation of pictorial and actual space, a precursor to the performance-for-camera approach of *Anchorage* and the moving-image installation of *The Shadow Under the Web*. Each were imbued with textures of mimesis—the emotive spinning and gunfire in *Anchorage* and the rhythm of breath in *Shadow*—and emboldened by the drama of space to submerge viewers into the subject's present and presence on screen. However, Neshat's interest in veiled female figures traversing the confines of physical and psychological space was evident as far back as her 1982 MFA thesis (Fig. 10). Manifesting an early wrestling of embodied experience from her investigational interplay of the two and three-dimensional, Neshat recalled "atmospheric environments created to evoke a certain sense of beauty and mystery." She continued, "My focus has been an imaginary personal approach to the inter-relationship of human beings and their environment." At that time, Neshat had solitarily experienced the upheaval of her homeland; her transition to video installation also occurred at a moment of personal turmoil. She and Park would divorce, and in August 1995, her visits to Iran permanently ended when she was detained and interrogated at the Tehran Airport.[22]

Neshat is the first artist to achieve significant renown for appropriating the veil as a visual sign, informed by the body's ability to inflect meaning through performativity and expose marginalizing visual systems through appropriation. Claimed as another recycled photograph in support of the new woman-led Iranian Revolution, *Unveiling*'s titular image was unfurled in 2022 as a banner from the roof of Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin (Fig. 11). It depicts Neshat's forward-gaze and open chador, revealing text on her neck and chest in an improper display of the body according to the tenets of hijab. "Woman Life Freedom" is the worldwide rallying cry following the September 16, 2022 arrest and murder of Mahsa Jina Amini by Gasht-e Ershad for failing to wear hijab according to mandatory standards. But the Berlin banner also drew criticism from a new generation of Iranian diasporic artists in Europe who claim Neshat has no right to speak for Iran, and that her work caters to the Western art market's desire for the exotic that overshadows their own artistic efforts.[23]

For most of her career, such criticism is in part encouraged by ethnocentric assertions of style and authenticity rendered toward Neshat. Valentina Vitali contends that "interviews, articles, catalogues, and any such material instrumental in creating and promoting Shirin Neshat as a commodity has tended to assess the work's value in terms of notions of ethnicity."[24] By comparison, Cindy Sherman (b. 1954) also enacted and performed gendered stereotypes in her *Film Stills* series (1977–80), and many artists used portraiture to disavow rather than establish stable subject representations, including Catherine Opie (b. 1961), Yasumasa Morimura, Lyle Ashton Harris, Sarah Lucas (b. 1962), and Renée Cox (b. 1960). This path toward the social and psychological disruption of preconceived stereotypes via the artist's own body has been paved since the 1960s, when Schneemann famously stated, "I could be an image, but not an image-maker creating my own Self-image."[25] What Neshat ultimately shares with these artists is that they shifted the concept of what a portrait, and thereby a subject, can be—a politics of identity often unsettling for viewers, even other artists. As with accusations of narcissism made by other feminist artists against Wilke for utilizing her own naked (and contentiously beautiful) body, Neshat's perceived exoticism or self-exoticization is a transgression of the boundaries of acceptable identity politics. Rather than deny Wilke's "narcissism," Jones appropriated it to explain the artist's performative strategy, to tease out representations of women as desired-objects and desiring-subjects. Supporting the artists' shared genealogy of performative portraiture, Neshat's works similarly align with strategies that, rather than disclaim, interrogate the mechanisms upon which exoticisms operate, raising questions without answering them.[26] Yoko Ono (b. 1933) has been similarly accused of intentionally negotiating her Asian body in live performance to solidify her status within white, avant-garde circles embracing Zen philosophy during the 1960s.[27] With Ono or Neshat, criticism of their motivations reveals the disparities between white/Western and non-white/non-Western artists, particularly those engaged in performance.

Neshat's "exoticism" as a disruptive strategy dismantling fixed identity also raises important questions about structures of discourse and market demands that produce cultural codes for transnational or diasporic artists whose works are curated within Western metropolises. Jean Fisher, Gerardo Mosquera, and Hamid Keshmirshekan, global art critics, art historians, and curators from the United Kingdom, Cuba, and Iran, respectively, have each placed exoticism within Western audience expectations of representation and its attendant discourses. According to Fisher, the dominance of the Euro-American curatorial framework of artists "evaluates all cultural productions through its own criteria of otherness [that] ignores their individual insights." She further contested that exoticism within the global exhibition circuit denies artists consideration as individualized "thinking subjects" in ways "not meted out to white European artists."[28] This line of argument is fortified by Mosquera, who maintained that curatorial demands for "authenticity" create unequal expectations of artistic practice. Recognizing that artists identified as non-European or American are promoted according to what Fisher deems "commodified signs of ethnicity," he asserted that an undiluted cultural representation results in a "myth of authenticity [that] precludes the complex contradictions of postcolonial hybridities."[29] Within this global complex, Neshat's Iranianness "satisfies the expectations of the 'other' in postmodern neo-exoticism" and obscured the complexities of her personal hybridity and transcultural artistic practices.[30] Keshmirshekan referred to these positions to argue that exoticism rests within market trends for cultural representation, particularly for artists from the Middle East after 9/11. Along with Mosquera, he places some blame with artists who conciliate to exhibition trends and noting that artworks were "particularly criticized when the artists were not expressing their own concerns but rather creating to meet foreign demand."[31] Both writers acknowledged that artists comply or risk exclusion, but Mosquera further advocated to counteract these conditions with exhibition practices that decentralize curation and allow participating artists, as I conclude with Neshat, to apply "strategies of recontextualization, appropriation, and recycling" and "reject cultural authenticity in favor of their own thoughts."[32]

In this article, Neshat's biography has been used to situate an investigational practice addressing her own concerns, driven by her personal experience of diaspora and her New York-based interactions with other artists, rather than curatorial and market influences or cultural essentialisms. Although her work is often compared with feminist art, this is not to assign a Westcentric categorical model nor align her responses to Iran with Western feminist politics but to reveal a transcultural hybrid practice, and perhaps expand her art historical contextualization from ethnocentric assertions to an artist who profoundly contributed to complexly embodied experiences. Using the visual tools and strategies at her disposal, an individualized and innovative "thinking subject" rather than a representative one, Neshat transgressed the spatial-temporal limitations of identity, history, nation, and gender, and the discourses that attempt to contain her. •



Fig. 11. *Intervention by Shirin Neshat at the Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin* (2022). Courtesy Gladstone Gallery / Circa. © Shirin Neshat. © Nationalgalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / artbeats Berlin. Photo by Paula Schumacher.

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Notes

1. The activist/artist collective "For Freedoms," with support from the Vital Voices Global Partnership, produced temporary public installations under the project titled *Eyes on Iran*. See Will Heinrich, "With 'Eyes on Iran,' Artists Bring Protests to Roosevelt Island," *New York Times*, Dec. 8, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/08/arts/design/artists-iranian-protests-roosevelt-island.html.
2. See Erin C. Devine, *Translation and Transgression in the Art of Shirin Neshat* (London: Routledge, 2023), https://www.routledge.com/Translation-and-Transgression-in-the-Art-of-Shirin-Neshat/Devine/p/book/9781032376431.

3. Carolina A. Miranda, "Artist Shirin Neshat challenges the idea of Muslim women as victims and explores exile," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 23, 2019, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2019-10-23/artist-shirin-neshat-muslim-women-as-victims-exile-iran.
4. Scott MacDonald, "Between Two Worlds: An Interview with Shirin Neshat," *Feminist Studies* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 627.
5. Andrea Sadeghi, "Twenty-Nine Degrees," *The Daily California,* vol. XIII, no. 174, Aug. 6–12, 1982, 8.
6. Neshat was included in group exhibitions in New York from 1985, including *Fever* at Exit Art in December 1992. Although certainly important to her evolution, documentation of her actual work in this timeframe is scant or non-existent. In these years she is arguably more involved in arts administration, specifically The Storefront, and occasional independent curating, as with *Homeland* (1989) at Minor Injury, Brooklyn. Therefore, *Unveiling* can be regarded as her first mature body of work. Early exhibitions listed on her 1992 resume were provided by the Franklin Furnace Archive. Shahrzad Ehya thoroughly lists them in her dissertation "Facing Up to Shirin Neshat's Women of Allah," (University of California, Berkeley, 2012).
7. Leslie Camhi, "Lifting the Veil," *ARTNews* 99, no. 2 (Feb. 2000): 150.
8. Francine Birbragher, "Shirin Neshat: Interview," *Art Nexus* 2, no. 50 (Sept.–Nov. 2003): 92.
9. Octavio Zaya, "Q&A Shirin Neshat: Islamic Women as Ambiguous Icons," *Creative Camera* (Oct.–Nov. 1996): 18, https://www.gladstonegallery.com/sites/default/files/CreativeCamera_96.pdf.
10. Neshat's Exhibition Proposal to Franklin Furnace, 1992, Franklin Furnace Archives, Brooklyn, NY.
11. Shiva Balaghi and Lynn Gumpert, ed., *Picturing Iran: Art, Society, & Revolution* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), *passim*. For additional scholarship of the Saqqakhaneh School, see Fereshteh Daftari, *Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2006), and Hamid Kesmirshekan, "Modern and Contemporary Iranian Art: Developments and Challenges" in *Different Sames: New Perspectives in Contemporary Iranian Art*, ed. Hossein Armirsadeghi (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 10–37.
12. Balaghi and Gumpert, *Picturing Iran*, 28. Balaghi builds upon Islamic scholar Annemarie Schimmel's understanding of the roots of calligraphy and textual meaning to offer her own interpretation of calligraphy's abstract form.
13. Iftikhar Dadi, "Shirin Neshat's Photographs as Postcolonial Allegories," *Signs* 34, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 137. Fuller attention is dedicated to this issue of calligraphy in my forthcoming *Translation and Transgression in the Art of Shirin Neshat*.
14. Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: Univ. Minnesota Press, 1998), 58.
15. Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 875–93. In this essay, Cixous first introduces "écriture feminine." Strategies of writing as resistance to patriarchy are threaded through various essays and books by Irigaray, Minh-ha, and Anzaldúa, most notably Luce Irigaray, *To Speak is Never Neutral* (New York: Routledge Press, 2002), originally published in French (1985); Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1989); and Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).
16. Amna Malik, "Dialogues Between 'Orientalism' and Modernism in Shirin Neshat's '*Women of Allah*,'" in Celina Jeffery and Gregory Minissale, ed. *Global and Local Art Histories* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2007), 165.
17. Amna Malik, "Surface Tension: Reconsidering Horizontality in the Work of Diasporic Iranian Artists," in *Identity Theft: The Cultural Colonization of Contemporary Art*, ed. Jonathan Harris (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool Univ. Press, 2008), 110.
18. Amelia Jones, "Televisual Flesh: Activating Otherness in New Media Art," *Parachute*, no. 113 (Winter 2004), 71–91.
19. Maria Walsh, "You've Got Me Under Your Spell: The Entranced Spectator," in *Screen/Space: The Projected Image of Contemporary Art,* ed. Tamara Trodd (Manchester, UK: Manchester Univ. Press, 2011), 113.
20. Hilary Radner, "Cinema and the Body: The Ghost in the Theater," in Hilary Radner and Alistair Fox, ed. *Raymond Bellour: Cinema and the Moving Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2018), 52–69. It is translated from Bellour's *The Body of Cinema: Hypnoses, Emotions, Animalities* (Paris: POL, 2009). The concept of Bellour's 'cinema-situation' is also discussed in Walsh's "You've Got Me Under Your Spell: The Entranced Spectator," 113.
21. MacDonald, "Between Two Worlds," 631.
22. Ed Schad, *Shirin Neshat: I Will Greet the Sun Again* (New York: Delmonico Prestel, 2020), 228.
23. Elaine Velie, "Iranian Artist's Criticize Berlin Museum's Display of Shirin Neshat Banner, *Hyperallergic*, Nov. 17, 2022, https://hyperallergic.com/780221/iranian-artists-criticize-berlin-museums-display-of-shirin-neshat-banner/.
24. Valentin Vitali, "Corporate Art and Critical Theory: On Shirin Neshat," *Women, A Cultural Review* 15, no. 1 (March 2004), 1–18.
25. Amelia Jones, "Post Feminism, Feminist Pleasures, & Embodied Theories of Art" in *New Feminist Criticism: Identity, Art, Action*, ed. Arlene Raven, Cassandra Langer, and Joanna Frueh (New York: Icon Editions, 1994), 30.
26. In many articles and interviews, Neshat is quoted that she only raises questions; the earliest recording of this statement may be Octavio Zaya's "Q&A Shirin Neshat: Islamic Women as Ambiguous Icons," *Creative Camera*. It asserts a practice adhered to complicating existing stereotypes rather than offering alternatives. It was not until after 9/11 that she began a process of identifying herself as a political artist.
27. Jieun Rhee, "Performing the Other: Yoko Ono's Cut Piece," *Art History* 28, no. 1 (Feb. 2005), 96–115. Rhee's thesis is primarily based on Ono's 1965 New York performance of *Cut Piece*. However, the piece was first performed in Tokyo, and Ono was sought by Fluxus founder George Maciunas; her reluctance to join the organized art movement has been documented. Her own relationship to Zen Buddhism and her incorporation of its premises into her work was evident for more than a decade before *Cut Piece*. See Erin Devine, "Marginalization as Use: Race & Gender in the Work of Yoko Ono," *International Journal of the Arts in Society* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 55–60.
28. Jean Fisher, "The Syncretic Turn: Cross-Cultural Practices in the Age of Multiculturalism," in *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, ed. Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung (Oxford 2005); quoted in Hamid Keshmirshekan, "The Question of Identity vis-à-vis Exoticism in Contemporary Iranian Art," *Iranian Studies* 43, no. 4 (Sept. 2010): 501.
29. Gerardo Mosquera, "The Marco Polo Syndrome: Some Problems around Art and Eurocentrism," *Third Text* 21 (Winter 1992/93): 35–41.
30. Gerardo Mosquera, "The World of Differences: Notes about Art, Globalization, and Periphery," *Neue Bildende Kunst,* no. 4/5 (1995).
31. Keshmirshekan, "The Question of Identity vis-à-vis Exoticism in Contemporary Iranian Art," 498.
32. Mosquera, "The Marco Polo Syndrome;" quoted in Hamid Keshmirshekan, "The Question of Identity," 500.

Curdling the Photographic Image

Ana Mendieta's *Silueta*

By Philip Kelleher

A photograph shows a portion of Old Man's Creek in Iowa (Fig. 1 and Pl. 6). On the river's bank, a diminutive silhouette carved into the dirt reveals a now well-known motif of the artist Ana Mendieta (1948–85). Between 1973 and 1980, Mendieta produced more than one hundred iterations of the form in a series of photographs and films titled *Silueta*.[1] In this instance, Mendieta made the silhouette by carving away the top surface of dirt to reveal a darker wet layer beneath in the shape of her body. Looking closely at this central figure, one sees clusters of dry dirt amidst the moist bodily form—the dry bits perhaps tumbled down from the above bank as the artist retreated from the area. This variegated field of the silhouette reveals its impurity—an incomplete division of inside and outside, of self and non-self. In a related conception, María Lugones has described such formations as a "curdling" where the mestizo (of mixed European and Indigenous American heritage) is both separated and resistant to that separated so-called "pure" state of the other.[2] Lugones complicates non-centered subjectivities (i.e., non-white heterosexual males), which she writes often operate under the rubric of purity by homogenizing differences within a logic of opposition.[3] This concept is certainly germane to Mendieta's marginalization within white feminism in New York in the 1970s and early '80s, but another more pertinent reading investigates the ways her *Siluetas* actively "curdle" the photographic image—that is to say, her self-images demonstrate not just a multiplicity of subjectivities but also a thickening of the photographic image that undermines the medium's claims to rational (or "pure," to again call on Lugones's terms) communication. More than that, this curdling enacts a bodily presence within the photographic space that is more than evidence of the incomplete reduction of the body to the logic of the image; it is a manifestation of the curdled body's impact on the very terms of photographic language.



Fig. 1. Ana Mendieta, *Untitled* (*Silueta* series, Iowa) (1978), color photograph, 13 1/4" x 20". Art Gallery NSW. © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC; courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Fig. 2 Ana Mendieta, *Isla* (*Silueta* series) (1981), black and white photograph. Estate of Ana Mendieta. Photo: The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC; courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

For most critics, Mendieta's body, rather than her images, is primary—her movement from Cuba to the US and her subject formation within a country that centers white males. As a result of this focus, two dominant interpretations emerge: one essentialist and the other constructionist. Miwon Kwon summarizes: "At the crux of this distinction is the status of the body *in* representation and *as* representation. That is, the body as a transparent signifier of identity and self versus the body as a nexus of arbitrary conventions of meaning, the body as signature or sign."[4] The former essentialist reading is tied to one of two characteristic identities: Mendieta as Cuban or Mendieta as woman.[5] The latter constructionist reading, on the other hand, largely comes as an attempt to differentiate Mendieta from a 1970s essentialism as such ideas fell out of favor for many feminists. A third reading does in fact engage the photographic element of the *Siluetas* but does so through postmodern ideas of temporality—these scholars see the image as document of a fleeting moment following the semiological analysis of French theorist Roland Barthes.[6] By contrast, the analysis pursued here is to engage the bodily and the photographic as they mutually instantiate each other. Put differently, Mendieta's work provides an important challenge to the conception that photography shapes subjectivity; in this work one sees the ways the body shapes photographic language writ large.

To return to the opening image, one sees a range of silhouettes (to key the series' title) that are put under pressure. In addition to the central curdled bodily silhouette, the murky water in the foreground offers more: here, one can just barely detect subtle traces of silhouetted trees reflected on the water's surface. In fact, these elements are noticeable mostly through their opposing surrounding elements—small clusters of light formed from the sunlight peeking through the overhanging canopy of trees. While the treetops themselves are cropped from the image, the background likewise shows a positive/negative relationship between light and matter in a thick of trees: at points, one sees the negative space between the trees and at others, one sees an alternating field of flattened silhouetted tress or more robustly articulated bundles of green leaves. This exercise in close looking, uncommon in analysis of Mendieta's works, points to the way Mendieta plays materially with the surface/depth relationship fundamental not only to silhouettes but also to photography broadly.[7]

Peering into the murky water, Mendieta has captured a rather confusing element: on the left side of the water, a dark angled line mimics a similar dark line on the bank (where shadows form under an erosion, an edge just below a patch of grass). The two dark linear forms seem to mirror one another, but in fact, the lower element is not a reflection but instead a substance beneath the water's surface (a large rock or fallen branch, perhaps). The semi-transparent water of the river and the image beneath its surface recall Maurice Merleau-Ponty's famous description of viewing gridded tile at the bottom of a pool:

> When through the water's thickness I see the tiled bottom of the pool, I do not see it *despite* the water and the reflections; I see it through them and because of them. If there were no distortions, no ripples of sunlight, if it were without that flesh that I saw the geometry of the tiles, then I would cease to see it *as* it is and where it is—which is to say, beyond any identical, specific place. I cannot say that the water itself—the aqueous power, the syrupy and shimmering element—is *in* space; all this is not somewhere else either, but it is not in the pool. It inhabits it, is materialized there, yet it is not contained there; and if I lift my eyes toward the screen of cypresses where the web of reflections plays, I must recognize that the water visits it as well, or at least sends out to it its active, living essence.[8]

For the French philosopher, water manifests the experiential elements of vision that are explicitly attached to one's body and one's bodily experience of space.[9] This type of phenomenological viewing was crucial for Earth Art (or Land Art) in the early 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, Mendieta termed her projects earth-body works, which she too produced in spaces outside a traditional art context.[10] At the time, Earth artists, site specific artists, and performance artists alike rejected the

mediating and commercial medium of the documented experience.[11] Although some of Mendieta's work existed in the form of performances—the early *Untitled* (*Rape Scene)* in particular—in many instances the artist avoided this kind of corporeal viewership (and *Rape Scene* itself also has a photographic life). The *Siluetas*, for example, were exclusively shown in documentary form—made in secluded locations, they were unavailable as performances. Nonetheless, Julia Bryan-Wilson sees a bodily relationality across the artist's oeuvre and even among the *Siluetas*. This occurs, the art historian writes, in Mendieta's reliance on someone to help her—to trace her form in the earth, to cover her body with foliage, and to photograph her when necessary.[12] However, this was not always the case: in several of the *Siluetas*, Mendieta used a wooden template (based on her body) to make the shapes and photograph their imprints herself.[13] This does not disprove Bryan-Wilson's interest in Mendieta's conceptions of bodies as non-discrete entities; instead, it complicates the art historian's emphasis on "the existence of, and interdependency between, many bodies" in this work.[14] The issue is not the interaction of bodies as such, but rather, the interaction of bodies within the mediated spaces of and around the image screen.

The complex range of inter-relationality—between body and dirt, water, blood, flowers, and grass—is, in the *Siluetas*, held in tension with the compressed, homogenizing logic of photographies.[15] The series title itself evokes a formal category of wholeness: a solid homogeneous image built from the stability of the outline (or the rigid separation between body and surround). Given the intensity of criticism aimed at the idea of photographic documentation *as* artwork at the time, Mendieta's choice might appear strange. It is precisely this paradox that her work mines, and it does so by creating a parallel friction between a range of photographic types, on the one hand, and of so-called natural types, on the other hand. The artist produced the form of her body in a range of materials: in flora, mud, fire (via candles or wood), or pigment (Fig. 2 and Pl. 7). In addition, she recorded these forms in various mediums: black and white or color photographs and Super 8 or 16 mm film. Moreover, each instance was pictured several times. The vast number of images making up the *Siluetas* are in turn displayed in multiple arrangements: at times they are shown categorically from a single location, while at other times they are shown cumulatively from various locations. Still and moving images are shown side by side as well.[16] While the range of representational materials are coded as photographic, the range of performative materials are coded as natural (Mendieta's body as well as the soil, grass, etc.).[17] Yet neither group operates homogeneously: the performative space, where Mendieta's body imprints the bank's soil, for example, is revealed to have different properties—colors, densities, moisture content (i.e., appearances). A different image, from 1978, shows Mendieta's form impressed into a field of grass in Coralville, Iowa (Fig. 3). The space appears to be uninterrupted broad-leaf grass, yet, on the left side of the image, bits of clover can be spotted—another example of the impurity, or curdling, of the photograph's ability to homogenize areas of meaning.



Fig. 3. Ana Mendieta, *Untitled* (*Silueta* series, Iowa) (1978), gelatin silver print, 19 1/2" x 15 1/2". Collection SFMOMA. Photo: The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC. © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection; LLC; courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Furthermore, the photograph's depth of field creates additional distinctions: the sharply focused foreground is comprised of an acute range of greys (from deep black to near whites), while the background is both blurred and washed out (a near overexposure). The tensions within the image are further complicated across its multiples: shot from different angles and orientations, the intra-photographic image resists singular coherence. The range of photographic qualities, aspects, and frames are analogized with the various natural materials and states—each disrupts the categorical security of the other.

The categorical limit of the body is, in turn, challenged within this matrix. In an untitled series from 1972, the artist pressed a square piece of glass onto her face and body.[18] The material mimics the glossy surface of the photograph and the enframed glazing. In a grouping that shows the artist's face pressed with the glass, racial and class archetypes can be identified: full or thin lips, flat or upturned nose. The physiognomic tropes are produced from the impact of the glass screen onto Mendieta's flesh. This literalization parodies (in part) the histories of documentary and archival control. Art historian John Tagg explains these practices at the end of nineteenth century:

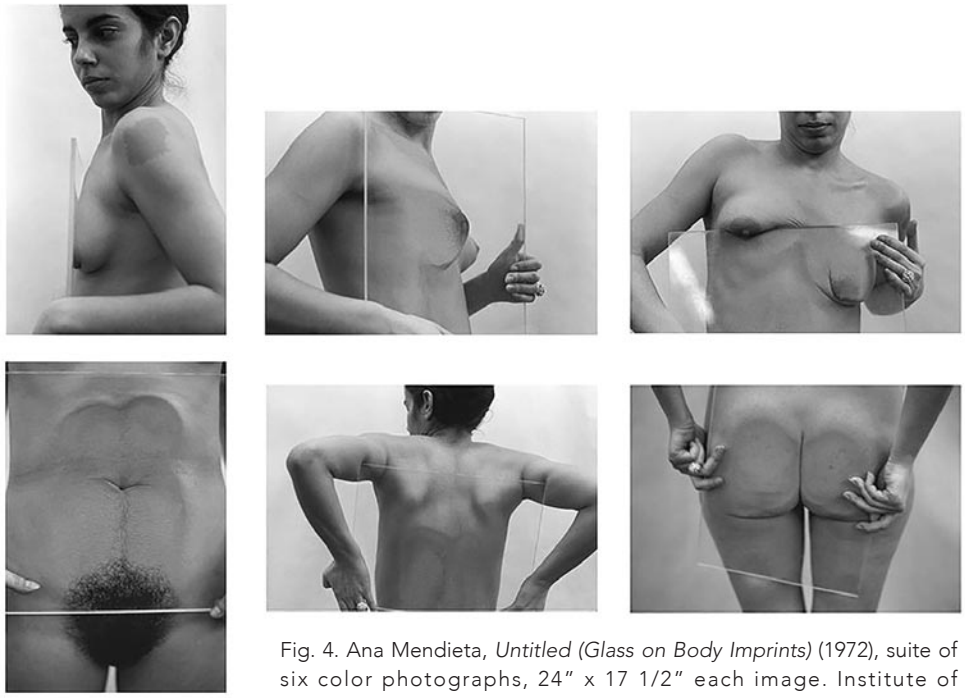


Fig. 4. Ana Mendieta, *Untitled (Glass on Body Imprints)* (1972), suite of six color photographs, 24" x 17 1/2" each image. Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami. Photo: The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC; courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

> The bodies—workers, vagrants, criminals, patients, the insane, the poor, the colonized races—are taken one by one: isolated in a shallow, contained space; turned full face and subjected to an unreturnable gaze; illuminated, focused, measured, numbered and named; forced to yield to the minutest scrutiny of gestures and features.[19]

These methods served state power distributed around a constructed norm of the white male. In Mendieta's work, the shaping is, once again, made by a transparent material—glass—but that modification is rendered visible by light caught on the upper or lower edges and by the exaggerated distortions. In other words, the distortion, this time, reveals the apparatus, rather than hides it. In another iteration of this project, Mendieta compresses her body (Fig. 4). The glass mashes, twists, and compacts her flesh, but not definitively so: the glass sheet that the artist herself holds fails to completely cover or confine her body—arms and legs extend beyond the limit, and fingers and right breast fold over the partition. This metaphorical frame is met by another—this time an actual photograph. But, again, coherency is not delivered, for the same body that refuses and resists the glass exceeds the close cropping of the six images, and through the distorted and circumscribed pictures no conceptualizable whole body can be reconstituted by the viewer. In this way, the body presses back onto the photographic apparatus by distorting its mechanisms through the incomplete reduction of body to pure type.

Similarly, the boarders of the *Siluetas* are never strictly maintained as the liminal spaces that divide inside from outside waver throughout the series. In an iteration produced in 1976 in Salina Cruz, Mexico, Mendieta constructed an imprint with red pigment at the Pacific Ocean's edge (Fig. 5). As waves crash, the form is dissolved and washed away. Photographs capture the process, which Jane Blocker suggests emphasizes the paradox of bodily and spatial limits. Citing the Chicana feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa, Blocker writes that the border simultaneously creates meaning and is impossible to maintain with certainty.[20] The slippage between inside and outside suggests the unsustainable (if assumed) divide between body and nature—that is, each spill into and out from one another.

In part, this slippage might suggest an attempt to reintegrate or recuperate, through physical contact with nature, a previous loss. As has been widely observed, the artist came to the US in 1961 as part of the Peter Pan Operation, at the age of eleven.[21] Emphasis on these biographic details (which are not unimportant), has contributed to a reading of Mendieta's work as a personal process of "therapeutic response to traumatic expatriation."[22] To lie on the earth, to blend with the dirt and flora, is, according to this reading above, an attempt to reintegrate the artist's fragmented body/psyche. Through various descriptions, this conception forms the heart of essentialist interpretations. Of course, the therapeutic process—a transference—is also one of traumatic repetition. Mendieta not only rejoins the earth, but also repeatedly pulls away from it.[23] In each performative action, the artist binds herself to the earth momentarily as she forms her silhouette on the ground (Fig. 6). Afterwards, however, she stands up and undoes that reconstituted bond. Sigmund Freud's conception of this destructive repetitive action, exemplified in childhood, is an attempt to bind, or control, a previous traumatic event. In the famous *fort-da* game described by Freud, the psychoanalyst's grandson repeatedly discards a wooden reel with a string attached. As he does so, he exclaims "o-o-o-o" (what Freud identifies as "fort" or "gone"). Then, the child retrieves the object via the string and proclaims "da" (or "there").[24] This repetitive action mimics the temporary loss of the child's mother—to repeat the practice is a means to build self-control over his response to his mother's departure.[25] The child practices suppressing an instinctual response of protest at his mother's disappearance with the repeated removal of the toy. Echoes of this psychoanalytic conceptualization seem to seep into (wittingly or not) readings of Mendieta's work as a "personal dialogue with nature, which represents the land she didn't have."[26] Again, this is especially the case when critics focus exclusively on the *performance* in the *Siluetas*.[27]

For Lacan, however, the *fort-da* game operates differently—it is the acquisition of language. He writes, "The subject here does not simply master his deprivation by assuming it—he



Fig. 5. Ana Mendieta, *Untitled* (*Silueta* series) (1976), color photograph, 20" x 13 5/16". Palmer Museum of Art of The Pennsylvania State University. Photo: The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC; courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Fig. 6. Ana Mendieta, *Untitled* (*Silueta* series, Iowa) (1977), color photograph, 20" x 13 1/4". Collection of Ignacio C. Mendieta. Photo: The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC; courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

raises his desire to a second power … the child thus begins to become engaged in the system of the concrete discourse of those around him…."[28] The child, in other words, does not simply toy with the presence/absence of the wheel as a form of control; instead, he begins to navigate the material and the linguistic. There is a lateral move from the field of bodily desire to that of linguistic desire—the latter a field of social meaning production. In a subsequent context, Lacan continues: "The function of the exercise with this object refers to an alienation, and not to some supposed mastery, which is difficult to imagine being increased in an endless repetition, whereas the endless repetition that is in question reveals the radical vacillation of the subject."[29] The subject is *always already* in a state of flux or fragmentation. Language operates as a site of desire in which one attempts (in vein) to fill that fundamental lack.

Mendieta's performative acts to produce the *Siluetas*, then, operate less as sites of recovery than as sites of articulation. In the opening color photograph (see Fig. 1 and Pl. 6), the symbolic absence of Mendieta's body, in the silhouetted dirt trace of action, is combined with a material removal, revealed in the color of the dirt itself—a damp and darker surface exposed by unearthing a portion of the bank. The water and the dirt silhouette operate as inverses: the (expected) reflection of material nature on the water's surface is partially replaced with actual material elements beneath—the angled rock at left. Mendieta's silhouette, on the other hand, is a stand-in for the artist's actual corpus constructed from the removal of earth. Whether a particular iteration is constructed from a removal or a building up of surface, Mendieta's body is only selectively shown and never in a manner that crystalizes her identity. Corporeality is always constructed through a removal of her body (as many critics note), but this subtraction is paired with a parallel presence. She exhibits a trace of a trace: in the first instance, the imprint of her body in nature; and in the second, light burned onto photographic emulsion. In this doubling the



Fig. 7. Ana Mendieta, Untitled (*Silueta* series) (1977), color photograph, Estate of Ana Mendieta. Photo: The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC; courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

dual function of the trace—a representation—becomes apparent. The silhouette stands in for Mendieta, yet the silhouette itself is a presence. As philosopher Louis Marin recounts:

> In Furetière's dictionary, at the end of the seventeenth century, under the verb *représenter*, 'to represent,' we find a remarkable tension that puts its meaning to work. To represent signifies on the one hand to substitute a present entity for an absent one (which is, let me say in passing, the most general structure of any sign, whether it be in language or in images), a substitution that turns out to be regulated—owing to nature or to convention?—by a mimetic economy: it is the postulated similarity between the present entity and the absent one that authorizes the act of substitution. But there is another meaning according to which to represent signifies to exhibit, to show, to insist, to present: in a word, a presence.[30]

Even when formed from the removal of earth, the function of Mendieta's area of dark colored dirt is to represent something (or someone) absent, and by doing so, the mark announces its own presence.

Furthermore, Lacan's conception, also invested in linguistic structure, offers a similar observation:

> Through the word—which is already a presence made of absence—absence itself comes to be named in an original moment…. Through what becomes embodied only by being the trace of a nothingness and whose medium thus cannot be altered, concepts, in preserving the duration of what passes away, engender things.[31]

For Lacan, language, concept, or in this case, representation, constitutes things within social space. The natural, the bodily, and the photographic are interpolated fields of meaning.

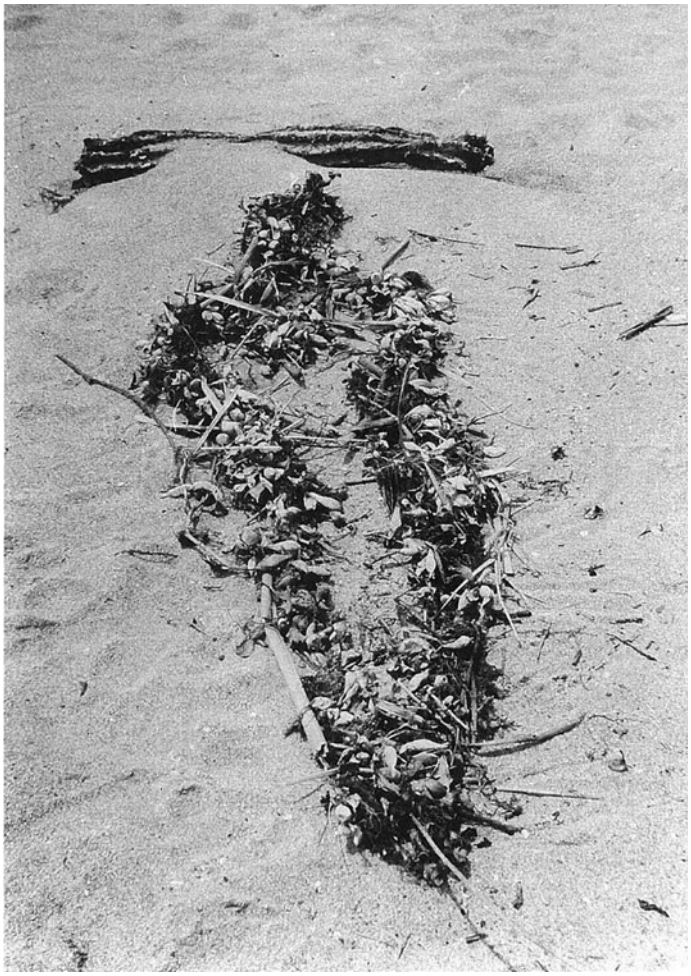


Fig. 8. Ana Mendieta, Untitled (*Silueta* series) (1977), color photograph, 20" x 13 1/4". Collection of Raquel O. Mendieta. Photo: The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC; courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Mendieta's performances, therefore, are not simply gestures concerned with the self; instead, they produce meaning within and through photographic discursivity that self-critically doubles as performative discursivity.

In this move, there is an amount of agency, even if uncertain. Joanna S. Walker identifies this agency in Mendieta's occasional use of a template to produce the *Siluetas*. For Walker, this is an attempt at distanciation that permeates the series as a whole.[32] Yet, this conception relies on an assumption of control—of meaning, language, or representation. Walker writes:

> Avoiding the narcissistic mirror image, Mendieta adopted various disguises in order to mediate a presence that was in essence oblique[,] and the *Siluetas* evolve as a single self-portrait composed of constantly changing elements…. Identity is in the making in these different ways of remembering Mendieta's body, and it is through this radical manipulation of the template that she achieved a powerful sense of artistic agency.[33]

Walker, however, does not even provisionally describe what this identity might look like. The inability or refusal to do so is symptomatic of the overwrought attention to Mendieta's process, which disallows any substantial consideration of the visual material and that material's reception. This is the crucial axis on which the *Siluetas*—through the photographic lens—turn.

The opacity of the image produced by Mendieta indeed creates a type of agency—a curdling, but it is not one that manifests a pure (even if unfixed) identity. Instead, Mendieta navigates the field of photography—in relation to body and nature—in order to challenge the space of articulation (linguistic and visual). That is, contra Walker's claims, which suggest that the artist uses photography and performance as a means to construct an identity, the *Siluetas* are never (from the start) able to recover a fundamental loss. Again, Lacan cuts to the heart of the matter in an earlier, but equally famous, formulation of the mirror stage:

> It suffices to understand the mirror stage in this context *as an identification*, in the full sense analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes [*assume*] an image—an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase, as witnessed by the use in analytic theory of antiquity's term, "imago."[34]

This is not yet the subject in language; rather, Lacan illustrates the projection of one's self as image (*imago*). The "ideal-I" (later the ego ideal) formed at this moment (prior to motor skills and prior to language, which institutes the *I* as subject), this primordial *I* will always operate as unrecoverable: the *I* and reality will never be fully resolved or synthesized.[35] This is distinct from, a challenge to, a pure constructionist conception: Lacan demonstrates that the primordial individual is already in a state of incompleteness, even before entering the social field. Citing Roger Caillois's famed psychasthenia, Lacan explains that even before the social dialectic, there is an "organic inadequacy."[36] "The function of the mirror stage thus turns out," he continues, "to be a particular case of the function of imagos, which is to establish a relationship between an organism and its reality."[37] The individual, then, attempts to rectify this lack through a corrective relationality to the environment—environment as "'orthopedic' form of its totality."[38] In the move from specular *I* to social *I*, this lack transitions into desire for social recognition from others.[39]

Crucially, the environment becomes the symbolic site (again linked to language) through which one pursues wholeness. Yet, as Caillois explains, mimicry with the environment does not, in the end, provide access to that desired self (*I*). Instead, it causes a "disturbance in the perception of space … between personality and space."[40] When Mendieta moves between multiple environments, she enacts a paradoxical mapping of this conception.[41] She moves fleetingly between feminist discourses—A.I.R. Gallery and the Great Goddess dialogues—and race discourses—Santería and landscapes in Mexico. She moves between landscape types: fields of grass, riverbanks of dirt, mud, and water, rocky terrain, spaces adjacent to ancient ruins, to name but a few examples (Figs. 7–8). She moves between photographic mediums: still/moving and black and white/color. Rather than see this prolific mixing as simply a search for self, it is a projection of that very search into the space of the viewer. A criticality emerges that recognizes the stereotyped conceptualizations of gender and race with and within the visual field. Indeed, the extended debates that attempt to situate Mendieta into discrete categories (essential and constructed ones alike) reveal not the artist's search, but rather, the viewers'. There is a recurrent assumption that Mendieta's choice to make the *Siluetas* in discrete, conspicuously "natural" locations is tied to her own identity as other. Yet, when the artist photographs this work and these spaces, she transmogrifies the apparently distant "outside" and brings it to the "inside" of the gallery (a normative space). Mendieta's body—as artist—and photography—as artistic medium—construct an extended threshold that productively collapses the artificial divide between inside and outside, between culture and nature. The *Siluetas* are both curdled within the images themselves and within the spaces of production/viewing.

The photographs of the *Siluetas* are, like the traces of Mendieta's body, a presence. The stain on the photographic or filmic negative that stands in for the corporeal, gendered, racialized, and classed subject of representation, is itself a manifestation that produces meaning. This meaning, however, is never secure—it is always prone to misinterpretation. Tagg explicates: "The instrumentalized record is simultaneously too big and too small for its discursive frame, saying less than is wished and more than is wanted."[42] The slippage of meaning is a result of the too much/too little of the performance and of the image, both in relation to the viewer's implicated position. This articulates a rotation from the space of production to the space of reception and, ultimately, a folding back and forth between the two. When Lacan describes the discomfort produced by humor found in a floating sardine can—the fishermen who took him out to sea, laughed at the can's precarity—he describes his social implication in vision. That is, he becomes the butt of the joke: he, like the can, is out of place. In the performance, Mendieta invokes a similar action: her body is marked as non-normative in relation to the patriarchal hegemonic formation of the art world. In the photographs, however, the viewer themself is interpolated into her bodily trace—the supposed absence, or stain, of the artist looks back at the viewer. Their position, as viewer, overdetermines, or better, overflows the work. The image no longer operates in secure distance; instead, it rushes toward the viewer and infects the idealized gallery site.

In a few instances Mendieta produced *Siluetas* by burning wood or candles (Pl. 8). In some of these cases the images depict the ash remnants of the combustion, but in others they show the actual flame as silhouette. This produces a double emphasis: first in the form of the silhouette as positive rather than negative space; and second in the light source emerging from the object rather than reflecting off its surface. The latter development is a direct reversal of the photographic process, whereby the image is not formed through light reflecting off an

object; instead, the light emerges from the object itself. This emphatic presence of the trace, as itself the source of meaning, is mirrored in the dialogic doubling in the viewer. By looking at the work, there is at once a reception of light reflected on the photograph *and* a projection of subjective responses. If these parallel sites of meaning production are overtly inflected in the flames of photographed candles, they are subdued—but present—in the rest of the *Siluetas* as a curdling of the image via the body. The subdued presence is not less productive, but it modulates the viewer's impact differently. The viewer is provoked to fill that void with meaning. Indeed, this is precisely what scholarship has done, and, as a result, the work's critical point emerges as a critique of the homogenized and singular cultural categorizes of artist, woman, and Cuban all within nature. The *construction* of the discrete categories—nature and culture—manifests in the paradoxical disappearance of the photographic frame in scholarship on the *Siluetas*. The uneasy medium has long occupied a middle position between "high" and "low." For it to be subverted to the logic of the bodily by critics exposes a symptomatic response that overemphasizes the codes of meaning applied to the specificity of Mendieta's body. To see the two together—implicated medium and implicated body—articulates not their peculiarity from high art and high culture, but rather the artificial hierarchies that create and rely on artificial homogeneities of difference. •

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Notes

Special thanks to Fabiola López-Durán, and thanks to Gabriel Martinez, Nikki Moore, Carolina Rios Robles, and Ronnie Yates. Thanks also to Aliza Edelman and the editors at *Woman's Art Journal*.

1. The titles vary slightly. For dates, see Miwon Kwon, "Bloody Valentines: Afterimages by Ana Mendieta," in *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century art – In, Of, and From the Feminine*, exh. cat. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), 167.
2. Lugones writes: "When I think of *mestizaje*, I think of both separation as curdling, an exercise in impurity, and of separation as splitting, an exercise in purity. I think of the attempt at control exercised by those who possess both power and the categorial eye and who attempt to split everything impure, breaking it down into pure elements … for the purposes of control. Control over creativity. And I think of something in the middle of either/or, something impure, something or someone mestizo, as both separated, curdled, and resisting in its curdled state. *Mestizaje* defies control through simultaneously asserting the impure, curdled multiple state and rejecting fragmentation into pure parts. In this play of assertion and rejection, the mestiza is unclassifiable, unmanageable. She has no pure parts to be 'had,' controlled." María Lugones, "Purity, Impurity, and Separation," in *Pilgrimages / Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pubs., 2003), 122–26,140–46.
3. Lugones.
4. Kwon, "Bloody Valentines," 166.
5. Mendieta has offered statements that occasionally support such claims. One oft repeated example: "I have been carrying on a dialogue between the landscape and the female body…. I believe this to be a direct result of my having been torn away from my homeland during my adolescence. I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature). My art is the way I re-establish the bonds that unite me to the universe. It is a return to the maternal source." Cited in Angelique Szymanek, "The Bloody Pleasure of Ana Mendieta's Violent Tableaux," (Ph.D. diss., Binghamton Univ., State University of New York, 2015), np. See also Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis, MN: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1998), 26.
6. Susan Best, "The Serial Spaces of Ana Mendieta," *Art History* 30, no. 1 (February 2007): 57–82. Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 32–51.
7. I take inspiration for the project of close looking from Angelique Szymanek's research, which importantly argues that Mendieta's work tends to be used as a foil through which contemporary political positions are expressed or mobilized. Scholarship on Mendieta's artwork is wide ranging and highly impactful in advancing conceptions of identity and subject formation; however, it also has largely left the actual objects the artist created understudied. It seems to me that what occurs within and between the *Silueta* images, in fact, opens a challenging critique of bodies *within* a changing perceptual field. Szymanek, "The Bloody Pleasure of Ana Mendieta's Violent Tableaux"; and Szymanek, "Bloody Pleasures: Ana Mendieta's Violent Tableaux," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 41, no. 4 (Summer 2016): 895–925.
8. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1964), 182.
9. One might productively extend this watery relationality in connection to Mendieta's work toward a feminist posthumanism—one that simultaneously rejects phallogocentric conceptions of individual self-sufficiency *and* problematizes any "cozy togetherness" that eliminates the impacts of embodied difference. See Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).
10. Reviewers in the essentialist school emphasize the importance of locality as a means for Mendieta to rejoin a "maternal" or "tropical" nature. For examples of these readings, see Lucy R. Lippard, "Making Up: Role-Playing and Transformation in Women's Art" and "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: European and American Women's Body Art," in *The Pink Glass Swan: Selected Feminist Essays on Art* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 89–98 and 99–116; Anne Creissels, "From Leda to Daphne, Sacrifice and Virginity in the Work of Ana Mendieta," in *The Sacred and the Feminine: Imagination and Sexual Difference*, ed. Griselda Pollock and Victoria Turvey Sauron (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); and Mary Jane Jacob, *Ana Mendieta: The "Silueta" Series, 1973–1980*, exh. cat. (New York: Galerie Lelong, 1991), 8.
11. Douglas Crimp, "Redefining Site Specificity," in *Richard Serra* (October Files), ed. Hal Foster with Gordon Hughes (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000), 147–74; Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993).
12. Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Against the Body: Interpreting Ana Mendieta," in *Ana Mendieta: Traces*, ed. Stephanie Rosenthal, exh. cat. (London: Hayward Pub., 2013), 27–37.
13. Joanna S. Walker, "The Body is Present Even if in Disguise: Tracing the Trace in the Artwork of Nancy Spero and Ana Mendieta" *Tate Papers*, no. 11 (Spring 2009), http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tatepapers/11/thebodyispresentevenifindisguise-tracingthetraceintheartworkofnancysperoandanamendieta.
14. Bryan-Wilson, "Against the Body," 36.
15. John Tagg insists on the plural form of this term, which he stresses

emphasizes the multiplicity of formats within the category of the photographic. Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and The Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2009), 12.

16. See recent exhibitions at the Katherine E. Nash Gallery at the University of Minnesota, among others.
17. The obvious exception is the sculptural versions, of which only objects created from candles exist. In a few cases, wooden armatures have been displayed as sculptural versions (see Jacob's *The 'Silueta' Series, 1973–1980*, for example); however, these objects were used in the production of images, rather than as *Siluetas* proper.
18. This artwork is *Untitled (Glass on Body Imprints)* of 1972.
19. John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1993), 64.
20. Jane Blocker, *Where Is Ana Mendieta?: Identity, Performativity, and Exile* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1999), 109–111. Blocker takes a middle position regarding essentialism/constructionism—the border is not fully established in her reading.
21. There is some discrepancy on Mendieta's age: Bryan-Wilson writes that she was twelve; Kwon writes thirteen; while Szymanek, eleven. Bryan-Wilson, "Against the Body," 27; Kwon, "Bloody Valentine," 165; Szymanek, "The Bloody Pleasure of Ana Mendieta's Violent Tableaux," np.
22. Blocker, *Where Is Ana Mendieta?*, 12. Blocker critiques such interpretations.
23. On transference, see Jacques Lacan, section 3 and 4, in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 123–260.
24. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961), 13–15.
25. Freud.
26. Blocker, *Where Is Ana Mendieta?*, 12.
27. Donald Kuspit's use of psychoanalysis is the most extreme case, but rather than see it as an attempt to recover a fragmented psyche, the critic and art historian sees the work as a form of escape into pure narcissism. See Kuspit, "Ana Mendieta, Autonomous Body," *Ana Mendieta*, ed. Gloria Moure (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1996), 35–82.
28. Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961), 262.
29. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 239.
30. Louis Marin, "Mimesis and Description," in *On Representation*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2001), 256.
31. Lacan refers again to the *fort-da* game. *Écrits*, 228.
32. Walker, "The Body is Present Even if in Disguise," np.
33. Walker.
34. Lacan, *Écrits*, 76.
35. Lacan.
36. Lacan, 77.
37. Lacan, 78.
38. Lacan.
39. Lacan, 79.
40. Roger Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," trans. John Shepley *October* 31 (Winter 1984): 28.
41. To be clear, I do not mean to suggest that Mendieta was reading Lacan and/or Caillois (though she might well have been) and applying their principles. Instead, much of this conceptual framework is germane to questions of photographic distance and performative presence—the latter seen (at the time) as more real, yet both are prone to a collapse of so-called critical distance.
42. Tagg, "The Archiving Machine; or, The Camera and the Filing Cabinet" *Grey Room* 47 (Spring 2012): 32.



THE ACTIVIST COLLECTOR
Lida Clanton Broner's 1938 Journey from Newark to South Africa
Christa Clarke
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THE BRODSKY CENTER AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Three Decades, 1986-2017
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Visual Arts at Douglass College
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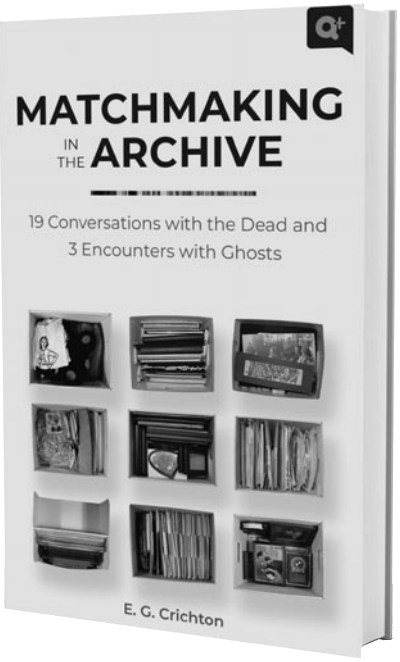
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Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman

Feminist Collaboration and Domestic Disruption

By Joanna Gardner-Huggett



Fig. 1. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Still Wet from the Cocoon 7: Giving Her All* (1980), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13".

Barbara Ciurej (b. 1956) and Lindsay Lochman's (b. 1952) photograph *Still Wet from the Cocoon 7: Giving Her All* (1980; Fig. 1) appears to be an ordinary suburban dining room laid with the family's best crystal, silver, lace tablecloth, and china.[1] The scene quickly shifts when Lochman's father, in formal dress, raises his glass to toast the crouching female nude who hovers like a vulture in the lower right corner. A carefully manicured woman's hand with elaborate rings and an etched silver bangle joins the toast, receiving fresh breast milk from this blurred sibyl who is discovering the physical power of her female physique for the first time.[2] By sharing breast milk instead of wine, the artists place women's fecundity front and center, exposing the monstrous feminine of the female body and undermining the sanitized conventions of the female nude.[3] This provocative and hilarious moment is just one example of many where long-time collaborators and co-conspirators Ciurej and Lochman upend artistic and gendered taboos in photography.[4]

Ciurej and Lochman met in 1975 at the Institute of Design (ID) in Chicago. Having overlapped for two years while studying visual communication, their feminist collaboration empowered them to counter the isolation experienced as young female artists in ID's primarily white male modernist environment.[5] Collaborative photography was rare at ID and threatened longstanding ideals because, as Lochman explained, it "rejected the primacy of the individual artist's vision, the inequality of the artist/model relationship, and the sole ownership of the image."[6] In contrast to other women photographers who worked together, such as Claude Cahun (1894–1954) and Marcel Moore (1892–1972), they are not intimate partners.[7] Similar to their predecessors, Ciurej and Lochman cast their photographic series as occupying a third space, a middle realm that is not the product of their individual egos, and opens up communication with the viewer through humorous juxtapositions between the domestic realm and the women in the photographs who refuse to comply.[8]

This article examines how Ciurej and Lochman's collaborative and feminist practice grew out of their formalist art education, feminist politics, and membership in the women artists' cooperative, Artemisia Gallery, in Chicago from 1978 through 1983. Particular attention will be given to Ciurej and Lochman's 1980 series *Still Wet from the Cocoon* and *Glory on a Budget*, where they simultaneously sought to disrupt gendered expectations in the home through self-fashioning and performative black and white photography. These series reflect what Claire Raymond describes as a feminist aesthetic

where photographs function as modes of visual agitation used to end patriarchal domination by operating on an ocular level, rearranging the sensible to be seen anew.[9] Created at the close of a robust decade of feminist activism and art, both series capture poignant and ordinary moments from youth through puberty to adulthood. In what appear to be scenes of typical white suburban life, viewers soon experience a rupture provoked by absurdity and humor, providing an opening to reject patriarchal conventions imposed on women since birth.

The Institute of Design had its origins in the late 1920s. By 1935, it was affiliated with the Association of Arts and Industries (AAI), which recruited former Weimar and Dessau Bauhaus teacher Lázsló Moholy-Nagy to serve as director in 1937.[10] Deemed Moholy-Nagy's "New Bauhaus," photography became central to the school, training a new generation of artists who used the medium for abstraction more than observation and documentation.[11] After two years, Moholy-Nagy left AAI and founded the School of Design in 1939, later renamed the Institute of Design in 1944. Facing financial instability, the school was subsequently affiliated with the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1949, three years after Moholy's death, but the photography program continued to thrive through the late 1960s under the direction of noted artists Nathan Lerner, Harry Callahan, Aaron Siskind, and Arthur Siegel.[12]

When Ciurej and Lochman enrolled at ID, they still felt the weight of Moholy-Nagy's Bauhaus traditions, which stressed problem solving and formalist black and white photography.[13] Despite claims that Siegel had warned students "not to force a camera on a woman," Ciurej and Lochman were struck by how the nearly all white male faculty, past and present, were preoccupied with photographing their wives and/or girlfriends as sculpture strewn in the landscape.[14] For instance, Callahan's wife, Eleanor, served as a muse for the photographer throughout their marriage, especially while the couple lived in Chicago.[15] *Eleanor, Chicago* (1949) depicts her after a swim in Lake Michigan, reminiscent of the Birth of Venus as she emerges from the foam with "eyes unopened, still seemingly in the process of being formed."[16] As Eleanor explained, "I never refused when he wanted to take a picture…. If he said: 'Come quick, Eleanor—there's a good light,' I was right there."[17] Eleanor's compliance with Harry's demands and her lack of attribution in developing the array of identities she portrayed over his long career is just one example of what prompted Ciurej and Lochman to explore how to depict women actively without succumbing to the status of the muse under the white heteronormative male gaze.

Ciurej and Lochman stress that this transitional moment in ID's history still offered an important foundation for their work. Although white male photographers dominated the histories of photography in their classes, Lochman notes that they also were both introduced to an earlier generation of female photographers who engaged the nude female form, such as Ruth Bernhard (1905–2006), Anne Brigman (1869–1950), Barbara Morgan (1900–92), and Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976).[18] Faculty member Elmer Ray Pearson taught the historical legacy of the Bauhaus, emphasizing its relationship between studio practice and social practice. Photographer David Plowden demonstrated "fluid and mutable ways of storytelling," and insisted that the artists learn to meet the viewer halfway, which influenced the ways Ciurej and Lochman edited and contextualized their photographs. Patty Carroll, who joined the ID faculty during their last semester, quickly became an important role model and gave them invaluable advice on maintaining an artistic practice after art school. Ciurej and Lochman also credit Sylvia Smith, "the unsung ID administrator," who created stability and supported their intellectual voyage.[19]



Fig. 2. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Twin Tufts* (White Sands, New Mexico) (1977), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13" on 11" x 14" paper.

Faculty at ID also gave Ciurej and Lochman significant room to play, which helped cultivate their early collaborative work, including *Twin Tufts* from 1977 (Fig. 2). Created spontaneously in White Sands, New Mexico, while on a road trip out west, the photograph depicts Ciurej and Lochman from the waist down standing confidently on two mounds of sand. Both wear billowing black coats with jeans and underwear that are dropped to reveal their "pubic triangles." Each pair of feet is framed by a semi-circle of wild plants like a pair of eyelashes. In the lower foreground, "Twin Tufts" is etched in capital letters into the sand announcing their arrival as if superheroes. Ciurej and Lochman describe this photograph as a real breakthrough, their #MeToo moment, and a way to harness their anger and counter "stereotypes of woman as Madonnas, whores, earth mothers, sexpots and man-eaters."[20] Women photographing performative narratives rooted in female experience, often with humor, was increasingly taking hold in the art world, even though it remained unfamiliar territory to ID faculty.[21] When Ciurej and Lochman showed Plowden their early collaborative photographs, he didn't know what to make of them and asked his wife Sandra for advice; she told him to "just let them get on with it," and they did.[22]

Major exhibitions and publications devoted to female photographers in the mid-1970s affirmed Ciurej and Lochman's new collective interest in self-representation and



Fig. 3. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Still Wet from the Cocoon 3: Decorating the Cake* (1980), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13".

female sensibility. Anne Tucker edited *The Woman's Eye* in 1975, featuring the works of female photographers from roughly 1900 to the early 1970s, highlighting now canonical artists Berenice Abbott (1898–1991), Diane Arbus (1923–71), Margaret Bourke-White (1904–71), Judy Dater (b. 1941), and Dorothea Lange (1895–1965).[23] That year the San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts staged the exhibition *Women of Photography: An Historical Survey,* accompanied by a catalogue documenting the work of more than fifty women.[24] When the exhibition traveled to the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York, Hilton Kramer, writing in the *New York Times*, described it as "a revelation for anyone with a serious interest in the history of art and photography."[25] *Artforum* reviewer Jeff Perrone recognized that many of the photographers chose "personal expressiveness" over a documentary tradition and were indebted to dance, illustrating bodily awareness and sensuousness in their images.[26] Perrone's account could easily be applied to Ciurej and Lochman's new collaborative photographs.

Dater's photography, in particular, is a key precedent for *Still Wet from the Cocoon* and *Glory on a Budget*, especially in her desire to move "beyond the formal, public pose to discover women as they are to themselves," and her humor in doing so.[27] Dater's *Imogen and Twinka* (1974), for instance, features her mentor, Imogen Cunningham, fully dressed and startled by the young nude model, Twinka Thiebaud, standing by a massive redwood tree and reversing the traditional erotic relationship of a leering old man enjoying a voluptuous female nude. This staged photograph pays homage to Thomas Hart Benton's painting *Persephone* (1938–39), bringing the myth to the Midwest with an old, white male farmer ogling the sleeping nude by a river.[28] Dater undermines the male gaze but also brings two generations of women into conversation as active agents. She explains having a "direct need to make pictures of nude women … that were not passive and not the classical object or male dominated desire. I wanted to create a monumental heroic, if you like, a new ideal—someone to be reckoned with."[29]

Further emboldening Ciurej and Lochman's exploration were recent gains for women, especially the Equal Rights Amendment in 1972 and the 1973 Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision.[30] Ciurej stresses that access to birth control and reproductive freedom communicated that they were truly free to use their own bodies in any way they chose.[31] With their 1977 *Twin Tufts*, they joined a growing interest in body art in the US, two years after the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, coordinated the first national exhibition titled *Bodyworks*. Curator Ira Licht traced the evolution of body art from Marcel Duchamp and Dada to Jackson Pollock, culminating in Bruce Nauman and Yves Klein. Eleanor Antin (b. 1935), Adrian Piper (b. 1948), and Gina Pane (1939–90) were also included in the exhibition, although Licht did not address their work in his catalog essay, pointing to the risks of historical erasure for women using their own bodies in performance despite greater bodily autonomy.[32] Ciurej recalls seeing this show and notes that she felt assaulted by Vito Acconci and Chris Burden's featured performances, but "in hindsight, [it] informed our own work. There was shock value in using your body at the time, and it was empowering to be in control of that language."[33]

Ciurej and Lochman were less familiar with Antin, Piper, and Pane when they started their collaboration, but they were influenced by the performances of Mary Beth Edelson (1933–2021), for example her *Goddess Head (Calling Series)* from 1975.[34] They found Edelson's interest in spirituality, matriarchy, and ritual appealing as a means for overturning contemporary stereotypes of women. Their experimentation with collaborative photography featuring their own bodies in the late 1970s coincided with a growing critique of "cultural feminism" or essentialism associated with Edelson, which emphasized feminist separatism, the value of connections among women, female spirituality and the embrace of the goddess. Jennie Klein explains that critics cast cultural feminism and female artists, especially those employing their own bodies in art, as a naïve attempt to undo patriarchy compared to the interrogation of language by feminist artists like Mary Kelly (b. 1941) and others.[35] Lucy Lippard argued in 1976, for instance, that she had a lack of sympathy for women photographing themselves in sexually provocative poses, offering, "it is a subtle abyss that separates men's use of women for sexual titillation from women's use of women to expose that insult."[36]

It would be easy to simply categorize Ciurej and Lochman's early collaborations as essentialist since they fall somewhere between the engagement with female ritual found in Edelson's performances and Hannah Wilke's (1940–93)



Fig. 4. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Still Wet from the Cocoon 4: The Breasts* (1980), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13".

upending of fashion photography tropes. Amelia Jones's concept of "the rhetoric of the pose," articulated in her assessment of Wilke's staged photographs in the volume *Body Art/ Performing the Subject*, gets to the heart of Ciurej and Lochman's intentions for *Twin Tufts* and *Still Wet from the Cocoon*. Rather than cast women's bodily performances as narcissism, Jones argues that the rhetoric of the pose both solicits and confronts the male gaze, potentially opening the female body and the self to other desires and identifications. Like Wilke who parodied objectifying fashion poses, Ciurej and Lochman's frank depiction of their bodies, staged in domestic spaces where women were supposedly passive and compliant, mocked the expectation that the male gaze could in any way assert control over their antics.[37]

Ciurej started *Still Wet from the Cocoon* in 1978 as her senior thesis project at ID, but she did not want to produce it alone. Shot in 35 millimeter, the elaborate sets, theatrical lighting, and costumes, and more importantly, the framing of content, are products of exchange with Lochman. The pair take turns as subject, editor, and assistant, eliminating the hierarchy of photographer over the model or muse, as well as sole ownership of the image.[38] Part of their larger *Mythology Portfolio*, Ciurej and Lochman created a set of thirty-two images they describe as "performative photographs" rather than a series documenting a performance.[39] These psycho-tableaux probe fantasies and fears that all women encounter in familiar environments during the passage from childhood to adulthood.[40] Set within white suburban culture of the late 1970s, the photographs are grouped into a series of chapters that explore mental attitudes characteristic of specific stages in a woman's development.[41]

The first section addresses concepts of womanhood passed down from mother to daughter, from sister to sister.[42] *Still Wet from the Cocoon 3: Decorating the Cake* (1980; Fig. 3) features Ciurej lying face down on the dining table in a sparsely decorated suburban dining room while her mother pipes icing patterns along her back. A newly baked cake sits untouched at the end of the table and suggests that what the daughter inherits from her mother is not merely baking advice, but guidance on how to navigate adulthood in a patriarchal realm that has long silenced the mother's voice. Capturing this intimate domestic moment counters Ciurej's disillusionment with the misogyny she witnessed throughout her Catholic upbringing and honors the "cadre of commanding 'home-maker' [sic] women relatives" in her life.[43]

As the narrative progresses, the female protagonists are experiencing a "budding awareness of the accoutrements of the female physique."[44] Ciurej and Lochman symbolically reject religion, the beauty industry, and patriarchal control over women's bodies, reproduction, and labor.[45] In *Still Wet from the Cocoon 4: The Breasts* (1980; Fig. 4), a blurred mother helps her daughter tie on a pair of fake breasts. Although Ciurej and Lochman came of age with feminism's call to trash your bras, most women continued to wear them, and manufacturers encouraged mothers to buy their daughters' training bras as a rite of passage through targeted advertising.[46] Sitting against the back wall on the right is a doll donning a white lace dress and veil reminiscent of a Catholic christening gown and emblematic of the expectations of innocence and purity taught to adolescent girls. For Lochman, the doll's stiff upright stance and stern facial expression is "an indicator of disapproval of behavior exhibited by us third wave feminists."[47] After applying curlers to their pubic hair, the two young women in *Still Wet from the Cocoon 6: The Perm* (1980; Fig. 5) sway as if listening to the radio while the box of Lilt for home permanent waves rests on the sink. A long-time beauty staple, their TV ad boasted, "What nature didn't give me Lilt did," and exerted significant media influence.[48]

After negotiating the perils of puberty, Ciurej and Lochman show their protagonists from *Still Wet from the Cocoon* entering the adult world and "playing the game." In *Still Wet from the Cocoon 11: Scrabble* (1980; Fig. 6) one nude female becomes the



Fig. 5. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Still Wet from the Cocoon 6: The Perm* (1980), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13".



Fig. 6. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Still Wet from the Cocoon 11: Scrabble* (1980), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13".

coffee table and holds the word game puzzle while two men calculate their next moves. Reminiscent of Man Ray's Surrealist photography, the female body is cropped at the neck and legs as the men intensely focus on their Scrabble strategies, seemingly unaware that there is a real woman providing the support for their play. Lochman recalled that while they were staging the photograph both players kept trying to one-up each other, trading euphemisms and forcing Ciurej (the model) to endure this submissive pose much longer than anticipated.[49] The players' competition and fetishizing of the female body is further reinforced by the words hole, nookie, snatch, tufts, and vulv formed on the Scrabble board. Roles reverse in *Still Wet from the Cocoon 14: Bacchus* (1980; Fig. 7) when two modern maenads, clad only in crisp white shirts tied at their waists, stand over a young Bacchus reclining in the left foreground. In Euripides's early fifth century BCE play, *Bakchai*, the maenads are entranced by Bacchus and soon flee the city for the mountains, defeat attacks by the male Theban army, and become invulnerable to weapons. Barbara Goff argues that the maenad becomes an antithetical representation of the feminine and married woman.[50] Ciurej and Lochman embrace the maenads' power. One woman teases him with the prospect of food while the second pleasures herself. The oscillation between submission and control reveals the reality for Ciurej and Lochman's generation: a tension between increased bodily autonomy while the ideology of the heteronormative family still expects women to remain tied to the domestic realm.

Still Wet from the Cocoon concludes with Ciurej and Lochman's female characters "taking a tumble," falling "head first out of childhood," and discovering "life is not all sequins and stardust."[51] In *Still Wet from the Cocoon 25: Taking A Tumble* (1980; Fig. 8), a young woman tangled in drapery cascades down the stairs. On the porch rests a box containing the aforementioned doll in profile, looking down with a judgmental stare, and suggesting it is safer for women to comply. By the end of the photographic series in *Still Wet from the Cocoon 32: BeyoReal* (1980; Fig. 9), Ciurej and Lochman's character is now part of the circus; they explain, "She has come to see that she has been performing in 'the greatest show on earth,' which is emphasized by the cropped sign next to her reading 'Beyond Real.'"[52] Undressed from the waist down and wearing only flip flops, the protagonist cannot see through the bundle of fabric wrapped around her, no closer to navigating with ease a patriarchal world, yet she persists despite her loss of sight.

While Ciurej and Lochman were influenced by the work of Edelson and other female artists as they developed *Still Wet*



Fig. 7. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Still Wet from the Cocoon 14: Bacchus* (1980), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13".



Fig. 8. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Still Wet from the Cocoon 25: Taking A Tumble* (1980), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13".

from the Cocoon, it is worth considering a parallel between this series and the photography of Francesca Woodman (1958–81). Woodman studied at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) from 1975 to 1978, receiving a similar modernist photographic education to Ciurej and Lochman (after Harry Callahan left ID and joined RISD to build their photography program in 1961).[53] Like Ciurej and Lochman, Woodman staged tableaux of herself in the nude or partially clad in domestic spaces. In *House #3, Providence, Rhode Island* (1976), Woodman is blurry save for her stockinged legs in Mary Janes and hovers before the window of an abandoned sitting room with crumbling plaster. Raymond argues that Woodman's photographs from these years are distinct from other body artists like Edelson and Wilke because she troubles the presence of the female body by employing traces, echoes, and blurs of the figure rather than affirming bodily presences.[54] Woodman, according to Raymond, performs the opposite of housework and offers the possibility of transcending the restrictive codes of the gendered self.[55] Ciurej and Lochman share the formal elements of cropping and blurring in the series *Still Wet from the Cocoon* and *Glory on a Budget*, revealing the constraint of domestic spaces and suggesting that while the rejection of gendered expectations for women may be clumsy and painful, there is space to resist.

In fall 1979, *Still Wet from the Cocoon* and the subsequent series, *Glory on a Budget*, became part of Ciurej and Lochman's application to the women artists' collective, Artemisia Gallery. Founded in 1973 in Chicago, Artemisia was part of a nationwide eruption of feminist organizations committed to creating agency and visibility for women artists. Taking their name from the seventeenth-century Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi (1597–c.1654), "whose best work had been credited to her father," the founding members were determined to create a forum for their art.[56] Like many women artist collectives formed in the early 1970s, Artemisia rejected the hierarchical structure of patriarchal governance and distributed authority among all the members, implemented a rotating leadership, and made all decisions a participatory process, which paralleled Ciurej and Lochman's own photographic practice.[57]

Ciurej and Lochman stayed at Artemisia for five years, eventually taking on the roles of president and treasurer, respectively, and working through a period of transition for the gallery, much like their time at ID. Most of the original members of the gallery had left by then, and a younger generation joined coinciding with a shift in feminist art criticism at the end of the 1970s.[58] Ciurej notes, for example, that just painting the office cabinets pink one year caused a tremendous uproar among Artemisia's members who were not interested in exploring the feminine as a legitimate subject.[59]

Because of these vigorous feminist debates, membership in Artemisia expanded Ciurej and Lochman's thinking and introduced them to a wide range of women artists' production and feminist content, whether through reading *Heresies* journal (using the gallery's subscription) or via numerous guest artists and curators, as well as thematic exhibitions, which were not available at ID. Both artists cite the importance of Nancy Forest Brown's leadership—it was she who invited Rachel Rosenthal (1926–2015) and Carolee Schneemann (1939–2019) to perform at the gallery, and Lucy Lippard to curate *Both Sides Now: An International Exhibition Integrating Feminism and Leftist Politics* of 1979.[60] Organized "to reconcile cultural and socialist feminisms," *Both Sides Now* featured a Who's Who of feminist art, including Kelly, Piper, Suzanne Lacy (b. 1945), and Martha Rosler (b. 1943).[61] In 1980 Artemisia hosted the exhibition *The Art of the Woman's Building*, highlighting both the history of the 1893 Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago along with graphic, performance, and video art from the gallery's contemporary feminist peer: the Woman's Building in Los Angeles. Equally important, Artemisia was located within a hub of alternative spaces in Chicago, including the women artists' cooperative ARC, as well as Randolph Street, N.A.M.E., and Chicago Filmmakers Gallery,



Fig. 9. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Still Wet from the Cocoon 32: BeyoReal* (1980), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13".



Fig. 11. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Glory on a Budget 2* (1980), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13".

providing a wider artistic network, especially at a time when artists did not have access to the internet and there were few commercial galleries supporting Chicago-based artists, much less anyone pursuing feminist agendas.[62]

Guaranteed annual exhibitions for Artemisia members was another important benefit, and in October 1980 Ciurej and Lochman showed the completed versions of *Glory on a Budget: A Domestic Mythology* alongside *Still Wet from the Cocoon*. Instead of inserting great women artists into famous art historical images, such as in Edelson's *Some Living American Women Artists* (1972), where Georgia O'Keeffe replaces Christ in Leonardo's *Last Supper*, in Ciurej and Lochman's series of nine photographs, they investigated the history of European painting, where "household duties merged with art historical representations of women."[63] These images continue to interrogate the relegation of women to the private sphere but also address the reality that to be a great artist is to be "white



Fig. 10. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Glory on a Budget 6* (1980), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13".

and male." Linda Nochlin's now canonical 1971 essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" inspired a wealth of new scholarship on women artists, but art history textbooks changed very slowly.[64] By the late 1970s only Gardner's *Art Through the Ages* included any female artists: Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945) and Bridget Riley (b. 1931). In contrast, Janson and Gombrich's textbooks didn't feature any women. It wasn't until 1986 that Janson added fourteen women and in 2002 Gombrich added just one work by Kollwitz.[65]

Throughout the series, the ties between women, the domestic, and household appliances remain constant. *Glory on a Budget 6* (1980; Fig. 10), inspired by Manet's *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882), for instance, suggests there is little difference between the French artist's barmaid and a white middle class wife in the US, except the woman at home is not earning a living wage. In her essay the "Politics of Housework" (1970), Patricia Mainardi describes the liberated woman as a "new commodity," but one that is only attained if it "can be fitted in with the household chores."[66] While other female photographers in the late 1970s depict the B-movie star or the potentially overwhelmed housewife, such as Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Still #84* (1978) and Laurie Simmons' *Blonde/Red Dress/Kitchen* (1978), Ciurej and Lochman instead mock the absurdity of these demands.[67] The curator Joyce Fernandes notes that *Glory on a Budget* also exposes the dichotomy between domesticity and artmaking, revealing societal conditions that historically limit women's professional visibility.[68] Lochman affirms this point in a survey asking about the impact of her membership in Artemisia Gallery during the 1980s. She explains how hard it was for her and Ciurej to attain their career goals as they navigated the major life changes of childbearing, which altered the way the two photographers collaborated.[69]

Glory on a Budget 2 (1980; Fig. 11) restages Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (1483–85) within the open doors of a kitchen refrigerator



Fig. 12. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Glory on a Budget 4* (1980), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13"

and points to the economics of the household. Standing on a crudely rendered scallop shell constructed from heavy paper, a blurry Lochman moves in a frenzied manner reminiscent of a bacchante and challenges the lessons associated with expectations of marriage in fifteenth-century Italy. Jane C. Long explains that the frank nudity found in Botticelli's original, specifically Venus's exaggerated curves and contrapposto stance, celebrates femininity. This female erotic is justified in the context of a wedding celebration because marriage was not considered legitimate in the eyes of upper-class Renaissance society until consummated.[70] Ciurej and Lochman allude to these qualities as well as the fact that the wife is now subject to the husband's financial control after leaving her father. Their frenzied Venus turns away from the fully stocked fridge, effectively refusing to fulfill the duty of feeding and caring for husband and home or maintaining a prescribed budget. With the refrigerator doors wide open, the supplies are bound to spoil, and any available time and dollars are more likely to sustain the goddess's creative endeavors.

Domestic disruption continues in subsequent scenes in the series. In *Glory on a Budget 4* (1980; Fig. 12), Lochman, wearing a 1950s style cocktail dress and kitten heels, dances a pas de deux with the Electrolux flaunting the grace of a Degas dancer.[71] *Glory on a Budget 5* (1980; Fig. 13) sends up Geertgen tot Sint Jans's *The Nativity* (c. 1490). Instead of paying reverence to the Christ child, however, it is the roast turkey that Ciurej adores while dressed in a dark blue velvet cloak evoking Christian Dior's "New Look." Here spiritual enlightenment is exchanged for the glory of consumer efficiency over the Madonna's piety. In these photographs the female characters exemplify the perfect white suburban housewife, cheerily tending to their daily chores and not exhibiting the disillusioned attitudes expressed in Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique* (1963) or the film *Diary of the Mad Housewife* (1970), although the viewer soon realizes that Ciurej and Lochman are mocking these traits.[72]



Fig. 13. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, *Glory on a Budget 5* (1980), black and white gelatin silver print, 10" x 13".

The critic Mary Dougherty reviewed Ciurej and Lochman's 1980 Artemisia exhibition, featuring both *Still Wet from the Cocoon* and *Glory on a Budget* in the *New Art Examiner*. While finding the images humorous, she admitted feeling uncomfortable viewing them, writing, "This sense of discomfort forces us to look at issues we wish were solved. I see no "resolution of the female humanoid ... the unspeakable fantasies that haunt us is to name patterns of behavior that still hold sway over our lives."[73] More than forty years later, Dougherty's words and these images continue to ring true. When Ciurej and Lochman began their collaboration, they shared a belief in continued progressive change thanks to a robust feminist movement (not anticipating the overturning of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision in June 2022, just shy of its fiftieth anniversary).[74] *Still Wet from the Cocoon* and *Glory on a Budget* also resonate as we emerge from the pandemic. Women's domestic labor increased significantly during these last three years; in the face of ever-present health concerns, they attempt to balance forced remote work, school, shutdowns, attending to children, parents, and relatives, and general day-to-day tasks of maintaining a household. A UN Women report from September 2020 explains that before the COVID-19 lockdown, women performed an average of 4.1 hours of work at home per day in contrast to 1.7 for men. The pandemic only widened that gap.[75]

As domestic disrupters, Ciurej and Lochman have resisted art history's insistence on elevating the artist as lone genius and cultivated ever-evolving conversations with varied audiences—through their photography and community-based work interrogating who has access to cultural, political, and economic power. As *Still Wet from the* Cocoon and *Glory on a Budget* demonstrated inequities for women in the private sphere, Ciurej and Lochman's later series build on these issues by assessing how conditions in the private

sphere intersect with public realities. After leaving Artemisia, they produced *Watch Me Grow* (2009), a series examining childcare centers in Milwaukee; *Processed Views: Surveying the Industrial Landscape* (2012–ongoing) investigating how industrial food production has led to fast food values; and the more recent artist's book, *Recipes for Disaster* (2020), documenting the climate crisis through "risk-laden desserts."[76] Their riotous humor remains, but as Dougherty stressed, our laughs demand our acknowledgement that there is significant work to be done. ●

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Notes

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1. When exhibited, *Still Wet from the Cocoon 4–7* (1980), is accompanied by the text: "Puberty is marked by a budding awareness of the accoutrements of the female physique. Secrets are shared between playmates regarding the subtleties of primping and posturing." Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, "Still Wet from the Cocoon, A Photographic Narrative," Index of Photographs, 1980, Corrected and Revised, 2023. Collection of the artists.
2. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, interview with the author, June 7, 2018, Chicago, Illinois (hereafter cited as Ciurej and Lochman, Interview).
3. Jane M. Ussher, *Managing the Monstrous Feminine, Regulating the Reproductive Body* (London: Routledge, 2006), 6.
4. Michael Costello, "Ciurej & Lochman: Evolving Histories and Processed Views," *Comp, Art & Design Magazine*, Sept. 13, 2018, http://www.thecompmagazine.com/ciurej-lochman/.
5. When they met, Ciurej was pursuing a B.S. in Visual Communication and Lochman a M.S. in Visual Communication.
6. Lochman, quoted in Costello, "Ciurej & Lochman: Evolving Histories and Processed Views."
7. See Julie Cole, "Claude Cahun, Marcel Moore, and the Collaborative Construction of a Lesbian Identity," in *Reclaiming Female Agency, Feminist Art History After Postmodernism*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2005), 343–59.
8. Ciurej and Lochman, Interview.
9. Claire Raymond, *Women Photographers and Feminist Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2017), 3–4.
10. Moholy-Nagy accepted the position after Walter Gropius rejected an offer to run ID because he already was recruited to teach at Harvard University. Peter Selz, "Modernism Comes to Chicago: the Institute of Design," in *Art in Chicago 1945–1995* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996), 37.
11. Selz, 37, 40–41.
12. Selz, 40–48.
13. Costello, "Ciurej & Lochman: Evolving Histories & Processed Views."
14. Ciurej and Lochman, Interview. See also John Grimes, "Epilogue: After 1971," in *Taken by Design, Photographs from the Institute of Design, 1937–1971*, ed. David Travis and Elizabeth Siegel (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2002), 225.
15. See Julian Cox, ed., *Harry Callahan: Eleanor* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2007), for the exhibition catalog exploring Callahan's depiction of his wife Eleanor throughout their marriage.
16. Martha Chahroudi, "'Eleanor, Chicago,' 1949, by Harry Callahan," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 80 (Summer–Autumn 1984), 32.
17. Carol Kino, "The Artist's Wife: A Constant Muse Who Never Said No," *New York Times*, Oct. 2, 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/02/arts/design/02call.html.
18. Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, e-mail to the author, Jan. 19, 2023.
19. Costello, "Ciurej & Lochman: Evolving Histories & Processed Views."
20. Costello, "Ciurej & Lochman: Evolving Histories & Processed Views."; Cuirej and Lochman, "Twin Tufts," *Libido, Journal of Sex and Sensibility* 1, no. 1 (1988): 20.
21. Ciurej and Lochman, Interview.
22. Ciurej and Lochman, Interview.
23. Anne Tucker, ed., *The Woman's Eye* (New York: Knopf, 1975).
24. Margery Mann, ed., *Women of Photography, A Historical Survey* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts, 1975).
25. Hilton Kramer, "Photography Show by Women at Janis," *New York Times,* Dec. 13, 1975, 19, http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1975/12/13/79110979.html.
26. Jeff Perrone, "Women of Photography: History and Taste," *Artforum* (March 1976), https://www.artforum.com/print/197603/women-of-photography-history-and-taste-38007; Drew Sawyer, "'Seething with Ideas': Francesca Woodman and Photography Circa 1975," in *Francesca Woodman, Portrait of a Reputation* (New York: Rizzoli), 113.
27. Donna Stein, "The Art of Judy Dater and Her Photographic 'Memoir,'" *Woman's Art Journal* 35, no. 1 (Spring–Summer 2014): 3.
28. Donna Stein, "Dater, Judy," *Oxford Art Online*, http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ezproxy.depaul.edu/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7002094162.
29. Quoted in Claire Bonney, "The Nude Photograph: Some Female Perspectives," *Woman's Art Journal* 6, no. 2 (Autumn–Winter 1986): 11.
30. National Organization for Women, "Chronology of the Equal Rights Amendment, 1923–1996," https://now.org/resource/chronology-of-the-equal-rights-amendment-1923-1996/.
31. Ciurej and Lochman, interview with the author, August 21, 2018.
32. Ira Licht, "Bodyworks," in *Bodyworks* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1975), np.
33. Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, e-mail to the author, Jan. 19, 2023.
34. Ciurej and Lochman, e-mail.
35. Jennie Klein, "Goddess: Feminist Art and Spirituality in the 1970s," *Feminist Studies* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 578–79.
36. Lucy Lippard, "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: European and American Women's Body Art," in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1976), 124–25.
37. Amelia Jones, *Body Art/ Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1998), 152–53. Jones draws on Craig Owens's theory of the "rhetoric of pose." See Owens, "The Medusa Effect: or, The Spectacular Ruse [1984]" in *Beyond Recognition, Power and Culture*, ed. Scott Bryson et. al. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press 1992), 192.
38. Costello, "Ciurej & Lochman: Evolving Histories and Processed Views."

39. Ciurej and Lochman, e-mail to the author, Jan. 19, 2023.
40. Ciurej and Lochman, "Still Wet from the Cocoon, A Photographic Narrative."
41. Ciurej and Lochman, "Still Wet."
42. Ciurej and Lochman, "Still Wet."
43. Michael Costello, "Ciurej & Lochman: Evolving Histories & Processed Views."
44. Ciurej and Lochman, "Still Wet from the Cocoon, A Photographic Narrative."
45. Marvin M. Ellison, "Is 'Pro-Choice' What We Really Mean to Say," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 124.
46. Jane Farrell-Beck and Colleen Gau, *Uplift: The Bra in America* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania, 2002), 129, 139.
47. Ciurej and Lochman, e-mail to the author, Jan. 19, 2023.
48. Lilt television commercial, 1980, https://youtu.be/gwhZGLp5hI. In 1960, the *New York Times* reported that NBC dropped a planned skit by Mike Nichols and Elaine May who planned to use the Lilt product for a mock award honoring dignity, "for contributing to the maturity and dignity of television," ironically applauding the TV industry for not being controlled by its advertisers. Val Adams, "Sponsor Dropped Emmy TV Sketch, Nichols and May Skit About Home-Permanent Rejected by Manufacturer of Lilt," *New York Times*, June 22, 1960.
49. Lochman notes that Malcolm Edgerton, an architecture student at the Illinois Institute of Technology, now Ciurej's husband, and J.Paul Stainslowski, an ID student, took on the role of the scrabble players. Ciurej and Lochman, e-mail to the author, Jan. 19, 2023.
50. Barbara Goff, *Citizen Bacchae: Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004), 271–78.
51. Ciurej and Lochman, "Still Wet from the Cocoon, A Photographic Narrative."
52. Ciurej and Lochman, "Still Wet from the Cocoon, A Photographic Narrative."
53. Sawyer, "'Seething with Ideas': Francesca Woodman and Photography Circa 1975," 110–11.
54. Raymond, *Women Photographers and Feminist Aesthetics*, 93.
55. Raymond, 107.
56. Virginia Holbert, *Artemisia X: Ten Years* (Chicago: Artemisia Gallery, 1983); Franz Schulze, "Women's Art, Beyond Chauvinism," *ARTnews* (March 1975): 71.
57. Rebecca Bordt, *The Structure of Women's Non-Profit Organizations* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Press, 1997), 11.
58. Many of Artemisia's original members left the gallery after Joy Poe's controversial *Rape Performance* in May 1979. Ciurej and Lochman, Interview. For a history of this event, see Angelique Szymanek, "Impossible to Image: Art and Sexual Violence, 1975–1979," in *In and Out of View: Art and the Dynamics of Circulation, Suppression, and Censorship*, ed. Catha Paquette, Karen Kleinfelder, and Christopher Miles (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 81–94.
59. Ciurej and Lochman, Interview.
60. Ciurej and Lochman, Interview.
61. Lucy Lippard, "Both Sides Now," in *The Pink Glass Swan, Selected Feminist Essays on Art* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), 266.
62. Ciurej and Lochman, interview with the author, June 7, 2018 and Aug. 21, 2018.
63. Ciurej and Lochman, interview, "Mythology, Glory on a Budget," https://www.ciurejlochmanphoto.com/mythologies/GloryOnABudget/gb.html. For more on Mary Beth Edelson's *Some Living American Artists,* see Kat Griefen, "Considering Mary Beth Edelson's *Some Living American Artists*," *The Brooklyn Rail*, March 2019, https://brooklynrail.org/2019/03/criticspage/Considering-Mary-Beth-Edelsons-Some-Living-American-Women-Artists.
64. Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists," *ARTNews* (January 1971): 22–39; 67–71.
65. Roger Clark, Ashley R. Folgo, and Jane Pichette, "Have There Been Any Great Women Artists? An Investigation of the Visibility of Women Artists in Recent Art History Textbooks," *Art Education* 58, no. 3 (May 2005): 7.
66. Patricia Mainardi, "The Politics of Housework" (New York: Red Stockings, 1970), https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/09/11/pat-mainardi-the-politics-of-housework/.
67. Juliet Kinchin and Aidan O'Connor, *Design and the Modern Kitchen Counter Space* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 74–75.
68. Joyce Fernandes, "An Introduction," in *Sex Specific: Photographic Investigations of Contemporary Sexuality,"* exh. cat. (Chicago: School of the Art Institute, 1984), 4.
69. Lochman, response to Gayle R. Davis's survey assessing the impact of membership at Artemisia Gallery on women artists' careers, circa fall 1990. Undated document in Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois.
70. Jane C. Long, "Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* as Wedding Painting," *Aurora* 9 (2008): 10–13.
71. Deborah Bright, "Photography Show Exposes More than Sex," *New Art Examiner* (Feb. 1985): 37.
72. Rupa Huq, "Women on the Edge?: Representations of the Post-War Suburban Woman in Popular Culture to the Present Day," in *Making Sense of Suburbia in Popular Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 133–37.
73. Mary Dougherty, "Barbara Lazarus-Metz, ARC Gallery, 9 W. Hubbard, 266–7607, Barbara Jo Ciurej, Lindsay Lochman, Artemisia Gallery 9. W. Hubbard, 751–2016," exhibition review, *New Art Examiner* (Oct. 1980): 15.
74. This ruling quickly led to thirteen states eliminating access to abortion, and many more imposing severe restrictions, leaving only eighteen states providing legal abortions. Planned Parenthood and Planned Parenthood Action Fund, "Is Abortion Still Accessible in My State Now That Roe v. Wade Was Overturned," https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/abortion-access-tool/US.
75. UN Women, "COVID-19 and its economic toll on women: The story behind the numbers," Sept. 16, 2020, https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/9/feature-covid-19-economic-impacts-on-women.
76. Barbara Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, "Recipes for Disaster," https://www.ciurejlochmanphoto.com/BOOKS/booksindex.html.

From the Empty Dress to the Advent of the Goddess Maemoto Shōko

1980s to the Present

By Kokatsu Reiko

Exhibitions that summarized Japanese art in the 1980s were held at several museums in Japan between 2018 and 2019. Following the international reappraisal of 1960s–1970s Japanese art, opportunities to re-evaluate art from 1980s Japan gained ground.[1] Gallery Kobayashi, which opened in 1977 and actively led such trends, held the exhibition *The Eighties 4: Maemoto Shōko* in September 2019. This show was an opportunity to view two of Maemoto's large-scale works from the 1980s, namely, *Bloody Bride II* (1984; Fig. 1) and *Daiguren* (*Blazing Flame, like a Crimson Lotus*) (1986; Pl. 9), a very large, astonishing work.[2] On a crimson denim curtain six and one-half meters long, Maemoto depicted yellow stars, blue tree-like forms (or were they dancing flames?), and randomly sprinkled lame powder making a sparkling backdrop for a dress of panniers/side hoops, similar to the dress style worn during the age of Marie Antoinette. *Bloody Bride II* was just as eccentric. On a backdrop of pale-greens and pinks—a flower garden—there was a large *maneki-neko* (good-luck cat doll) in the same colors and a dress—its skirt lifted to reveal a crimson fabric lining hung with vinyl tubes, dolls, and artificial flowers. Contrary to the excessive, decorative appearances of these two works, the common characteristic they shared was the absence of a woman's body inside each dress. Furthermore, as can be inferred from their titles, the seemingly flamboyant and cheerful-looking works expressed something much darker: *Daiguren* depicted a raging flame that resembled a crimson lotus, while *Bloody Bride II* signified a bride dyed with blood.[3]

During the 1980s, when Maemoto was creating these works, she was praised by the media as one of the "Chō-shōjo" (Super Girls). Although she was still considered young



Fig. 1. Maemoto Shōko, *Bloody Bride II* (1984), acrylic, plaster, lame powder on dongolos cloth, 89 7/8" x 89 7/8" x 17 3/4". Takahashi collection. © Gallery Kobayashi.

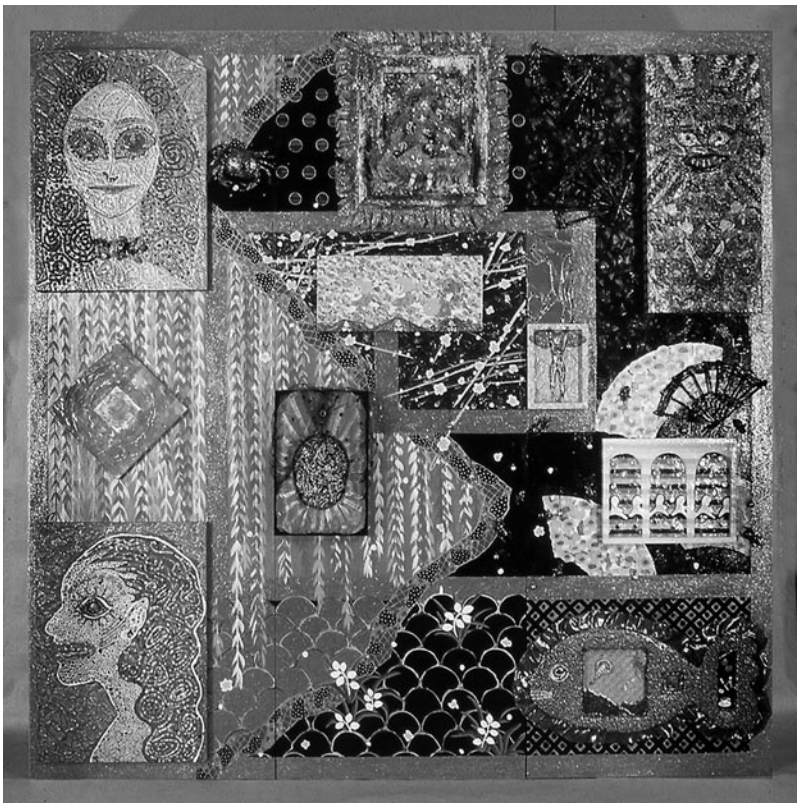


Fig. 2. Maemoto Shōko, *Water in my Mind II* (1984), mixed media, 89 3/4" x 89 3/4" x 8 5/8". Private Collection. Photo: Anzai Shigeo. Photo courtesy Maemoto Shōko.

(around thirty), she was participating in many significant exhibitions both inside and outside Japan. This essay will examine the unique circumstances of Maemoto's career, the period of silence or suspension from 2010 until 2020, when she resumed her activities and reentered the art world, and the motivations and environmental factors influencing women's artistic choices and directions. Maemoto Shōko graduated from the Kyōto Seika University, Junior College Division, Department of Fine Arts in 1980. She moved from Kyōto to the Kantō region (Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture), and continued her studies at the B-Semi Schooling System, completed in 1982. In 1981, she began showing her works in group exhibitions held at the Kanagawa Kenmin Hall Gallery and the Yokohama Civic Art Gallery. In 1983, she had her first solo exhibition at Gallery Kobayashi in Tokyo, where she continues to show. For the next few years, she frequently participated in significant exhibitions as a bright shining star—almost unthinkable for a new artist just out of art school.[4] After 1991, her exhibition history became scarce. Aside from such exhibitions as *Majo tachi no butōkai* (The Ball of Witches) (1992); *International Art Festival Tachikawa 2000*; *Aru korekutā ga mita sengo bijutsu* (Post-War Art Seen Through a Collector's Eye (2001); and, finally, her 2005 solo exhibition *Migawari marī* (Mary the Scapegoat) at Gallery Kobayashi, it would be several years—not until 2020—before Maemoto would resume creating and exhibiting new works and reenter the art world.[5]

Details of the period are mentioned in the "Maemoto Shōko Interview," conducted by Hirama Takahiro, as well as another recently published interview.[6] In 1986, Maemoto began holding a lecture course, "Maemoto Shōko Seminar: Contemporary Art Exercises," at the B-Semi Schooling System (1986–2004). In 2001, she became a part-time lecturer for the oil painting course of the Department of Painting at the Tama Art University (2001–05). In addition, for many years, she held a class referred to as "Absolute Princess Seminar" (2000–19) at the Day/Night Care ward of a psychiatric hospital in Tokyo. The contents of the classes have been published as a book.[7] She also contributed several essays in magazines about her way of life, published as a book series.[8]

During this period, she held doubts about the conventional format for holding solo exhibitions. She shifted her art-related activities as an artist to curating and producing exhibition sites on her own while also asking some other artists to form a group, whose members changed for every new exhibition.[9] But from around 2010, she was unable to create new works; hence, she suspended her artistic activity. She got married, moved to Chiba Prefecture, and raised two children. According to Maemoto, this occurred as a new generation of artists began to emerge, leading her to feel a gap between their world of creativity and the perspective of art that she believed in. This, she said, led her to lose her creative desire.[10]

As she struggled to create something, she encountered "felt craft" and absorbed herself in the technique. She positioned felt work ambiguously as an in-between "something, not art" or "fragments of art," and began creating accessories such as felt brooches and hair clips. These works contain both a sense of humor and spite (accessories not only cute but a bit poisonous) that reflected small, cute objects such as cats, girls, Naruto (spiral-pattern fish cake), and an erupting Mount Fuji, objects with which she is familiar and appreciates. In 2016, when Maemoto opened her own handmade variety shop in Koenji, Tokyo, the name of the shop, "Strawberry Supersonic," derived from her name as a belly dancer, "Strawberry," plus the word "supersonic." Maemoto said she wanted a place where she felt she belonged, thus, opening the shop as a business was not her true purpose. Nonetheless, the shop has evolved so that today she even rents out small areas for craft artists to use as their own gallery spaces and keeps a wall available as a gallery for young artists and for the exhibition of her own works. Via Twitter, she has met new friends and artists, and the shop has become a gathering place.[11]

In 2019, a retrospective of her 1980s works held at Gallery Kobayashi gained renewed attention for Maemoto. Encouraged by the energy she perceived in those earlier pieces, in 2020, for the first time in fifteen years, she showed her new works at Kobayashi in a solo show titled *Hōju kamidana* (Sacred Household Shrine). The small altars, a mixed-media series including *Gorgoneion* (2020; Pl. 10), were



Fig. 3. Maemoto Shōko (front row, far right), photographed in article "For Some Reason They Are All Beautiful and Single?! The Temperament of 'Women Artists' Today," from *Ten Women Painters* exhibition, *Focus* (Dec. 21, 1984): 20–21.

dedicated to various goddesses, from Medusa of Greek mythology to the mermaid princess and to Maemoto herself, who had lost her beloved old cat. The formality of the altar allowed Maemoto to express her feelings of sadness and love honestly. This marked her official return to the art world. The following year, another solo exhibition, *Gurendaiguren* (Growing Blazing Flame, Like a Crimson Lotus), featured two new works—a painting and a three-dimensional work—that, in their installation, faced two of her earlier 1980s pieces. The artist had made a remarkable comeback, despite the fact that this show was held in the disadvantageous environment of Tokyo under the COVID-19 state of emergency. Furthermore, in 2022, she held another solo show, *Gokuraku suigū* (Paradise Water Shrine), where she exhibited one of her 1980s works and another new piece, again in a direct relationship to each other (face-to-face) to instigate a visual correspondence and contrast. Her 2023 show, *Hanatome-hime engi: Stop All Wars* (The Story of Princess Flower-Block), was composed of her earlier work and two additional new pieces.

To better understand Maemoto's early and recent works in her annual solo exhibitions from 2020 to 2023, it is useful to reflect on her earlier participation in an exceptional number of significant exhibitions from the 1980s. Among those early exhibitions, two consisted of only women artists—*Ten Women Painters* (1984) and *Woman Artists of the Day* (1990). Also, around that time, the major art magazine *Bijutsu Techō* published a special feature called "Bijutsu no Chō-shōjo-tachi" (The Super Girls in Art) in its August 1986 issue. The term "Super Girls" referred to a number of women artists ("girls"?!) around the age of thirty who gained recognition in the 1980s. For many years, this term continued to be used as a keyword that stuck to their names (the term is not suggestive of the "super-powered" girl but rather an allusion to transcendence). However, this term loosely indicates young women artists recognized at the time, neither of whom shared any common aesthetic concepts or ideas nor had any common stylistic features.[12] This term is presumed to have derived from Miyasako Chizuru's book, *Chō-shōjo e* (To Super Girls), published in 1984.[13] However, as was indicated by art critic Sawaragi Noi, the feature, "The Super Girls in Art," did not mention Miyasako's implications regarding the feminist trends at the time, nor did it touch upon the idea of transcending the concept of the "girl" (that is, taking on the role of denying the stereotypical idea of "girlhood").[14] In his essay "Chō-shōjo shinpen uchū" (The Universe Around the Super Girls), art critic Shinohara Motoaki merely stated: "The impressions I received from the recent works by women artists were … passion or inclination toward things close by, or matters that imply personal affairs."[15] Fortunately, "Super Girls" as a genre did not have as strong an impact as the genre of the "Onnanoko shashin" (Photo by Girls), which referred to



Fig. 4. Maemoto Shōko, *Kanashimi no mayu* (The Cocoon of Sadness) (2021), mixed media, 82 3/4" x 27 5/8" x 27 5/8". © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.

women photographers who gained recognition in the 1990s.[16] It may also be surmised that the term "Super Girls" was not intended to ghettoize women artists by undervaluing them to be "girls" or "girlies," as was the case with the term "Photo by Girls." In *Art in America*, the American art critic Janet Koplos perceptively pointed out, referring to the *Woman Artists of the Day* exhibition, that the term "Super Girls" later began to carry with it a certain "stigma."[17] "Tōno and other [male] critics focused on women who were young and attractive, [and] even while they praised them for freedom and freshness, they created a patronizing public identity for those artist as 'supergirls,'" Koplos argued.[18] Koplos interviewed one of the participating artists, Yano Michiko (b. 1956), who stated that women today do not have difficulty finding places to exhibit works, but it is difficult for the works to be taken seriously.[19]

It is interesting to examine how Maemoto's out-of-the-ordinary works, featuring objects such as a three-dimensional dress or *maneki-neko*, were critically received at that time. In Maemoto's memory, the only gendered oriented terms in reviews by male critics were those such as "outlandish" and "excessive femininity."[20] Commenting on the Japanese women artists who participated in *Woman Artists of the Day*, Koplos describes Maemoto as one of the few artists in Japan to "directly address specific social themes or intellectually difficult subject matter." In addition, her interpretation of Maemoto's work, *Silent Explosion: Running Through the Night on Foreign Streets* (1988; Pl. 11), in the traveling exhibition *Against Nature* (1989–91), was that it "appear[ed] to be [an] intensely feminist and angry work."[21] In *Silent Explosion*, the abdominal area of the iron-blue dress is violently cut open and a crimson lava-like fabric, loosely attached with pieces of cloth, seemingly pours out and spreads onto the floor. Rising from the dress against the painted background is a crimson blazing flame. Koplos thought that this work was associated with how women continue to bleed during their menstrual period or emit blood as a result of sexual violence, but Maemoto did not endorse this interpretation.[22] In her work *Bloody Bride II* (see Fig. 1), also shown in *Against Nature*, countless small objects—Kewpie dolls, small balls, spangles and artificial flowers—are attached to the dress's raised red-lined fabric. For Koplos and Maemoto, this work embeds a feeling of rebellion against the prescribed fate of women—and their bodies—to marry and bear children. Maemoto explained that, from around the time she moved to Yokohama and commuted to the B-Semi Schooling System, she began to have panic attacks from a fear of going out and meeting people. During this period of suffering from mental instability, she also experienced fear about herself as a woman equipped with a uterus, burdened with the role of giving birth. She elucidated that the interior of the drawn skirt, in both *Bloody Bride II* and *Silent Explosion*, was the image of a woman's womb.[23]

In opposing Koplos's idea that the artist was primarily adopting a social theme, one involving feminist anger, Maemoto was in fact strictly expressing the "fear of childbirth" at that time, reflecting her own realistic sensation as a young woman in her twenties. Hence, her artistic theme was not necessarily a universal one about problems involving *all* women in the world. Addressing the broader implications of *Bloody Bride II*, Maemoto offered:

> If I had a keener awareness and created works from the perspective of the world (women) as a whole, art in Japan might have slightly changed. This is something I should've thought about, and it is also extremely regrettable that none of the art critics at the time had the insight to ask me an in-depth question on my expression.[24]

As she implied, feminist critiques were literally nonexistent in the Japanese art world and society at large in the 1980s and early 1990s. One exception was presented in the creative ideas of director Koike Kazuko, who also contributed an essay to the catalog for *Woman Artists of the Day*, but did not refer to individual works in the essay or comment specifically on Maemoto.[25]

Despite this situation, *Bijutsu Techō* published the "The Super Girls in Art" special feature of 1986 and, aside from *Ten Women Painters* of 1984, only two Japanese women artists participated in the *Fifth Biennale of Sydney*—Maemoto, who showed *Bloody Bride II* and *Water in my Mind II* (1984; Fig. 2), and Yano Michiko (b. 1956), who were then both in their twenties. Photographer Anzai Shigeo had recommended them for the show.[26] Out of the nine artists who participated in *Against Nature*, which toured the US between 1989 and 1991, only two (*at least there were two!*) were women, Hirabayashi Kaoru (b. 1955) and Maemoto. In his catalogue essay for *Ten Women Painters*, Tōno Yoshiaki began by saying, "At a glance, their works use loud colors, employ 'arts-and-crafts' usage of materials, and reveal naïve images, which tend to be interpreted as a reaction to the restrained, non-representational art of the 1970s, but … they have acquired what they should from the 70s art." He continued: "They disclose a freewheeling sensibility … a world like that of a utopian illusion."[27] What Tōno said was merely how he felt, and it was not necessarily intended to be critical.[28] After all, the ten painters who participated in that exhibition—Kataoka Tamako (1905–2008), Katsura Yuki (1913–91), Gōda Sawako (1940–2016), Shōji Fuku (1910–2002) Tsuda Kazue (b. 1950), Maemoto Shōko, Migishi Setsuko (1905–99), Yano Michiko (b. 1956), Yamamoto Yōko (b. 1952) and Yoshizawa Mika (b. 1959)—had nothing in common aside from the fact that they were women. Additionally, the weekly photography magazine, *Focus*, published a nonsensical article on *Ten Women Painters*, titled "Nazeka bijin de dokushin?! *Jūnin no josei gaka* ten ni miru gendai 'joryū' kishitsu" (For Some Reason They Are All Beautiful and Single?! The Temperament of 'Women Artists' Today, as Seen in the *Ten Women Painters* Exhibition).[29] The content of this article was just as senseless as its title, for it merely alluded to the potential commonality that they were "beautiful and single." An accompanying photo of the ten painters revealed the photographer's intention: the two oldest painters (Kataoka and Shōji), in their seventies and belonging to the *Inten* (Nihon bijutsu-in/Japan Art Institute), stood in the back row behind the bench, while the line of young attractive painters were seated in the foreground; no artist looks particularly pleased, however, all lending stoic expressions (Fig. 3). As described above, quite a few exhibitions by women painters were held from the mid-1980s to around 1990. The "New Wave" women painters, in their twenties and early thirties, who had just begun their activities at the time, were selected to participate in those exhibitions. Nonetheless, it was a transient trend that lasted only while they were young. In the Japanese art world of that time, there were few if any exhibitions or critiques that ventured a decent analysis of the contents of the individual works.[30]

What was on the mind of Maemoto, who, in this state of affairs, was glorified as a young woman painter? In an interview conducted by *Bijutsu Techō*, Maemoto made a lucid self-analysis: "There are more women artists today, and now there is this type of a trend, so right now we're being overly praised. But I'm pretty sure that the trend will decline from this point. I'm well aware of this." She then referred to a book she had read on Noh drama, *Kadensho* (The Flowering Spirit), saying, "The mid-thirties determine the future." She firmly stated that in her works, which stemmed from a level seen as "amusement for women and children," there contained "an essential element that should be considered the foundation of art." Namely, her works are created "for someone other than herself" and "from the bottom of her heart."[31] Up until the present, Maemoto's creative acts have consistently been founded on these two key phrases and intentions.



Fig. 5. Maemoto Shōko, detail of *Hi no tama kuni kitan (*Mysterious Story of the Land of Fire) (2021), acrylic on canvas stretched on wooden panel, 63 7/8" x 102 3/8". © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.



Fig. 6. Maemoto Shōko, detail of *Kanashimi no mayu* (The Cocoon of Sadness) (2021), mixed media, 82 3/4" x 27 5/8" x 27 5/8". © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.



Fig. 7. Maemoto Shōko, *Giseisha wa itsumo shōki* (Victims Are Always Sane) (2022), mixed media, 16 1/8" x 19 3/4" x 4 3/4". © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.

When Maemoto exhibited for the first time in almost sixteen years, in the 2021 solo show *Growing Blazing Flame, Like a Crimson Lotus*, held under the COVID-19 state of emergency, both new and older works were included. She displayed *Hi no tama kuni kitan* (Mysterious Story of the Land of Fire) (2021; Pl. 12), her first large-scale painting in quite some time, and the three-dimensional *Kanashimi no mayu* (The Cocoon of Sadness) (2021; Fig. 4), in dialogue and arranged across from two 1980s masterpieces, *Silent Explosion: Running Through the Night on Foreign Streets* (1988) and *Blazing Flame, Like a Crimson Lotus* (1986), which was previously shown only on a few opportunities. In *Mysterious Story of the Land of Fire*, a goddess, covered on her voluptuous nude body with a tattoo-like *karakusa-moyō* (arabesque pattern), holds out her left hand. Beyond her hand is the upside-down head of a huge, shaggy, red-haired creature/cat facing the viewer. Since strands of red hair are stuck to the goddess's nails, it may be surmised that she fought with the huge creature, but because her own streaming hair is also red, the creature-like cat can be interpreted as being the transfigured or incarnated form of a goddess. Upon the blue sea on which the goddess drifts are small people and cats, each holding onto a transparent spherical object or bubble (Fig. 5). Correspondingly, the immediate motive behind the making of *The Cocoon of Sadness* derived from a tragic incident that occurred in Myanmar, where the military seized power in the country. In that takeover, the citizens, who held street demonstrations demanding democracy, became victims one after the other. In this work, the entire blue face of a combined cat-human, eyes wide open and strewn with red teardrops, is spitting out from its mouth red butterflies representing the people who became victims (Fig. 6). Maemoto explained that in the process of creating this work, the number of victims grew too large for her to represent in so many butterflies. The ears and the chin of the cat-like



Fig. 8. Maemoto Shōko, *Satsuriku no usagi-hime* (The Massacre of Princess Rabbit) (2023), mixed media, 64 1/4" x 56 3/8" x 5 1/2". © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.



Fig. 9. Maemoto Shōko, *Hanatome-hime* (Princess Flower-Block) (2023), mixed media, 48 1/2" x 36 1/4" x 5 1/2". © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.

human's face has a protective metal covering, with a backdrop in the form of a white butterfly made from fake fur, and it wears a bride's white veil that falls to the floor, which might have been worn by the first victim, a woman. This is another form of a goddess figure created by Maemoto. It can also be understood as the manifestation of the feelings of the Myanmar people who devoted their lives to democratization. Maemoto handed out remaining butterflies and fragments of the veil (those that she was unable to exhibit) to every visitor, allowing her to share her feelings toward the Myanmar citizens and victims with the visitors, a performative action complementing *The Cocoon of Sadness*.

We may begin to understand that Maemoto's combined cat/human face, created from handicraft-type techniques, and her painting of a voluptuously sensual nude woman, in *Mysterious Story of the Land of Fire*, are aimed at expressing the present, agonizing state of people, suffering at the mercy of world politics. The eyes of the goddess in the *Mysterious Story* look in two directions, perhaps so that she may oversee the entire world. Although the goddess's own body is not disheveled from any apparent conflict, her overwhelming power is represented by the accompanying beast, and her gaze, filled with tender affection, seems cast upon the underlying signs of life in the form of tiny people and cats floating within the sea. Koplos's observation from 1992, which referred to Maemoto's work as the rare case of Japanese art directly adopting social themes, is certainly applicable to the artist's new pieces as well. While Maemoto does not straightforwardly express social or political incidents in her art, neither does she ignore the world in which she resides nor withdraw into the routine atmosphere around her, which was how Tōno and Shinohara had previously generalized the "Super Girl" artists. As a twenty-six-year-old, Maemoto had declared that her works are created "for someone other than herself" and "from the bottom of her heart," and this conviction has remained unchanged.

Now that Maemoto has reentered the art world and initiated her artistic practice after a suspended period, we may look forward to seeing the range of women and goddess images she will create.[32] Her works will undoubtedly fulfill her aims expressed in 1987: "A work that is so creative that it can overturn the sense of value of the viewer, and which has such a powerful 'spirit' that it will not allow the viewer to look straight at the work with a half-hearted gaze."[33] This overwhelming sense of a powerful 'spirit' can be applied to the works from her 2022 and 2023 individual exhibitions held at Gallery Kobayashi, respectively, *Paradise Water Shrine* and *The Story of Princess Flower-Block: Stop All Wars*.[34] In *Paradise Water Shrine*, she installed her new wall-relief, *Gokuraku suigū: Hisui-hime* (Paradise Water Shrine: Princess Jade) (2022; Pl. 13), so that it spatially confronted her earlier large installation from 1992, *Shinkai no anemone* (*Anemone in the Deep Sea*) (1992; Pl. 14), conceived as a pair of images that dwell at the bottom of the ocean. Maemoto intended to calm our weary minds from the current wars and pandemic. Princess Jade, enshrined at the bottom of the sea in *Paradise Water*, has entwined pieces of red seaweed draped from her voluptuous, blue tinged body; her massive god-like hands are elevated independently from her body, while her flickering, red flamed eyes harbor deep anger. The sea creature in *Anemone in the Deep Sea* is devoid of a



Fig. 10. Maemoto Shōko, installation of *Noriko* (1986), mixed media, 88 5/8" x 118" x 137". © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.

human figure, exhibiting an empty dress but also consuming aquatic life to survive. According to Maemoto, the central form is not exactly "an empty dress," but rather she purposely avoided the personification of human characteristics, so that the viewer could project her own image onto the figure.[35] Embedded in this complex installation is the artist's own feelings of anger toward worldly disasters and those experiences that have impacted her own life and caused high levels of frustration.[36] Displayed in the gallery's back room, the hanging wall sculpture *Paradise Water Shrine* revealed a beastly face emerging from a blood-red mat (a splotch of hemoglobin). More than any other work in the exhibition, *Giseisha wa itsumo shōki* (Victims Are Always Sane) (2022; Fig. 7), summarizes the themes of the show by addressing the inexpressible—agony, anger, and sadness. Dedicated to the victims in Ukraine who suffered due to the Russian invasion, this work, in conjunction with the piece constructed after the Myanmar coup, was a necessity of creation for the artist and a form of protest toward the inexplicable insanity of the wars instigated by world dictators.

The exhibition, *The Story of Princess Flower-Block: Stop All Wars*, was visualized by Maemoto as an irrepressible outcry in response to the unceasing wars, conflicts, and bloodshed occurring globally. To actualize this distress, in 2023, the Mighty Goddess *Usagi-hime* (Princess Rabbit) of 1999 was reconceptualized as the Goddess of Battle—*Satsuriku no usagi-hime* (The Massacre of Princess Rabbit) (Fig. 8).[37] Relatedly, *Hanatome-hime* (Princess Flower-Block) (2023) (Fig. 9) stops war with all her might—the gesture of her thrusting left hand relates to the three-finger salute used by the people of Myanmar as the sign of their anti-government protest movement. Maemoto said that this was a coincidence, but one could argue that it was inevitable that she came to incorporate that sign, expressing Maemoto's sentiments and reflecting those living through such acts of warfare. While Princess Rabbit does not like to battle, she is fighting out of necessity to protect what is valuable to the society where she belongs, Maemoto further elucidated (Pl. 15). Disputes, conflicts, and wars continue endlessly, without the moral and ethical determination of right from wrong, black from white. In this troublesome state, *Noriko* from 1986 (Fig. 10) stands present in the space as if to watch over the two goddesses in conflict. A colossal self-standing dress, it was devised by Maemoto by stitching scraps of denim fabric together. As the very first free-standing dress constructed by the artist, the piece affirmatively expressed women's capabilities to live independently in society.[38] However, when the work was first installed in a group exhibition, in 1986, a male artist, who also participated in the show, enclosed the entire work in a wooden barricade, under the false and sexist pretense that he was collaborating with her. An act of vicious harassment, her independent and original work was thus barred from view with no attempt to rectify the situation.[39] Consequently, her latest exhibition in 2023, *The Story of Princess Flower-Block: Stop All Wars*, was the first in which *Noriko* stood prominently, a dignified, indomitable presence for viewers in the gallery. In our irrational world where warfare never ceases, Maemoto continues to experience the anguish of "the cells of her body dying of anger."[40] Nonetheless, Maemoto Shōko has firmly determined that the only solution from anger and despair is to continue doing what she can as an artist and as a woman, embedding her soul into the creation of her art works. ●

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Notes

This article appeared in an earlier version in Japanese as "Kūdō no doresu kara, Megami kōrin e–Maemoto Shōko ten *Gurendaiguren* wo mite" (From the Empty Dress, To the Advent of Goddess: On Viewing Maemoto Shōko's Exhibition *Growing Blazing Flame, Like a Crimson Lotus*), Aug. 28, 2021, in the monthly online art magazine, *Review and Report*, https://note.com/ misonikomi_oden/n/nebe6020dc18c.

1. A short list from Japan includes: *Starting Points: Japanese Art of the '80s*, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa; Takamatsu Art Museum; and Shizuoka City Museum of Art, 2018–19; and *New Wave: Japanese Contemporary Art of the 1980s*, National Museum of Art, Osaka, 2018–19. *Bubblewrap*, curated by Murakami Takashi, also focused on 1980s art, at the Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, 2018–19. In 2022, *Kansai Contemporary Art of the 1980s* was held at the Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of Art.
2. The reason Maemoto was not selected for the aforementioned retrospectives on the 1980s, however, was most likely because the curators had selected established artists historically recognized at that point in time, rather than re-evaluating their activities during that period. Maemoto was also not included in *Kansai Contemporary Art of the 1980s* because it was held after she shifted her activities from the Kansai to the Kanto region. Sawaragi Noi, "Geppyō dai 122 kai, awa to suna no naka no 80 nendai" (Monthly Review No. 122: The '80s inside Bubbles and Sand), "Reviews," *Bijutsu Techō* (April 2019), https://bijutsutecho.com/magazine/review/19465.
3. In Buddhism, the word "daiguren" refers to the seventh out of the eight Cold Hells, where due to severe cold, the skin of the dead is torn and begins to look like a crimson lotus flower. But in her work, Maemoto uses this word to convey the image of "a flame blazing like a crimson lotus."
4. Between 1984 and 1991, she participated in the following exhibitions: *The Fifth Biennale of Sydney*, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, Australia, 1984; *Creative '84: Ten Women Painters*, Yūrakuchō Asahi Gallery, Tokyo, 1984; *The Critical Point in Art '85*, Muramatsu Gallery, Tokyo, 1985; *Art in Front '86*: *Seikimatsu geijutsu no saizensen* (The Forefront of Fin-de-siècle Art), Spiral Garden, Tokyo, 1986; *Art in Japan Since 1969: Mono-ha and Post Mono-ha*, Seibu Museum of Art, Tokyo, 1987; *Against Nature: Japanese Art in the Eighties*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art—traveled to a total of seven venues in the U.S., concluded at ICA Nagoya, Aichi, 1989–91; *Woman Artists of the Day—Kigō no mori, genzai no bijutsu* (Forest of Symbols, the Art of Today), IMP Hall, Osaka, 1990.
5. See *Majo tachi no butōkai* (The Ball of Witches), Sumida Riverside Hall Gallery, Tokyo, 1992; *International Art Festival Tachikawa 2000*, curatated by Namikawa Emiko, Tokyo, 2000; *Aru korekutā ga mita sengo bijutsu* (Post-War Art Seen through a Collector's Eye), Museum of Modern Art, Gunma, 2001.
6. See Hirama Takahiro, "Maemoto Shōko Interview," https://note.com/qqwertyupoiu/n/n1844ebe91bf9; and Maemoto Shōko, interviewed by Wada Yuina, *Strawberry Supersonic Since 2016*, Tokyo, Strawberry Supersonic, Nov. 2022.
7. Seminars by Nakamura Kazumi, Okazaki Kenjirō, and Maemoto Shōko are compiled in the book *Contemporary Art Exercises II* (B-Semi Schooling System Edition, Gendaikikakushitsu Publishers, 1989).
8. Those include: *Issho ni ikō paradaisu* (Let's Go to Paradise) (Libro Port, 1992); *Jissen! Zettai ohimesama shugi* (Action! Absolute Princess Seminar) (Takarajimasha Inc., 2000); *Jibun wo kagayakaseru 25 no chottoshita hōhō* (25 Simple Ways to Make Oneself Shine) (Takarajimasha Inc., 2002); and *Tsumaranai hibi wo kaeru 26 no hōhō* (26 Ways to Change Daily Boredom) (Daiwa Shuppan, 2003).
9. Such activities include "Dark Seed," with Kurokawa, Jun (2005–2010); "Radical Crops," with Ōmura Masumi (2007–09); and "Influence," with Katō Takashi (2008). She also studied belly dance, which she would later go on to teach from 2003–2017.
10. Maemoto, telephone interview with the author, July 14, 2021. See also Takahiro, "Maemoto Shōko Interview," and Maemoto, interviewed by Wada Yuina.
11. In 2022, she also began showing her earlier works at the shop's gallery. Takahiro, "Maemoto Shōko Interview."
12. The names of thirty-nine artists, from Iida Miyo to Watabiki Nobuko (in the order of Japanese syllabary), were cited in the special feature "Bijutsu no Chō-shōjo-tachi" (The Super Girls in Art), *Bijutsu Techō* (August 1986): 19–71.
13. Miyasako Chizuru, *Chō-shōjo e* (To Super Girls) (Tokyo: Hokusousha, 1984).
14. Sawaragi Noi, "*ART POP* kara hajimeru—80 nendai no bijutsu wo megutte" (Starting from *ART POP*— On 1980s Art), *Bijutsu Techō* (June 2019): 108–111.
15. Shinohara Motoaki, "Chō-shōjo shinpen uchū" (The Universe Around the Super Girls), *Bijutsu Techō* (August 1986): 66–71.
16. On "Photos by Girls," see Nagashima Yurie, *Bokura' no 'onna no ko shashin' kara watashi-tachi no gārī foto e* ("Our Photo by Girls") (Tokyo: Daifuku Shorin, 2020). This book discusses her studies and offers a counterargument by the author who was herself involved as a "Photo by Girls," https://note.com/misonikomi_oden/n/ne968e19 d2447.
17. Janet Koplos, "Some Kind of Revolution?," *Art in America* (May 1992): 98–111, 153, 155.
18. Koplos, 105. Koplos referenced Tōno Yoshiaki's essay "Imagineering," published in *Artforum* (Jan. 1986): 72–75; she concluded, "the article was … as much autography (of women artists) as analysis."
19. Koplos, 105.
20. I was unable to find any reviews of that kind. I reference Takashima Naoyuki, "Art in Front '86: Toshi kara toshi e" (From City to City), *Bijutsu Techō* (June 1986): 142–143; and Y. A. (Yuri Akita), commentary on Maemoto Shōko in the book, *The Eighties: Hachijū nendai no bijutsu* (Art in the 1980s) (Tokyo: Gallery Kobayashi, 1990), 86.
21. Koplos, 106. Reviews of the *Against Nature* exhibition, published in the US at the time, also offered similar feminist interpretations as in Koplos. See Mary Ganz, "Japan's New Wave: The Cutting Edge," *Image*, June 25, 1989, 18-21, 31; Kenneth Baker, "[Review] Urban Riddles from Japan," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 25, 1989.

22. Maemoto, interview by Janet Koplos, June 26, 1990. Cited in Koplos, "Some Kind of Revolution?," 106.
23. Maemoto, written response to author via Messenger, June 30, 2021.
24. Maemoto, written response to author via Messenger, June 30, 2021.
25. Koike Kazuko, "Jidai no kigō e no dōsatsu-ryoku" (The Insight into the Symbols of the Time), *Woman Artists of the Day—Kigō no mori, genzai no bijutsu* (Forest of Symbols, the Art of Today), exh. cat. (Osaka: Matsushita IMP Building Shunkō Kinen Tokubetsu-ten Jikkō-iinkai, 1990), 6–7. Unfortunately, this catalog does not mention the curator for the exhibition, which consisted of only women artists—ten Americans and six Japanese. As Koplos indicated, while the age range of the American artists in this exhibition was wider—from thirty-three to sixty-seven—the Japanese artists leaned toward the younger generation, that is, from twenty-seven to thirty-five. The outset of Koplos's essay begins from the question, "Aren't there any midcareer or senior women artists in Japan?" (Koplos, 99). Unfortunately, the climate of the Japanese art world, then oriented toward young women artists, has not changed even in the present day. The *Aichi Triennale 2019*, which "radically" reformed participation by having the same number of men and women artists, showed mostly Japanese women under forty.
26. Anzai Shigeo, "Biennāle-ten ni sanka suru wakate ātisuto futari" (The Two Young Artists who Participated in the Biennale), *Fujin Gahō* (Jan. 1984): 286. Leon Paroissien was the director of the *Fifth Biennale of Sydney*; supposedly, he came to Japan directly to investigate the works of the participating artists, making it an exceptional case for the two women artists, in their twenties, to represent Japan via Anzai's recommendation. A summary of the biennale and the opinions of the two participating artists appeared in *Lunami Journal* 33 (July–Aug. 1984).
27. Tōno Yoshiaki, "'Jyūnin no josei gaka' ten ni yosete" (On the *Ten Women Painters* Exhibition), in *Creative '84: Ten Women Painters*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: The Asahi Shimbun, 1984), 4–6.
28. According to Tōno, in the same year, 1984, he curated *Tawamurenaru hyōmen*, consisting of seven women artists—Iwase Kyōko, Uchikura Hitomi, Sugiyama Tomoko, Matsui Chie, Yasuda Naoko, Yano Michiko, and Yoshizawa Mika. *TAMA VIVANT '84*: *tawamurenaru hyōmen* (Frolicsome Surface), Tama Art University Hachioji Campus, Tokyo (TAMA VIVANT, 1984). Except for Iwase, all the women artists appeared in the *Bijutsu Techō* special feature, "The Super Girls in Art."
29. "For Some Reason They Are All Beautiful and Single?! Today's 'Women Artists' Temperament as Seen in the *Ten Women Painters* Exhibition," *Focus*, Dec. 21, 1984, 20–21.
30. Around 1997, the first wave of exhibitions incorporating gender perspectives were organized by several art museums. At the time, these shows triggered a spate of criticism referred to as the "Gender Dispute." See Kitahara Megumi, "Nihon no bijutsu ni okeru 'takaga seibetsu' wo meguru ronsō, 1997–98" (Debates Concerning 'Mere Gender Difference' in the Japanese Art World, 1997–98), *Impaction*, no. 110 (Oct. 15, 1998): 96–107, https://artplatform.go.jp/resources/readings/R202108. For an introduction to gender perspectives on Japanese art museums from the 1990s to the 2000s, see Kokatsu Reiko, "Nihon no bijutsukan ni okeru jendā no shiten no dōnyū wo megutte" (The Introduction of Gender Perspectives in Japanese Museums), *Image & Gender* 7 (March 2007): 14–21, https://artplatform.go.jp/resources/readings/ R202113.
31. "Sakka hōmon: Maemoto Shōko, Watashi wo miteiru watashi" (Visit to an Artist: Maemoto Shōko, 'I' Who is Looking at Me), *Bijutsu Techō* (Nov. 1983): 120–25.
32. The exhibition *Sacred Household Shrine* at Gallery Kobayashi from June 28–July 4, 2020, consisted of seven works in which a variety of goddesses were enshrined in a household shrine.
33. Maemoto, "Nihon gendai bijutsuka zankoku monogatari" (A Cruel Story about Japanese Contemporary Artists), *WACOA 07* (1987): 28–29.
34. The exhibition *Paradise Water Shrine* was held at Gallery Kobayashi from April 25–May 7, 2022; *The Story of Princess Flower-Block*: *Stop All Wars* was on view at the gallery from April 24–May, 6, 2023.
35. Maemoto, conversation with the author, May 5, 2023.
36. Maemoto, response to the author by Messenger, May 16, 2023. An in-depth analysis is necessary for another context.
37. Maemoto's mixed media, *Konseiki saikyō: Princess Rabbit* (*The Strongest this Century: Princess Rabbit*) of 1999 (16 1/8" x 10 5/8" x 4") first appeared in the exhibition *Shugo tenshi* (*Guardian Angels*) at Harajuku Gallery, Tokyo, in 1999.
38. The title *Noriko,* named after Maemoto's niece, is embedded with the hope that in her niece's lifetime, the world would be an easier place for women to live freely. Maemoto, conversation with the author, May 5, 2023. *Noriko* first appeared in the group exhibition *Art in Front '86*: *Seikimatsu geijutsu no saizensen* (The Forefront of Fin-de-siècle Art) held at the Spiral Garden, March 25–April 29, 1986. Artist Murakami Yasuhiro and Yoshimoto Sakuji also participated.
39. Maemoto, interview by Nakajima Izumi and Kokatsu, August 17, 2022. Regardless of the inexcusable conduct of the male artist, the project supervisor, Itō Junji, did not offer any instruction to revise the barricaded work.
40. Maemoto, introduction, Facebook, April 7, 2023.

Dragging Away: Queer Abstraction in Contemporary Art

By Lex Morgan Lancaster
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Jennifer Packer: The Eye Is Not Satisfied With Seeing

Edited by Melissa Blanchflower and Natalia Grabowska, with contributions from Rizvana Bradley, bell hooks, Dona Nelson, Jennifer Packer, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Christina Sharpe, and Hans Ulrich Obrist
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Reviewed by Sarah Louise Cowan

In recent decades, scholars have begun dismantling the binary of "abstract" and "representational" practices that once dominated modernist art criticism. However, questions about abstraction and representation still shape both academic and popular conversations regarding visual art. For instance, even while acknowledging the inherently political choice artists make to work abstractly, narratives about art tend to view abstraction as a form of withdrawal from social issues. These well-worn tropes result in part from the multiple meanings of the terms "abstraction" and "representation"—each refers to broad aesthetic modes as well as to mental and political processes. Too often, scholars conflate these meanings. Consequently, "abstraction" simultaneously denotes a refusal to literally illustrate the world as well as a set of cognitive processes linked to colonialism and stereotype. "Representation" refers both to depiction and to the possession of a political voice. While the relationships between these terms' definitions deserve serious consideration, their unexamined slippage undermines artistic agency.

Two recent publications—a study by Lex Morgan Lancaster and an exhibition catalogue about the artist Jennifer Packer (b. 1984)—critically examine abstraction and representation, respectively, offering challenges to the terms' supposed antagonisms. Lancaster's book, *Dragging Away: Queer Abstraction in Contemporary Art*, offers a transhistorical account of how artists working since 1990 have engaged with abstract form in order to "drag" it. For Lancaster, "to drag" means to bend artistic conventions in order to create space for non-normative experiences, particularly with regards to gender and sexuality. By contrast, the eclectic essays in *Jennifer Packer: The Eye Is Not Satisfied with Seeing* contend with how Packer's contemporary practice centers representational, often figurative forms that defy demands for transparency. Both studies focus on artists who refuse to show up in their work in ways that are "expected."

In *Dragging Away,* Lancaster persuasively intervenes in scholarly narratives of queer art that rely heavily on "the body"—whether implied or depicted—as the privileged locus of LGBTQIA+ artistic content. Existing literature on queer art, as Lancaster elucidates, tends to focus on art immediately identifiable as queer, through literal representation of erotic acts or through visibly queer bodies. This bias inappropriately limits narratives about work by LGBTQIA+ artists. Lancaster intervenes not only by focusing their study on abstract practices, but also by emphatically steering their analyses away from bodily projections, in other words the tendency to read bodily form into non-representational art. Throughout the book, they deploy the term "queer" to refer to practices that engage critically with notions of gender and sexuality, rather than suturing the concept to artists' identities. However, the coherency of this maneuver no doubt benefits from Lancaster's sustained and careful engagement with artists who are in fact queer.

Dragging Away deploys inventive yet considered comparative analyses both to introduce readers to little-studied contemporary practices and to reexamine canonical artworks. For instance, Lancaster looks at the sculptural paintings of contemporary artist Linda Besemer (b. 1957) alongside the spill paintings of Lynda Benglis (b. 1941), and the inset paintings of Nancy Brooks Brody (b. 1962) alongside Ellsworth Kelly's staid formalist compositions. For each artwork they analyze, Lancaster considers how "queer" artists have approached abstraction ambivalently. Modernist practice has often been a site of exclusion. On the other hand, it serves as an aesthetic resource for those whose subjectivities exceed norms of masculinity, whiteness, and heterosexuality.

Lancaster grounds their richly theoretical account of artworks in "queer formalism," a term originally coined by Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy to describe close looking that gives special attention to "how gender, sexuality, and desire operate beyond their straightforward depictions" (31).[1] Indeed, Lancaster offers careful analyses of artworks' visual and material features, while also considering how the sociopolitical contexts of those works generate less straightforward effects. This fastidious attention to formal qualities helps to ground an ambitious study whose subjects span the playful installation of wave-topped clocks *Beyond the Will to Measure* (2014) by Every Ocean Hughes (b. 1977) and the minimalist paintings of Agnes Martin (1912–2004). In this deeply interdisciplinary project, Lancaster engages with the fields of visual culture studies, queer studies, Black studies, and disability studies.

The book's four chapters, each of which focuses on a formal thematic, offer a fresh look at how abstraction can function as a tool for liberation from stultifying social categories. In "Edging Geometry," Lancaster examines contemporary practices by Brody, Hughes, and Ulrike Müller (b. 1971) that engage with hard-edge geometric forms. Countering this aesthetic's typical association with the austere and hermetic, the author considers how the artists' use of "unruly materials" generates sensuous, even erotic encounters (36). Queer abstraction that mobilizes hard-edge geometry, Lancaster argues, tends to produce destabilizing effects that upset conventional audience orientations, thereby creating new ways of being in the world.

Lancaster's strongest entry, chapter two, "Feeling the Grid," analyzes the way Lorna Simpson (b. 1960) uses the grid in her *Public Sex* series (1995–98), overlaying it onto large-scale photographs of empty parks and other communal spaces that the artist's adjoining texts identify as sites of voyeurism. The



Fig. 1. Lorna Simpson, *The Park* (1995), serigraph on six felt panels with two felt text panels, edition of three with two APs, each image panel 34" x 22", overall 100" x 94". Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

chapter holds together the grid's paradoxical meanings—its "democratizing logic" (63) alongside its industrial and colonialist associations. Lancaster convincingly reveals how this "technology for organizing space" also creates "intimate spaces of contact" with the potential for queer eroticism (67). This reading of Simpson's series motivates a reconsideration of Martin's gridded paintings of the 1960s, particularly the gilded *Friendship* (1963), which reflects light that transcends the grid's two-dimensionality. The comparison, Lancaster concludes, illuminates the grid's potential as "flexible rather than stagnant," "a space for intimacies to exceed bounds of difference," like a glittering beaded curtain or disco ball (80).

Chapter three, "Flaming Color," focuses on how artists Besemer and Benglis have employed intense color in order to generate "haptic encounters" (88). Lancaster asserts this ambitious argument against the grain of normative art-historical narratives that view slick-textured paintings purely as optical surfaces. Crucially for Lancaster, these chromatic, haptic works break away from modernist tendencies to cast painting as bodily surface and defy logics of racialization and gendering. Instead, the author interprets Besemer's and Benglis's paintings, which in many cases abandon the canvas ground to materialize paint itself, as invitations to reflect on the experience of bodily inhabitation.

In chapter four, "Transforming Everyday Matter," Lancaster argues that the engagements with everyday "low" materials by artists Sheila Pepe (b. 1959), Harmony Hammond (b. 1944), Shinique Smith (b. 1971), and Tiona Nekkia McClodden (b. 1981) are specifically deforming processes. For instance, Smith's bale sculptures—bundled pillars of colorful fabrics—deploy the logic of accumulation to deform the individual article of clothing and gesture toward globalized chains of production and Black women's labor. This chapter's strong formal readings rest uneasily alongside Lancaster's relatively brief discussions of crip, a self-identification that challenges pernicious stereotypes about disability. The connection between these artists' intentional aberrations from "ideal" form and the lived experiences of people who identify as crip is not fully bridged.

"Dragging the Flag," the book's epilogue, critically analyzes the rainbow pride flag, originally designed by Gilbert Baker in 1978, and its many afterlives, including in Daniel Quasar's 2018 "Progress Pride Flag" and Angela Hennessy's *Black Rainbow* (2017). Lancaster's visual studies approach functions best here, where it is grounded in material history. This text provides an incisive, accessible examination of the rainbow flag's cultural histories and artistic potentials.

Lancaster's study represents an important contribution to scholarship on queer art in particular and contemporary art more generally. For those new to the field, the judiciously illustrated, lively text offers a generous introduction to a range of timely debates about the politics of abstraction and queer representation. For those well acquainted with these debates, Lancaster presents compelling and at times nonintuitive arguments with nuance. Occasionally, the author's reasoning overly relies on rhetorical moves. For instance, the queer "edging" properties of Brody's paintings seem to emanate more from Lancaster's descriptive play than from the artworks per se (49). A more robust cultural history of "edging" would have helped support Lancaster's original argument. Additionally, the chapters might have focused on a single central pair of artists. The book's discussions of secondary comparisons, such as that between Jasper Johns's *Gray Numbers* (1958) and the pixelated number grid *Magic Square for SPSP 5385* (2015) by Xylor Jane (b. 1963), tend to pale next to Lancaster's more considered analyses.

In her portraits and floral still lifes, Jennifer Packer defies the kind of transparency sometimes associated with representation. As a Black woman who paints Black people, Packer's resistance to this transparency operates in ways that inextricably combine aesthetic, political, and ethical considerations. *Jennifer Packer: The Eye Is Not Satisfied With Seeing* represents the early-career artist's first survey exhibition in a European institution. Packer was born in Philadelphia and attended the Tyler School of Art. The critically acclaimed exhibition, curated by Melissa Blanchflower and Natalia Grabowska and held at London's Serpentine Gallery from May through August 2021 (following a COVID-related delay), traveled to the Whitney Museum of American Art in October 2021. It featured oil paintings and drawings Packer had produced in her Bronx studio over the previous decade. Packer is part of a generation of young Black US artists who are working in the wake of Kerry James Marshall's and Kehinde Wiley's striking success—including Jordan Casteel (b. 1989) and Eric N. Mack, who maintain studios in the same building as Packer—and who are reimagining the visuality (and extra-visuality) of blackness.

The lavishly illustrated exhibition catalogue conveys the luscious intimacies of Packer's practice. In her portraits in particular, the artist plays with the edges of representation. Through strategies of distortion, concealment, and abstraction, she exceeds the logics of "positive" representation. Finely articulated passages—a pair of eyes, a lower lip, a household object—punctuate fields of loose, gestural marks. In this way, Packer activates the entire picture plane. Often, a single color moves across

a composition's negative and positive spaces, defying conventional boundaries between interior and exterior. For a few years, the artist pushed this to the extreme, working in monochrome. In several portraits, Packer veils the faces of figures with swaths of color, particularly subjects in seemingly vulnerable positions. Light seems to emanate from her sitters.

Packer produces her drawn and painted portraits largely from observation and memory rather than from photography. The artist places a premium on the phenomenological aspects of portraiture and imagines the resulting images to be a kind of record of time spent together. She exclusively portrays friends and family, often in domestic settings. For Packer, these existing relationships allow her to fulfill a responsibility she feels as an artist to be "attentive," to "witness pain with ... consciousness" (85).

Through her floral still life works, too, Packer extends her commitment to art as an offering of conscious presence. She conceives of the works as "funeral bouquets," often honoring Black Americans killed at the hands of police (81). As she explains to Hans Ulrich Obrist in the catalogue's interview, Packer painted *Say Her Name* (2017) in response to Sandra Bland's suspicious death in police custody in 2015. The painting's expressive vegetation, which seems to hang suspended in a bath of light, represents Packer's own grief over Bland, rather than serving as a surrogate for Bland herself. In this work, as in *Laquan (1)* (2016–18) and *Blessed Are Those Who Mourn (Breonna! Breonna!)* (2020), the artist mobilizes titles to explicitly position her practice in historical-political contexts that she does not explicitly depict.

The catalogue's brief foreword, by Bettina Korek and Obrist, introduces the exhibition's central themes—representation as a way of "bearing witness and sharing testimony" (14), Packer's engagement with the history of Western painting, and the slow, careful, often emotional viewership her paintings invite. In the lengthy interview with Obrist, which is the publication's highlight, Packer notes, "I'm interested in personhood—that someone exists in that space, with me now, and is represented with integrity, as if the undeniable quality of their existence could be observed" (79). Indeed, in her portraiture, Packer judiciously conveys details—often in the eyes, feet, or hands—enough to honor the individuality of her sitters, but not so much as to overexpose them to the gaze of her viewers. This concern for avoiding surveillance suffuses her practice; Packer approaches representation as a scrim rather than a "portal." Instead of giving viewers the illusion of unfettered access to her sitters, Packer attempts to convey that "the subjects exist and that they're humans worth thinking about beyond their relationship with" the artist (79).

The interview also provides the catalogue's richest account of Packer's varied artistic touchstones. She is a voracious student of art history. (The show draws its subtitle—*The Eye Is Not Satisfied With Seeing*—from Ecclesiastes 1:8, which refers to an insatiable human desire for knowledge.) Packer first recognized herself as a painter upon encountering Michelangelo da Caravaggio's *Saint Matthew* series in Rome (1599–1601). The paintings' depictions of suffering, for Packer, cut through convention to create an indelible sense of human pain. She notes Kerry James Marshall's "tenderness" toward Black women's subjectivity in some of his paintings, such as *Could This Be Love* (1992), which she connects to Jean-Honoré Fragonard's "thinking about romance" in *L'Escarpolette* (The Swing, c. 1767–78). In Philip Guston's work, Packer feels "so connected to the idea that a good painting is hard to follow—the image isn't completely predicted" (76). She draws on Henri Matisse's severe editing process and looks to the works of Palmer Hayden, Henry Taylor, and Simone Leigh (b. 1967). Interdisciplinary scholar Christina Sharpe's brief essay, "Jennifer Packer 'Abundant with Light,'" examines how Packer's aesthetic choices constitute a politics. For instance, Sharpe writes that "it is as if Packer is working the terrain of visibility, hypervisibility and invisibility, those concepts of private and public that attend blackness and that are blackness's investigations of existence" (19–20). Sharpe's writing here is characteristically sensitive to the formation of anti-blackness in the visual and to art's potential to seize upon, and even interrupt, those processes. However, her analyses of Packer's art feel at times overly broad. Sharpe quite rightly identifies intimacy, tenderness, and generosity as themes of Packer's works, but her essay occasionally comes short of specifying how they show up in this particular practice.



Fig. 2. Jennifer Packer, *Jess* (2018), oil on canvas, 30" x 24". Collection of Ursula Burns. Photograph by Jason Wyche.

Rizvana Bradley's two-part contribution, "The Weathering of Form: Jennifer Packer's Abstract Figures," further contextualizes Packer's figurative and still life practices in scholarly discourses about blackness in a representational field. While Sharpe stays broad, Bradley gets specific about how, for instance, Packer's intimate yet withholding depictions of everyday Black life place a wedge in the enduring binary of interior and exterior. Of all of the expository essays in the catalogue, Bradley's also most seriously considers Packer's interventions in histories of art. She situates the floral works in relation to the historically inferior status of still life painting and to the low position of plants in the dominant conceptual hierarchy of beings, arguing that Packer's reclaiming of the genre materializes her reclaiming of Black people from their lesser place in racist ontological hierarchies. As a result, the analysis best accounts for Packer's contributions to modernisms.

A reprint of bell hooks's influential 1992 essay, "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination," also appears in the catalogue. Broadly conceived, the text critically examines questions that motivated hooks's intellectual endeavors for much of the 1990s, including those about the racialized dynamics of visuality. These themes clearly bear on Packer's practice. However, the intended bridge between Packer's work and this essay's particular focus on Black people's "'special' knowledge of whiteness gleaned from close scrutiny of white people" remains opaque (98), since Packer's drawings and paintings emphatically center Black figures and blackness. Readers may nonetheless enjoy hooks's characteristically incisive criticism, which remains as urgent today as it was when she wrote it.

The catalogue benefits from its variety; its entries span several genres of writing. In addition to the above scholarly entries, it features three brief creative texts written by artist Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (b. 1977) expressly for the publication. The two vignettes and one poem evoke the sacred and botanical cycles that permeate Packer's portraiture and still lifes. For instance, "What The Head Can't Take, The Heart May Carry" describes the public breakdown of a woman in grief: Even after warnings from the Devil, a priest, angels, and oracles, she is unprepared for the "Head-Break" of the loss (24–25). The publication concludes with a brief narrative by Packer's former instructor at Tyler, painter Dona Nelson (b. 1947). These reflections from a mentor poignantly describe the experience of encountering Packer's exquisite art in person.

The texts in *Jennifer Packer: The Eye Is Not Satisfied With Seeing* occasionally veer away from the cross-cultural, art-historical trajectories of Packer's references in favor of situating the works in a more streamlined set of contemporary conversations about representation. Packer's work insists on a broader view, revealing how our present discourses carry centuries of freight. Still, taken as a whole, the catalogue's written entries provide a far-ranging, sensitive companion to her art. Readers should beware, however, that copies of *Jennifer Packer* are vexingly difficult to acquire: The catalogue is out of print, and secondhand copies are astronomically priced.

Lancaster's monograph and the Packer catalogue represent leading contributions to ongoing debates about the politics of abstraction and representation. Both publications take on the question of embodiment as a central concern. For Lancaster, the impulse to interpolate human figures into the work of LGBTQIA+ artists represents a problem: These projections limit the interpretive field for queer art and inappropriately conflate queerness with immediately visible signs. For Packer, depicting the human figure, particularly Black figures, entails a risk of overexposure. She sparingly reveals her sitters, protecting them from anti-Black scopic logics. Ultimately, of course, artworks imply human presence—the artist, the viewer—whether or not a figure is depicted and, even if it is, regardless of the degree to which it is portrayed. Lancaster and the authors of Packer's catalogue point to sensuous forms—dripping paint, caressing light—as modes of activating an embodied viewing experience while eschewing the demands of straightforward depiction. The projects share a resistance to representational transparency while nonetheless approaching the artistic encounter through embodiment.

As our everyday lives and digital identities continue to merge, the issues of legibility, representation, and abstraction take on greater significance. This is especially true for those of us who belong to marginalized communities, which are subjected to heightened forms of surveillance and commodification. Ongoing debates about abstraction and representation respond in part to the ways that online media, and the often two-dimensional digital personas we generate on those platforms, rub against our vastly more complex human experiences. Despite their seeming aesthetic antagonisms, Packer and the artists Lancaster studies share a set of ethical and political commitments to an insistently three-dimensional humanism. •

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Notes

1. Lancaster in reference to Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy, "Queer Formalisms: Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy in Conversation," *Art Journal* 72, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 58–71.

Black Matrilineage, Photography, and Representation: Another Way of Knowing

Edited by Lesly Deschler Canossi and Zoraida Lopez-Diago, with contributions by Salamishah and Scheherazade Tillet, Brie McLemore, Jennifer L. Turner, Kellie Carter Jackson, Marly Pierre-Louis, Susan Thompson, Rachel Lobo, Emily Brady, Atalie Gerhard, Sasha Turner, Nicole J. Caruth, Haile Eshe Cole, Rhaisa Williams, Renée Mussai, Jonathan Michael Square, Grace Aneiza Ali, Marcia Michael, and Régine Michelle Jean-Charles
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Reviewed by Megan Driscoll

This sprawling open-access volume brings together texts by artists, curators, and scholars whose backgrounds span the fields of history, Africana studies, sociology, and visual culture.[1] The result is an equally expansive breadth of approaches to the conjuncture of blackness and the maternal, tethered at times somewhat loosely to photography as one of the title's other ways of knowing. The book emerged out

of a seminar from editors Lesly Deschler Canossi and Zoraida Lopez-Diago's broader project, "Women Picturing Revolution," which through live interviews, conference panels, and other events has addressed the cultural politics of photography by and about women from Africa and from the African diaspora.[2] The fact that this open framework of revolution refined itself into a book on matrilineage is telling. The volume considers issues of maternal legacy and care that have been a source of both extreme violence and profound power for Black femininity since the trans-Atlantic slave trade cleaved mothers from children and left in its wake the modern era of conflict and restitution. Where the camera enters this equation is similarly marked by what Shawn Michelle Smith calls photography's double-consciousness.[3] Since its inception, photography has been a simultaneously oppressive and liberatory force for defining blackness, producing the split between imposed image and self-image that W. E. B. Du Bois defines as the double-consciousness of Black life.[4] As demonstrated by the essays, interviews, poetry, and reflections that compose *Black Matrilineage, Photography, and Representation*, photographic imaging is likewise implicated in the production of fraught ideologies surrounding Black motherhood—but it has also been seized by artists, mothers (broadly defined), and entrepreneurs as a forceful tool for autonomy and self-representation. As Renée Mussai reflects in the book in her part-letter, part-homage to photographer Zanele Muholi (b. 1972), a friend: "To allow oneself to feel—and imagine—otherwise, is a prerequisite for the birthing of r/evolutions: to practise, cultivate, visualise, manifest and imagine freedom every day" (236).

In an attempt to wrangle its many perspectives into some order, *Black Matrilineage* is divided into six main content areas: a two-essay preface, four body sections made up of a total of sixteen chapters, and a section of thirty high-quality color plates. Some of the plates duplicate the small black-and-white figures scattered throughout the text, which is helpful when color is important to the work; other plates are by photographers not illustrated elsewhere in the volume. The plates section is limited, however, to images by artists; they exclude the journalistic and personal photographs that also feature in the book (and that are equally important to its claims). These choices reinforce the editors' conception of the plates as a "selection of works curated by Women Picturing Revolution" (273), a gesture that is effective because of photography's amenability to reproduction. This exhibition also works well due to its stunning cast of contemporary artists, including, but not limited to, the elegant reenactments of Ayana V. Jackson (b. 1977; Fig. 1), the roiling juxtapositions of Wangechi Mutu (b. 1972), the sensual celebrations of Mickalene Thomas (b. 1971), the tender ghosts of Lebohang Kganye (b. 1990), and the lush futurisms of Mary Sibande (b. 1982). Well-composed and well-selected, the artworks visually assert the editors' argument that to understand Black matrilineage we must study the legacy of Black women and gender-nonconforming people who have leveraged the camera to "navigat[e] the interlocking Western sociopolitical structures that place a false narrative on [their] bod[ies]," thereby "disrupting the destructive, racist, and limiting image of Black motherhood" (21). The plates are followed by a short afterword that introduces the important voice of Black feminist scholar Régine Michelle Jean-Charles but otherwise does not add much to the book in terms of either new claims or clear summation. This may be because the volume's ambitions are impossible to summarize, the contents of the chapters resisting thematic coherence even within most of the subsections. While this multiplicity makes *Black Matrilineage* challenging to wrestle into a single narrative, it is ultimately a strength for how the volume should be used: as a reference text for readers and educators to engage with specific topics of blackness and the maternal, whether the subject is the role of photography in the African American struggle for reproductive justice (Haile Eshe Cole); what the vernacular archive can reveal about the personal lives of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Black Canadian women, who are otherwise known today only for the oppressive public and domestic labor they endured (Rachel Lobo); or the present-absence of motherland in the photography and poetry of the Guyanese diaspora (Grace Aneiza Ali).

The first of the two prefaces is written by scholar-artist sisters Salamishah Tillet (b. 1975) and Scheherazade Tillet (b. 1978). It is a brief, affective reflection on family photographs and their own photographic practices, setting a personal tone that threads through much of *Black Matrilineage*. Personal archives and autobiographic narratives are as essential to the book's academic essays as they are to its interviews, embracing and strengthening the feminist aim of challenging public/private boundaries as the writers take seriously the role of lived experience in how we understand the world. The second preface is written by project editors Deschler Canossi and Lopez-Diago. In addition to helpful summaries of the main content sections (28–31), the essay introduces several key concepts that will reappear throughout the book, among them the effects of slavery on past and present violence haunting Black matrilineage; the role of controlling image stereotypes in forming negative ideologies of the Black maternal; and the persistent effects of these ideologies in such spheres as incarceration and maternal and infant health. These histories lean on several Black feminist thinkers who form an essential framework for the volume, including Hortense Spillers, bell hooks, Patricia Collins, Alice Walker, and Zora Neale Hurston. The editors also ask us to break free from the over-identification of Black mothering with pain, calling for an expansive vision of Black matrilineage as possibility. Proposing photography as one of the methods through which such a vision can be constructed, they highlight the practices of such artists as Deborah Willis (b. 1948), Carrie Mae Weems (b. 1953), Renee Cox (b. 1960), Sheila Pree Bright (b. 1967), and Nona Faustine (b. 1977) as well as Willis's and Carla Williams's foundational art-historical work. Deschler Canossi and Lopez-Diago thus promise a rich theorization of photography that the rest of the book does not always deliver. The topic of Black matrilineage receives deep engagement from each



Fig. 1. Ayana V. Jackson, *The Rupture Was Her Story* (2019), archival pigment print on German etching paper, 25 5/8" x 43". Courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim.

text, but while all of the essays mention photography, many lack close analysis connecting photographic subjects to historical or theoretical claims. Here it may be helpful to explain my own scholarly background: I'm a historian of contemporary art whose areas of study include African diasporic photography and digital media. I take for granted that images are worthy objects of in-depth study and that they can only be fully understood when visual evidence is paired with historical context. Fellow lovers of photography may be disappointed to find visual analysis spread somewhat thinly across the chapters after the strength of the editors' preface.

The first main content section is organized around the theme of digital culture. It begins with academic studies of the effects of social media on cultural conceptions of Black mothering, including virality and the nuances of Black maternal pain (Brie McLemore) and the influence of memes on stereotyping and self-perception (Jennifer L. Turner). Kellie Carter Jackson interviews the owner of a community website, mater mea, that may be of interest to Black mothers looking for social media alternatives, and Marly Pierre-Louis promotes several Instagram accounts that present both eroticism and the daily activities of parenting in their representation of Black motherhood. Audre Lorde enters the conversation here, another major Black feminist author who returns throughout the book, including in the subtitle of part three, "Self-Care as a Site of Resistance." Across part one there is an unfortunate tendency to accept social media's claims to be inherently democratic, although McLemore offers an incisive analysis of the relationship between digital virality and the hypervisibility of blackness as spectacle.[5]

The thematic connections among essays become looser in the subsequent sections, although many of the individual texts are strong. Part two opens with Susan Thompson's interview of photographer Deana Lawson (b. 1979) tracing the theme of motherhood across several of Lawson's series. The discussion offers insight into the artist's dense layering of spiritual and art-historical references in images that manipulate our expectations of transparency from their quasi-documentary style to present a more complex model of identity and representation. The next two texts are academic essays that engage deeply with the intersections of photo history and the sociohistorical construction of gender and race. The first is Lobo's aforementioned essay on Black Canadian mothers in the vernacular archive; this is followed by Emily Brady's study of early twentieth-century African American female photographers who strategically deployed motherhood as an economic and symbolic tool. Both Lobo and Brady use visual evidence effectively to support their important contributions to the historical record, and their essays exemplify of one of the great pleasures of the book: Even if you're already familiar with the more prominent artists and contexts, there are certain to be at least some new-to-you imagemakers and archives. The fourth text in part two, written by Atalie Gerhard, explores the separate projects of photographers Paula C. Johnson and Sara Bennett that feature images of currently or formerly incarcerated Black mothers. Gerhard's material is interesting, and she mobilizes a dizzying array of relevant history and theory, but the difficult-to-follow writing suggests the need for a stronger editorial hand in the volume. Part two concludes with a viscerally powerful poem by Sasha Turner that expands on bell hooks's phrase "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" to insist that we name not only the victims of racist violence but also the institutional causes of their murders.

Part three begins with a pair of texts focusing on the horrifically high rates of Black infant and maternal mortality in the United States and their root in systemic racism, a topic that recurs throughout the book. Nicole J. Caruth and Haile Eshe Cole add the hopeful perspectives of artists and activists who are trying to improve outcomes. Caruth speaks with artist Andrea Chung (b. 1978) and public health administrator D'Yuanna Allen-Robb about their collaboration in 2018 on a multifaceted social-practice project at a public health center that included maternal cooking workshops and the distribution of a cookbook incorporating works from Chung's *Midwives* series. The *Midwives* collages (2017) are influenced by Chung's Caribbean background, and Caruth's discussion of the series offers fascinating insight into how diasporic cultural accretions can result in both oppressive stereotyping and self-determining symbolic forms. Cole builds on her existing scholarship on Black maternal health to explore how the history of photography has contributed to the racist ideologies that produce dangerous health effects, ending with a few recent photographic projects that are attempting to construct new experiences of Black mothering, such as the professional and amateur photography produced for Black Breastfeeding Week. The third and final essay in part three shifts to another of the book's sub-themes: the complexities of mothers' lives outside of their maternal roles, in this case as participants in the after-hours Black social scene of 1970s and 1980s Cleveland. Opening with a rich analysis of one of many family photographs from these events, Rhaisa Williams deftly interweaves scholarly history with personal anecdote to challenge overdetermined narratives of both the misery of working-class motherhood and the "threat" of the Black social spaces in which such mothers found joy and reprieve.

The fourth and final body section begins with the chapter by Mussai, who, like Williams, uses the personal as a

bridge to the historical. Playing with the intimacy of the epistolary form, Mussai's letter to artist and friend Muholi unfolds into a lushly descriptive rumination on a series of Muholi's photographs that reference the 1956 Women's March in Pretoria, South Africa, through the setting of these images in Constitution Hill, the notorious prison where protesters were sent. Through these images, Mussai connects the notion of "m/othering" to the caring labor that goes into the production of art and into the rebellion of "r/evolutions" (240). Mussai's text is followed by Jonathan Michael Square's study of two photographic series by Nona Faustine (b. 1977) that respectively celebrate the matrilineage of family and interrogate the geographic lineage of New York's now-concealed histories of slavery. Although Square offers a thorough analysis of the content and context of both series, the lack of attention to form is felt strongly here, as he misses several opportunities to engage with Faustine's skillful use of composition to communicate her themes. The interest in the sociocultural lineage of diaspora evident in Faustine's work emerges again in Aneiza Ali's much more form-focused discussion of Guyanese-descended photographer Keisha Scarville (b. 1975). Using the words of Guyanese-born, UK-based poet Grace Nichols (b. 1950) to help illuminate Scarville's *Mama's Clothes* series (2015), Ali explores the entwinement of love and loss of mother with the yearning for a never-quite-retrievable motherland. Section four ends with artist Marcia Michael (b. 1973) reflecting on conjuring—the construction of knowledge and memory through storytelling that bends time and place—as Black matrilineage, a practice that Michael finds in her mother's oral histories, in influential works of literature (e.g., Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, 1987), and in her own photography. The essay features a section of eight black-and-white reproductions of Michael's work, uncaptioned but framed by the artist's words describing photography as "a performative link between the past and present" (269). The images invite readers to imagine the ancestral ghosts she calls upon hovering in the unfocused, backlit glow of a child holding to her face a camera-turned-portal; to feel the intimacy of matrilineage in the folds of one floral print dress draped against another as a child leans into an older woman and light bounces off the shoulder that the child shrugs to pull herself in closer.

The curated exhibition of plates follows Michael's text to conclude the main content areas of the volume. This forcefully image-focused ending helps to underscore the importance of photography as more than illustrative of *Black Matrilineage*'s social and historical themes; photographic practice is, as the book's title suggests, its own way of knowing.[6] Both techne and episteme, photography has long been instrumentalized in violence against the very possibility of Black motherhood. But it also has played a critical role in constructing new modes of being, deeply anchored in the matrilineages of vision, culture, and care found across these pages. ●

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Notes

1. *Black Matrilineage*'s open-access digital edition is available at hhttps://lup.be/products/180336.
2. Lesly Deschler Canossi and Zoraida Lopez-Diago, "Women Picturing Revolution," accessed May 23, 2023, https://www.womenpicturingrevolution.com.
3. Shawn Michelle Smith, "Twoness: Photography on the Color Line," in *The Double: Identity and Difference in Art since 1900*, ed. James Meyer (Princeton and Washington, DC: Princeton University Press and National Gallery of Art, 2022), 239.
4. W. E. B. Du Bois first published his theory of Black double-consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: McClurg, 1903).
5. Readers looking for more analytic engagement with social media, blackness, femininity, and cultural practice may be interested in the writings of Aria Dean, including (but not limited to) "Closing the Loop," *The New Inquiry*, March 1, 2016, https://thenewinquiry.com/closing-the-loop/.
6. Also on photography as constructing knowledge within this context, see Emily Brady, "'Shutterbug?' Black Women Photographers and the Politics of Self-Representation," *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2023), https:// journal panorama.org/article/producing-and-consuming/shutterbug/.

Re-Assembling Motherhood(s): On Radical Care and Collective Art as Feminist Practices

By MATERNAL FANTASIES
Edited by Sascia Bailer, Magdalena Kallenberger, and Maicyra Leão Teles e Silva
Onomatopee, 2021

Reviewed by Li Yang

Feminist mothering has breached the patriarchal idealizing myth of motherhood, but mother artists remain a marginalized and underrepresented group in exhibitions, collections, publications, and art criticism. How do mother artists tackle their precarious working conditions and unacknowledged childcare duties? How are mothering, self-care, and interdependent care work intertwined with art producing? What are the collective tools that facilitate the full inclusion of mother artists and their children in the art world? How does collective art creation build a bastion of women against the broader issues of gender inequality, patriarchal capitalism, and social injustices? *Re-Assembling Motherhood(s)* unfolds the research, writing, and art practices of Berlin-based interdisciplinary collective MATERNAL FANTASIES (rendered hereafter as Maternal Fantasies), formed in 2018. The collective consists of seven international artists who are also researchers and mothers: Magdalena Kallenberger and Maicyra Leão Teles e Silva, co-editors of the volume with Sascia Bailer, and contributors Lena Chen, Aino El Solh, Mikala Hyldig Dal, Hanne Klaas, and



Fig. 1. Maternal Fantasies, *Suspended Time* (2021), film still with caption that reads, "'Caring, carrying, caressing.' 'Care-baking.' 'Care.' 'Care, chaos, circulation, contradiction, chronicity.'"

Isabell Spengler. The diversity of personae echoes the range of genres traversed in the book: collective writings based on prompts; stills and other images of the collective's artworks, including films, live performances, props, mixed photo-text installations, and sketches; and essays addressing motherhood and art production. In their introduction, Kallenberger and Leão advise the reader, "The content is not expected to be read in a linear way. Allow yourself to make leaps and pauses, take a break, digest, and return to thinking further with us, our work, and [our] methods" (15).

The text collages "The Choir Assembly" and "The Ancestors' Assembly" are like two independent yet simultaneous and complementary lines of melody in a polyphonic movement. The former, composed of the biographical details of the individual collective members compiled from the members' responses to a questionnaire, reflects the diversity of demographic features within the collective, such as race, class, sexuality, religion, and physical appearance. The intentional fragmentation and reassembling shed light on how Maternal Fantasies perceive and visualize intersectional feminism. The second text collage is dedicated to the same kinds of information about the members' self-chosen feminist forebears. Among these ancestors are the surrealist artist Meret Oppenheim (1913–1985); author and activist Audre Lorde, whose framing of self-care as a political act explicitly underlies the group's collective artmaking and writing exercises; Hélène Cixous, whose call to "Write! Writing is for you, you are for you" was one of the group's writing prompts;[1] and Valerie Solanas, whose 1967 antipatriarchal *SCUM Manifesto*—along with an array of other feminist texts—provided inspiration for the collective's activities.

The rationale for adopting polyvocality as a method is tied to the complexities and multifaceted layers of motherhood. The other collective writings and co-created artworks featured in the book also foreground this approach. The paradigm resonates with Julia Kristeva's philosophical concept of the polylogue, in which language evokes manifold voices, meanings, and discourses rather than operating along single, stable channels driven by unitary speakers/subjects (the latter as envisioned by Lacanian psychoanalysis). Readers of *Re-Assembling Motherhood(s)* can perceive the interplay of these undulating voices as "a kind of creative 'barbarism' that ... disrupt[s] the monological, colonizing, centristic drives of 'civilization,'" to quote Susan Hardy Aiken's proposal for a feminist approach to the canon (and to canonicity itself).[2] In the first essay of the book, "Building Intimacy Across Difference: Collective Writing, Reading, & Listening," co-editor Kallenberger offers examples of the polyvocal method by revisiting six collective automatic writing exercises that Maternal Fantasies engaged in over the previous three years. The exercises allow different trajectories of personal stories to entwine and fuse, thereby diluting the patriarchal single-authorship and hierarchical modes of creating knowledge. The authors' unvarnished materials and candid texts redress the muting of mothers, challenging entrenched power relations that permeate both the art world and society. At the same time, the collective format preserves the subjectivity of individual mothers/artists, as Kallenberger makes clear: "Collective automatic writing became a tool to formulate our individual thoughts towards a practice built on the lived experience of being both an artist and a mother" (29). This reconciliation between the individual authentic experience and shared authorship of the group simultaneously acknowledges that "the maternal encompasses the full array of human identities, expanding along with our imaginations and sense of selves" (28) and confronts the reality that motherhood goes beyond the personal sphere and manifests itself as an essential fabric of human connection when entering political and social space.

In her second essay, "Maternal Fantasies: Collective Art Production as a Tool for Radical Self-Care," Kallenberger details how the group developed their collective strategies to support each other in the poignant situation of pandemic lockdowns. Notably, in this essay, Kallenberger responds to criticisms of the "playfulness" of Maternal Fantasies' work. Regarding claims that their projects are not political enough and lack militancy, she argues the opposite, that while their work and production process are, "indeed, fun, we refuse to diminish the multifaceted layers ingrained into what this performance playfully depicts and what is inherent in its deeply political modes of production" (86). Leão echoes this sentiment by stating, "Our revolution is not in the street" (133). In other words, Maternal Fantasies positions their political messages not necessarily within art content but through promoting the visibility of their collective art production process, such as the internal coordination of tasks and the establishment of balance in the involvement of children.

In their artist statement, Maternal Fantasies elucidate the rationale for including and collaborating with children in their artistic practice: "We reject the reproduction of social structures [that] exclude children from most public dynamics and surrender mothers into domestic isolation suffocated by underpaid and/or unpaid care work" (8). At the same time, the participation of children both as subject matter and as creators of artwork is a source of maternal ambivalence for the collective's members, prompting, as Kallenberger points out, "serious ethical considerations" (11). As mothers and artists, the collective on one hand brings maternal subjectivity to the foreground as an act of resistance against the longtime silence about, and deliberate suppression of, this matter within the art world. On the other hand, because they represent their children in their work, the members move between the poles of mother-child intersubjectivity: considering the best interests of children while exercising their own sense of agency to create art; caring for children at different developmental stages while practicing self-care; and negotiating between the evolving autonomy of their child participants and the social-political position of their art

In the essay "Core and Margins: Porous Tools of Feminist Collectivity," Leão reveals the complexity and ambivalence that characterize the in-between distances among the collective's members in a personal narrative tone. Her discussion of the strategies and tools for aligning and being together as a collective alternates with her tracing of other collectives of mothers, such as the Los Angeles-based group Mother Art, which was active from 1973 to 1986 and was the subject of a retrospective in 2000. On the other hand, Hyldig Dal's essay "Art Babies Money: Replacing Capital with Care as the Foundation for a Planetary Economy" situates the collective form in an imaginary care-based economy that "acknowledges the essentiality of everyone's contribution to the commons and puts an end to unequal pay and privilege" (140). By creating a manifesto for such an economy, Hyldig Dal calls for an expansion of the types of care-based social infrastructures present in Maternal Fantasies' collective practice and for a radical transformation of the current capitalist system.

A vivid example of how the group facilitates fluid intersubjectivity and enables infinite forms and textures in the relationships between artist mothers and children is their creation and use of body extensions, "key elements of Maternal Fantasies' whimsical visual aesthetic" (114). Made of papier-mâché by the artists and their children during collective workshops, and incorporated widely into the group's films and installations, these colorful props include phallic and breast-like forms, tails, and a dinosaur paw. The visibility of these large, bright, playful, fantastical objects emphasizes, by contrast, the invisibility of the maternal in social structures. Furthermore, by their very strangeness, the objects encourage moments of porosity, divergence, and the unexpected, moments that in turn allow a living exploration and visualization of myriad types of connections both between mother and child and among adult members, including feelings of joyful alignment. The collective's body extensions blur the boundaries between reality and fantasy and between "self" and "other," marking an intersubjective space where Maternal Fantasies can concretize the premise in their artist statement "that mothering is not a private condition and that the self is not a generic, philosophical self, but a situated self, engaged in complex sets of relations" (8).

Care is a basis of feminist solidarity.[4] As the title of the reviewed work suggests, a core aim of Maternal Fantasies is the exercise of radical care on a collective basis, "mak[ing] care the guiding term of our personal and societal politics," as envisioned in Hyldig Dal's manifesto on care-based economics (148). The group's practices of self-care and communal care indeed manifest radicality. For example, despite the diversity of their spoken languages and maternal experiences, the members of the collective engage in a rotational working/caring format in which individuals or small teams lead projects while others provide child care, cleaning, and meal preparation. "In this way," writes Hyldig Dal, "hierarchies, among us and among the tasks at hand, largely dissolve" (140).[5] Even during the COVID pandemic lockdowns, the collective continued to produce work together virtually, "the recurring rhythm of these meetings transform[ing] them into a personal support infrastructure" (85). Maternal Fantasies is thus a communal space where "I" and "we" can be switched, and where being close and distant is never paradoxical. There is no dominating arbiter of the group's practice, just as there is no standard maternal. Understanding motherhood as "the symbiotic interdependence of nurturing the life of the Other within your Self" (145), the members of the collective radicalize care by supporting other caregivers and their children in reshaping gender narratives and seeking to replace the "upside-down logic of value creation" in the capitalist economy, which "plac[es] production above reproduction" (143). According to Elke Krasny, care feminism is "about bodily, cultural, health, social, environmental, educational, and aesthetic justice rooted in the essentiality of care."[6] Maternal Fantasies can be seen as radical practitioners of this notion, as they are constantly celebrating the subjectivity and interconnectedness of maternal bodies, striving for a just acknowledgement of multiple cultures and realities, and standing for a new care-based social order.

Beyond unedited collective writings reverberating with subtle subjectivity and nonconformist film stills centering the mother-child dyad, this book provides trenchant ruminations on ways that communal care can lay a foundation for the empowerment of mother artists and can interfere with patriarchal constructs of reproduction and production. *Re-Assembling Motherhood(s)* is thus more than an artists' book; it does not simply document the collective practice of Maternal Fantasies. It is an experimental tour de force in which a choir of mother artists directs their individual and communal voices toward radical ways of envisaging, experiencing, and practicing care within the space of collective art, motherhood, and feminism. ●

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Notes

1. Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976), 875–93 [original French 1975].
2. Susan Hardy Aiken, "Women and the Question of Canonicity," *College English* 48, no. 3 (1986): 298.
3. Also on the topic of fluid intersubjectivity, see Andrea Liss, *Feminist Art and the Maternal* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 24.
4. Fiona Robinson, "Care Ethics, Political Theory, and the Future of Feminism," in *Care Ethics and Political Theory*, ed. Daniel Engster and Maurice Hamington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 293–311.
5. A precedent for this arrangement is the child care collective Where We At (Black Women Artists, Inc.), founded by Kay Brown, Dindga McCannon, and Faith Ringgold in 1971, which is cited as an important example of "othermothering" among artists in Lesly Deschler Canossi and Zoraida Lopez-Diago, eds., *Black Matrilineage, Photography, and Representation: Another Way of Knowing* (Leuven University Press, 2022), 25. See Megan Driscoll's review of that book in this issue.
6. Elke Krasny, "Radicalizing Care: Feminist Futures for Living with an Infected Planet," in *Radicalizing Care: Feminist and Queer Activism in Curating*, ed. Krasny, Sophie Lingg, Lena Fritsch, Birgit Bosold, and Vera Hofmann (London: Sternberg Press, 2021), 34.

Barbara Chase-Riboud Monumentale: The Bronzes

Edited by Stephanie Weissberg, with contributions by Christophe Cherix, Courtney J. Martin, Akili Tommasino, Stephanie Weissberg, and others
Princeton University Press and Pulitzer Art Foundation, 2023

I Always Knew: A Memoir

By Barbara Chase-Riboud
Princeton University Press, 2022

Reviewed by Nika Elder

Like Lorraine O'Grady (b. 1934) and Faith Ringgold (b. 1930), Barbara Chase-Riboud (b. 1939) is a Black female-identified artist of a certain generation whom the art world is finally giving her due.[1] But unlike O'Grady and Ringgold, who have also published texts during their long careers,[2] Chase-Riboud first achieved popular fame as a writer. In 1979 she published the groundbreaking and best-selling novel *Sally Hemings*, which went on to win the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize for the best novel by an American woman. Six more best-selling novels followed, as did two acclaimed collections of poetry, including *Portrait of a Nude Woman as Cleopatra* (1987), which won Chase-Riboud the Carl Sandburg Poetry Prize for Best American Poet. While the literary establishment has embraced and lauded Chase-Riboud's work in historical fiction and poetry, museums and scholars have devoted less attention to the artist's achievements in sculpture and drawing. Chase-Riboud has received some notable commissions over the course of her career, and galleries and museums have exhibited select bodies of her work, but it was not until 2022–23 that the Pulitzer Art Foundation in St. Louis and the Serpentine Galleries in London hosted the first major retrospectives of the artist's extensive and varied oeuvre.[3] Now two publications—the exhibition catalogue of the Pulitzer show and the artist's first memoir—seek to solidify Chase-Riboud's reputation and elucidate her professional start as a visual artist. Rightfully, they do so by acknowledging and celebrating—rather than skirting—the interdisciplinarity at the heart of her practice.

Billed as "the largest monographic exhibition of her work to date," the show for which *Barbara Chase-Riboud Monumentale: The Bronzes* constitutes the catalogue included more than thirty sculptures—many of which paired the eponymous polished metal with knotted and braided fibers, the combination of materials for which the artist is best known. But the exhibit also extended well beyond its stated focus. In addition to sculpture, it also encompassed almost twenty charcoal drawings and—via the Bloomberg Connects app, which visitors were invited to use on their phones—five of her poems. Since the show by nature prioritized Chase-Riboud's work in visual media, the catalogue is where the confluence of the artist's visual and literary pursuits emerges to greatest effect.

Edited by Stephanie Weissberg, the volume features four analytical essays; "A Manifesto for Sculpture in Pursuit of Futurism" by Chase-Riboud and Reginald Jackson; Erin Jenoa Gilbert's conversation with the artist; and attendant reference lists. The first essay is a brief but poignant meditation by Courtney J. Martin on Chase-Riboud's time at Yale University and the transformations that both the artist and the institution underwent during her time there. Editor Weissberg provides a comprehensive overview of Chase-Riboud's work in sculpture and her conception of the monument as a contested paradigm and site. Christophe Cherix's essay addresses the artist's early drawings and the ways in which they foreshadowed her later sculptures, especially in their reconciliation of competing binaries. Akili Tommasino devotes his essay to a discussion of *Cleopatra's Chair* (1994), a broad throne covered in bronze plaques that belongs to Chase-Riboud's series of reliefs, freestanding sculptures, and poems honoring the famous queen of Egypt. The sculptures "embody the form of abstraction contained in ritual" (45), Tommasini writes, and attest to Chase-Riboud's wide-ranging engagement with the history of art, from the Egyptian temples of Karnak to ancient Chinese jade burial suits.

But it is Chase-Riboud's work—again, both visual and literary—that truly shines. The luscious illustrations of the artist's sculptures and drawings compose much of the catalogue's heft, and in an adroit and meaningful editorial move, the reproductions are interspersed with full-page reprints of seven of the artist's poems. Thus Chase-Riboud's visual and literary works are physically placed into conversation—with neither taking priority over the other, and with both, at times literally, existing side by side. In one of the most powerful juxtapositions, Chase-

Riboud's "Le Lit" occurs alongside one of the artist's drawings of the same name from 1966–73. Both the short poem and the black-and-white image describe a bedsheet whose abstracted and rumpled form assumes the stature of a cultural artifact. With an elegant economy of form, the two works simultaneously speak to the seismic significance of small, intimate moments that individualize the long arc of history. Also appearing on facing pages, and similarly reinforcing each other, are Chase-Riboud's poem "On Hearing Marian Anderson" and her sculpture *La Musica Marian Anderson* (2003). Of Anderson's voice, Chase-Riboud writes, "Something in it of silver and fabulous / Silken scarves flung out throughout Bach's equations…." Likewise, the sculpture juxtaposes hard and soft forms: Bundles of silk and synthetic fibers accent a sublimely graceful Z-shaped armature in bronze (Fig. 1). Together the two works convey the artist's interest in materializing the strength and elegance, the power and beauty, the poignancy and reach of the singer's voice.

In considering the artist's references to Anderson as well as to Malcolm X and other historical figures, *Monumentale* argues that, through her sculpture, Chase-Riboud has "asked "important questions about who and what deserves to be remembered"(Weissberg, 30). While that point is certainly true, the pairing of her poems and visual art ironically makes a visual case for the artist's investment in *absence*—the absence of bodies in particular—and the displacement of those bodies into objects and things. It also raises fascinating and important questions about the *differences* between her work in poetry, historical fiction, and visual art: Why pursue the same (or similar) topics in these various media? What does each one allow her to say or do that the others do not? The plates leave one eager to hear and learn more about Chase-Riboud's thinking *across* media.

Of course, Chase-Riboud isn't the only contemporary artist to work in multiple media, but as the artist herself addresses in her memoir, pursuing and attaining success in multiple fields is a rarity. In *I Always Knew*, she writes frequently of her "double life," noting that "people who knew me as a writer knew nothing of my art and vice versa. An art critic would stare blankly if I started talking about the *New York Review of Books*. A literary critic was unimpressed with a solo exhibition at MoMA, Paris" (365). *I Always Knew* provides insight into the artist's organic transition from architecture student to visual artist to poet and writer as well as into her lifelong movement among these disciplines and even identities. In a way, the volume puts to shame any attempt to categorize Chase-Riboud as one type of artist or another, because it so vividly demonstrates her overall commitment to creativity and to the creative life. Marketed as a memoir, the book—as the author herself observes in the preface—offers much more than a straightforward autobiography. It comprises three hundred letters that the artist sent to her mother, Vivian Mae Chase (as well as one letter that Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis sent to Chase-Riboud and a brief epistle from the artist's son to his grandmother), over three decades as she built a life and career in Europe. They are organized chronologically and punctuated by short texts newly written by the author that locate the events of her life in historical context.

As Chase-Riboud writes, the letters tell the story of "somebody who would become an artist." She then asks, "Did I always know? My title was suggested by the master of historical novels Gore Vidal in an old video where he claimed it was a perfect title for a book, especially a book like this one whose whole purpose is to discover *why* I always knew" (x). Over the course of the book the answer to that question becomes eminently clear: Chase-Riboud internalized the value that her mother, her grandparents, and later her editors, Toni Morrison and Kennedy Onassis, saw in her vision and her ambitions. Chase-Riboud's career and her chutzpah to pursue both the literary and visual arts is testament to their faith in her—as, too, is *I Always Knew*, premised as it is on a cache of six hundred letters that Vivien Mae had the foresight to save and preserve, presumably anticipating that her daughter would someday become a public figure.

It is clear from the first letter, written



Fig 1. Barbara Chase-Riboud, *On Hearing Marian Anderson* (2003), bronze, silk, and synthetic fibers, 45" x 26" x 11", collection of Nigel and Ayodele Hart.

in September 1957 aboard *Le Flandre* as Chase-Riboud set sail for London, that the artist internalized her family's faith in her, especially her mother's, early on. At age nineteen, she was already describing her experiences as though she were the protagonist in a coming-of-age film. The writing is cinematic, effervescent, and charming as she recounts her interactions with various shipmates, from "a very nice, shy nuclear physicist" to French waiters and a precocious seven-year-old girl (3). Chase-Riboud maintains this tone—born of warmth towards her mother, confidence in herself, and enthusiasm for her adopted homes—throughout the text. As the 1950s give way to the 1960s and beyond, she diligently updates her mother on her comings and goings, her friends' lives, her house renovations (so many house renovations), her first husband Marc Riboud's journalism projects and extended family, the couple's two sons, and her struggles with child care. The minutiae make for a surprisingly captivating read, casting Chase-Riboud as an ordinary woman who forged an extraordinary life. Indeed, the letters relegate the luminaries whom she frequently encountered—everyone from Pablo Picasso to James Baldwin—to supporting roles.

As fascinating as the details Chase-Riboud chooses to include are the ones she excludes. She rarely and only briefly

discusses current events. Regarding her career, she addresses the logistics of setting up her various studios and of locating foundries, and she mentions the tedium of writing, but little if anything comes up about the subjects or concerns that motivated and propelled her visual art and literary endeavors. The letters were not written to explain her art to future fans of her work so much as to share her life with the person who had created and shaped it. The most charming bits of the book are those where the relationship between mother and daughter shines through—when Chase-Riboud ribs her mother for the elder woman's romantic pursuits, for example, and when she asks Vivien Mae to send her various things (a coat, a letter, etc.) that she had left behind in Philadelphia or could not easily procure in Paris (blue jeans).

Although interesting and at times illuminating, the newly written texts that introduce the letters can feel extraneous. In their attention to historical events, they seem to want to compensate for material that is absent from the letters themselves. But the letters provide their own lens onto history, namely onto the ways that one Black woman perceived the racial politics and cataclysmic world events of her day as influencing *and not influencing* the course of her life. In fact, the book treats one's intimate relationships and the global realities of cultural and political revolution as competing forces, and this mild but powerful tension drives the memoir, as it informs poems and drawings like "Le Lit"/*Le Lit*. To what extent are individuals in control of their destiny? How do they shape—and how are they shaped by—history? What is the relationship between one's personal and social identities? This last question has become particularly pressing in revisionist scholarship on Black and/or female-identified artists, and the Pulitzer catalogue takes a definitive stance on it. To its editor's immense credit, the essays in *Monumentale* do not attempt to reduce the artist's work to her race or gender. Instead, they seek to categorize Chase-Riboud as a modernist committed to expanding the form and content of sculpture. In this respect, the catalogue will serve as an excellent foundation for a sustained and thorough examination of the ways in which the artist's varying engagements with political events, with historical figures like Cleopatra, and with the monument as a cultural paradigm relate to her formal experiments with abstraction, materials, and technique across media.

Individually, these two books offer important insights into Chase-Riboud's life, art, and careers. Together, they make an airtight case that the artist is deserving of (and long overdue) an interpretive monograph that properly historicizes her diverse creative practices. The artist's memoir offers an initial gesture in this direction that any scholar would do well to take up. The field needs—and Chase-Riboud richly merits—a comprehensive and interpretive account of her life's work that is as interdisciplinary and intersectional as the artist's own interests. Our understanding not only of Chase-Riboud's art but also of contemporary art as a whole would benefit from such a study. As the recent work on Lorraine O'Grady and Faith Ringgold makes clear, Barbara Chase-Riboud was not the only artist committed to both art and writing at this time. The field should not stop at (belatedly) giving these individual Black women their due. It is now incumbent upon scholars to reevaluate the key issues, strategies, and imperatives used to discuss the creative arts of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s as a whole. ●

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Notes

1. Aruna D'Souza, ed., *Writing in Space, 1973-2019* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020); Catherine Morris and Aruna D'Souza, eds., *Lorraine O'Grady: Both/And* (New York: Dancing Foxes Press/Brooklyn Museum, 2021); Stephanie Sparling Williams, *Speaking Out of Turn: Lorraine O'Grady and the Art of Language* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021); *Faith Ringgold* (Cologne: Serpentine/Glenstone Museum/König, 2022); Faith Ringgold, Michele Wallace, and Kirsten Weiss, *Faith Ringgold: Politics Power* (Berlin: Weiss, 2022), reviewed by Lisa Farrington in *Woman's Art Journal* 44, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2023), 54–55.
2. On O'Grady's writings, see D'Souza, *Writing in Space*, and Sparling Williams, *Speaking Out of Turn*. Faith Ringgold has published approximately twenty children's books and an autobiography; see the artist's website for additional information: https://www.faithringgold.com/about-faith/
3. See "Selected Exhibition History" in *Barbara Chase-Riboud Monumentale: The Bronzes*, 170–72.

Consuelo Jimenez Underwood: Art, Weaving, Vision

Edited by Laura E. Pérez and Ann Marie Leimer, with contributions by Constance Cortez, Karen Mary Davalos, Carmen Febles, María Esther Fernández, Christine Laffer, Anne Marie Leimer, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Robert Milnes, Jenell Navarro, Laura E. Pérez, Marcos Pizarro, Verónica Reyes, Clara Román-Odio, Carol Sauvion, Cristina Serna, Luis Valdez, and Emily Zaiden
Duke University Press, 2022

Reviewed by Matthew Simms

The art of Consuelo Jimenez Underwood (b. 1949) communicates in many overlapping and intertwined languages. It speaks in the dialects of wool, plastic, barbed wire, silk, and more. It is polyphonic. It is multilingual, much like the artist herself, who grew up between cultures, nations, and languages. There is something fitting, then, in the anthology under review here, with its many overlapping voices and perspec-

tives, each of which contributes something unique to our understanding of this crucial artist, daughter of migrant farm workers, pioneer in fiber art, and consistent voice for social and environmental justice. This is the first scholarly volume devoted exclusively to the artist, beyond the few, albeit important, catalogues that have accompaned exhibitions of her art. As such, *Consuelo Jimenez Underwood: Art, Weaving, Vision* provides a welcome opportunity to assess the state of scholarship on the artist and to consider resources for future research.

The volume opens with introductory statements by editors Laura E. Pérez and Ann Marie Leimer in which they describe their admiration for Jimenez Underwood while spelling out their individual, if complementary, senses of its environmentally compassionate, politically urgent, and aesthetically vital stakes. They also announce a theme that will recur throughout the rest of the volume, namely the artist's mixed Mexican-American and indigenous Huichol ancestry. Underwood was raised on the border, moving back and forth between Mexicali and Calexico, and this experience deeply marked her. The border between the United States and Mexico, and its profound human and environmental toll, informs every aspect of the artist's work.

The fifteen essays and one poem that make up the body of the book are divided into three sections: "Spinning—Making Thread," "Weaving—Hand Work," and "Off the Loom—Into the World." Hailing from a wide range of disciplines, including art history, fiber art, religious studies, gender studies, cultural studies, ethnic studies, history, and more, the authors follow a common thread, as it were, as they explore individual parts of the broad tapestry of Jimenez Underwood's art, as well as tracing the warp and the weft of its ethical commitments.

Section one, which includes just two essays, opens with Carol Sauvion's personal reflections on the experience of working on a *Craft in America* television episode on the artist. The second essay, by Christine Laffer, one of the artist's former students, continues the sense of proximity to the artist at work. With a practitioner's eye, Laffer draws the reader's attention to both the sensory and the semantic valences of the artist's materials.

Section two begins with a sequence of revised or reprinted essays that first appeared elsewhere. Constance Cortez's "History/Whose-Story? Postcoloniality and Contemporary Chicana Art," a journal article published in 2007, adopts a highly theoretical tone as it reviews a wide range of concepts that the author offers as tools for interpreting art rooted in Mexican-American and Indigenous experiences. She explores the notion of "borderlands" (a term that, for Cortez, encompasses the many conflicting views and perceptions of geopolitical boundaries, especially the US-Mexico border); Emma Pérez's "decolonial imaginary" (art that challenges the past and present subjugation of people and cultures by formerly colonizing nations, part of Pérez's "third space" of the historical recovery of agency through feminist action); and Gloria Anzaldúa's "*conciencia de la mestiza*" (literally "the consciousness of the mixed-descent woman," defined by Cortez as "the possibility of action born of numerous sites in which subject identity may lie," an aspect of Anzaldúa's "methodology of oppositional consciousness," 55). Amalia Mesa-Bains's text was written for the catalogue of Jimenez Underwood's 2006 solo exhibition in San Jose, California, and it concentrates on questions of identity and memory. It was Jimenez Underwood's father who first introduced her to weaving and to its significance, Mesa-Bains notes, adding that the patience and manual dexterity it demanded reveals analogies with the seasonal fieldwork she performed as a child. Editor Pérez's chapter was written for the catalogue of the 2013 exhibition she curated, *Welcome to Flower-Landia*, which included among other pieces *Welcome to Border-landia!* (2013), a twenty-five-foot-wide installation executed directly on the museum wall comprising wire-constructed imitation *nopales* (cactus paddle-arms, an important ingredient in Mexican cooking), woven "prayer ties," and other materials, all traversed by a blood-red rendering of the US-Mexican border overlaid with barbed wire. María Esther Fernández's text, which comes from the same catalogue, focuses on other examples of the artist's so-called "borderlines" pieces, which address the emotional and environmental effects of the US border policy. In the similarly large-scale *Undocumented Border Flowers* (2010), for example, barbed wire surrounds border checkpoints, and enormous cutouts of the Californian, Arizonian, New Mexican, and Texan state flowers stud the wall (Fig. 1). Emily Zaiden's essay, the last in the sequence of reprinted or revised texts, comes from the catalogue of a 2017 group exhibition that included pieces by Jimenez Underwood. The essay thoughtfully explores the theme of lines and lineage in the artist's work, including, most significantly again, the borderline. For these reprinted exhibition catalogue texts, the reader is grateful for the many color reproductions of Jimenez Underwood's works in these exhibitions, which help clarify the original contexts of these remarks.

Six more essays make up the rest of part two, by far the largest section of the book. Chapter eight, by Clara Román-Odio, explores Jimenez Underwood's *Flag* series, which is based on the artist's appropriation and reworking through weaving of the American and Mexican national flags, not only in fiber but also in such symbolically weighty materials as *New York Times* delivery bags. Román-Odio considers the concern of these *Flags* with geographical and cultural displacement within colonial and neocolonial contexts. Chapter nine, by editor Leimer, focuses on clothing "as a ritual or healing object" (124) in the artist's three capelike silk *American Dress* pieces (1999, 2019). In chapter ten, Karen Mary Davalos takes up the question of decolonial cartography, with an emphasis on the counter-hegemonic strategies of Indigenous peoples who have resisted imperial land practices. This essay highlights Jimenez Underwood's series *Land Grabs: 500 Years* (1996), in which woven grids create latitude and longitude lines over historical geopolitical maps of territorial acquisitions in the Americas, produced in response to the quincentenarial celebrations of Christopher Columbus's arrival. Chapter eleven, by Cristina Serna, compares Jimenez Underwood's art with that of Mexican fiber and multimedia artist Georgina Santos. The essay picks up the theme of decolonization, which is discussed here

specifically as a means to preserve ancestral knowledge. In chapter twelve, Carmen Febles focuses on the artist's series of *Rebozos for Our Mothers* (2010–13), woven hangings in the style of the *rebozo*, a Mexican type of shawl. Febles gives special consideration of the blending of references to mother figures, among them the Aztec goddess Coatlicue and the Catholic Virgin Mary, particularly La Virgen de Guadalupe, Mexico City. In chapter thirteen, Jenell Navarro discusses the history of the *rebozo* in Indigenous communities across the American continent, with a focus on the significance of water in weaving traditions, evoked by Jimenez Underwood's *Rebozos for Our Mothers: Mother Ocean (Water)* (2011) and *Mother Rain Rebozo* (2017).

In section three, chapters fourteen and fifteen, by Robert Milnes and Marcos Pizarro respectively, trace the artist's role as an educator and pedagogue, underscoring her ambition to empower her students to become leaders in their chosen fields. The volume closes with a narrative poem by Véronica Reyes, composed in response to hearing an inspiring lecture delivered by the artist. It moves freely between English and Spanish in ways that remind us of the multilingual, polyvalent, and loquacious artist herself.

The anthology resounds as a chorus of appreciation, essay after essay adding a new angle on the artist's encompassing ambition to lay bare and scramble borders—between countries, between fine art and craft, and between languages. This disruption involves her use of nontraditional and at times highly charged materials, such as barbed wire and plastics. True, as one passes from essay to essay, a sense of repetition gradually sets in, as certain biographical facts are recounted again and again, and as questions of borders and identity emerge and reemerge. The term "hagiography" may even come to mind. But why not celebrate unreservedly the brave and critical work of such an indomitable artist? And repetition makes sense in a collection of such varied voices from so many backgrounds, all addressed to the work of an artist whose practice, after all, revolves mainly around weaving. This repetitive work of winding and threading, of passing the shuttle of warp thread again and again through the raised shed of weft threads, is a sequential rhythm of over and under, under and over, and over and under again to create pattern on the loom. Likewise, this volume suggests an interwoven series of overlapping and intertwined themes that form a pattern. Jimenez Underwood's own voice also echoes throughout this volume in the form of quoted language. Resounding, too, are the voices of her materials that she invites to speak: "Who wants to say the message? Do you, silk? Do you, cotton? Do you, linen? Who can speak this message?" (207).



Fig. 1. Consuelo Jimenez Underwood, *Undocumented Border Flowers*, installation at the Triton Museum of Arts, Santa Clara, CA (2010), mixed media, 17′ x 24′. Photograph by James Dewrance.

My own familiarity with Jimenez Underwood dates to my first visit to her home in Cupertino, California, in the summer of 2020, when I, too, was treated to inspiring stories of ancestry and craft, of resistance and borderlines. I was there specifically to facilitate the artist's generous donation of her personal and professional papers to the Archives of American Art, a branch of the Smithsonian Institution. These archival materials included books of color samples of dyed yarns, sketchbooks, correspondence, photographs, and much more—a veritable treasure trove for researchers hoping to understand in detail the sources, contexts, and motivations for the artist's work. For example, on a notebook page in the collection dated February of 1985, Jimenez Underwood has jotted thoughts about a class she was currently teaching: "Visions of IXTLAN," she observes. "A great class. Feisty, talk back, laugh at my jokes." Further down the page, she cites Wassily Kandinsky: "The point is the source of all imagery." Then come a few scribbles that read like personal admonishments: "Do not dread mornings. Do not love sleep so." Finally, this: "Create when necessary, adore when appropriate. Culminate a life every day. Begin a life every day."

The primary sources that support the essays in *Consuelo Jimenez Underwood: Art, Weaving, Vision* are recent interviews with the artist and her art, both of which are pivotal resources for understanding the grand sweep of her work. Theory and contextual sources also come into play here. Now, with the availability of Jimenez Underwood's papers, one can only imagine what new scholarship may follow. Indeed, much remains to be discovered, and the present volume, with its myriad of voices and perspectives, admirably indicates the way. This volume, then, is nothing if not a gathering—a reunion of sympathetic personages come together to celebrate an artist who deserves greater attention. Reyes' poem at the very end of the volume resonates with Jimenez Underwood's invocation of her materials "to say the message":

> VII. Consuelo's Vision
> Lesson 1. Respect el telar
> Lesson 2. Listen to las viejitas,
> really las doñas
> Lesson 3. Respect the craft of
> needle and thread
> needle and thread needle and thread

In his stirring preface, Valdez, founder of the US-based Chicano performance troupe El Teatro Campesino and patron saint of Chicanx playwriting and film, acknowledges both the pain and the beauty of Jimenez Underwood's art. He, too, detects a murmur of voices: "She materializes, with primordial effect, the voices of her ancestors from the loom of life, death, and rebirth." (xv) •

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Hung Liu: Portraits of Promised Lands

Edited by Dorothy Moss, with essays by Nancy Lim, Lucy R. Lippard, Elizabeth Partridge, and Philip Tinari
National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC, and Yale University Press, 2021

Reviewed by Meng Yi and Jane Chin Davidson

This catalogue celebrates the body of work of Hung Liu (1948–2021), the first Chinese-American artist to have received a solo show at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC. The long-awaited career retrospective, which ran from August 2021 through May 2022, turned into a poignant memorial when Hung Liu died on August 7, 2021, less than three weeks before the show opened. Dorothy Moss, then Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Portrait Gallery, organized the exhibition and edited the catalogue before being appointed the founding director of the Hung Liu Estate in April 2023.

Liu was born in Changchun in 1948, the year before Mao Zedong came to power as Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, and she emigrated to the United States in 1984. Her multifaceted experiences included four years of political exile—she was sent to a re-education camp in 1968 after the Red Guard insurgency of China's Cultural Revolution (1966–76)—and nearly four decades in a different kind of exile as an Asian Pacific American immigrant. Her unique perspective was thus shaped by the political turmoil of her home country as well as by the cultural clashes she observed in the US. *Hung Liu: Portraits of Promised Lands* provides a comprehensive overview of Liu's life and work, showing the way in which the extraordinary period of revolution in China was integral to Liu's career trajectory and to the development of her distinctive artistic style in the periods before and after she emigrated to the United States. After her long-delayed arrival at the University of California San Diego in 1984, where she studied art under conceptual painter and performance artist Allan Kaprow, Liu came to produce her signature large-scale, deeply humanistic portrait paintings based on photographs of everyday people. While the images are largely realistic, Liu's oil paint often calls attention to its mediating role by dripping down the canvas or panel.

During the Cultural Revolution, imagemakers in service of the People's Republic employed socialist-realist aesthetics adapted from Soviet realism to ensure legibility. Posters, murals, and other works of state art served to convey anti-dynastic, anti-upper-class ideologies so that commoners could understand the images' socialist messaging. As Julia Andrews has noted, however, figure painting in China also continued to incorporate aspects of the long-established aristocratic Chinese artistic tradition, known as *guohua*.[1] Liu's remarkable portraiture was influenced by her socialist-realist training: She was one of the few students accepted into Beijing Teacher's College in 1972 when schools finally reopened after being closed down at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. This socialist-realist tutelage came to inform Liu's work even as she rejected the style's insistent idealizations, which she later described as "socialist surrealism" (29). For instance, Liu's 1993 self-portrait *Avant-Garde*, a painted color version of a 1973–74 photograph of the artist toting a rifle during her military training days (Fig. 1), questions the documentary function of socialist-realist art, exposing the style as propagandistic. Liu's artistic sensibility, by contrast, is characterized by a deep compassion for the marginalized and forgotten figures of history. Her portraits carry a profound emotional impact while empathetically depicting overlooked individuals. Her subjects range from foot-bound women in feudal Chinese society to the poor white and African American families, mostly women and children, whom Liu revisits from the photographs of Dorothea Lange (1895–1965).

The richly illustrated catalogue from the Smithsonian retrospective is structured into three primary sections. A preface consisting of two historical-biographical analyses of Liu's work by editor Moss and contributor Nancy Lim respectively is followed by plates illustrating works from 1970–72 through the late 1990s. Essays by Lucy R. Lippard, Elizabeth Partridge, and Philip Tinari further engage with Liu's artwork and processes, after which come plates of works she made between 2000 and 2020. The third section offers personal reflections on Liu's practice by ten renowned artists. Altogether, fifty-two plates serve as the checklist for the *Hung Liu: Portraits of the Promised Land* exhibition.

Moss's "Interface," which introduces the book, delves into the relationship between Liu and her family and its impact on her art. Like many people in China during the Cultural Revolution, Liu's mother, Liu Zongguang, had to destroy most of the family's record of photographs for fear the images would be considered anti-proletariat. Moss traces Liu's fascination with portraiture to the loss of these family photographs. When Liu had been an infant, her father, Xia Peng, had been sent to prison for his role as a captain of the Nationalist Army (the military branch of the Kuomintang political party, which was defeated by the Communists in 1949). She would not see him again until nearly fifty years later. Liu's rebellion against the repressive use of portraiture in Chinese socialist-realist art, Moss explains, reverses the ideological function of this painting discipline, as she brings forgotten subjects—including, in *Father's Day* (1994), her own father, whom she found at long last on a prison work farm—back into her paintings.

Lim's chapter focuses on Liu's early development as an artist. During the four years she spent living in a desperately poor rural community after being sent "down to the countryside," Mao's solution for young people he considered a threat to the Cultural Revolution, Liu secretly began producing photographs and drawings that captured the peasants' dignity without heroization. Both Lim and Moss illustrate the ways in which Liu's real-life experiences exemplify China's radical political moment, and how the images she made during the Revolution anticipate the themes of her subsequent artistic production. Liu's

graphite-on-canvas series *Where is Mao?* (1988), executed a few years after she moved to the US, more overtly challenges socialist-realist conventions. In redrawing iconic photographs of Mao—alongside his wife Jiang Qing at Yanan in the 1940s, shaking hands with US president Richard Nixon in 1972—the artist closely copied the images of other figures but left Mao's face and body blank. *Where is Mao?* marks Liu's shift to conceptualism, which is strongly evident in her most well-known work, *Resident Alien* (1988), a huge oil painting that monumentalizes a green card assigned to "Cookie, Fortune," the name next to Liu's face.

Lippard's chapter examines Liu's expression of identity during her thirty-seven years living and working in the US, mostly in California. The feminist art critic discusses Liu's 2012 series of "portraits" of the Beijing apartment that had been left empty by her mother's death a year earlier, including an image of the phone on which Liu and her mother had kept in daily contact. To elaborate on Liu's exploration of female identity and gender, Lippard discusses works like *Tis the Final Conflict* (2007), in which a female soldier carries a comrade's limp body; *Mu Nu* (Mother and Daughter, 1997), which depicts two women dragging an unseen boat by a rope; and *Blue Boy* (1993), which shows an actor transforming into a female character. Elizabeth Partridge's essay explains Liu's focus on rural subjects of the underclass in her re-creations of Lange's well-known 1930s photographs of the Great Depression in the US, such as Liu's 2016 painting *Migrant Mother: Mealtime*. The personal experience of exile and migration puts Liu on the same frequency as Lange; *Migrant Mother: Mealtime* establishes a connection between the two artists—and with the struggling young family their two works portray—that transcends time and space. This model of interaction aims to encourage both Chinese and American audiences to look more closely at the similarities between the two cultures. Beijing-based Philip Tinari provides a different perspective on Liu's emigration experience by making direct comparisons between Liu's works and those of male Chinese and American artists of the same period, including Wang Guangyi, who painted a grid over Mao's officially sanctioned portrait type the same year that Liu effaced the chairman in her *Where is Mao?* series. Wang produced *Mao Zedong: Red Grid No. 2* in China; Liu, however, as one of the first Chinese artists to establish a career in the US, found that becoming an "American" freed her from many creative restrictions. Liu's American identity can be seen both as helping provoke her challenges to Maoist ideals and as providing the opportunity to expose facts about the early People's Republic that were unknown or overlooked in the US—and that are now being downplayed, Tinari observes, in the revisionist narrative within China today.



Fig. 1. Source photograph of Hung Liu during military training while a student in China (1973–74), next to Liu, *Avant-Garde* (1993), oil on shaped canvas and wood, 116" x 43". San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

The last major section of the book examines Liu's influence and stature as an artist in the words of ten esteemed peers: Enrique Chagoya, Judy Chicago (b. 1939), Mel Chin, Yu Hong (b. 1966), Martin Mull, Amy Sherald (b. 1973), Stephanie Syjuco (b. 1974), Lava Thomas (b. 1958), Carrie Mae Weems (b. 1953), and Liu Xiaodong (b. 1963). This section is particularly compelling, as the artists' concise but insightful analyses reveal how Liu's paintings have acted as a shared language, establishing deep transnational connections with artists of different genders and cultures. Together, these descriptive and personal texts offer journeys into the kinship between Liu's practice and those of other artists. To conclude the book, Liu's husband, the artist Jeff Kelley, has contributed a concise chronological account of Liu's life and exhibition history that will prove invaluable to scholars and followers of the artist's work.

By creating large-scale paintings that reinterpreted historical photographs of forgotten subjects, Hung Liu challenged traditional boundaries, expanded the definition of art, and gave voice to marginalized people. Liu's works convey her understanding of the relationship between time, memory, and history, inviting viewers to reflect on the significance of visual representations in shaping individual and collective experiences. *Hung Liu: Portraits of Promised Lands* explores an artistic vision that is inclusive and empathetic, capturing Chinese and American women, men, and children in ways that "restore [their] dignity and honor" (Moss, 14) and that elicit emotion from audiences of all kinds. The book is a fitting tribute to Hung Liu after her death and an excellent study for those interested in contemporary Chinese art, feminist perspectives on portraiture, and socialist-realist and photo-realist strategies in painting. As globalization brings cultures into closer proximity and creates new intersections and exchanges, Liu's works offer a unique lens through which to view the complex and evolving discourse around "Chineseness" and artistic identity. The

book is a valuable resource for scholars and art enthusiasts alike, providing a nuanced and insightful analysis of the recent legacy of one of the most influential Chinese American artists from Maoist and post-Maoist China. •

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Notes

1. Julia F. Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 113–16.

Women in Abstraction

Edited by Christine Macel and Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska, with essays by Christine Macel, Griselda Pollock, Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska, Anne Montfort-Tanguy, and Abigail Solomon-Godeau
Centre Pompidou and Thames & Hudson, 2021

Reviewed by Sarah Humphreville

The exhibition catalogue for the Centre Pompidou's *Elles font l'abstraction*, translated into English by Francisca Garvie and Lorna Dale for Thames & Hudson, is an ambitious effort to revise the history of abstraction. Across five essays, fifteen mini-essays, 112 amply illustrated catalogue entries (one for each artist included in the show), and a chronology, *Women in Abstraction* argues for an expanded and adjusted narrative of abstraction that not only accounts for the contributions of women artists but also dismantles the entrenched understanding of abstraction as a male-dominated march of modernism with a linear, heroic progression. The book does not always live up to its aims, but it is nevertheless a welcome addition to the growing discourse on the topic of its title that offers readers ample opportunity to discover new artists and new lines of inquiry.

The catalogue opens with co-editor Christine Macel's "She *Makes* Abstraction," which establishes the major themes, stakes, and questions of the book. How do we define abstraction? How can the story of abstraction expand to include non-Western artists, unacknowledged origins, and a broader range of creative practices? Why do women artists still need to be separated as gendered category? Macel's questions form a framework for justifying the necessity of the whole project, and her answers confirm its need. She begins by offering an overview of the intermittent and limited history of exhibitions focused on female abstractionists, starting with the curatorial efforts of Katherine S. Dreier (1877–1952) and Peggy Guggenheim (1898–1979) in New York in the 1930s and 1940s and concluding with a recent spate of shows on the topic, the first of which was the Denver Art Museum's *Women of Abstract Expressionism* in 2016. *Women in Abstraction* builds upon these predecessors—all of which concentrated on specific geographies and / or time periods—and stretches the boundaries of the field to provide, to date, the most globally and chronologically comprehensive accounting of this subject, extending beyond the West and from 1865 to 1980. But why stop at 1980? Macel makes no attempt to explain ending at this point (though a few later-breaking practitioners are included in the catalogue, such as the women of the APY Art Centre Collective of Aboriginal artists in central Australia [founded 2016] and Jessica Stockholder [b. 1959]), which can unfortunately imply—contrary to the stated thesis of the book—that abstraction was inherently a modernist project or that gender parity in the arts was achieved over forty years ago. Macel does an excellent job, however, in defining abstraction. Characterizing it very broadly as "a process of abstracting from reality," she leans into its inherent messiness, acknowledging the challenge of encapsulating abstraction both as a movement and as a style and making the case that the term must be understood as malleable, "meaning different things at different times" to different artists (20). She argues for the continued need to treat women artists as a distinct category because of structural marginalization, and she addresses abstraction's relationship to feminism by touching on the movement's spiritualist origins and by explaining that the de-cloistering of the arts—through incorporating such fields as dance, the decorative arts, and photography—is a necessary condition not only of a feminist reading of abstraction but also of any thorough approach to the topic.

The catalogue's remaining four essays expand upon ideas introduced by Macel in the introductory text, beginning with Griselda Pollock's "Abstraction? Co-Creation?," which contends with the institutional impediments that abet the effacement of women abstractionists. She damns the art-historical canon and especially museums, writing that twentieth-century art historians "collectively … ignored the evidence of the most important characteristic of modern art, namely, that it has been co-created by women and men from across the world" (26), and she points out that this omission worked against art history's own supposed aims of understanding the totality of modernism. Pollock provides compelling anecdotal evidence—for instance, Museum of Modern Art director Alfred Barr Jr. suggesting women artists for Guggenheim to exhibit at her gallery even as he failed to show those same artists at MoMA—and recalls her own early, and not particularly difficult, research into female artists to demonstrate that the elimination of women from prevailing narratives of abstraction did not occur by mere happenstance but was instead willful. Even decades later, those actions continue to make an impact; indeed, they have necessitated the work of *Women in Abstraction*.

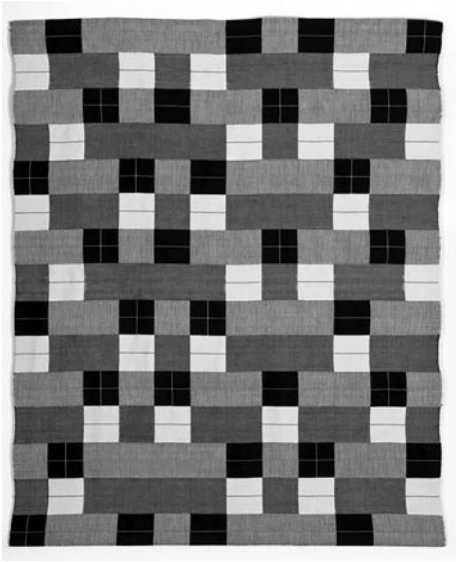


Fig. 1. Anni Albers, *Wall Hanging* (1927/1964), cotton, silk, double weave, 59" × 48". Zürcher Hochschule der Künste / Museum für Gestaltung Zürich / Kunstgewerbesammlung, Zurich.

Abigail Solomon-Godeau, in "Where Was Sisterhood?," likewise grapples with the structural erasure of women abstractionists from art history, in her case focusing on the paradox that women artists' commitment to revolutionary practices in their work did not necessarily coincide with a similar commitment to revolutionary gender politics. Her essay delves into the social and artistic circumstances around this contradiction as she aims to uncover why so many figures did not—or perhaps more correctly were unable to—form a feminist consciousness. Like Pollock, Solomon-Godeau points to the institutional strictures women artists encountered, such as their encouragement toward "lesser" media at the Bauhaus, the gendered assumptions embedded in language, and misogynist criticism, but her essay is most effective in arguing that women abstractionists could not help but internalize patriarchal mores. With an inherent understanding of power, these artists recognized that "presenting themselves *as* women artists was to accept a lesser (or far lesser) status than that of the men in their cohort" (41; emphasis mine), which effectively precluded any notion of forming a unified sisterhood and therefore of garnering strength through collectivity. Women artists also contended with ingrained gender roles at home, including (and particularly) the women who were married to fellow artists, among them Natalia Goncharova (1881–1962), Sonia Delaunay-Terk (1885–1979), Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889–1943), Anni Albers (1899–1994; Fig. 1), and Lee Krasner (1908–1984), who "considered their husbands to be far more innovative and accomplished than themselves" and ceaselessly advocated for their spouses, sometimes at the expense of their own professional reputations (43). Such domestic gender dynamics among artist couples are also the subject of Anne Montfort-Tanguy's essay, "Stand Up Against: Right Up Against," which takes Delaunay-Terk and Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975) as case studies in understanding how women artists coped with their roles as wives and mothers, with the public perception of artist couples, and with the shadows of influence assumed to have been cast by male artists. She mines each woman's autobiography to demonstrate their delicate balancing between the expectations of femininity placed upon them and their acts of asserting their own originality.

Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska, co-editor of the catalogue with Macel, also contends with historical exclusions in her essay, "Women Artists and Abstract Photography." Her revisionist mission is two-pronged: to insert women into the history of abstract photography, and to insert photography into the larger history of abstraction. In tracing the concurrent development of abstraction and photography, she highlights the work of a handful of photographers—among them Florence Henri (1893–1982), Lotte Jacobi (1896–1990), Carlotta Corpron (1901–1988), and Marta Hoepffner (1912–2000)—to demonstrate that female practitioners were critical to the understanding of the capabilities and inherent properties of photography as a medium and to the acceptance of photography, including color photography, within the realm of fine art, importantly locating the origins of gestural abstraction in the photographic practice of light drawing. By additionally focusing on the work of Laure Albin-Guillot (1879–1962) and Berenice Abbott (1898–1991), she reveals the relationship between scientific imaging and early abstract photography, and in so doing deepens the origin story of abstraction.

The catalogue entries are arranged roughly chronologically, punctuated at irregular intervals by the mini-essays. (The latter would have served better elsewhere in the book, as their placement in the catalogue implies categorization of the artists that follow, but not all of the entries in the resultant groupings pertain to the topics discussed.) The mini-essays, which are extremely brief, open with Simon Grant similarly tracing abstraction's roots, drawing connections among spiritualism, Theosophy, and abstraction *avant la lettre*. Grant provides a brief discussion of artists whose oeuvre developed alongside the beliefs of these movements, positioning Georgiana Houghton (1814–1884) as the first artist—regardless of gender—to work abstractly, a point he builds upon in the catalogue entry on Houghton that immediately follows. Adrien Sina, Kathrin Schönegg, Julie Jones, Jonathan Pouthier, and Jessica Gerschultz likewise direct their mini-essays toward one of the aims outlined by Macel in "She *Makes* Abstraction": the de-cloistering of media. These authors discuss how dance, photography, film, and the fiber arts, typically omitted from histories of abstraction because of their perceived irrelevance or lower status, were critical to abstraction's genesis. Similarly, in contributions on the women of the Russian avant-garde and the Bauhaus respectively, Elitza Dulguerova and Ina Belcheva show that artistic practices encompassing theatrical design, textiles, and the decorative arts alongside painting were embedded within abstraction from its outset. Individual catalogue entries on figures such as Delaunay-Terk, Mary Ellen Bute (1906–1983), Lenore Tawney (1907–2007), and Sheila Hicks (b. 1934), among others, build on this collective argument. Frustratingly and confoundingly, however, in both the mini-essays and the catalogue entries, this media-based reassessment virtually ignores printmaking (with the exception of a catalogue entry on Dorothea Rockburne [b. 1932]), even though many women artists in this field, among them Sue Fuller (1914–2006), Dorr Bothwell (1902–2000),

and June Wayne (1918–2011), made important contributions to abstraction, to printing techniques, and to the broad acceptance of certain media, including screen printing.

Perusing the catalogue entries, which provide a good introduction to each artist's practice while emphasizing biography and exhibition history, I relished the discovery of new figures and took joy in finding "old friends," just as Pollock did when she was invited to participate in this project (26). But I also lamented omissions, an inevitable occurrence in a volume such as *Women and Abstraction*. The absence of printmakers felt particularly egregious, as it not only left out individual artists but denied an entire category of artmaking that is too often dismissed as a lesser medium, operating against the stated goals of this art-historical endeavor. Likewise, the book falls short of its aim to truly shift the geography of abstraction. Conceding Macel's point that "twentieth-century abstraction evolved chiefly in the 'West'… then became a more global phenomenon in the 1950s" (20), I would not expect geographical parity among the included artists, but the balance still feels heavily weighted towards Europe and, to a lesser extent, the United States. This balance could have been improved by incorporating essays that addressed artists from other regions—for instance, women artists of the Latin American Concrete and Neo-Concrete movements. In another instance of canonical geographical hegemony, the catalogue leaves out American practitioners who began to engage with abstraction in the decades before World War II—with the expected exception of Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) and the unexpected exception of Henri—despite important contributions by such figures as Agnes Pelton (1881–1961) and Irene Rice Pereira (1902–1971), and despite mention of these artists and their contemporaries in the essays. These shortcomings, however, lend further weight to the book's thesis that the discourse on women and abstraction needs to be expanded, and perhaps through its absences as much as through its inclusions, the catalogue points toward new avenues for research. I cannot wait to see the exhibitions and read the books that *Women in Abstraction* will inspire. •

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The New Woman Behind the Camera

By Andrea Nelson, with contributions by Mia Fineman, Elizabeth Cronin, Mila Ganeva, Kristen Gresh, Elizabeth Otto, Kim Sichel, and others
National Gallery of Art, Washington, 2020

Reviewed by Lauren Cesiro



Fig. 1. Alma Lavenson, *Self-Portrait* (1932), gelatin silver print, 7" x 9 5/8". National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

In a self-portrait taken by Alma Lavenson (1897–1989) in 1932 (Fig. 1), the photographer stands behind the camera, adjusting the lens with her right hand and holding the camera steady with her left. Lavenson's head and most of her body remain out of view, except, upon closer inspection, in the reflection off the lens, which shows the artist surrounded by blurred and stretched objects in a room brightly lit by a window. This photograph, the cover image and first figure of the book *The New Woman Behind the Camera*, sets the stage for the entire publication, which is dedicated to women photographers of the 1920s through 1950s and their modern worlds. The book was published in 2020 by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, to accompany the 2021 exhibition of the same title organized by the National Gallery in association with the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The exhibition and book revisit this period from the end of World War I through the aftermath of World War II—with occasional reference to the previous decades—to show the ways women were part of shaping photography in that crucial era for the medium. The catalogue considers art photography, studio photography, and photojournalism in light of the careers and works of 120

women from twenty countries. Two hundred sixty-three detailed images, six essays framing specific topics, and a thorough biography section situate these women photographers within the historical and art-historical contexts that they were part of and helped to make.

As Lavenson's photograph illustrates, and as National Gallery of Art Director Kaywin Feldman writes in her forward, the book (like the exhibition on which it was based) approaches the camera as "a vehicle for self-determination as well as self-expression" for the New Woman (10). A prefatory "Note to the Reader" concedes that the category "Woman," while useful for the book's project of reclaiming underrepresented histories, is insufficient because it effaces the vast differences among women (13); "the ultimate goal," the preface points out, "is to eradicate the very category of 'women artists'" (17). This preface is authored by catalogue editor Andrea Nelson, curator of the exhibition and Associate Curator of Photographs at the National Gallery of Art, together with Mia Fineman, Curator of Photographs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Nelson and Fineman define the New Woman more specifically as having transgressed the boundaries of the domestic sphere and having sought to expand her agency (15). The New Woman did not necessarily consider herself a feminist or an activist, and she likely perpetuated some of the social norms of her day, yet she was almost certainly involved in the struggle for women's rights to at least some extent. Nelson and Fineman place this definition, and *The New Woman Behind the Camera*, within a larger history of photography books and exhibitions that have opened spaces for women photographers: Ann Tucker's anthology *The Woman's Eye* (1973); the 1975 exhibition *Women of Photography: An Historical Survey* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, curated by Margery Mann and Anne Noggle; Val Williams's book and touring exhibition *Women Photographers: The Other Observers, 1900 to the Present* (1986); Naomi Rosenblum's *A History of Women Photographers* (1994), reprised as an exhibition co-organized with Barbara Tannenbaum at the New York Public Library (1996); and a range of international exhibitions and books from the last ten years that take gender and photography as their focus.

The present book is an even more detailed resource, and thus an even stronger force in pushing against the many volumes and exhibitions on the history of photography that claim to be all-encompassing projects but that focus overwhelmingly on men. The reproductions included to support these ends are clear, detailed, glossy, and often full-page. They capture the full range of tones of these (almost exclusively) black-and-white gelatin silver prints: the warm tones of *Jeannette Warburg Altimus and Arthur Joseph Perrault* by Florestine Perrault Collins (1895–1988) from the mid-1920s, for example, which contrast with the cooler grays of Lavenson's self-portrait.

In the first chapter, "'Such a Way of Life Exists': New Women Photographers in the Studio," Nelson examines the rise of women in studio photography during the 1930s in Tokyo, London, Vienna, New York (including Harlem), and elsewhere. She argues that studio practice was "a critical means for some [women] to establish their professional identities as photographers and a viable way to provide for themselves and their families" (99). In Nazareth, Palestine, for example, Karimeh Abbud (1896–1955) established a home studio in the early 1920s and also traveled to the homes of her female clientele. Her psychologically insightful imagery "challenges ideas of women as they were promulgated by male photographers" (117).

Elizabeth Cronin's essay, "Modern Children by Modern Women," considers a category of subject matter that has been largely written out of the history of photography because, the author argues, it has not been taken seriously: children. Cronin looks at women photographing children and at the creativity they exercised in shooting what was deemed a socially acceptable and especially suitable subject for women photographers. She argues that New Women photographers shifted away from the syrupy idealization of the nineteenth century to capture children in spontaneous activities, sometimes employing avant-garde formal qualities like cropping, employing unconventional angles, and finding patterns in the everyday. Some New Women behind the camera, Cronin notes, paid particular attention to the welfare of children in peril, whether the dangers came from World War II, poverty, or other threats. Cronin includes humanitarian photographers Thérése Bonney (1894–1978), an American working in Belgium and France, and Emmy Andriesse (1914–1953), a Dutch Jewish photographer in Nazi Amsterdam, both of whom made pictures with the goal of changing society for the better.

Women editors, art directors, layout artists, and caption authors receive a brief mention by Kristen Gresh in "Working in the Margins: Women and the Rise of the Picture Press," but Gresh's main subject is women photojournalists. The author observes that New Women involved in the illustrated press were usually freelancers who enjoyed the ability to set their own terms within their photographic practice but who suffered without the guarantee of steady employment. Women published photographs in a wide range of outlets, including news magazines, fashion periodicals, advertisements, books, and more; they also sold their photographs to picture agencies. The chapter looks closely at four specific women photojournalists in different locations around the globe: Elizaveta Ignatovich (1903–1983) in the Soviet Union, known for her sharply focused, inventively cropped images of Soviet industrial projects; Hungary-born Kati Horna (1912–2000) in France, Spain, and Mexico, whose sometimes surrealism-inflected war photographs center on women and children; Homai Vyarawalla (1913–2012) in India, whose portrait of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Indian prime minister, appeared in *Life*; and Margaret Bourke-White (1904–1971) in the US, an exceptionally high-profile staff photographer for *Fortune* and *Life*.

Africa is the focus for Kim Sichel in "Photography on the Move: Women Report from Africa." Sichel notes that there is no evidence yet known of New Women photographers from Africa (169); she expresses the hope, however, that further research in the archives will bring African women in the the history of interwar photography. In the mean-

time, the New Women who inform Sichel's essay are photographers from France, Britain, Germany, and the US who traveled to Africa as anthropologists, artists, or photojournalists. Sichel makes clear that there was no monolithic approach to photographing Africa among these women: "Some clearly embody the controlling gaze of their predominant cultures, while others crack the mold to allow in a different point of view" (169). The European photographers concentrated largely on the colonies of their home countries, such as French ethnog-raphic team Thérèse Rivière (1901–1970) and Germaine Tillion (1907–2008), whose images of Islamic Algerians looking comfortably at the camera reflect the photographers' immersion in the culture, but whose texts employ otherizing language about their subjects. African American anthropologist and activist Eslanda Goode Robeson (1895–1965), by contrast, engaged "as equals" with the South and East Africans she captured on film (173).

Elizabeth Otto's "Modern Bodies" analyzes the new relationships that developed in the decades after World War I between photography and the body, especially the gendered body, as informed by modernity and as expressed in the formal qualities of photographs by New Women. In these images, the male or female nude body can be at rest or in motion, or the (usually) clothed body can be engaged in sports, dance, or other activities, whether alone, with others, or in formation. Some formally innovative photographs fragment the body, such as a close-up of a male torso by Laure Albin-Guillot (1879–1962) in which pubic hair eroticizes an otherwise classicizing figure. New Women photographers could capture women in unselfconscious play, such as a Bauhaus student with a beach ball in an image by Irene Bayer-Hecht (1898–1991), or in highly deliberate movement, such as dancer Martha Graham in the "pathos-laden … electric images" of Barbara Morgan (1900–1992) (199).

In Mila Ganeva's essay "Making the New Woman: Female Fashion Photographers in Berlin Between the Wars," a cultural and visual studies approach provides specific details of the New Women photographers at the epicenter of German interwar fashion. Ganeva argues that the rise of fashion photography not only cultivated consumer trends but also made space for women photographers, who were lured by the economic independence, creative challenges, and increased mobility the industry offered (207). Ganeva looks at the photographic studio ringl + pit (Grete Stern, 1904–1998, and Ellen Auerbach, 1906–2004), whose advertising work playfully ridiculed traditional tropes of femininity, and Madame d'Ora (b. Dora Kallmus, 1881–1963), who photographed fashion trends associated with the New Woman, among the many photographers who challenged popular notions of womanhood.

The essays included in *The New Woman Behind the Camera* are not meant to provide a uniform approach but rather to suggest ways that the New Woman photographer can be studied in different contexts. The biographies at the end of the book are a particularity good resource for further research. Self-portraits of some of the women photographers discussed in the book, or photographs taken of them by others, bring these practitioners into the picture even more. While there is no bibliography, the endnotes for each chapter open additional pathways to pursue the New Woman. As the preface, introduction, and essays suggest, this book and exhibition are only a stepping stone—albeit a substantial one—in the research needed to place women within the history of photography.

The New Woman Behind the Camera usefully consolidates the subject of 1920s to 1950s woman photographers into one specific study for the first time. Still, the acknowledgment in the "Note to the Reader" that women cannot be reduced to one thing, even as gender is the determining factor for inclusion in the catalogue, reflects one of the book's complications. The only unifying factor among these women, Nelson and Fineman admit, is that they operated within patriarchal societies (16). Even this shared experience of sexism varied widely, however; *Life* staff photographer Bourke-White in the US gained much more prominence and prestige, for example, than the Tokyo-based Tazue Satō Matsunaga (1914–?), who gave up photography in her mid-twenties to help her family (274), and the Lebanese amateur photographer Marie el Khazen (1899–1983), who portrayed herself and her circle of women as "independent and individualistic" (36), but about whom so little is known that no entry for her appears among the volume's biographies. Sexuality is only briefly considered in the volume; more research into the ways in which this aspect of identity intersects with the New Woman would be beneficial. In addition, the term "New Woman" refers primarily to a specific economic class of women, yet the volume leaves out the ways in which this term, and the photographers who embraced it, might have helped to produce and reinforce these class distinctions. It would be interesting to see how the "New Woman" concept affected women photographers who did not consider themselves as such or who did not have access to this term. One of the exciting aspects of this book and exhibition is the groundwork they have provided for more conversations about the New Woman on topics not considered here.

Lavenson's self-portrait of her hands, arms, and fragmented body as she hunches over the camera visually encapsulates the ways that the photographers in *The New Woman Behind the Camera* made space for themselves in their chosen field and how they worked around established norms to set new standards for themselves. I might ask the reader also to consider the photograph itself as a gelatin silver print. Most of the photographs included in the catalogue are from this process. What other photographic processes did the New Woman experiment with? More broadly, what specific technical aspects of her photographic practice might be relevant to the "New Woman" as a category of identity? How, for example, did Lavenson set up her photograph? While the catalogue does not address this point, nor does it mention any negatives or archival documentation associated with this work, one wonders if another camera was situated in front of Lavenson's, taking a photograph of Lavenson as she adjusted and steadied the camera in the image. Who might

have been on the other side of this second camera, if anyone? A second volume of this book relying on archival materials and negatives to illuminate the New Woman's photographic processes would ultimately shed more light on the strictures that bound her and the choices she made. •

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Florine Stettheimer: A Biography

By Barbara Bloemink
Hirmer, 2021

Reviewed by Heather Hole

This lavishly illustrated, exhaustively researched biography argues for the inclusion of artist Florine Stettheimer (1871–1944) in the pantheon of great twentieth-century modernists. A member of the interwar New York avant-garde, Stettheimer produced biting yet vibrant portraits and scenes of leisure in a bright, fanciful, hyper-feminine style. As a single woman from a wealthy family, Stettheimer lived most of her life in luxury with her mother, Rosetta, along with two of her sisters, dollhouse artist Carrie (1869–1944) and author Ettie (1875–1955). Based in part on these circumstances, some scholars, critics, and curators have dismissed Stettheimer as a frivolous, cloistered amateur. They focus instead on her role as co-hostess of glittering salon teas (alongside the purportedly more sociable Carrie and Ettie) for better-known modernists, including, among many others, artist Marcel Duchamp and writer Carl Van Vechten (Fig. 1).

Bloemink states her overarching goal in the introduction and epilogue: to prove Stettheimer is "one of the most innovative and significant artists of the twentieth century, as well as being one of the most relevant" today (388). To this end, Bloemink carefully dismantles myths that have surrounded the artist for decades, many of which are rooted in the biography of Stettheimer published in 1963—almost two decades after her death—by film critic Parker Tyler, who admitted that his text was heavily fictionalized. While more recent scholarship has addressed these misconceptions piecemeal, Bloemink aims to set the whole record straight. Tyler depicted a timid recluse who refused to exhibit her work after mixed reviews of an early one-person show at Knoedler, and who wanted her works to be destroyed after her death. Bloemink instead positions Stettheimer as a professional by drawing attention to her participation in more than forty group shows, and by noting that Stettheimer often expressed the hope that a museum would posthumously receive her full body of work. The biographer portrays Stettheimer as a progressive feminist whose imagery consciously subverted the male gaze. Countering the idea that Stettheimer's work is derivative, the author argues—with varying degrees of success—that the artist was the first to achieve many breakthroughs. For example, Bloemink states, without significant context, that "many years before her American contemporaries, Stettheimer painted several works dealing with issues such as African American segregation, anti-Jewish and Catholic bigotry, women's rights and independence, and fluid sexual preference" (10). Even as she makes these arguments, Bloemink does not shy away from evidence that subverts her narrative. What is left of Stettheimer's diaries, mutilated by Ettie after Florine's death ostensibly to preserve the artist's privacy, demonstrates a bored elitism that undermines the image of her as politically progressive. In a characteristic passage, Stettheimer complained of having to dine with "underbred people" on an ocean voyage to Italy (48). Bloemink rightly notes, however, that we will never know what the rest of those pages held.

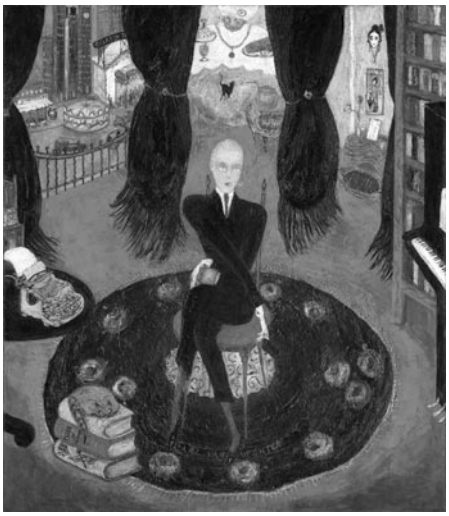


Fig. 1. Florine Stettheimer, *Portrait of Carl Van Vechten* (1922), oil on canvas, 30 1/2" x 26". Yale University Art Gallery.

The body of *Florine Stettheimer: A Biography* weaves these ideas of Stettheimer as a creatively and socially groundbreaking artist through a chronological accounting of the artist's life. At this point, the book begins to read more like a revised second edition of Bloemink's 1995 monograph on the artist.[1] The author's *The Life and Art of Florine Stettheimer* presented a thoroughly researched examination of Stettheimer's career that laid the foundation for subsequent scholarship. In *A Biography*, Bloemink advances fresh arguments and revises prior interpretations of a number of Stettheimer's works. The text itself, however, charts a similar path in language that at times mirrors that of the earlier volume. For example, the long account at the start of chapter one of Ettie scattering Florine's ashes in the Hudson River (22) hews almost exactly to the opening of the 1995 prologue.

The first two chapters cover Stettheimer's early decades, spent

chiefly in New York City, Germany, and France, always in the company of Rosetta, Carrie, and Ettie. Bloemink points out that the artist trained in drawing and painting at the Art Students League in New York, and that she visited museums, galleries, and studios frequently throughout her travels. The author therefore dismisses characterizations of Stettheimer as a "primitive" artist, a category to which, for example, the 2018 National Gallery exhibition *Outliers and American Vanguard Art* assigned her (15, 381–82). Chapter three turns to the mature works the artist began upon her return to New York at the outbreak of World War I. These pivotal pieces, painted in the artist's mid-forties, include what Bloemink asserts is the "first nude, feminist self-portrait by a woman in art history," an argument that sidesteps the earlier nude self-portraiture of Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876–1907) by attributing the loosely defined term "feminist" to Stettheimer's painting (10). Executed in c. 1915–16, it depicts Stettheimer reclining across white bedclothes while holding up a bouquet of flowers, and was thus undeniably composed in dialogue with Manet's *Olympia* (1863) and other canonical paintings of nude women by male artists. As the figure looks straight at the viewer with a slight smile, Bloemink argues, Stettheimer "turn[s] the male gaze back on itself" (386).

In chapters four and five, the author explores two major elements of Stettheimer's developing practice: her insistently feminine, Rococo-informed style, and her use of what her friend Duchamp called "virtual multiplication through color" (144), namely the representation of more than one point in time within a single image, often differentiated by a change in palette.[2] *La Fête à Duchamp* (1917), for example, depicts the thirtieth birthday party the Stettheimers threw for Duchamp at their summer house in Upstate New York. The painting shows the fauvist, candy-colored palette, the attentiveness to social interactions, the wry humor, and the depiction of multiple moments in time that would characterize many of the artist's future works. In the foreground, members of the New York avant-garde lounge and interact on bright yellow grass, while in the distance the same group, now rendered in twilight tones, eats a formal evening dinner under a blue awning hung with lanterns.

Stettheimer would continue to paint her friends and family—sometimes in active multifigure scenes, other times in portraits—throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, a period addressed in chapters six through eight. Many of Stettheimer's paintings were not aimed at a public audience, even if they were exhibited in group shows. In addition to numerous art-historical references, the artist loaded these works with in-jokes only her friends would understand, making their details all but sealed to outsiders. Bloemink's painstakingly researched identifications unlock the works' meanings. For example, Stettheimer's portrait of Van Vechten (1922; Fig. 1), which she unveiled in her customary way at a private tea, incorporates myriad allusions to the sitter's life, including a miniature abridged version of New York City with his favorite café near a theater whose marquee announces a performance by the author's wife, actress Fania Marianoff. The figure holding a platter of food at top center represents the sybaritic main character of the semiautobiographical novel Van Vechten had just published (222–26).

In perhaps the most intriguing portion of the book, Bloemink embarks on a novel analysis of Stettheimer's depictions of Black Americans in two paintings of the early 1920s: *Beauty Contest: To the Memory of P. T. Barnum* (1924), inspired by the inaugural staging of what would become the Miss America Pageant, and *Asbury Park South* (1920), based on a group excursion Van Vechten organized to the segregated Black section of a New Jersey beach. These two works contain striking images by a white woman of contemporary Black people at work and play. Bloemink acknowledges that the Black musicians in *Beauty Contest* reflect negative stereotyping (201), but she asserts regarding *Asbury Park South* that Stettheimer "painted the Black persons in exactly the same manner as she painted the white figures: that is to say, without caricature" (190). Van Vechten's tour of the Asbury Park beach, however, placed Stettheimer and her white companions in a more complex position than Bloemink acknowledges, casting them not just as allies but also as white voyeurs. Van Vechten has long been a controversial figure for scholars of the Harlem Renaissance; as a publishing power broker, he sought to elevate Black authors while simultaneously embracing a "flawed progressivism" that included an unexamined belief in racial difference.[3] Stettheimer's painting, which depicts Van Vechten on a high viewing platform looking down on Black people enjoying the boardwalk, is more attentive to these power imbalances than Bloemink's celebratory interpretation would indicate.

Questions of Black agency and white spectatorship recur in chapter nine, an expansive examination of *Four Saints in Three Acts*, an avant-garde opera with an all-Black cast. Stettheimer designed the sets and costumes, Gertrude Stein authored the libretto, and Virgil Thompson wrote the score. First performed in 1934 at the Wadsworth Atheneum, the opera fulfilled Stettheimer's lifelong ambition to produce a *Gesamtkunstwerk*—a holistic composition of performing and visual arts—and won her acclaim. At the same time, none of the white collaborators seems to have had an interest in telling Black stories per se; many years later, Thompson remarked that he had chosen Black performers because "they alone possess the dignity and poise, the lack of self-consciousness that proper interpretation of the opera demands" (317).[4] It is possible that even this condescending comment was disingenuous, and that the inclusion of Black performers was more of an attention-seeking stunt than a progressive act.

In chapters eight and ten, Bloemink offers detailed explanations and insightful readings of Stettheimer's vibrant and imposing *Cathedrals* series. These four works represent new institutions that had come to dominate the cultural life of interwar New York. *The Cathedrals of Broadway* (1929) presents movie theaters,

including the Capitol Theater (represented by its dome) and the Rialto (its name seen in lights), as "shining secular shrine[s]" (273). The ostentatious society wedding at the center of *The Cathedrals of Fifth Avenue* (1931) includes countless references to elite commerce, including the luxury stores whose names are inscribed in the sky, such as Tiffany's and Altman's (290–92). *The Cathedrals of Wall Street* (1939) shows the New York Stock Exchange façade covered in gold, decorated with a bust of Theodore Roosevelt, and overlooking a military parade at the feet of a large George Washington statue (350). In *The Cathedrals of Art* (1942–44), Stettheimer carefully attends to the delicate tensions and infighting among such art-world notables as Alfred Stieglitz and Francis Henry Taylor and among the museums then jockeying for position in New York City: the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Whitney (359–65).

Bloemink has succeeded in strengthening the foundation she began laying in 1995 for ongoing work on Stettheimer. While she presents some familiar material, she also offers revised arguments and new engagement with the Harlem Renaissance that make the book a valuable, if flawed, contribution to the field. Overall, however, the author has not fully realized her ambition to prove that her subject is one of the most important modernists of the twentieth century. Bloemink frequently relies on the idea that Stettheimer was "first," as when she makes the questionable claim that the artist was "one of the first true American artists mastering multiple media" (387). Stettheimer's work was groundbreaking in many ways, but not in some of the ways Bloemink asserts it was, and novelty alone is not in any case a sufficient measure of greatness. Bloemink's cursory engagement with recent Stettheimer scholarship also weakens the relevance of her arguments. In her epilogue, after tracing Stettheimer's cyclical rediscovery and return to obscurity, Bloemink states her hope that the current revival of interest in the artist's work will continue (382). This perspective is not new, but it is compelling.[5] Bloemink's *Florine Stettheimer: A Biography* is essential to those efforts. ●

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Notes

1. Barbara J. Bloemink, *The Life and Art of Florine Stettheimer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).
2. Marcel Duchamp, letter to the Stettheimer sisters, May 1, 1919, viewed by Bloemink in the collection of Joseph Solomon (executor of Florine Stettheimer estate) in 1995.
3. Emily Bernard, "What He Did for the Race: Carl Van Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 80, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 531–42; Korey Garibaldi, *Impermanent Blackness: the Making and Unmaking of Interracial Literary Culture in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 68.
4. Bloemink, interview with Thompson, New York City, 1983.
5. A related exploration of this subject goes unacknowledged: H. Alexander Rich, "Rediscovering Florine Stettheimer (Again): The Strange Presence and Absence of a New York Art World Mainstay," *Woman's Art Journal* 32, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2011): 22–29.

The Age of Undress: Art, Fashion, and the Classical Ideal in the 1790s

By Amelia Rauser
Yale University Press, 2020

Reviewed by Theresa Kutasz Christensen

"In 1796, it appears, one could wear the same ensemble to a garden party or to the guillotine" (167). This statement refers to the garment that is this book's central subject: the high-waisted, lightweight, at times nearly transparent white cotton muslin dress. In unpacking the fashion for this type of dress (or, as the title puts it, undress), author Amelia Rauser investigates the layers of embodied and enacted meanings in the garment's adoption by women across Europe during the closing decade of the eighteenth century. Rauser frames the adoption of the dress as part of an international program by women of creative, divisive, conversational, and transformational self-presentation as living statues and as embodied allegories. She makes the well-supported assertion that wearers of this style viewed the female body as a shape to be draped, posed, and sculpted for a variety of personal, social, rhetorical, artistic, and political reasons. It is this perceptual shift—from the understanding of the body as a surface to be adorned with brocaded and embroidered fabrics, and as a form to be modified by stomachers, corsets, stays, and petticoats, to a celebration of female skin, shape, and movement as qualities to be revealed and enhanced by dress—that catalyzes Rauser's discussion of the motivations for and reactions to these new fashions of the 1790s.

The introduction provides a basic history of eighteenth-century elite European women's costume and submits that many women in the 1790s, as well as some male reformers and artists, viewed the neoclassical dress style as more "natural" than older fashions, both in its departure from the high artifice of the previous decades and in the extent to which it revealed of the female form (12–14). The birth of the neoclassical dress, Rauser notes, is contested, with rival claims crediting its origins to artists Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755–1842), Adèle Tornezy (1769–1861), or George Romney, or more often to one of three fashionable women in different parts of Western Europe: in Naples, Emma Hart, later Lady Emma Hamilton (1765–1815), portrayed in the dress as a bacchante—a dancing follower of Dionysus—by numerous artists, including Vigée-Lebrun; in London, Charlotte Campbell, later Lady Charlotte Bury (1775–1861), an aristocratic friend of Hart's; and in Paris, Thérésa Cabarrus, later Madame Thérésa Tallien (1773–1835), who wears the dress in a 1796 portrait commemorating her imprisonment for helping to lead the Thermidorian Reaction.

Rauser's text is divided into five thematic chapters that provide a broadly

chronological consideration of how the new style developed, followed by a brief conclusion. The chapters focus on women's self-identifications as Galatea, bacchantes, Psyche, the Corinthian Maid, wax statues, and the *femme sauvage* respectively, with these figures providing crucial touch points of a discussion that comfortably traverses disciplinary boundaries. The author weaves into this narrative the influences of Hamilton in Naples, Campbell in London, and Tallien in Paris, portraying them as trailblazers who exemplified this female agency by deploying the new style in their respective communities.

In chapter one, the emergence of the neoclassical style of dress is traced through Naples, where the figure of the bacchante was popularized in artistic and literary depictions of dancing figures found on wall paintings in Herculaneum and through the attitudes, or performance of classical vignettes, of Emma Hart. Expanding beyond Naples, Rauser explores women's role in neoclassical culture through their enactment of so-called bacchantism, the dichotomous self-depiction as both erotic or primitive on one hand and as virtuous or intellectually curious on the other, depending on both the woman and the context. Pivoting from the flowing movement of garments activated by bacchic music and dance to the static draped forms of classical statues, chapter two focuses on the woman as living statue. Here Rauser contextualizes the body-as-sculpture within Enlightenment aesthetic philosophy and life sciences, connecting the period's obsession with the story of Psyche to discourses on beauty, Vitalism (the concept of a life force differentiating organic bodies from inorganic matter), and women's health. In chapter three, Rauser interrogates the cultural phenomenon of the padded belly as it relates to the social circle of Charlotte Campbell in London and women's desire to reproduce in three dimensions the graceful curving lines popularized in two-dimensional linear illustrations of the period. Included are contemporary moral and aesthetic criticisms of this so-called "pad fad" along with a well-crafted comparison of the artifice of constructing one's own female form and the then-popular story of the Corinthian Maid, in which the ancient Roman encyclopedist Pliny the Elder attributes the invention of both drawing and sculpture to the agency of a woman.

Chapter four shifts to a material-centered discussion of muslin's physical and social properties. It takes into consideration both the trade of physical goods consumed by proponents of neoclassical dress, such as cotton and madras cloth, and the appropriation of slave dress and imported Creole fashion, which Rauser suggests were used by European women to amplify and celebrate both their whiteness and their increasingly perilous freedoms. In the book's final chapter, the topic of freedom becomes central, as Rauser explores how women in high-waisted white muslin gowns began to figure into imagery of the French Revolution (while remaining fixtures in artists' studios and society gatherings). Not only portraiture of such revolutionary women as Thérésa Tallien but also public spectacles of women performing allegorical roles transformed living muslin-clad bodies into nationalist symbols of Liberty, Reason, or Victory—and again, Rauser insists, into living statues. In both cases these draped women embodied the complex juxtaposition of idealized classical authority with female agency.

Preceding each chapter, and demarcated by slightly darker paper, are five sections of a half dozen or more pages investigating the materiality of white muslin dresses: their drape, transparency, high-waistedness, whiteness, and lightness. These sections support and inform the text's discussions of broader social and historical themes but are also designed to stand alone as readings on the primary material aspects of neoclassical dress. While much of the book carries a base assumption of readers' familiarity with late eighteenth-century European history as well as with the historical standards against which the shifts in fashion discussed can be compared, these material focused sections would serve quite nicely for use in an advanced undergraduate or graduate course on women's history, neoclassicism, or dress.

As a scholarly resource, the book is well researched. The endnotes are brief and not usually discursive, a blessing for the reader, as it minimizes the frequency of page-flipping. The bibliography wanders across a vast body of scholarship on topics ranging from aesthetic philosophy to eighteenth-century excavations of ancient Campania to the histories of wigs, cosmetics, and the tambourine. Rauser's text will appeal to diverse audiences with an interest in women, art, politics, costume, and literature.



Fig. 1. Marie Victoire Lemoine, *The Interior of an Atelier of a Woman Painter* (1789), oil on canvas, 46" x 35". Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 57.103.

The volume is wonderfully illustrated, with more than 160 high-quality, full-page color images and details in 189 pages of text. Still, the reader is at times left wishing for more, as in the case of the tightly cropped illustration of *The Interior of an Atelier of a Woman Painter* by Marie-Victoire Lemoine (1754–1820), which might have been more impactful if shown in full, including not only the portrait of Vigée-Lebrun in a high-waisted, gauzy white dress but also the figure of her pupil at work on a large-scale history painting (Fig. 1). The neoclassical-style dress, Lemoine's painting demonstrates, suited not only classical figures on the canvas but also women artists like LeBrun who vied for acceptance in male-dominated Salons where their presentation of academic subject matter was still not the norm. While Rauser does not devote as much visual analysis to the illustrated works as a reader

might like, she generally does address their specific subject matter in the text, not simply leaning on paintings from the period to illustrate broad ideas.

A highlight of the book is the wide variety of works and objects from the period upon which Rauser draws: a robust set of painted portraits, including ones by woman artists Vigée-Lebrun, Marie-Denise Villers (1774–1821), and Marguerite Gérard (1761–1837), as well as other paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, transparencies (etchings or engravings altered by the addition of watercolor and varnish, often by women, and placed in front of light sources within the home), clothing, and jewelry. These images afford the reader a sense of the subtle variations in self-fashioning among wearers of the white muslin high-waisted dress and of the direct relationship between these women and the visual culture of the period. Contemporary letters, newspaper articles, and satirical prints—most of them by men—elucidate popular receptions of the style, some lampooning the often lofty neoclassical ideals projected by the wearers, with barbs directed at the decency, vanity, and morality of their fashion choices.

Rauser's treatment of race and colonial expansion in relation to the material and social aspects of dress is an integral element of her study and could serve as a model for how the current global turn in scholarship on the premodern era might be addressed in contemporary work on Europe. The text delves into discussions of extractive trade economies, including the import of cotton from West Indian plantations worked by enslaved Africans, and racial abjection, notably the neoclassical exaltation of whiteness both in ancient statues and in the garments that women wore to emulate them. Rauser concludes that a study of European neoclassical fashion is inherently tied to colonial projects both materially and through period discourse.

As a feminist project, the book is in conversation with recent exhibitions such as the Bard Graduate Center's 2022–23 *Threads of Power* exhibition in New York, which looked at women's agency in the social and material history of lace production. It takes its place amidst a growing body of woman-centered, garment-focused social histories, including recent volumes by Laura F. Edwards (*Only the Clothes on Her Back: Clothing and the Hidden History of Power in the Nineteenth-Century United States,* 2022), Sarah A. Bendall (*Shaping Femininity: Foundation Garments, the Body and Women in Early Modern England,* 2021), and Barbara Burman and Ariane Fennetaux (*The Pocket: A Hidden History of Women's Lives, 1660–1900*, 2020).

Structuring its analysis of the clothes primarily around the upper- and middle-class European women who wore them, this book re-centers women in the history of their own dress. Instead of treating the wearers as passive recipients of a neoclassical taste formed by men of the Grand Tour or as unthinking victims of the decade's broad social and political shifts, Rauser credits women with shaping their own style—and thus contributing significantly to neoclassicism—in response to a wide range of Enlightenment movements in the biological sciences, aesthetics, politics, and philosophy, as well as in fulfillment of their own desire to represent themselves as authentic. *Age of Undress* proves that there is abundant material to support Rauser's fascinating investigation of a moment in fashion history and an aesthetic philosophy expressed by the physical presence of women as animate statues moving within the spaces of European society. ●

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Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe

By Mary D. Garrard
Reaktion Books, 2020

Reviewed by Adelina Modesti

Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–c. 1656) is arguably the best known and most significant woman artist of the early modern period. Eminent feminist art historian Mary Garrard first broached the artist's work in the 1980s, focusing on the strong and powerful women Artemisia depicted so frequently; this research culminated in the pioneering monograph *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (Princeton University Press, 1989). In her most recent contribution, Garrard revisits the subjects of historical feminism and the *femme forte* that underpinned the earlier volume. Drawing from the wealth of scholarly studies on the topic that have appeared in the past thirty years, the author elaborates on the *querelle des femmes* and on early modern feminist writings as they impacted the social and cultural fabric of European society and specifically Artemisia's life and work. The aim of Garrard's book, as the author states in the preface (7), is to locate the artist in the context of women's political history, offering a gendered analysis of the thematic concerns of a select number of paintings, including new attributions. She argues that the term "feminist" is not only a modern concept but also one that can be applied to the women (and men) of early modern Europe who reacted to the era's misogyny and defended equality of the sexes, championing female education and women's engagement in public life. Feminism can thus be seen as a historical continuum, not an isolated phenomenon.

The initial chapter highlights the "woman question" by exploring the body

of writings produced by feminists in Europe after Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405), such as those by Isotta Nogarola and Laura Cereta (fifteenth century) and later by Moderata Fonte (sixteenth century), Lucrezia Marinella, and Arcangela Tarabotti (seventeenth century). Garrard employs this discussion to frame Gentileschi's biography, deftly weaving parallels between the circumstances and challenges of Artemisia's life and the issues raised by these feminist authors. Garrard posits that the mature Artemisia would have become acquainted with Marinella and Tarabotti, or at least with their works, while she resided in Venice in the years 1627 to 1630. Garrard even speculates that Artemisia may have met Marinella in Rome as early as 1624, when the latter visited a mutual acquaintance, Cristofano Bronzini. In any event, the artist would have known about Marinella and some of the other Venetian feminist writers from Bronzini's pro-feminist treatise *Della dignità e nobiltà delle donne* (On the Dignity and Nobility of Women, 1615–22 and later), which pays homage to Marinella and contains the earliest known biography of Gentileschi. She was perhaps also acquainted with Tarabotti, the sister-in-law of Artemisia's only known Venetian patron, Jacomo Pighetti (47).

There are, however, some areas of contention in this opening chapter. This reader would not define Torquato Tasso's *Discorso della virtù feminile e donnesca* (Discourse on Feminine and Womanly Virtue, 1582) as a "misogynist text" in the same vein as Giuseppe Passi's *I Donneschi Defetti* (The Defects of Women, 1599; 14, 49). While Tasso's views may be ultimately conservative, his is a discourse that praises female virtues, while Passi's degrades women. In addition, the Counter-Reformation Church may have introduced strict enclosure for nuns (13–14), but at the same time it raised the age of entry to eighteen so that women themselves could choose to join the convent rather than being coerced to do so by their family. Other Tridentine reforms also gave women a receptive forum in which to challenge and annul their marriages in cases of abuse, and reintroduced the concept of consensual matrimony so that young women could refuse an arranged marriage.



Fig. 1. Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (c. 1618-20), oil on canvas, 78" x 64". Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

The following six chapters of *Gentileschi and Feminism* explore themes of female inequality under patriarchy, sexuality, emancipation, empowerment, and self-fashioning as expressed in the female subjects in Artemisia's oeuvre, relating the artist's interpretations of these women to the views of the feminist writers introduced in the first chapter. In the first of these thematic chapters, "Sexuality and Sexual Violation: Susanna and Lucretia," Artemisia's 1610 *Susanna and the Elders* and her *Lucretia* (c. 1612–13 or 1621–5) are examined in relation to the sexual double standard to which early modern women were subject. Both paintings deal with rape (threatened and real) and are analyzed in relation to Artemisia's own experiences as a young woman: her exposure to the unwanted sexual advances of men, not an uncommon occurrence in the charged male sexual culture of Seicento Rome, and her rape at the age of seventeen by a friend of her father. These personal experiences, especially the trial against her rapist, were demoralizing and humiliating, but they also psychologically empowered Artemisia, who rejected victimhood, and they enabled her to identify with the moral dilemmas faced by her two chosen pictorial heroines and the "issues of sexual honour, false accusation and false witness" (84) at the heart of the narratives.

Chapter three, "The Fictive Self: Musicians and Magdalenes," adopts Judith Butler's theoretical framework of performative identity, the idea that an individual's behavior constructs their gender. The chapter explores the multiple roles Artemisia adopted in her identification with three of the women she represented: a gypsy musician, St. Catherine, and Mary Magdalene. Performance was at the heart of the gynocentric Medici court of Archduchess Maria Maddalena of Austria, who fashioned herself as an Amazonian warrior and pious leader. Artemisia herself probably performed in the theatrical and musical masques featuring these *femmes fortes* that were held at the grand duchess's court, so she knew

how to convincingly play a role. Thus Artemisia's identification with the female subjects she painted should not be taken at face value, but should instead be seen as a dramatic trope in which the artist embodies different personae, continually shifting her fictive self across a broad spectrum of identities, from sexualized lute player to saint.

In chapter four, "Women and Political Power: Judith," Garrard foregrounds women's political agency as represented by the civic actions of the biblical heroine Judith, who saved her Israelite people from Assyrian attack by decapitating the enemy general Holofernes. Tracing the multivalent meanings of the figure of Judith, including as a symbol of liberty for the Florentine people, the author concludes that the subject was particularly apt under the female rule of the Tuscan state by Cristina di Lorena and Maria Maddalena d'Austria (co-regents of Tuscany 1621–28), when these women's political leadership was being legitimated but also challenged. Within a single image of Judith's patriotic androcide, Artemisia was able to encapsulate "women's political history" (157).

Another androcide introduces the fifth chapter, "Battle of the Sexes: Women on Top." Jael, a Hebrew *femme forte* like Judith, murders the Canaanite Sisera by driving a tent peg through his temple in a signed painting of 1620. But Jael is a more ambiguous figure, treated in the visual and literary sources as a murderous *femme fatale*. Garrard here examines Artemisia's *donne infame*, who through their usurping of masculine power trick men into submission, within the topos of women-on-top as seen in the topsy-turvy world of popular print culture and carnival. The inversion of power and sexual relationships in such works as *Hercules and Omphale* (1627–30, now lost), *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* (1620s?), *Medea* (shown killing one of her sons, painted by the artist or a follower, c. 1627–30), *Samson and Delilah* (c. 1635), and *Corisca and the Satyr* (c. 1635–7) is set against the gender wars waged by Venetian feminists, such as Fonte and Tarabotti, in the literary academies of the lagoon city where Artemisia lived in the late 1620s. Even Esther, an otherwise unlikely *donna infama*, is informed by the sexual politics espoused by these writers, as we see in Garrard's discussion of *Esther before Ahasuerus*, painted during the artist's Venetian stay. Esther's regally elegant garb contrasts with, and thus calls attention to, the foppishness of the king's attire.

In the following chapter, "The Divided Self: Allegorical and Real," the title refers to women's lived experience under patriarchy, whereby unrealistic ideal societal expectations inhibit and conflict with female desire and self-actualization. Allegorical figures, usually female, embody these ideals at far remove from the real lives of early modern women. This distance is most evident in female education—or lack thereof: Women were berated for being inferior, weak, and less knowledgeable than men, but were at the same time denied access to learning that would redress this situation. Garrard sees this paradoxical disjunction addressed vehemently in the learned feminist writings of the period, which espoused women's equality and even superiority if only they could be educated as men were. The author concludes that Artemisia's *Allegory of Painting* (1638–40), itself full of "many learned references and sophisticated ideas," represents "a healing fusion and reintegration of the divided halves of self" (224). Only a female artist could achieve this aim; Artemisia did so by populating the allegory with an actual woman, Artemisia herself, a choice that bridged the gap between the allegorical ideal and reality.

The feminist writers' call for women's education also concludes the final chapter, "Matriarchal Succession: The Greenwich Ceiling," which examines Artemisia's stay in England at the court of Charles I and her work in 1638–39 on the Queen's House ceiling paintings begun by her father. The paintings were commissioned from Orazio and then Artemisia by Queen Consort Henrietta Maria, who had married Charles in 1625, and whose patronage scholars have only recently begun to explore. Garrard argues that the all-female allegorical figures of the Greenwich ceiling, which include the Muses and Liberal Arts, covertly refer to Queen Henrietta Maria and her mother, Queen Maria de' Medici (regent of France, 1610–17), as political leaders and patrons of the arts, hence evoking matriarchal succession, a right denied to women in both England and France. Artemisia, with her repertoire of strong, heroic women, must have been considered a most apt painter of the ceiling decorations. Both in Greenwich and at Somerset House, another residence for which Henrietta Maria commissioned a ceiling painting (now lost), the queen "surrounded herself and her female courtiers with images that mirrored their gender" (231). As a foreign Catholic queen in Protestant England, Henrietta found her position of power precarious, and she had to allay anxieties about her rule that echoed male fears about women's authority and autonomy. For the Greenwich ceiling, Henrietta Maria chose the allegorical subject *Peace and the Arts under the English Crown* to highlight her cultural agenda as an enlightened ruler and art patron, countering the actual situation of political revolt that saw her exiled in 1644 and Charles beheaded in 1649.

Garrard's *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe* is an accessibly written volume, and it contains a select bibliography for further reading as well as a useful index. It is well illustrated with seventy-one images, many in color, but the book would have benefited from a separate list of illustrations and from some clearer images of the Greenwich ceiling paintings in the final chapter. Nonetheless, the reader, whether a specialist or an enthusiast, will find much to ponder in this incisive overview of Artemisia's art in relation to the work of her literary contemporaries and within the context of the growing feminist thought of the early modern period. •

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Lavinia Fontana: Trailblazer, Rule Breaker

By Aoife Brady, with contributions by Babette Bohn and Jonquil O'Reilly
National Gallery of Ireland, 2023

Reviewed by Catherine R. Puglisi

A bulletin of August 13, 1614, circulated news of Lavinia Fontana's death across Rome, hailing her as a "unique painter among the women of our times, who equaled the best men of that profession."[1] Despite lifetime fame, Fontana (1552–1614) sank into obscurity in the nineteenth century, as did the rest of the Bolognese school of painting to which she belonged, but the latter was resuscitated in a series of influential monographic shows beginning in the 1950s devoted to Guido Reni (1954); to Ludovico, Agostino, and Annibale Carracci (1956); and to Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, il Guercino (1968). Fontana's turn finally came with the 1994 exhibition in Bologna that followed a catalogue raisonné of 1989, both produced by Italian women scholars.[2] Caroline Murphy's monograph of 2003 presented the first sustained study devoted to Fontana in English.[3] Attesting to the current renewed attention to her art—along with other early modern women's—is a spate of recent group shows at the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, in 2021;[4] at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, and the Detroit Institute of Arts in 2021–2022;[5] and, in an exhibition pairing Fontana with Sofonisba Anguissola (c. 1535–1625), at the Prado, Madrid, in 2021.[6] The catalogue under review accompanied the first monographic exhibition of Fontana's art since 1994.[7]

A constellation of circumstances favored Fontana's having built a woman's first known professional career in the visual arts of the West. Her birthplace of Bologna had by long tradition offered women a unique environment to pursue careers. Her father and teacher Prospero Fontana not only numbered among local leading painters but also acted as trusted adviser to the city's archbishop, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, a key figure in the Catholic Reformation of the late sixteenth century. Prospero proved himself more progressive in recognizing his daughter's gifts than he was in working in the prevailing Mannerist style. He trained Lavinia, ensured her education, and introduced her into the artistic, scientific, and intellectual circles that frequented his studio. As his own health declined, Prospero promoted Lavinia's career and astutely arranged her marriage to Gian Paolo Zappi, a well-off gentleman from nearby Imola, who signed a highly unusual marriage contract (cat. 2) requiring him to live in the Fontana home in Bologna and support his wife's career. Their thirty-seven-year-long marriage produced as many as eleven children, most of whom died in infancy. After Prospero's death, the Fontana-Zappi household moved to Rome in 1604, where Lavinia enjoyed continued success until her death.

Aoife Brady, Curator of Italian and Spanish Art at the National Gallery of Ireland, curated the *Lavinia Fontana: Trailblazer, Rule Breaker* exhibition and edited its catalogue. In addition to composing the introductory "Setting the Scene" that briefly sketches the artist's life, she wrote one of the three main essays and all sixty-six entries, most one page in length. In "The Workshop of a Woman Artist," Brady addresses clearly and informatively Fontana's technique and working methods, here explored for the first time. Brady's evidence is gathered from recent technical investigations, conservation reports, and close visual study. Lavinia seems to have been among the first to exploit copper panels as painting supports for small pictures because of their smooth surface and luminous effects, a technique that the Flemish painter Denys Calvaert reportedly introduced to Bologna after arriving in about 1560 and that the Carracci and their pupils later adopted. Building on Murphy's fundamental monograph, Brady explores the practical arrangement whereby Fontana's husband facilitated his wife's career by assuming responsibility for negotiating contracts and managing the household. How Lavinia's eleven pregnancies within seventeen years and the experience of watching most of her offspring die prematurely might have impacted her painting and ability to undertake large-scale commissions are issues Brady explores with great sensitivity. Future study might fruitfully compare Fontana's maternity to that of Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–c. 1656), and the solid Fontana-Zappi partnership to the more precarious relations between Gentileschi and her husband, who although initially of practical assistance amassed debts and eventually disappeared from her life. The essay raises further critical questions about Fontana's operation of a busy studio within the social constraints imposed on women. Like the recent Prado exhibition catalogue discussing Anguissola's technique, Brady's essay establishes an important starting point for continued investigation of Fontana's works and for future comparative analyses with other painters.

Following Brady's essay, Jonquil O'Reilly's "Styling the Bolognese Elite: Fashion in the Portraits of Lavinia Fontana" examines the fabrics, patterns, and style of the garments worn by the painter's male and female sitters, offering a valuable primer on contemporary attire, its functions, and its specialized vocabulary, with definitions supplied in a handy glossary at the end of the catalogue. Babette Bohn, well-known for her numerous publications on early modern women artists, contributed the opening essay, "Lavinia Fontana and Bolognese Material Culture," in which she presents a rich discussion of the links between the local economy and the exceptional surface realism in Fontana's portraits. Meticulously rendered luxury textiles and gauzy silk veils celebrate the silk industry, while the elaborate jewelry adorning Fontana's sitters as well as their dogs showcases the goldsmiths' artistry. The ubiquitous miniature dogs, identified by Bohn as an early Italian breed of King Charles spaniel, served as a traditional symbol of fidelity; adorned with jeweled earrings and gem-studded collars, they also conveyed status and wealth. Bohn observes that the material naturalism, new to Bologna, finds precedents in Venice and Florence. Even closer parallels can be cited in portraits

by Moretto da Brescia and Giambattista Moroni from Lombardy, which likewise witness an expanding class of prosperous, class-conscious North Italian consumers. Fontana's surface realism also recalls Anguissola's and that of Scipione Pulzone, the leading portraitist in Rome, whose death before Fontana's arrival in the city opened a field she quickly commanded.

Sixty-six catalogue entries follow the three essays, with good color reproductions and details of each object, as well as comparative works. The entries, like the exhibition, are divided into five thematic sections—"Fontana and Men," "Fontana and Women," "Fontana and Children," "Allegory and Myth," and "The Crowning Glory"—that underline Fontana's impressive range, encompassing large-scale altarpieces, small devotional works, allegorical and mythological paintings featuring female nudes, and portraits.[8] By breaching the bounds of so-called women artists' genres, Lavinia established her credentials to compete in a male artistic world. Interspersed with the paintings in the catalogue is a selection of her drawings, including sheets from the Getty (cat. 16) and the Uffizi (cat. 33, 36, 61, 62) and an album from the Morgan Library (cat. 14). Considered the first extant graphic corpus by a woman, Fontana's drawings comprise mostly exquisite head studies drawn in red and black chalk, several of which have been identified as preparatory to specific portraits. A bibliography closes the catalogue, which does not include an index.

All five catalogue sections include Fontana's portraits, a representative selection of twenty-one works that apart from the two well-known self-portraits (cat. 1, 4) features a clientele of Bolognese scholars and prelates as well as men, women, and children of the local governing class. Ranging in scale from miniature to lifesize, the portraits also vary in format, depicting subjects seated at three-quarter length, seated at full length, or even standing at full length. That the women of the city flocked to her studio is understandable from the flattering portrayals that highlight their physical attributes along with their accoutrements of status yet endow these sitters with humanity: an ethereal unknown woman dressed in white (cat. 20), the learned and talented *Lucia Bonasoni Garzoni*, c. 1590 (cat. 19), and the assertive *Costanza Alidosi*, c. 1595 (cat. 24). The ambitious *Portrait of the Gozzadini family*, 1584 (cat. 17), depicts the influential, affluent clan full-length and lifesize, a format with precedents in earlier sixteenth-century Netherlandish art that was nonetheless pioneering in Bolognese portraiture. Commissioned notably by a woman, Laudomia Gozzadini, the painting depicts Fontana's first female patron at right, sumptuously garbed and seated with her deceased sister and father. The sisters' husbands stand behind in an unusual arrangement that, as Brady explains, reflects a complicated inheritance and Laudomia's claim to the family fortune. Brady's entries convey a wealth of information, discussing the identities of sitters, when known; the personal links of those individuals to Lavinia and her father's circle; technical aspects of the works; and issues of dating. The unpersuasive stylistic attribution of *Portrait of a Boy* (cat. 39) may well be dismissed in the future, but the newly discovered *Portrait of a Young Girl* (cat. 30), possibly a member of the Gonzaga family, is instead a convincing and lovely addition to Lavinia's oeuvre.[9]



Fig. 1. Lavinia Fontana, *Minerva Dressing* (1613), oil on canvas, 102" x 75". Galleria Borghese, Rome.

"Allegory and Myth" presents several fascinating works Fontana painted in maturity. A pair of half-length canvases portraying a Bolognese noblewoman immediately captures attention: One portrays her fully clothed, the other unclothed in the guise of the goddess Venus (1593, 1592; cat. 44, 45). As Brady proposes, the nude portrait was probably meant only for the delectation of the lady's husband. One might infer, too, that he could only entrust his wife to a highly respected woman painter's scrutiny. The eroticism of the image, noted by Brady, reveals an unprecedented facet of the painter's art, which applies likewise to her full-length nudes. Among them are two works added relatively recently to her oeuvre: *Galatea and Cherubs Riding the Stormy Waves*, c. 1590 (cat. 42), in which the sea nymph's legs are suggestively splayed, and *Venus and Mars*, c. 1595 (cat. 46), where the god playfully pats his lover's rear end. Brady's statement that Fontana's erotic paintings predate Annibale Carracci's sensuous nudes in the Farnese Gallery is true but does not acknowledge Annibale's earlier Bolognese easel pictures in this genre, like the seductive *Venus, Adonis, and Cupid* (1588–90) in the Prado. Nonetheless, like Annibale, Lavinia was a forerunner in such subjects in Bologna. The extraordinary, recently restored *Minerva Dressing*—or is she undressing?—inserted in the last section (cat. 66; Fig. 1) was perhaps Fontana's final work, painted in 1613 for the powerful papal nephew Cardinal Scipione Borghese. Minerva is nude, armor strewn about her feet, a novel portrayal of the goddess of wisdom, all the more "radical" for its woman creator. Seen from the rear, she fixes the viewer from over her shoulder with, in Brady's words, a "sultry gaze." The conceit derives from the antique Callipygian Venus statue type, and the figure's naturalism suggests that

Fontana, like the contemporary Carracci, studied a life model posed after the famous statue. It must be noted that Fontana's nudes surely constituted a precedent for Gentileschi, who later capitalized on her gender by creating a demand for themes with female heroines, sometimes nude, painted by a woman. Lavinia's two representations of the biblical story of Judith and Holofernes (cat. 47, 48) inspired Artemisia, as well as her father Orazio, in the casting of a young and beautiful woman instead of the traditional hag as the protagonist's accomplice. While Fontana partly respected convention in imagining a noble and sensuous Judith, her figure gains conviction from the artist's recourse to a real model's features, arguably her own, as Fontana's Judith may be an idealized self-portrait. The catalogue's reproduction of the newly restored version (c. 1595–1600; cat. 47), a detail of which adorns the cover, records the stunning transformation of the formerly murky image, revealing the beautiful execution of the transparent silk veils of Judith's costume and the midnight blue sky behind her.

Along with *Minerva Dressing*, the National Gallery of Ireland's *The Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon* (cat. 51) rightly dominates the last section of the catalogue and commands its longest entry. Calling the work Lavinia's artistic "manifesto," Brady summarizes the results of a recent restoration and research project, the subject of an independent publication she co-edited in 2021. The ambitious multi-figured, large-scale canvas depicts the traditional biblical narrative but gives the protagonists and their respective retinues distinct portrait heads, privileging the queen and her large female suite. Conservation of the canvas has sharpened the heads, restored splendor to the luxurious garments, and unveiled a date of 1599 on the clock held by one of the queen's ladies. Reexamining the archival, visual, and literary evidence regarding provenance, dating, and possible patronage, along with the new technical information, Brady challenges the longstanding identification of the disguised portraits as the Duke and Duchess of Mantua and instead proposes a compelling theory whereby Fontana portrayed Duke Alfonso II d'Este of Ferrara and his third wife Margherita Gonzaga as Solomon and Sheba.[10] Brady further hypothesizes that the references to fertility embedded in the image evoke the couple's hopes of an heir, quashed by the duke's death, which would in turn explain the mystery surrounding the fate of the canvas.

Fontana's move to Rome in 1604 followed the unveiling there of Annibale's Farnese ceiling (begun 1597) and Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's *Calling of St. Matthew* and *Martyrdom of St. Matthew* in the Contarelli Chapel (1599–1600). Lavinia's Roman works, three of which are included in the catalogue (cat. 38, 49, and 66), present new content and forms inspired by her changed artistic environment. As one primary source recounts, she enjoyed papal patronage and received prestigious commissions for altarpieces and portraits, many more of which remain to be rediscovered, as she reportedly painted most of the patrician women of the city along with numerous princes and cardinals.[11] Less studied than her Bolognese years, this phase of her career awaits full exploration. What was the impact of Rome on her art? How integrated was she into the art world? How was she viewed by the Academy of St. Luke, which until 1609 did not accept women? Stefania Vai's forthcoming dissertation promises to address such questions.[12] The Dublin exhibition and its catalogue have deepened understanding of Lavinia Fontana's art and Bolognese milieu. As is always the case, the catalogue was written well before installation of the works. Revelations and/or further issues concerning chronology, attribution, and interpretation arising from the exhibition must necessarily await subsequent publications. •

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Notes

1. My translation of the Italian transcribed in Maria Teresa Cantaro and Lavinia Fontana, *Lavinia Fontana bolognese: "Pittora singolare" 1552–1614* (Milan: Jandi Sapi, 1989), 317, no. 51.31.
2. Cantaro, *Fontana bolognese*; Vera Fortunati Pietrantonio and Lavinia Fontana, *Lavinia Fontana of Bologna, 1552–1614* (Washington, DC: National Museum of Women in the Arts; Milan: Electa, 1998).
3. *Lavinia Fontana: A Painter and Her Patrons in Sixteenth-Century Bologna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).
4. Anna Maria Bava, Gioia Mori, and Alain Tapié, *Le Signore dell'Arte: Storie di donne tra '500 e '600* (Milan: Skira, 2021).
5. Babette Bohn, Eve Straussman-Pflanzer, and Oliver Tostmann, *By Her Hand: Artemisia Gentileschi and Women Artists in Italy, 1500–1800* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 2021), reviewed by Sarah Gwyneth Ross in *Woman's Art Journal* 43, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2022), 67–69.
6. Letitia Ruiz Gómez, ed., *A Tale of Two Women Painters: Sofonisba Anguissola and Lavinia Fontana*, trans. Jenny Dodman (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2019). Noteworthy museum acquisitions of Fontana's works include the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; the Getty Museum (cat. 15, 16); the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC (cat. 19); and the Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts. Relevant current exhibitions are *Strong Women in Renaissance Italy*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and *Making Her Mark: A History of Women Artists in Europe, 1400–1600*, at the Baltimore Museum of Art.
7. The exhibition was on view in Dublin from May 6 through August 27, 2023.
8. The unexpected choice to open with "Fontana and Men" underscores the instrumental role Lavinia's father, husband, and early male patrons played in launching her career (38).
9. The second edition of the catalogue substitutes *Portrait of a Young Girl* for the *Holy Family with Saints Margaret and Francis* (1578) in the David Museum at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, which was catalogued in the first edition but not exhibited.
10. For Giovanni Baglione's biography in Italian of Lavinia Fontana, see Cantaro, *Fontana bolognese*, 321.
11. Vai's dissertation for the University of Edinburgh is anticipated in December 2024; on *Minerva Dressing*, see her recent "Lavinia's Pallade Nuda," *Iconocrazia* 18 (2020), vol. 2, *Iconocratic Studies: In memory of Sarah Jordan Lippert*, 1–15.



Pl. 1. Shirin Neshat, *Offered Eyes* (1993/2022), public art installation, FDR Four Freedoms State Park, Roosevelt Island, NY. Courtesy For Freedoms. Photo by Austin Paz.



Pl. 2. Shirin Neshat, installation view of *Unveiling* (1993), Franklin Furnace, New York. Photo by Marty Heitner, courtesy Franklin Furnace Archive. © Shirin Neshat.



Pl. 3. Shirin Neshat, installation of *Unveiling* (1993), Franklin Furnace, New York. Photo by Marty Heitner, courtesy Franklin Furnace Archive. © Shirin Neshat.



Pl. 4. Shirin Neshat, installation of *Anchorage* (1996), video. Creative Time Archive. Courtesy the Fales Library & Special Collections, New York University Libraries. © Shirin Neshat.



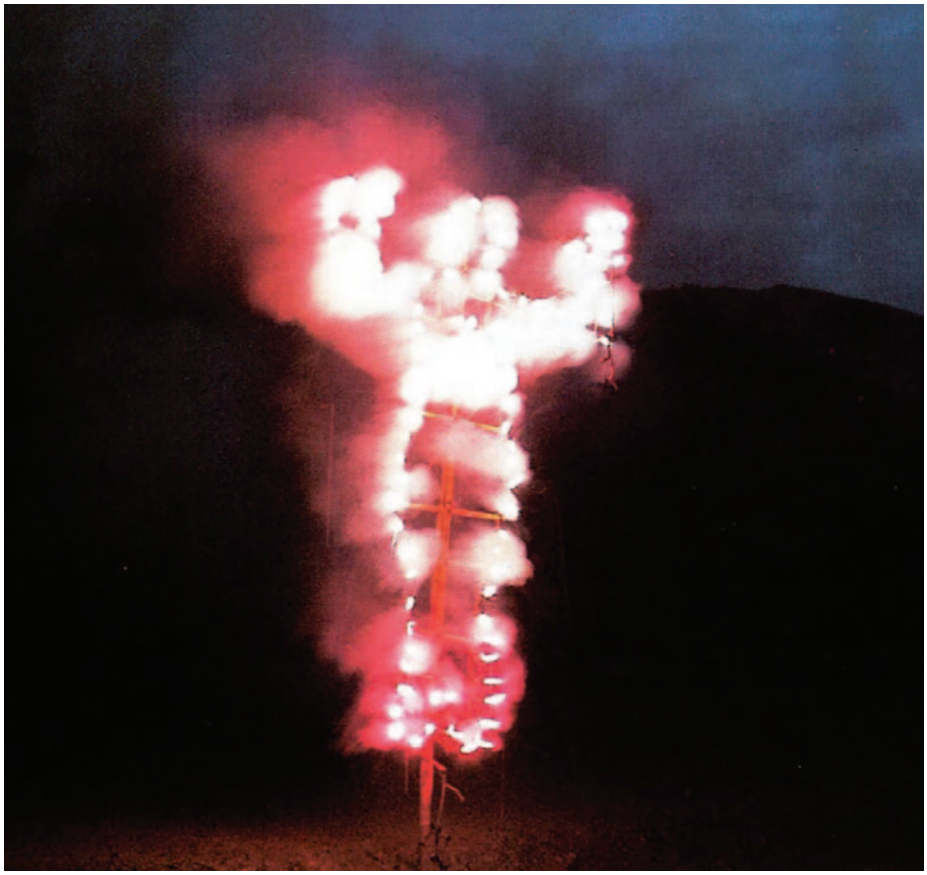
Pl. 5. Shirin Neshat, *The Shadow Under the Web* (1997), four-channel color video (10 minutes). Presented originally on four rectangular monitors, the piece was later projected, as viewed in this installation from the exhibition *La Pratique est absolument nécessaire et elle pose désormais le problème non plus de son esthétique mais de sa stratégie*. Photo by Blaise Adilon. Courtesy IAC, Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes, France. © Shirin Neshat.



Pl. 6. Ana Mendieta, *Untitled* (*Silueta* series, Iowa) (1978), color photograph, 13 1/4" x 20". Art Gallery NSW. © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC; courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Pl. 7. Ana Mendieta, Untitled (*Silueta* series, Iowa) (1979), chromogenic print, 20" x 13 3/16". Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from the Photography Committee. © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC; courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Pl. 8. Ana Mendieta, *Anima, Silueta de Cohetes (Firework Piece)* (1976), still from Super-8 color, silent film, 2:23 minutes. Still photograph in the Collection of Raquel O. Mendieta. Photo: The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC; courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Pl. 9. Maemoto Shōko, *Daiguren (Blazing Flame, like a Crimson Lotus)* (1986), acrylic, plaster, lame powder on dongolos cloth, 90 5/8" x 255" x 28 3/4". © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.



Pl. 10. Maemoto Shōko, *Gorgoneion* (2020), mixed media, 14 1/4" x 10 1/4" x 3 5/8". © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.



Pl. 11. Maemoto Shōko, *Silent Explosion: Running Through the Night on Foreign Streets* (1988), acrylic, plaster, lame powder on dongolos cloth, 119" x 79" x 110". Collection of Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, Nagoya, Japan.



Pl. 12. Maemoto Shōko, *Hi no tama kuni kitan* (Mysterious Story of the Land of Fire) (2021), acrylic on canvas stretched on wooden panel, 63 7/8" x 102 3/8". © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.



Pl. 13. Maemoto Shōko, *Gokuraku suigū: Hisui hime* (Paradise Water Shrine: Princess Jade) (2022), mixed media, 98 1/2" x 196" x 7 7 /8". © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.



Pl. 14. Maemoto Shōko, *Shinkai no anemone* (Anemone in the Deep Sea) (1992), mixed media, 86 5/8" x 149" x 149". © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.



Pl. 15. Maemoto Shōko, installation of *Satsuriku no usagi-hime* (The Massacre of Princess Rabbit) (right wall) and *Hanatome-hime* (Princess Flower-Block) (2023) (left wall), in the exhibition, *The Story of Princess Flower-Block: Stop All Wars*, Gallery Kobayashi, Tokyo, 2023. © 2023 Gallery Kobayashi.

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Warrior Waging Peace 1273;
wood, metal, fiber, stone, mixed media
71.5 x 25 x 24 inches
© Linda Stein 2023

This sculpture *Warrior Waging Peace 1273* highlights themes that have been a focus of Stein's practice for the last six decades, and are particularly resonant now in times of global conflict and suffering. These themes are power/vulnerability, masculinity/femininity, war/peace, aggression/passivity, strength/softness.

Written on the sculpture are words that address issues of bigotry and oppression including sexism, racism, trans/homophobia, ableism. They speak to Stein's history as an educator whose work inspires Upstander protection and anti-bullying.

The dulled machete blades presented in the sculpture are themselves a contradiction: they are simultaneously tools for harvesting and weapons of violence. Stein sees the machete blade as a symbol of both protection and destruction.

Our Curricular Team uses Stein's art to teach and inspire Upstander behavior. Under the auspices of HAWT, we reach out to museums and universities to help them form individualized learning experiences.

—Dr. Karen Keifer-Boyd
Professor of art education and women's, gender, and sexuality studies at Penn State University; HAWT Curricular Team Chair

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#Never Again: March for our Lives, acrylic on canvas 40"x30" 2022

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